

CLUB TATTLER



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COVER STORY

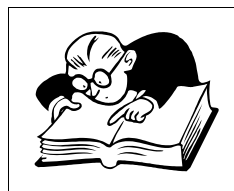
DISASTER IN HALIFAX, 1917 BOB COLE

On December 1, 1917, the French transport *Mont Blanc* pushed away from a Brooklyn wharf bound for Canada's great naval base at Halifax, Nova Scotia. America had entered World War I the previous Spring, so there would be no more debates with Germany on the subject of U-Boats and the rights of neutrals. As a result, her master, Captain Aimé Le Medec, hoped for the best as he made his way up the New England coast.

Mont Blanc was an earnest ship, doing the best that could be expected of her. She was also grossly overloaded, and her cargo was enough to make a brave sailor wince. Doing her part for the Allied war effort, her hold was packed with 225 tons of TNT and 35 tons of benzene. She also carried 21 tons of guncotton, a form of nitrocellulose used to make gunpowder, and 2,325 tons of picric acid, a yellow, crystalline substance used as a bursting charge for artillery shells. Ponderously slow, *Mont Blanc* struggled to make 7 knots on a good day with a following sea. On the 6th, however, she was barely making headway when she passed through the anti-submarine booms that guarded the busy Canadian port. She sputtered her way into Halifax. With her bow confidently pointed up the Narrows, the harbor's main shipping channel, all seemed well. Then, however, as luck would have

it, she was rammed by the Norwegian freighter *Imo*. The *Imo*, a former whaling ship, was loaded with coal and foodstuffs for the people of Belgium. The accident was largely the fault of her master, Captain Haakon, for he had stupidly cut across the bow of the French vessel in his haste to leave port. With the sun at her stern, and perhaps fouling Haakon's vision, the inbound French ship was hit in her #2 compartment. She immediately started to burn.

With the *Mont Blanc* dead in the water and listing, the flames attracted many onlookers to the Halifax piers. As morning stretched out over the Narrows, blackout curtains were lifted in all of the port's commercial buildings, and their workers couldn't help but keep an eye on the commotion. People in the gently-sloping residential neighborhoods at shoreside, elbows on window sills, were also attracted to the accident. The hubbub down on the water seemed well-harnessed though, contained by men who knew what they were about. It was a spectacle nonetheless, something to break the tedium of a Canadian winter. As crewmen worked to knock down the flames, however, it was not lost on them that *Mont Blanc* had anti-submarine guns fore and aft. This meant that in addition to her volatile cargo, full ammunition lockers posed yet another measure of concern.



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Notable Quote

Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plentiful in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.

Calvin Coolidge

Dates For the Club Calendar

<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Menu</u>	<u>Time</u>
Fri.	Dec 19	Social Evening	Pot Roast	5:30 PM
Mon.	Dec 22	Forefather's Day Parade	Breakfast	5:30 AM
Mon.	Dec 22	Annual Meeting	Succotash	4:00 PM
Fri.	Dec 26	No Meeting	—	
Fri.	Jan 2	Social Meeting		5:30 PM
Fri.	Jan 9	No Meeting	—	
Sat.	Jan 10	Twelfth Night	Celebration	6:30

On red meat nights there will be chicken or fish alternatives and sugar free desserts are generally available. The kitchen will be happy to honor these or any special requests with proper notice.

Richmond Talbot

As a featured columnist with "The Old Colony Memorial", he shares with us another side of his creative journalism, a little seasonal poetry.

A Plymouth Carol

*God rest ye merry gentlemen
Of famed Old Colony Club.
Ye keep good cheer despite
the cold
And seasonal hubbub.*

*Ye hearty chaps who rise at
dawn
To hear the cannon's roar,
Ye doff your toppers to the
folk
Who first came to our shore.*

*Now to the clubhouse ye
return
In stately march -- not dash.
At eventide then sit ye down
To savory succotash.*

*With families 'round on
Christmas day
In Santa ye believe,
Nor would such stalwarts as
ye snore
Through gala New Year's
Eve.*

*Throughout the season strive
ye on
To keep the Yuletide bright,
When New Year's done, ye
still have left
The feast of the Twelfth
Night.*

*Of all the clubmen 'round
the world
Ye celebrate the best.
Just pray to God when
Yuletide's o're
Ye really get that rest.*

**Mark your calendar. The
twelfthnight party will be
Jan 10, 2004.**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**TONY LONARDO**

It is Dec. 9 as I write this and it occurs to me that this will be the last of these in my year as president. and **what a year it was!!** I very quickly learned it's not as easy a job as many of my predecessors made it seem. I learned that if you don't delegate you wind up having to do it yourself. Finding help proved to be a simple task ... all I had to do was ask ... on many instances the help was offered before I knew I needed it. I had, and sincerely used, the many opportunities I had in 2003 to say "Thank You" to the members involved. I knew that most committees were eager to continue doing the fine jobs that they had been doing



all along while others seemed to be members of a Stone Mason's Union. We all seem to have survived; the OCC is healthier for it; **and no friendships were damaged.** All in all the news for our Annual Meeting is very positive ... I hope you will concur.
Re: the Annual Meeting: Forefathers Day falls on Monday, Dec. 22 (along with Winter). A.M. activities begin by gathering at the Club after 5:30 for the parade which starts at 6 AM. March and Ceremony on Cole's Hill and back should take about 45 minutes after which breakfast is served (\$10). Followed by Flag salute (outside). *Continued page 3*

******* Twenty-one Days to Twelfth Night *******

You have all received formal invitations from *president-elect Don and Ellen Brown*, the elegant menu that John Sgammato has designed, and the Costume Resources for the Old Colony Club booklet that Jim and Peg Baker presented. We should all be anticipating a wonderful **TWELFTH NIGHT CELEBRATION**. The committee members have been planning all the facets of presenting a party of this size to be even better than previous parties. Now all that is left is up to you to have a great time. Perhaps, though, a reminder is in order.

The date is January 10th . The party starts at 6.30 P.M.

The cost is \$35.00 per person, \$70 per couple **paid by check to the Old Colony Club and sent to William Sykes, 12 Stoddard St. Plymouth, MA 02360.**

All **reservations** must be received by **December 22nd** so that if we have less than 80 reservations at that time, we can allow extra guests to be added.

This is a formal party. All guests are requested to enter the Club by the front door so that you can be welcomed by Don and Ellen Brown. This year to eliminate a guest back up you will not have to sign the Guest Book. The downstairs dining room will be for dancing and the Cellar will be set up for those who wish to sit at a table to eat and drink as it was previously.

Club Connection

The following 2003 Executive Board Members are listed for your convenience. If you need information about the Club, one of the upcoming events, Club Membership List or if you've lost your Key, call or E-Mail us.

President	Tony Lonardo	508-224-5856	anthonylonardo@yahoo.com
1st VP	Don Brown	508-830-9420	debrown@adelphia.net
2nd VP	Bill Rudolph	508-747-4271	wrudolph41@aol.com
Secretary	James Kiefer	508-747-8883	james.kiefer@verizon.net
Treasurer	Dennis Stinnett	508-746-4297	gstinnett@msn.com

Building Committee

Bill Rudolph



The E. Board decided to put off work on the sewer reconstruction until spring. It was felt that any work in the driveway would adversely effect the Twelfth Night celebration.

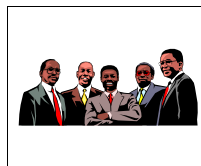
Membership Committee

Neal Merry

SPECIAL POINT OF INTEREST

Newest Club Members

John Victor Valorz of Plymouth, MA., sponsored by Donald Brown and Mike LePage was approved for membership at the November meeting.



Patrick T.J. Brown of Plymouth, MA., sponsored by Skip Lougee and Ted Lougee *and* **Henry (Hank) Russell Hague, Jr.** of Plymouth, MA., sponsored by Jeff Fischer and Peter Ryan were approved at the December General Meeting.

In 2003 the Club approved 13 new members. Congratulations!!

President's Message

Continued from page 2

P.M. activities begin with the Annual Business Meeting at 4:00 PM (sharp) until +/-5:30, at which time the social begins at the regular 7:00 PM bell. The presentation by our guest speaker, the Rev. Gary Marks, Pastor of the First Congregational Church, will begin immediately following dinner.

We look forward to seeing as many OCC members as possible at our Club's most important annual function.

Hope to see you soon, and often, in the future. Tony

DISASTER IN HALIFAX, 1917
CONTINUED

The fires burned for an hour, long enough for the many spectators to be lulled into thinking everything was, in fact, under control. Then at 9:05 AM, just as the morning's cold began to loosen its grip on the city, *Mont Blanc* blew up. The detonation was thunderous. No, it was apocalyptic! The noise itself battered the harbor, and there had never been such a thing. Onlookers were overwhelmed by it. It was, in fact, the greatest man-made explosion prior to the testing of the first Atomic bomb. The blast was so ferocious that a half-ton anchor was thrown two miles inland! The barrel of one of *Mont Blanc's* naval guns landed four miles away. The badly damaged *Imo*, displacing 5,000 tons, was actually knocked out of the water, and sat high and dry on shore. 325 acres of the city were damaged. 2,000 people were killed outright, and some 16,000 thousand more were injured as a mushroom cloud of coal dust rose over the city. The north side of Halifax was devastated. Virtually every window in the city was broken, and many spectators were blinded by flying glass. This included all too many children who had turned to look as school window panes splintered. For many, it was the last thing they ever saw. In fact, windows were broken as far as 50 miles from the site, and the shock wave could be felt 300 miles away.

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Bob Cole is a frequent contributor, OCC Member and retired History Professor. He has traveled the world and enjoys adding a bit of humor to history.

Richard H. Maxwell
retired pastor

Club Member 1995-2003

Old Colony Club member Richard Howland Maxwell ("Dick") died in his Plymouth home on Friday, Nov. 21. He has been a resident of Chiltonville since 1974 and a member of our Club since April 7, 1995. The Rev. Maxwell left full time ministry in 1978 when he joined into a part-time arrangement with two other ministers serving the Chiltonville Congregational Church. The Old Colony Club was included among the list of his many interests.

Dick was buried in a private service that took place Nov. 24 in the Chiltonville Cemetery. A memorial service scheduled for Dec. 7 was postponed until Sat. Dec. 13 in the Chiltonville Church. A contingent from the OCC will attend.

Old Colony Club

PO Box 1774
Plymouth, MA 02362

Phone: 508-746-0110



A Gentleman's Club

*An establishment for social
meetings and other non
profitable purposes*

We're on the WEB
www.oldcolonyclub.org

Disaster in Halifax, 1917 *Continued from page 3*

When New Englanders heard of the disaster, people were stunned. Soon, however, help was on its way. Boston's city fathers rushed an ambulance train to Nova Scotia, and made a donation of \$750,000 in aid -- a tremendous sum in those days. Massachusetts carpenters, glaziers, bricklayers, stavedores, and engineers followed the doctors to Nova Scotia. Given the fact that a Canadian December was well underway, much had to be done.....and Canada has never forgotten that assistance.

Ever since the great Halifax explosion, the people of Nova Scotia in their gratitude have sent a huge Christmas tree to Boston. They have done it every year since the disaster. This is the tree you might have walked by, in past years, as you strolled around the Prudential Center during the Holiday Season.

Next time you see it, you might spare a few seconds to reflect upon that terrible day in 1917, and of the perpetual bonds that tie us to our good friends
Downeast. BC

Mailing Address Line 1
Mailing Address Line 2
Mailing Address Line 3
Mailing Address Line 4
Mailing Address Line 5

HOUSE COMMITTEE Twelfth Night Notes

JOHN SGAMMATO

The annual Twelfth Night extravaganza is fast approaching. Committee chairman Bill Sykes has done a fine job of getting volunteers and putting them to work. The volunteers have responded with their usual excellence, including the invitations that by now all of you should have. It is very important that you **reply by the end of Forefathers Day** with a check to Bill Sykes. Make it out to the Old Colony Club, and send it to Bill at 12 Stoddard Street, Plymouth 02360. The amount is \$35 per person. The house can only fit a limited number of people, and the food committee needs to know how many people to feed.

This year the upstairs will be open for regular food, and everything will be better distributed throughout the house. This will make it

easier to get to each of the many delicacies that will be offered during the evening's festivities.

The Food Committee can use some assistance, especially in the form of serving dishes that fit the period (what might have been in the house in 1893). If you can lend large platters, a large punch bowl, footed cake plates, cake servers, and tiered trays in either a classical silverplate or in cut glass, please contact John Sgammato at (508) 747-2809.

Anything you can lend saves us the cost of rental, which means more goodies for you!

If you have any food allergies, please inform John and he can tell you what to avoid.

See you on the 10th!



12th NIGHT CELEBRATION 2004

JANUARY 10, 2004 AT 6.30 P.M.

THE OLD COLONY CLUB OF PLYMOUTH PRESENTS

THE TWO THOUSAND FOUR TWELFTH NIGHT FORMAL PARTY

OF THE ERA FROM 1875 TO 1920

Don Brown, Old Colony Club President Elect 2004, his wife Ellen and the Twelfth Night Committee welcome you to a stellar formal evening for your enjoyment at the Club which will be beautifully decorated to match the lovely gowns and the fabulous food choices by Co-Chair John Sgammato.

We can assure you, it will again be as delicious as that at the past parties. All sorts of punches and other drinks will be available all evening. Dancing will again be in the downstairs dining room. Plan to stay late.

This being the Club's premier formal affair, we ask that all members and guests enter the Club via the front door so that you can meet President Don Brown and Ellen.

Your RSVP invitations, with the menu included, will be sent the first week of December. A costume booklet will also be sent with your invitation showing the formal gowns of the chosen era.

The cost is \$35.00 per person, paid by check, must be received by December 23rd to secure your reservation. Again, there is a limit 80 people. Each member will be allowed to bring only one guest. If we do not have 80 paid reservations by December 23rd, additional guest will be accepted on a first come basis.

Send checks to:

William D. Sykes, 12 Stoddard St., Plymouth, MA 02360

For information call Bill Sykes at 508 746 3712 or John Sgammato at 508 747 2760

For additional reservations after December 23rd call Bill Sykes or Co-Chair of the 12th Night Committee John Sgammato