



Man Overboard

The Saugatuck River has never been easy to navigate because of its marshes and rocky bottom. With a natural depth of 5 feet at low tide from Long Island Sound up to about the railroad bridge where it then gradually decreases to about 1 foot in depth. It's no wonder that some ships would have a hard time navigating the shallow waters.

On April 17th, 1877 Captain Mott Allen, of the local mariner family, was piloting a coal barge up the Saugatuck. He had navigated the river many a time and was what some might call a veteran. Captain Allen was sailing his way up the river toward the Taylor and Richard's warf, on the coal barge Somerset, to deliver a large load of coal. But Captain Allen forgot to take into account the time of the tide with the weight of his load. Before the crew knew what had happened, the Captain's shouts were heard from the water as he had "involuntarily took a cold bath in the blue Saugatuck." The barge had run aground and come to a very abrupt stop, tossing the Captain overboard. The incident was mentioned in the Local News and Gossip section of The Westporter at the time.