

The 1874 Wreck of the *Saladin*

The ship's name *Saladin* comes from the reference to a man who became the first sultan of Egypt and Syria around 1173. One of the most famous ships named *Saladin* was the barque *Saladin* wrecked at Harbour Island, N.S in May 1844. The “melancholy affair of the Piracy and Murders, on board the Barque *Saladin*” was such “a recital of atrocious crimes and speedy retribution” that it received extensive coverage in the *Yarmouth Herald*. Following a very public trial, the last major piracy trial held in Nova Scotia, four of the crew men were executed 30 July 1844 on Halifax commons. You can read more about this story at [Local History \(yarmouthhistory.ca\)](http://yarmouthhistory.ca).

Thirty years later a large barque (782 tons) also named *Saladin* which left St John NB in January 1874 with a cargo of deals (pulp lumber) bound for London also ran into trouble. Soon after sailing from St John she ran into a storm. The *Saladin* began leaking badly and was in danger of sinking. With nearly 10 feet water in her hold, on 16 January, the *Saladin's* captain William Fell decided to save the crew by running the *Saladin* ashore on the nearest land. The location she went ashore turned out to be on the outside of the Yarmouth Bar connecting Stanwood's beach with the West Cape. The captain and crew landed safely despite the dangerous conditions with the assistance of the Yarmouth Bar residents. The ship subsequently was driven higher up on the Bar by the storm and became a total wreck.



In the event of a ship wreck, especially if the captain was an owner, he would participate in the salvage of the ship's cargo and materials that could be sold locally to make sure the most money possible could be obtained to cover his losses. In this case the hull and materials of the *Saladin* as she lay on the back of the Bar with the cargo of lumber still aboard was sold at auction for \$3825 to JW Lovitt. A Norwegian ship the *Ellen Grant* was chartered to load the take the cargo of lumber deals saved from the wreck to London.

All this recovery work was supervised by Captain William Fell who had remained in Yarmouth, boarding at the United States hotel in the town during his stay. It

must be remembered that the wreck and recovery work was being conducted in the wintery January weather of 1874. The local men hired to recover the cargo, with Captain William Fell supervising, worked in nasty conditions on a very exposed rocky beach over a couple weeks to recover as much as they could before it was lost to the sea. Unfortunately, it proved to be too much for Captain Fell. After a couple weeks of recovery work, for a day or 2 he had been suffering from the effects of exposure to the weather but did not feel it necessary to obtain medical assistance. He died somewhat suddenly on a Saturday about 6:00 o'clock in his room at the United States Hotel. At the request of the hotel proprietor, an inquest by the coroner was conducted and the jury rendered a verdict that his death have been caused by congestion of the lungs combined with heart disease.

The reason is not known but the remains of Captain William Fell were not taken back home to England. Instead, he was buried in the Mountain Cemetery in a lot paid for by several Yarmouth merchants and shipmasters. The newspaper said it was intended that the same lot should be also used for the future internment of foreign ship Masters who might thereafter die in Yarmouth and could not return to their homes.

In August 1915 the Canadian Fisherman Magazine had a story about the Yarmouth Bar and it noted that the *Saladin's* figurehead could be seen in David Stanwood's workshop, one of the oldest settlers of the Bar. It is unknown what happened to the figurehead but in the Yarmouth County Museum collection and on display is a ships name board which is believed to have also been from the 1874 *Saladin*.

