

# The Great Molasses Flood



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL.....	3
LETTER FROM THE HEAD CHAIR.....	4
LETTER FROM THE CRISIS DIRECTOR.....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	6
Questions to Consider.....	8
COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES.....	9
CHARACTER LIST.....	10
Rose Alcott.....	10
Dr. Samuel Whitaker.....	10
Edmund H. Crowley.....	10
Margaret O'Donnell.....	10
Luca Marino.....	11
Andrew J. Peters.....	11
Eleanor Fitzroy.....	11
Thomas J. Hale.....	11
Nora Callahan.....	12
Arthur Klein.....	12
James O'Rourke.....	12
Isaac Gonzalez.....	12
Margaret Emery.....	12
Lieutenant Commander H. J. Copeland.....	13
Julian Thorne.....	13
Alonzo Bianchi.....	13
Clarence Woodford.....	13
Henrietta Blanch.....	14
Loretta Phillips.....	14
Wesley Birch.....	14
Rufus Stewart.....	14

## LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL

Delegates, Club and Team Advisors, Parents, and Any Other MUN Folks,

It is my esteemed privilege to welcome you all to Davis Model United Nations Conference XXIII! My name is Brody Andrews, and I am honored to serve as your Secretary-General for the 23rd DMUNC. On the weekend of May 2-3, 2026, delegates will have the opportunity to engage in fruitful debate and cooperation, and hopefully, make lifelong connections.

As a senior at UC Davis, this will be my final DMUNC and my final Model UN Conference. I've been to over 30 conferences in the eight years I've been doing MUN but nothing I've gotten to do in my Model UN career has been as rewarding as DMUNC. Last year I got the opportunity to serve as the Director General of DMUNC XXII and it brought me so much joy to watch a massive number of future leaders bring their imaginative ideas to important debates. Thank you all for the opportunity to watch the magic unfold again, I truly cannot wait to see and be inspired by all of you in May.

I joined MUN my freshman year in high school and I could not be more grateful for the experiences it has brought me. Having been in your position I know how simultaneously nerve-wracking and exciting a MUN weekend can be. Whether this is your first conference or your 100th I'm happy you chose to come to DMUNC. In college, MUN has only become a larger part of my life. Not only has MUN afforded me educational and competitive opportunities, but it has also brought me lasting relationships with incredible people who continue to push and support me every day.

As someone who has done Model UN for so many years, I've had all the classic MUN experiences. Every author's panel, crisis update, closing ceremony celebration, and moderated caucus speech led me to DMUNC and I couldn't be happier. As graduation looms large, I want to remind all of you of the amazing joys that MUN can bring and all of the exciting things college has in store for all of you. When you love MUN, it loves you back. The skills you will improve, friendships you will form, and knowledge you will gain from even one MUN conference is enough to make having to explain what a crisis committee is to your non-MUN friends worth it.

I have had the honor of serving as the Director General of DMUNC XXII and as the crisis director for DMUNC XXI's The Muppets committee and DMUNC XX's Star Wars JCC on the Rebels side. With three DMUNCs and countless more conferences under my belt, I feel confident that my experience and passion will help make DMUNC XXIII a truly memorable conference. However, none of this would be possible without the hard work of the CONSEC and staff members who have worked tirelessly for months to prepare for DMUNC XXIII. Running DMUNC is in *no way* a one person job and I am eternally grateful to every single DMUNC staff member. My greatest thanks goes to my Director General Mae Tyson who has stepped up at every turn in extraordinary ways. Thank you Mae, CONSEC, head chairs, crisis directors, and all the DMUNC staff.

Delegates, we have been planning this weekend since August of 2025 and we're so excited for you to enjoy it. I encourage you to read through your committee background guides thoroughly and formulate collaborative resolutions. I look forward to the thought-provoking ideas that each of you will bring forth to your respective committees. Good luck! We truly can't wait to share this with you.

Sincerely,

Brody Andrews | Secretary-General

**Davis Model United Nations Conference XXIII**

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## **LETTER FROM THE HEAD CHAIR**

Hello Esteemed Delegates,

It's my pleasure to welcome you to the

**LETTER FROM THE CRISIS DIRECTOR**

## INTRODUCTION

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It is January 15th, 1919. Unusually warm for a typical winter day, the day's temperature climbs to a relatively tepid 40°F. Boston's North End is already buzzing with activity, those already occupied in the day's routine work, and residents just venturing out into the streets.

At around midday, a deep rumble begins near the rails of Copps Hill wharf.

The United States is in the midst of unprecedented change. World War I rages overseas, with no end in sight. Eleven months still remain before the armistice. At home, the Great Influenza Epidemic is in its peak, overwhelming hospitals and straining the domestic economy. Urban areas within the United States, Boston included, are experiencing burgeoning populations. Newly built factories attract new populations of workers, those that will come to characterize Boston's second wave of immigration. Their participation fuels Boston's flourishing economy, from the heavily staffed docks of Boston's harbor to breaking ground for the city's expanding infrastructure.

Above the bustle of the streets and Boston's elevated railroad tracks, sits a 50-ft tall tank holding 2.3 million gallons of molasses. The tank, constructed 4 years prior by Purity Distilling Company, released molasses into train cars, which was then shipped to be used in industrial alcohol production. Public awareness of the tank's condition existed well before its failure, as it was known to leak constantly, with local children regularly collecting the seeping molasses to take home. Concerns from the public about the tank's constant leakage, which indicated structural insufficiency, were largely ignored; with the company attempting to appease the public by layering over points of seepage with paint.

The tank's vulnerabilities stretch far beyond the visible seepage issues. The metal used in construction of the vat is insufficiently thick, and its chemical composition is itself prone to

cracking. These fatal flaws are pushed to the breaking point as the contents of the fully-filled tank expand during the day's sudden temperature shift.

The rumble, echoing through Boston's North End, soon materializes in the form of a massive wave – made up of 2.3 million gallons of molasses – travelling 35 MPH through the city's crowded streets.

With casualties unknown, buildings moved from their foundations, and a city flooded with syrup, it is up to the delegates in this committee to assess damage, manage resources, and rebuild the city in the wake of disaster. Delegates must assess the scope of the damage, coordinate rescue and relief efforts, allocate limited resources, and determine accountability for this unprecedented event.

## Questions to Consider

1. How should Boston prioritize infrastructure reconstruction to restore essential services while reducing future risks?
2. What measures could strengthen industrial regulation and municipal oversight without unduly hindering production?
3. How can community organizations, municipal agencies, and emergency responders coordinate effectively during industrial disasters?
4. What lessons can the city take from this event to improve urban planning, emergency preparedness, and public accountability?

## COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES

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As mentioned, it is the goal of this committee to address the aftermath of the Great Molasses Flood. This committee will take place 2 days after the initial disaster, still in the midst of cleanup and aid, with delegates working to address both active cleanup as well as long-term reconstruction and industrial accountability.

While creative thinking is strongly encouraged, all actions undertaken in directives must be grounded in reality. Usage of fantasy or science-fiction concepts will not be allowed in this committee. Additionally, delegates should strive to make sure that all methods for cleanup, reconstruction, etc, are period appropriate.

## CHARACTER LIST

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### **Rose Alcott**

A young but ambitious journalist who has long covered political investigative pieces covering industrial safety and urban corruption. Alcott has collected testimonies from residents and workers prior to the collapse and is prepared to publish findings that could sway public opinion—and political outcomes—depending on the committee's actions.

### **Dr. Samuel Whitaker**

Dr. Samuel Whitaker is a senior Public Health Officer in Boston, working during the height of the Great Influenza Epidemic. His responsibilities include managing hospital capacity, sanitation standards, and disease prevention across the city. The molasses flood has expanded his scope of concern, introducing new public health risks related to contamination and displacement.

### **Edmund H. Crowley**

Edmund H. Crowley has served as a City Building Inspector for Boston for over a decade, overseeing the approval and monitoring of industrial structures along the waterfront. Known for his reliance on established procedures rather than formal engineering analysis, Crowley approved the molasses tank prior to its collapse. In the wake of the disaster, his role places him at the center of scrutiny regarding municipal oversight and regulatory standards.

### **Margaret O'Donnell**

Margaret O'Donnell is a longtime resident of Boston's North End and a prominent community organizer within the neighborhood. Prior to the flood, she was involved in coordinating and submitting complaints from residents concerning the molasses tank's persistent leaks. Following the disaster, O'Donnell has emerged as a key voice advocating for displaced families and

affected residents.

### **Luca Marino**

Luca Marino is a dockworker at Copps Hill Wharf and an informal representative for waterfront laborers. With firsthand experience of conditions near the molasses tank prior to its collapse, Marino brings the perspective of industrial workers directly affected by the disaster. He has since taken on a more visible role in discussions surrounding worker safety and compensation.

### **Andrew J. Peters**

Andrew J. Peters is the Mayor of Boston during this catastrophe. As mayor, Peters faces the responsibility of coordinating with emergency services, helping direct rescue operations, and managing relief for displaced residents. Confronted with public outrage, damaged infrastructure, and overwhelmed city departments, he must make rapid decisions that balance immediate aid with questions of accountability and safety.

### **Eleanor Fitzroy**

Eleanor Fitzroy is an independent structural engineer engaged to assess the failure of the molasses tank. With prior experience in large-scale industrial projects, she has been tasked with evaluating material integrity and construction practices. Her technical analysis plays a significant role in determining the causes of the collapse and informing future standards.

### **Thomas J. Hale**

Thomas J. Hale is a Captain in the Boston Fire Department and was among the first responders to arrive at the disaster site. He is attempting to coordinate rescue operations under hazardous conditions, navigating streets flooded with molasses and debris. Hale now represents emergency services in discussions on preparedness and response capacity.

## **Nora Callahan**

Nora Callahan is a schoolteacher in the North End who transformed her school into a temporary shelter following the flood. Her work focuses on providing stability for displaced families, particularly children, during the recovery period.

## **Arthur Klein**

Arthur Klein is a civil engineer specializing in infrastructure assessment and repair. Assigned to evaluate structural damage across the North End, Klein contributes technical guidance on rebuilding efforts and future construction standards.

## **James O'Rourke**

James O'Rourke serves as Boston's Director of Public Works, overseeing infrastructure maintenance and repair. Following the flood, he is responsible for clearing streets, restoring transportation routes, and coordinating cleanup operations essential to the city's recovery.

## **Isaac Gonzalez**

Isaac Gonzalez is an employee of the Purity Distilling Company, present at the site when the molasses tank ruptures. He has long been aware of the tank's structural weaknesses, and as the disaster unfolds, Gonzalez uses his knowledge to assist first responders, and provide critical information about the tank's construction. His knowledge of the facility and its vulnerabilities makes him a key figure in guiding immediate rescue and containment efforts.

## **Margaret Emery**

Margaret Emery is a volunteer first responder in the wake of the Molasses flood. She has been aiding in the transport of injured residents to nearby treatment areas and a part of coordinated rescue efforts. Her presence and action in the wake of the flood makes her a compelling voice

on the toll that the disaster has taken on the city's North End.

### **Lieutenant Commander H. J. Copeland**

Lieutenant Commander H. J. Copeland is a senior officer aboard the USS *Nantucket*, a naval training ship of the Massachusetts Nautical School docked near Boston's North End when the molasses tank ruptures. Copeland, alongside his crew of 116 cadets venture ashore into the knee-deep flood to assist in rescue operations, directing efforts to extricate survivors and secure the scene amidst chaos. His quick decision-making and leadership under extreme conditions are crucial in the initial response to the disaster, coordinating with police, Red Cross, and other personnel as the community reels from the unprecedented crisis.

### **Julian Thorne**

Julian Thorne is a senior engineer with the Boston Elevated Railway, responsible for assessing and repairing the elevated tracks damaged by the molasses flood. With transit disrupted across the city, he is focused on restoring service while evaluating ways to strengthen and improve Boston's rail infrastructure for the future.

### **Alonzo Bianchi**

Alonzo Bianchi is a prominent member of the Order Sons of Italy in America, helping to provide assimilation services, mutual aid, and fraternization for Boston's booming Italian population. With a significant portion of injuries and deaths comprised of Italians working in Boston's North End, Bianchi is skeptical of protective regulations and working conditions in place for Boston's working population.

### **Clarence Woodford**

Clarence Woodford is Boston's newly elected city planner, coming into power only two months prior to the collapse. With his expertise on the city's development and infrastructure, Woodford

is tasked with ensuring that the city both recovers from this event and continues to develop itself as a cultural and economic hub within American society. His position grants him access to important information regarding city affairs, and relationships with Boston's commissioners.

### **Henrietta Blanch**

Henrietta Blanch is a prominent New York socialite and philanthropist, who is visiting her aunt in Boston's North End at the time of the accident. Inspired by her previous charitable ventures, Blanch seeks to bring comfort and aid to the city's residents. Never one to neglect the press, she utilizes her connections and status to spread information and awareness.

### **Loretta Phillips**

Loretta Phillips is a resident of Boston's North End and the primary employee of a bustling neighborhood bakery situated near the wharf. Her bakery is devastated by the wave of molasses, and has disrupted fellow businesses. Loretta is focused on advocating for local businesses and ensuring that rebuilding does not mean the disappearance of the small businesses and local economy that characterize Boston's North End.

### **Wesley Birch**

Wesley Birch is the head of the United States Industrial Alcohol Company, a position that grants him fabulous wealth and connections. Between the ratification of the 18th Amendment and the spilled molasses being under their ownership, the company has launched into crisis. As a natural face of industrial leadership, Birch must serve as a touchpoint for residents in the handling of the accident while ensuring that surrounding circumstances do not mean the end of his industrial empire.

## **Rufus Stewart**

Rufus Stewart is the chief of Boston's police department, who have seen mass overwhelm and panic in the face of the disaster. Stewart has been helping lead clean up efforts, but is also deeply concerned with investigation into the collapse, suspecting that not all is as it seems. His role focuses on accountability and investigative efforts.