

Appendix 1 to McAlister CN, Marble AE, Murray TJ. The Halifax Explosion: the first coordinated civilian medical response to disaster in Canada. *Can J Surg* 2017.
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Nova Scotia Doctors who gave Medical and Surgical Attendance to the Injured following the Halifax Explosion (prepared by Dr Allan E Marble)

Doctor	Place of Residence	Hospital/Office	Addendum
Stephen A. Adlington	Brookfield		
James G. Allen	Clyde River		
W. Bruce Almon	Halifax	35 Hollis	CAMC
Smith Anderson	Pictou	Camp Hill	
Charles C. Archibald	Halifax	125 Edward	CAMC
David W. Archibald	Sydney Mines		
Melbourne E. Armstrong	Bridgetown	Rosenberg	Physician-in-Charge
Thomas Armstrong	Halifax	500 Gottingen	
Clarence D. Barnaby	Halifax	180 South	
Homer B. Barnhill	Petite Riviere		
William J. Barton	Halifax	Cogswell	
Jane Hartz Bell	Halifax	158 South	
John Bell	New Glasgow	VGH & New Glasgow	
J, Gordon Bennett	Halifax		
Robie D. Bentley	Truro	Truro	
Arthur Birt	61 College		
Ernest E. Bissett	Windsor		
Edward Blackadder	150 South		
Arthur E. Blackett	319 Barrington		
Gerald C.W. Bliss	Amherst		
Francis E. Boudreau	Amherst		
Joseph E. Brean	Mulgrave		
Avery F. Buckley	209 South Park		
Matthew G. Burris	Dartmouth	Rosenberg	
Allister Calder	Glace Bay		
John Cameron	Halifax	Halifax	
John J. Cameron	Antigonish		
Owen H. Cameron	Amherst		
D.A. Campbell	130 Gottingen		
George M. Campbell	Halifax	407 Brunswick	CAMC
Oscar A. Cannon	Halifax	Cogswell	Physician/Surgeon
Michael J. Carney	Halifax	Children's	Physician/Surgeon CAMC
Willis C. Chandler	Halifax	Jennings	
Hugh D. Chisholm	Springville		
J. Stanley Chisholm	Halifax	Camp Hill	Physician/Surgeon CAMC
Murdoch Chisholm	Halifax	VGH	Surgeon
J. Locke Churchill	Halifax	Cogswell	Physician/Surgeon CAMC
Francis J.A. Cochran	Halifax	Cogswell	Physician/Surgeon CAMC

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Victor F. Connor	Hantsport	Cogswell	Physician/Surgeon	
James R. Corston	Halifax	Camp Hill	Physician/Surgeon	CAMC
Andrew J. Cowie	Halifax	30 South		
George H. Cox	New Glasgow	Camp Hill	Ophthalmologist	
Robinson Cox	Upper Stewiacke	Truro		
Albert Culton	Shubenacadie			
Allan R. Cunningham	Halifax	Cogswell	Ophthalmologist	CAMC
Matthew A. Curry	Halifax	71 Morris	Obstetrician	CAMC
John A. Davies	Halifax	Cogswell		CAMC
Frank R. Davis	Petite Riviere			
C.E. Avery DeWitt	Wolfville	Truro		
George E. DeWitt	Wolfville	Truro		
Walter E. Dickie	Barton	City Home	Physician/Surgeon	
Minar S. Dickson	Dartmouth	Rosenberg	Physician/Surgeon	
Arthur E. Doull	Halifax	Children's	Ophthalmologist	
William R. Dunbar	Truro			
William J. Eagan	Glace Bay			CAMC
Foster F. Eaton	Truro	Truro		
Charles S. Elliott	Stellarton	Cogswell	Physician/Surgeon	
Malcolm R. Elliott	Wolfville			
Edward D. Farrell	Halifax	Infirmary	Physician/Surgeon	
William D. Finn	Halifax	City Home	Physician/Surgeon	
Thomas W. P. Flinn	Halifax	84 Morris		
Albert E. Forbes	Maccan			
Arthur E.G. Forbes	Lunenburg	Infirmary	Physician/Surgeon	
Theodore R. Ford	Liverpool			
William D. Forrest	Halifax	257 Barrington		
Bernard Francis	Sydney Mines			
David Fraser-Harris	Halifax	80 South Park		
Silas A. Fulton	Truro			
George G. Gandier	Dartmouth	89 Ochterloney		
James R. Gilroy	Oxford			
Charles J. Gossip	Halifax	3 Edward		
Judson V. Graham	Halifax	Children's	Physician/Surgeon	
Harry G. Grant	Rose Bay			
Laurie L. Harrison	Halifax	105 Morris		
David J. Hartigan	New Waterford			
William H. Hattie	Halifax	NS Hospital		CAMC
Harry B. Havey	Stewiacke			
Arthur C. Hawkins	Halifax	Camp Hill	Physician/Surgeon	CAMC
Gordon Heal	Halifax	29 Birmingham		
Edward Jeffers	Parrsboro			
C.H. Johnson	Halifax	53 Brenton		

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Edmund J. Johnstone	Sydney			
Owen B. Keddy	Windsor	N.S.Hosp.	Physician/Surgeon	
Evan Kennedy	New Glasgow	N.S.Hosp.	Physician/Surgeon	
Hedley V. Kent	Truro			
Frederick S. Kinsman	Truro			
Everind A. Kirkpatrick	Halifax	VGH	Ophthalmologist	
F. Ernest Lawlor	Dartmouth	NS Hospital	Psychiatrist	CAMC
J. Frederick Lessell	Halifax	VGH	Anesthetist	
C. Courtenay Ligoure	Halifax	Private Hospital	Physician/Surgeon	
Roy D. Lindsay	Halifax	Cogswell	Physician/Surgeon	
Ferguson R. Little	Halifax	94 Gottingen		
John G.B. Lynch	Sydney			
Frank G. Mack	Halifax	Children's	Physician/Surgeon	
Joshua Mack	Halifax	305 Barrington		
Anthony Ivan Mader	Halifax	Mader's	Physician/Surgeon	
R. Evatt Mathers	Halifax	VGH	Ophthalmologist	
Charles J. Miller	New Glasgow			
Clarence Miller	Stellarton	Camp Hill		
Vernon L. Miller	Halifax	105 Morris		
Ernest F. Moore	Dartmouth	Cogswell	Psychiatrist	CAMC
Willis B. Moore	Kentville	Camp Hill		
Clarence H. Morris	Windsor	Camp Hill	Surgeon-in-Charge	
John C. Morrison	New Waterford			
Angus M. Morton	Halifax	52 Quinpool		CAMC
Charles S. Morton	Halifax	52 S.Garden		
Byard W. Mosher	Halifax	65 Victoria		
John M. Murdoch	Halifax	378 Robie		CAMC
George H. Murphy	Halifax	VGH	Surgeon	
Robert L. Murray	Dartmouth	N.S.Hospital		
Joseph J.F. MacAulay	Sydney			
Daniel R. MacDonald	Sydney	Morris	Surgeon-in-Charge	CAMC
E.J. MacDonald	Halifax	168 South		
Henry K. MacDonald	Halifax	VGH	Surgeon	
Michael R. MacDonald	Lourdes	Camp Hill		
Purdy A. MacDonald	Halifax	Infirmery	Physician/Surgeon	
John G. MacDougall	Halifax	VGH	Surgeon	
George A. MacIntosh	Halifax	Children's	Physician/Surgeon	CAMC
Hector MacKay	New Glasgow	Truro	Physician/Surgeon	
John W. MacKay	New Glasgow	Camp Hill		
Norman E. MacKay	Halifax	309 Barrington		
John J. MacKenzie	Pictou			
Murdoch D. MacKenzie	Parrsboro			
Donald L. MacKinnon	Truro			

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William F. MacKinnon	Antigonish			
Robert G. MacLellan	Lunenburg			
Samuel J. MacLennan	Halifax	Camp Hill	Ophthalmologist	
William A. MacLeod	Hopewell	Cogswell		
Donald J. McDonald	Sydney	Camp Hill	Physician/Surgeon	
Emanuel O. McDonald	Sydney			
John McDonald	Sydney			CAMC
Ronald F. McDonald	Antigonish			
Thomas H. McDonald	Meteghan	City Home	Physician/Surgeon	
Joseph P. McGrath	Kentville	Camp Hill		
Murdoch T. McLean	North Sydney	Infirmary	Physician/Surgeon	
Charles A.S. McQueen	Amherst			
Duncan R. McRae	Rawdon			
William O. McRae	Whitney Pier			
George Nathanson	Sydney			
Albert G. Nicholls	Halifax	10 South Park		CAMC
Robert F. O'Brien	Halifax	City Home	Physician/Surgeon	
Freeman O'Neil	Louisburg			CAMC
Laughlin J. O'Shaughnessy	Halifax	285 Gottingen		
Michael T. O'Sullivan	Glace Bay			
John W.T. Patton	Truro			
Henry A. Payzant	Dartmouth	Rosenberg	Physician/Surgeon	
Horace V. Pearman	Halifax	311 Barrington		
Nelson Pratt	Alton			
James A. Proudfoot	Inverness	Pine Hill	Physician/Surgeon	
Walter T. Purdy	Amherst			
William G. Putnam	Yarmouth			
Wallace N. Rehfuss	Bridgewater			
James Reynolds	Upper Stewiacke	Truro		
Grace E. Rice	Halifax	11 S.Garden		
William H. Rice	Sydney			
Horace Rindress	North Sydney			
Alexander A. Ross	Westville	N.S. Hosp.	Physician/Surgeon	
John J. Roy	Sydney			
Phillip M. Ryan	Halifax	313 Tower		
Hugh Schwartz	Halifax	294 Gottingen		CAMC
Nathan Shacknoue	Sydney			
Albert A. Shaffner	Halifax	24 Brunswick		CAMC
Frederick R. Shankel	Hantsport			
Ralph O. Shatford	Londonderry			
Thaddeus M. Sieniewicz	Halifax	Cogswell	Physician/Surgeon	
Louis M. Silver	Halifax	65 Morris		
Henry O. Simpson	Dartmouth	Rosenberg	Physician/Surgeon	

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Jordan W. Smith	Liverpool	City Home	Physician/Surgeon	
Montague A.B. Smith	Dartmouth	Rosenberg	Physician/Surgeon	
William F. Smith	Halifax	87 Hollis		
Cecil J. Sparrow	Sydney			CAMC
Grace Spencer	Halifax	59 Edward		
Lewis Thomas	Halifax			
Miles G. Tompkins	Dominion			
Saul J. Turel	Halifax	324 Gottingen		
Monson J. Wardrope	Springhill			
David T.C. Watson	Halifax	56 Charles		
Philip Weatherbe	Halifax	Pine Hill		
Henry B. Webster	Kentville			
Ralph R. Withrow	Springhill			
Percy C. Woodworth	Kentville			

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Notes prepared by Dr Allan E Marble for his public lecture: *Scene of a triumph of Surgery*

Excerpt 1

According to an article in *The Halifax Evening Mail* of February 2nd 1918 written by the Canadian Press entitled ‘All Canada Reads this Story Today on Relief Work in Halifax’ their response was minimal. This article consisted of four newspaper columns and buried in its text was a sentence which insulted a large number of physicians and surgeons in Halifax and in all parts of the three Maritime Provinces. The sentence in question was: *The local doctors, notwithstanding that they were called upon to treat their regular patients, also helped materially with the wounded.* Members of the Halifax Medical Society immediately reacted to the insult by forming a committee charged with preparing a letter to remove the false impression created by the sentence. Their letter was published in the *Halifax Morning Chronicle* on February 18th 1918 and read as follows:

Some of the medical men of the city have resented this manner of describing the part they played in the surgery arising out of the explosion. The fact is that they and certain colleagues from outside Halifax bore the whole burden of the surgical relief work until the various hospital units from the United States were installed in their respective buildings. The Massachusetts State Guard was the first American Unit to arrive, namely, on December 8th, on which day it entered on work at Bellevue. Three other units did not take over hospital work until December 9th. One American unit (Rhode Island) arrived on December 10th and took over hospital duties on December 12th.

It is therefore clear that the Halifax doctors, instead of helping materially with the wounded, virtually performed all the vast work there was to be done, with the help of their brethren from outside, before the American surgeons had had time to arrive on the scene.

The splendid work done by the American surgeons is hereby not in the least minimized, but the local practitioners naturally resent being described merely as helpers during a period in which, unquestionably, they and their provincial brethren were the chief performers.

This paper presents a considerable amount of evidence to show that the foregoing statement was true and that Nova Scotia doctors and nurses responded immediately and that they were the only health care providers for the injured during the three days following the explosion. Notes made by doctors while treating patients and, articles published by doctors in medical and surgical journals about their experience during the explosion, provide the evidence referred to above.

Wallace Kenney, the Superintendent of the Victoria General Hospital, corroborated the views of the Medical Society in his annual report of the Hospital for 1917.

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For the first days following the disaster, the full brunt of the situation fell straight upon the surgical staff of the VGH, the members of which, for the first three or four days and nights, had but little rest; and with such contributory relief as was incidentally afforded them by the arrival of doctors from the neighbouring towns, they carried on. The strain of course extended itself to the resident staff, nursing staff, office staff, indeed to all connected with the institution.¹

Dr. David Fraser-Harris, the official medical historian of the disaster, reinforced Mr. Kenney's statement in his unpublished manuscript describing the medical aspects of the explosion. Dr. Fraser-Harris described the Canadian Press article as giving a false impression of the part played by local doctors and singled out Dr. John G. MacDougall, one of the surgeons at the Victoria General Hospital, as an example of the important role played by a Halifax surgeon.

The amazing amount of work in major surgery done by Dr. J.G. MacDougall of Halifax cannot go unmentioned. His services were in constant requisition at no less than four hospitals including Camp Hill, the Victoria General, the Halifax Infirmary, and the YMCA Emergency Hospital. He seemed to be working at high pressure in at least four places at once. Many of the most serious and difficult cases were reserved for him; and long after the peak of the first few weeks was over, he had charge at the YMCA Hospital of all those cases in which a satisfactory result had not been obtained at other hospitals.²

The foregoing was also supported by Professor Archibald MacMechan who described the Victoria General Hospital *as the scene of a triumph of surgery.*³ He noted that Dr. John G. MacDougall, a senior staff surgeon, arrived at the hospital about thirty minutes after the explosion on the 6th and continued to perform surgery on the injured until Sunday the 9th. Dr. MacDougall performed his last major operation before the American Units arrived on the latter day.

1

JHA., 1919, Appendix 3(B), Superintendent Wallace Kenney's comments in the Annual Report of the Victoria General Hospital for 1918, pp.12-15.

2

NSA MG36 Series C, folder 119, p.37-38.

3

The Halifax Explosion, December 6, 1917. McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., Toronto. Compiled and edited by Graham Matson, 1978, p.63.

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During the first three days the offices of doctors throughout Halifax and Dartmouth were also inundated with lineups of the injured. On the morning of December 6th 1917 Dr. John Cameron was examining a patient in his consulting room and fortunately had just turned his back to the window. At that moment, at 9.05 a.m. to be exact, the window blew in and the flying glass hit Dr. Cameron's back, however, neither he nor his patient were injured. A flower pot in front of the window had been slashed to pieces by the flying glass and had shielded Dr. Cameron and his patient from being wounded. Within minutes a large number of injured people began to arrive at Dr. Cameron's office. He wrote:

I started stitching wounds at 9.10 a.m. and did not finish until 7.30 p.m. working at full pressure all the time, with not a bite to eat since breakfast. At 3.30 p.m. the Matron pressed a welcome cup of tea to my lips. There was no time to wash my hands between operations. Strict asepsis was impossible and no anesthetist was available. As most of the patients were suffering from various stages of shock, this seemed to produce Hypoanesthesia (if I may be permitted to coin a new word) which was most convenient for our purpose. My arms were stained with gore up to the elbows, my face and clothing were bespattered with blood. I must have looked like some fiend from the torture chambers of the Damned. I used the same treatment in every case – thorough washing with boric lotion, followed by warm boric compresses, kept moist with oiled silk. There was not a single case of severe sepsis among the patients, and the wounds healed remarkably well, considering the adverse conditions under which they were treated.⁴

Excerpt 2

At the same time Dr. George Cox was travelling from New Glasgow to Halifax to offer his services to the injured, Dr. Avery DeWitt was on the train from Wolfville with the same objective in mind.⁵ When he arrived at Rockingham he was met by George Graham, General Manager of the Dominion Atlantic Railway, who asked the doctor to provide medical attendance to the injured who were being loaded onto a train which was going to Truro. The train had been damaged by the explosion and had several windows smashed, however, it carried about two hundred dying and injured people to Truro. Dr.

4

Cameron, J.: 'In Reminiscent Mood', *Nova Scotia Medical Bulletin*, vol.24, no.5, p.135, 1945.
Dr. John Cameron
was Professor of Anatomy at Dalhousie from 1916 to 1930 (*Nova Scotia Medical Bulletin*,
vol.40, no.1, pp.28-30,
1961).

5

Dr. Avery DeWitt (1882-1973) was a McGill graduate who had pursued post graduate training at the Universities
Of Berne, Heidelberg, Leipzig, and Berlin (Allison, D.: *History of Nova Scotia*, Bowen and
Company, Halifax,
1916, vol.3, p.183).

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DeWitt did everything he could to attend the injured on the train with the assistance of his father and his sister who met and boarded the train at Windsor Junction.⁶ Although his father, Dr. George E. DeWitt, was 75 years of age, he was very willing to offer his many years of experience as a doctor to assist in treating the large number of injured.⁷ Dr. Avery DeWitt's sister, Nellie Anderson DeWitt, aged 26 and a graduate of the New England Baptist Hospital School of Nursing in Boston, was also quick to volunteer to assist her brother and her father.⁸

Truro did not have a hospital in 1917. In preparation for the arrival of the train the citizens of Truro converted their Court House, Academy, and Fire Hall into emergency hospitals. Several of the doctors in Truro, including Drs Hedley V. Kent and John W.T. Patton, had gone to Halifax on the morning of December 6th before they were informed that a trainload of the injured was on its way to their town. This meant that the DeWitt's were very busy treating the injured at the three hospital locations prior to the return of the Truro doctors from Halifax subsequent to the arrival of the medical relief units from the United States.⁹ A few days later Dr. Hector MacKay and several nurses from the Aberdeen Hospital in New Glasgow joined the DeWitts to assist in treating the patients at the Truro Emergency Hospitals.¹⁰ Dr. Avery DeWitt continued to look after the injured patients for ten days before returning to his practice in Wolfville. Two of the nurses who cared for the injured in the Truro Emergency Hospital were Marion Long and Fanny Coffin.¹¹ The list of the 146 injured people who were treated by the DeWitts and Dr. MacKay in the Truro Emergency Hospitals appeared in the *Halifax Morning Chronicle* on 11 December and consisted of 80 women, 48 men, and 18 children. Most of the injuries involved cuts, bruises, and face wounds, however, there also were 16 broken

6

Halifax Morning Chronicle, 15 December 1917, p.7. An article entitled 'Temporary Hospitals created in Few Hours Time – Dr. DeWitt's Heroic Service', appeared in this issue.

7

The Canadian Album, Men of Canada, or Success by Example. Bradley, Garretson & Co., Brantford. Ontario, 1894, vol.3, p.195. Dr. George E. DeWitt had received his MD from Harvard in 1872.

8

Halifax Chronicle Herald, 20 January 1962, p.31. Obituary of Nellie (DeWitt) Manning.

9

Halifax Morning Chronicle, 15 December 1917, p.7.

10

NSA MG36 Series C, folder 119, p.9. The History of the Medical Aspects of the Disaster at Halifax and Dartmouth on 6 December 1917. Unpublished manuscript written by Dr. David Fraser-Harris in 1919..

11

Truro Daily News, 12 December 1917, p.5.

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and fractured limbs, 11 eye injuries, as well as three people who were suffering from severe shock. According to Archibald MacMechan a total of ten of the injured died in the Truro Emergency Hospitals.

Although all of the permanent hospitals in Halifax lost most of their window glass and experienced cracks in plastered walls due to the explosion, only two of them were partially destroyed. The roof of the Royal Naval Hospital located on Gottingen Street crushed in and the building was badly wrecked. Alice Boutin, one of the two nurses on duty at the hospital, was severely injured as was Dr. Rousseau, the doctor in charge of the hospital. Alice Boutin's injuries consisted of a fractured rib and a dislocated shoulder. Patients in the hospital were uninjured and were transferred to the USS *Old Colony* Hospital Ship to make room for the many injured people from outside who, in most cases, had to be carried into the Naval Hospital.¹² Despite her injuries, Alice Boutin, continued to care for the injured at the Naval Hospital until late in the evening of December 6th before she was relieved of her duty.¹³ The other hospital at the north end of Gottingen Street, the Infectious Diseases Hospital, was almost totally wrecked, however, the patients in that facility did not suffer serious injuries.¹⁴

The patients who were transferred from the Royal Naval Hospital to the USS *Old Colony* Hospital Ship were taken by train on 10 December to New Glasgow to an Emergency Hospital set up in the West Side School. The doctors who cared for the injured on the train were: Drs. John W. MacKay, and John Bell, of New Glasgow, Dr. Smith Anderson of Pictou, and Dr. William F. MacKinnon of Antigonish. They were assisted by nine nurses. The West Side School had been converted to a 160-bed hospital under the supervision of Miss Jessie M. Sheraton, the Superintendent of Nurses at the Aberdeen Hospital. A total of eighty injured patients were cared for in the New Glasgow Emergency Hospital and, in addition to those from the USS *Old Colony*, there were patients from Camp Hill, the Cogswell Street Hospital, and the Victoria General Hospital. They were given medical and surgical attendance by Drs. John W. MacKay, John Bell, Charles J. Miller, and Evan Kennedy. A total of fifteen trained nurses cared for the injured in the Emergency Hospital which remained open until 5 January 1918.¹⁵

New Glasgow, Truro, and Windsor¹⁶ were the only towns outside of Halifax and Dartmouth to establish Emergency Hospitals following the explosion, although the towns

12

NSA MG36 Series C, folder 119, p.15.

13

Halifax Morning Chronicle, 13 December 1917, p.7. Alice Boutin was described as a worthy Cape Bretoner.

14

Halifax Morning Chronicle, 8 December 1917, p.1.

15

NSA MG36 Series C, folder 119, p.40.

16

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of Amherst, Antigonish, Pictou, Sydney, and Sydney Mines, had notified the Relief Committee that they were prepared to establish such Hospitals.¹⁷ The Relief Committee felt that it was important to keep members of injured families together and therefore most of the Emergency Hospitals were established in Halifax and Dartmouth. These were located at the **YMCA**, 381 Barrington Street¹⁸, the **Waegwoltic Club House** on the Northwest Arm, the **Morris Street School**, and the **Halifax City Home**, in Halifax and, at the residence of **Harry Rosenberg** on Crichton Street in Dartmouth. It is remarkable that a total of 103 doctors and 62 nurses came from all parts of the province outside of Halifax and Dartmouth and volunteered to provide medical and nursing services at these Emergency Hospitals for six or seven days.

Excerpt 3

The first American Medical Unit to arrive in Halifax was part of the **Massachusetts State Guard**. The Unit, under the command of Major Harold J. Giddings, MD, arrived at 3 a.m. on the morning of the 8th of December and included eleven medical officers and twenty-one nurses.¹⁹ The Halifax Relief Committee decided to place the Medical Unit in the vacant Bellevue House on the corner of Spring Garden Road and Queen Street and the building was renovated during the day and converted into a 100 bed hospital. By 9 p.m. on the 8th of December about 60 patients had been admitted into the **Bellevue Hospital** and by the 10th the number being treated there had increased to 152.²⁰ Beginning on 11 December an additional ten nurses were added to the Unit to cope with the large number of injured in the Bellevue.²¹ During the five day period from 8 to 12 December, a total of 167 patients received treatment at the Bellevue and the medical and

Halifax Morning Chronicle, 12 December, 1917, p.1. This issue lists fifteen injured from Halifax.

17

NSA MG36 Series C, folder 119, p.66.

18

The Halifax Explosion December 6th, 1917, op.cit., p.69. The matron of the YMCA Emergency Hospital was the wife of Dr. John G. MacDougall, one of the senior surgeons at the Victoria General Hospital.

19

The Halifax Explosion, December 6, 1917, op cit., p.?? The Report of the Halifax Relief Expedition, 6 December to 15 December 1917 by Hon. A.C. Ratshesky.

20

Ibid., p. 90. According to Ratshesky the medical officers were provided with dining and sleeping accommodation at the Halifax Club and the nurses were billeted in private houses and at Government House.

21

Ibid., p. 142. These nurses were from Saint John and were graduates of nursing schools in Montreal, Massachusetts, and Rhose Island.

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nursing staff also carried out 53 visits to treat the injured in their own homes. Dr. G. Loring, the ophthalmologist with the Unit, treated 27 eye cases at the Bellevue and performed 18 operations. He also treated 95 eye cases at the Cogswell Military Hospital, the Halifax infirmary, and at Camp Hill and performed 17 operations at those three hospitals.²² The Bellevue Hospital changed hands on the evening of the 12th of December when the Medical Unit of the Massachusetts State Guard passed it over to the Rhode Island Red Cross Unit and the Guard made preparations to return to Boston.²³

The second Medical Unit to arrive in Halifax was the **American Red Cross from Boston**. The Red Cross Unit arrived on the 9th of December directed by Dr. William E. Ladd. The Unit included twenty surgeons, three obstetricians, one oculist, seventy-four nurses, and equipment for a 500-bed hospital. The Red Cross unit moved into **St. Mary's College** on Windsor Street and transformed it into a hospital with 138 beds and on the 10th of December was caring for 114 patients.²⁴

The three obstetricians and three nurses in the Red Cross Unit were placed at the YMCA Emergency Hospital and eight of the Unit's nurses were sent to the USS *Old Colony* Hospital Ship. The Unit remained in Halifax until the 5th of January.²⁵

A third American Relief Unit, the Medical Department of the **Maine National Guard**, also arrived on the 9th of December. It was under the command of Major Gilbert Elliott, MD, and included seventeen medical officers and four nurses. The Maine Unit was given authorization to establish a hospital at the **Halifax Ladies College** on Barrington Street and on the 10th of December 86 patients were being treated there. The Maine Unit continued to operate the hospital at the Halifax Ladies College until the 23rd of December 1918 when it returned to the United States.²⁶

The largest of the American Hospitals was The State of **Rhode Island Red Cross Unit** and it was the fourth to arrive and it entered Halifax on the 9th of December. This Unit was commanded by Dr. Garry DeN. Hough and included fifty-three medical officers and fifty-one nurses. One of the three ophthalmologists with the unit was Dr. Norman Darrell Harvey, one of the best known eye specialists in the United States. He was born in Halifax in 1865, the son of John H. Harvey.²⁷ Dr. Harvey performed eye surgery at

22

Ibid., p. 146.

23

Ibid., p. 144.

24

NSA MG36 folder 118, pp. 26-27. Report of Dr. Fraser-Harris

25

Ibid., folder 118.5b, c, and d.

26

Ibid., p. 27.

27

Halifax Morning Chronicle, 14 December 1819, p.2. Nova Scotia Vital Statistics, delayed birth

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several hospitals in Halifax including the Children's Hospital.²⁸ During the 10th of December the members of the Unit did a house-to-house visit to provide treatment of the injured and by the end of the day had visited 800 homes. On the 11th of December thirty-eight of the medical officers were sent to the Halifax Infirmary along with 38 nurses. The remaining medical officers and nurses became part of the staff at **Bellevue Hospital** and, on the 12th, took over the operation of the Bellevue from the Massachusetts State Guard Unit which was preparing to return to Boston. Dr. Hough, who had been on duty at the Halifax Infirmary, was given authorization by Lt.Col. McKelvey Bell on 18 December to set up a hospital at the **Waegwoltic Club Building** on the Northwest Arm.²⁹ It continued to function until the 28th of February with the assistance of several fourth-year medical students from Dalhousie.³⁰

Dr. Ernest A. Codman's Unit arrived in Halifax from Boston on the 9th of December and immediately began to set up a hospital at the **YMCA Building** on Barrington Street. With Dr. Codman were thirteen physicians and surgeons and nine nurses, including an oculist, Dr. N.C. Van Wart from Fredericton. Dr. Codman was very impressed with the preparations which had been made at the YMCA prior to his arrival. He wrote *all the real work was done by you people in the transformation of the YMCA building into a hospital.*³¹ On the 10th of December Dr. Codman's Hospital was caring for 66 patients. The Unit returned to Boston on the 19th of December.

The sixth and final relief unit to offer its medical and nursing services to the injured was the **Red Cross Unit from Calais, Maine**, which arrived on the 10th of December. It was commanded by Dr. William Miner and included three medical officers and nine nurses. This Unit focused its attention on the several dressing stations throughout Halifax and Dartmouth and returned to Boston on the 14th of December.

Another American doctor who came all way from Michigan to care for the injured on 10 December was Dr. Charles C. Hubley, a native of Halifax. In December of 1917 he

certificate dated

1904, p. 6800981.

28

NSA MG36 Series C, folder 118, p.54.

29

Halifax Morning Chronicle, 19 December 1917, p.10. According to the *Chronicle* of 27 December there were 27

patients being cared for at the Waegwoltic Club although by that date Dr. Hough may have returned to Rhode

Island. Dr. Webb from Toronto was in charge of the hospitals on the 27th of December.

30

NSA MG36 Series C, folder 118, p.63.

31

A History of the Halifax Explosion, December 6, 1917, p. 72. Dr. Theodore R. Ford from Liverpool had attended

patients at the YMCA Hospital prior to the arrival of Dr. Codman's Unit.

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was on the Staff at the Sanatorium in Battle Creek, Michigan, and, upon arrival in Halifax, began to make house-to-house visits dressing wounds throughout the north end of the city. He continued to dress wounds and care for the injured until the 16th of December.³²

By the 19th of December there were 873 patients in hospitals in Halifax and Dartmouth, 219 in the Truro Emergency Hospitals and 73 in the New Glasgow Hospital.³³ Only three of the American Hospital Units were left in Halifax: the Red Cross Unit from Boston, the Rhode Island Red Cross Unit, and the Medical Unit of the Maine National Guard.

Excerpt 4

It is clear that the Canadian Press writers were uniformed or misinformed about who was responsible for the treatment of injuries following the Halifax Explosion. For the first three days, December 6,7, and 8, Nova Scotia Doctors and Nurses immediately came forward and carried the entire load of medical, surgical and nursing attendance of the injured. Drs MacDougall, Cox, and DeWitt, in particular, worked tirelessly for six or seven days to deal with the injured. Needless to say they were very relieved to learn of the arrival of the American Hospital Units, however, they continued to perform surgery until all of the injured had been treated. I would recommend that future writers about the medical response to the explosion provide a balanced account of the role played by the Nova Scotia doctors and nurses and the role played by the American Hospital Units.

32

Beed, B.: *1917 Halifax Explosion and American Response*, McCurdy Print, Halifax, 1998, p.67.

33

Halifax Morning Chronicle, 19 December 1917, p.10.

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Excerpts from *Noble Goals, Dedicated Doctors: The Story of Dalhousie Medical School* by Dr Jock Murray. Halifax (NS): Nimbus Publishing; 2017 ISBN-13: 978-1771085298. Reproduced with permission. Dr Murray's book may be purchased here <<https://www.nimbus.ca/store/noble-goals-dedicated-doctors.html>>; or at Amazon <<https://www.amazon.ca/Noble-Goals-Dedicated-Doctors-Dalhousie/dp/1771085290>>

Excerpt

The medical students were immediately recruited to assist the physicians and surgeons, even though those in the first years of training had no clinical experience and only about three months of medical lectures. Florence Murray, a third-year student, immediately pitched in to help and later described her experience. “Suddenly the house shook, the windows blew in. I went outside and found people streaming with blood. The nearby druggist gave me, without question, all the supplies I needed. From there I walked to Camp Hill hospital, where there were 1,500 emergencies in a building equipped for 100 convalescents. I helped administer morphine until it was all used up.”

She then helped with surgery and administered anesthetics. She was terrified because she had not done any of these procedures before. She said she didn't know how much anesthetic to give her first patient, a six-year-old child, as she remembered that you should watch the pupils of the eyes, but this child had lost both eyes. She did well, however, and the next day was appointed an official anesthetist in the hospital. She gave anesthetics for twenty-four hours and the next day was made official anesthetist for the YMCA hospital. Her classmate, Hector Pothier, was given the same role at the Victoria General Hospital. He described giving anesthetics for the next week, with little time to sleep, eat, or change clothes. Later many of the physicians praised the hard work, commitment, and skill of the medical students.

Anna Creighton Laing was in first year medicine and just taking her seat in class on December 6 when the room seemed to explode in glass and dust. The students started to make their way down the stairwell in the Forrest Building through debris, wondering if this was a German attack. A fellow student took Anna's arm to help her. As they got outside they saw a great cloud of smoke in the distance toward the harbour. Another student had been on her way to class just behind the professor when his hat suddenly lifted straight up off his head. She thought some super- natural phenomenon had occurred.

Anna headed for home and on the way met a student she knew who was holding a handkerchief over his blinded eye. Her floor and bed at home were covered with glass, and she felt lucky she was in class and not in her room when the explosion happened. Soon the military ordered them out with warnings of a second explosion. She went to

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Camp Hill Hospital and while comforting a young mother with her baby, a man came by, grabbed her shoulder and said, “You look useful. Come help me.” He was a military physician just back from France, and together they began to set broken bones and suture large lacerations. She saw her mother going through the crowded hospital, looking for people they knew. Later she found the body of her sister in an apartment, already prepared for burial. Anna and her medical student volunteers worked for the next two weeks assisting the physicians with anesthetics and surgery.

When they eventually returned to classes the students had trouble concentrating on their studies. It was an unprecedented introduction to the world of acute medicine and surgery. Anna and her classmates, only in their first term of studies on anatomy and physiology, had suddenly been thrust into a whirlwind of flesh and blood, assisting in removing eyes, treating burns, repairing fractures, and holding retractors in the operating rooms. The memory of being thrown into the drama of broken bodies, tragedy, and death was an experience the medical students would remember the rest of their lives, and many recounted the experience at the end of their careers when writing their life story.

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