

HALIFAX

CITY OF CONTRASTS

1. The Halifax skyline near the waterfront.
2. Commander MacGowan looks out from his boat.
3. They build the new Halifax — Construction work never ceases.
4. Students near a Halifax College.
5. An old Halifax seaman.
6. A young Canadian merchant navy officer.
7. Cmdr. MacGowan's old stories and old ships draw crowds of children.
8. Inside a Halifax hotel.
9. On the dockside.
10. A young architect explains models for modern Halifax.



“A city of contrasts — old history alive in stone-and-timber buildings alongside glass-and-metal skyscrapers — that’s Halifax,” says Lt. Commander W.T. “Mac” MacGowan of the Royal Canadian Navy (Retired). And he should know.

Commander MacGowan worked with the Canadian Merchant Marine in the 1930s, then joined the Royal Navy in London in 1939, and was back with the Royal Canadian Navy in 1942, serving as Lieutenant-Comman-

der aboard a depot ship servicing motor torpedo boats on anti-sub-marine work out of Halifax until 1945.

“She has grown and changed a lot in my 68 years here. We are trying to preserve what’s worth keeping of the old city, without standing in the way of the new investment represented by all these new skyscrapers,” Commander MacGowan gestures with his pipe-stem towards the city skyline — we were out in the harbour aboard his motor-boat—

and the panorama is breathtaking: the shipyards, Canada’s peace-keeping fleet at anchor, the stone and shingled warehouse along the old waterfront, behind them the modern office towers, hotels and apartments, and above them all the stone fortress and Georgian cupola of the old Town Clock on Citadel Hill.

“Of course, the last decade has brought a lot of culture — art exhibitions, music and live theatre. The tourist industry is prospering too, with new hotels and

gourmet seafood restaurants.”

Ever since it came into being some 226 years ago (it was a British naval base then), Halifax has continued to be the hub of government not only for the Province of Nova Scotia but for Federal Government administration for the whole Atlantic region of Canada. The port and railhead and the highways make it a natural focal point for transportation.

Almost entirely destroyed by the “Halifax Explosion” of 1917

—the result of a harbour ship collision which damaged every building in the city and killed 1,630 persons — Halifax was rebuilt into an important trading centre. It continues to be Canada’s chief Atlantic port (ice-free in winter).

“The container has given shipping everywhere a real shot in the arm and Halifax has the most modern facilities,” beams Commander MacGowan with pride. “But they filled in the basin of the Royal Yacht Squadron to

build the container port — Halifax is one of only four Royal Squadrons in the world—and now we have our basin in Halifax’s North West arm. I guess that’s progress for you, and we have to keep up with the times.”

It’s this combination of pride in the place and her traditions, only with the flexibility to accept and make changes, that will keep Halifax a strong, proud and thriving city for the next 226 years and beyond.

