



COMPLETED COURT DEVELOPMENT, RE-HOUSING SCHEME, HALIFAX, N.S.

The Halifax Disaster and the Re-Housing

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THE explosion which took place in the harbor of Halifax and which destroyed a considerable portion of that city, occurred nearly two years ago, on the morning of December 6, 1917. About two square miles in the north end of the city, were laid waste in about two seconds, when the cargo of the munition ship "Mont Blanc," consisting of 4,000 tons of one of the most deadly explosives known to science was ignited a few minutes after the collision of this vessel with the Belgian relief ship "Imo."

As the "Mont Blanc" blew up near the Halifax shore the portion of the city north of Russell Street received the full force of the explosion and nothing was left standing above the ground in this section of the city. More than fifteen hundred people were either killed instantly or died in the wreckage and thousands of homeless and injured ones were forced to flee for their lives from the fire which immediately began to break out in the ruins of each shattered building, and continued to rage until the first blizzard of the winter extinguished the blaze, and left this whole area a mass of smoldering ruins.

Rescue work began at once, at first haphazard, then organized under a temporary committee. Relief measures grew from local first aid to assistance of the most substantial kind from cities and States near and far. Large funds of money were appropriated to carry out immediate relief of human suffering, and later a program of reconstruction took definite form.

Six weeks after the explosion a relief commission was appointed. The ruins were cleared away, and with builders working day and night,

colonies of temporary houses sprang up on the Commons and public grounds of the city, and some five thousand people of the devastated area were more or less housed in a remarkably short time. Approximately 8,000 houses have been repaired. Industries that faced ruin have been sustained by aid in rehabilitation, and permanent houses to the extent of some 700 homes are now rapidly nearing completion.

The Relief Commission, under the energetic and untiring leadership of its chairman, Mr. T. Sherman Rogers, K.C., ably assisted by Judge Wallace and Mr. Fowke, his fellow commissioner, immediately undertook an active program to administer the investment of millions of dollars which had been provided for relief purposes, involving the complete rebuilding of districts in which the houses had been destroyed beyond any hope of repair.

The commission called into consultation Mr. Thomas Adams, town planning adviser, Commission of Conservation, Ottawa, and Ross & Macdonald, architects, of Montreal. The work of planning a greater and better Halifax has had the careful study of Mr. Adams for some years past, and extensive areas of undeveloped land surrounding the city have been sufficiently surveyed to fix the boundaries of the several city and county schemes.

Altogether the rebuilding of the many hundreds of dwellings in the affected area is of special interest at this time when so much attention is being given to the subject of housing, because it involves the most pretentious utilization of concrete units that has ever been undertaken and the most extensive housing program that has as yet been considered in Canada.