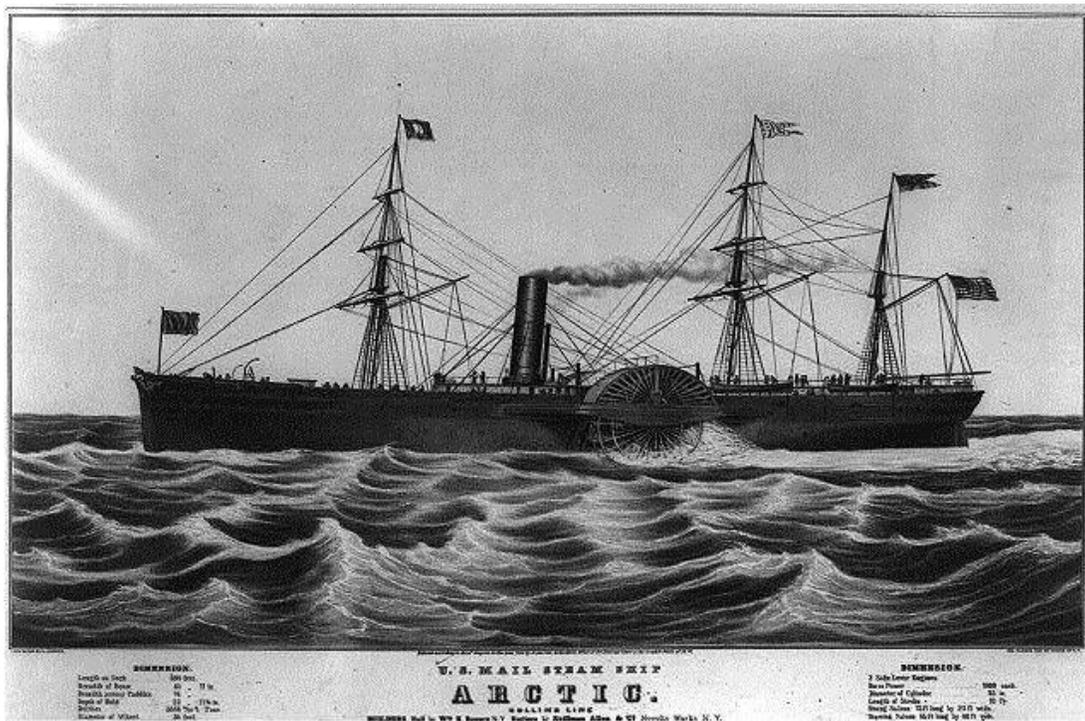


Fog Horn Foulis

By: Molly

The sun was just setting over the fog-shrouded coast of Saint John, New Brunswick as Robert Foulis made his way into a crowded tavern. He always enjoyed the stories the many sailors told. Any tavern you went to would be filled with them, old sea dogs trying to outdo each other with tails of heroic feats and brave adventure. They would swarm to the taverns like moths to candle light. This particular evening Robert was half listening to the stories and half engrossed in the newspaper he was reading. It read:

Collision tragedy!



Two ships, the S.S Arctic & French steamer Vesta collided just off of Cape Race in the mid-day fog . The Vesta made it to the shore at port St. John's Newfoundland but the crew and passengers of the S.S Arctic weren't so lucky. The collision left 3 gaping holes in the side of the Arctic . Not realizing the extent of the damage, the Captain tried to steer for shore which was not that far but the boat was so full of water there was no hope.

The Captain gave the order to abandon ship. In the pandemonium that ensued the crew mutinied and stole all 6 lifeboats on board. The protocol of women and children first was thrown to the wind and of the 400 people on board only a few survived and among them were no women or children.

The Captain survived, but only by luck since he had intended to go down with his ship.

As Robert left the tavern his mind was swirling like the cold rain that had started to fall. He was so busy thinking about the day's events that he did not realize when he took a wrong turn down a side street. Before you could say "Robertfoulisinventedthefoghorn" he was lost. As he wandered in search of his house the wind began to blow and this reminded Robert of a night many years ago, that had been very much the same. He had been on a boat, headed to Ohio, where he had intended to start a new life. But, as fate would have it, a storm forced him to dock in Halifax . Some Scottish friends convinced him to stay so he found work as a portrait painter. He later moved to Saint Johns, New Brunswick with his daughter Euphemia where he was now working as a civil engineer.



The rain had become torrential and the sky was dark and ominous. Robert needed to get home but he still couldn't find it in the dark. Then, from out of the night came the noise of someone playing the piano. They had a distinct style that if Robert had not heard many times before, he would have missed. It was his daughter playing scales on their piano at their home. As he followed the sound he noticed the low notes carried farther.

Later that night Robert tossed and turned as his mind went over the day's events. He thought more and more about the collision until it was the only thing on his mind. There must be a way to help ships in foggy weather he thought. Then, he had a revelation. If the low notes on the piano carried farther, people could use very loud, low notes to help ships navigate in the dark or in the fog.

This realization led him to invent the world's first steam powered fog horn. It took him six years to convince the lighthouse commission of St. John's to install his invention on Partridge Island.



1859 was a proud year for Foulis because that was the year the fog horn finally took its place on Partridge Island. The fog horn was a key navigational tool for over a century and it saved countless lives . Robert Foulis never patented his idea and he died penniless in 1866. It took Foulis 6 years to be recognized as the inventor of the fog horn. He is buried in an unmarked grave in Saint John. Despite all of this Robert Foulis is a true Canadian hero!