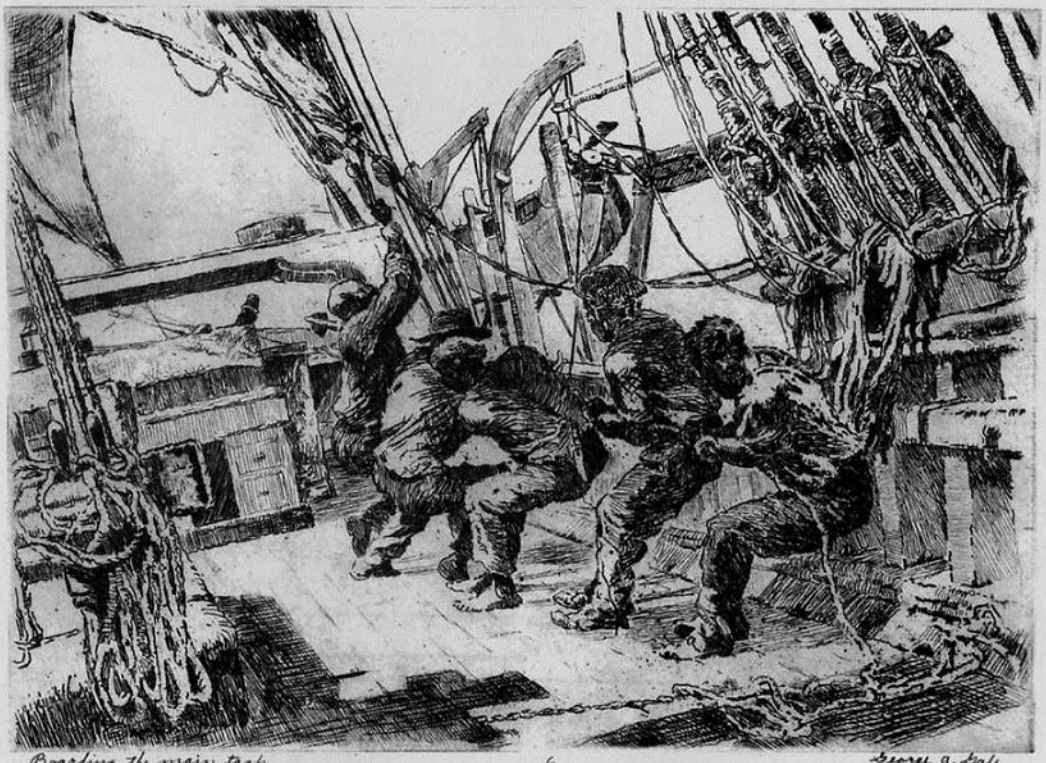
KENDALL WHALING MUSEUM MONOGRAPH SERIES N° 11

Sea Chanteys and Sailors' Songs

An Introduction for Singers and Performers, and a Guide for Teachers and Group Leaders



Stuart M. Frank

The Kendall Whaling Museum ✿ Sharon, Massachusetts USA ✿ 2000

To
Tom Berry, Ellen Cohn,
Stuart Packard Gillespie, Jr.,
the late Mark Herman,
and
Mary Malloy

Sea Chanteys and Sailors' Songs:
An Introduction for Singers and Performers, and a Guide for Teachers and Group Leaders

by Stuart M. Frank

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COVER ILLUSTRATION:
"Boarding the Main Tack." Etching by George Albert Gale (1893-1951),
6-1/4 x 8-3/4 inches (15.9 x 22.2 cm).
[Collection of the Kendall Whaling Museum #P-K 3357]

FRONTISPIECE:
"Heave—and Bust 'er." Working the brake windlass on a whaleship.
Pencil study by George Albert Gale (1893-1951),
8-1/2 x 11 inches (21.6 x 28 cm).
[Collection of the Kendall Whaling Museum #O-479]

BACK COVER ILLUSTRATION:
Dancing Sailor. Scrimshaw engraving on a sperm-whale tooth.
Anonymous, American, circa 1840-50. Height 6-1/2 inches (16.5 cm).
[Collection of the Kendall Whaling Museum #S-1874. Photo by M. Zilberstein]

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1. Definition and Purpose

Chanteys are shipboard worksongs informally utilized to coordinate rhythms for hoisting sail, weighing anchor, loading cargo, cutting-in whales, and occasionally for furling sail, hauling nets, and rowing. On sailing vessels of the nineteenth century, heavy heaving and hauling were unassisted by artificial power: shipboard work was done by hand. In the navy it was customary to beat working rhythms with a drum, often with martial music or popular tunes played on a fife, fiddle, or even by a small band. In the merchant service and on whalers, chanteys, like the army top-sergeant's yell "Heyup! Two, three, four," were a means to unify efforts, the way some ten or twenty or eighty men were led and encouraged in working rhythmically together. This made the work more efficient and lighter for all hands. A good yarn and a rousing chorus could be more effective than a bosun hollering "Heyup, two, three, *haul!*" The original chanteys were probably just such yells, which gradually took on a more sing-song quality, perhaps much like the military marching chant, "I had a young wife but she *left!* You're *right!* She *Left!*" Largely through the melodic and rhythmic influence of African-American stevedores, these ultimately became songs, retaining the structure of a drillmaster's lead followed by a standard refrain or chorus. Chanteys were of several different kinds, distinguished by differing rhythms which suited them to the differing rhythms of the several shipboard tasks for which chanteys were used.

2. Etymology

Several theories have been propounded about the origin and proper orthography of *chantey* (also spelled *shanty* and *shantey;* pluralized *chanties, chanteys, shanties, shanteys,* etc.), but the etymology is obscure. Whatever the spelling, it is properly pronounced *shanty* and refers as much to the specific occupational *use* of such songs as to the songs themselves. The practice of chanteying on shipboard is descended from West African traditional worksongs and was initially a phenomenon of the American and British merchant marine, acquired from black stevedores in the American cotton ports. The practice in Scandinavian, French, German, and other European vessels derived from the Anglo-American example in a characteristically international shipboard labor pool (Colcord, 29f). The term likely derives from the French verb *chanter* ("to sing") or its command form, *chantez* ("you, sing"). Advocates of the *ch* spelling generally agree that the term has French-Latin roots, either from the French verb directly or from the related English noun *chant.* Joanna Colcord, who grew up aboard Yankee square-riggers commanded by her father in the last decades of the nineteenth century, is convinced of a derivation from the French but prefers the *sh* spelling for the sake of pronunciation. William Main Doerflinger, one of the best informed authorities on the subject, spells it *shanty* but advocates a derivation from *chant.* Frederick Pease Harlow, an American sea captain who began collecting chanteys in the 1870s (but whose anthologies were not published until decades later) uses the *ch* spelling. The first anthology in print was compiled by Frederick J. Davis and Ferris Tozer, who entitled it *Sailor Songs or "Chanties"* (London, 1887), but the first authoritative anthology was by the British master mariner W.B. Whall, whose title is *Sea Songs and Shanties* (Glasgow, 1910).[1]

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1 The *Oxford English Dictionary* is entirely unhelpful here. Some other advocates of the *sh* spelling are divided between two derivations: [a] from the *shanties* (shacks) and shanty-town logging camps of North America, from whence many seafaring men are said to have come; and [b] from the *shanties* (shacks) built on stilts or pilings by West Indians, who would periodically move their cabins by hauling them along the ground in groups, singing rhythmic *shanty-songs* sung by *shanty-men.* However, mobility between the logging camps and the deepwater labor pool has likely been exaggerated and is in any case younger than the practice of chanteying; so too the West Indian house-shantying tradition, which undoubtedly arises from the same African precursors that also gave rise to stevedore songs and shipboard chanteys.

3. History and Deployment

While significant earlier instances have been noted (e.g., Colcord, 26ff; Hugill, 2ff; Mead 1973, "Appendix"; Frank 1985, 12ff), shipboard chanteying arose as a generalized phenomenon in the two decades following the Napoleonic Wars—generally, the 1820s and '30s—occasioned by sailors' exposure to the traditional call-and-response worksongs of African slave laborers loading cargo in the Gulf Coast and Caribbean ports (Colcord, 31f; Hugill, 6-12; Frank 1985, 15-22; Walser, 28-32). Not only is singing at work inherently infectious, but on shipboard it proved effective in allaying boredom, increasing efficiency, and elevating crew morale in an era when merchant ships tended to be chronically under-manned. Meanwhile, slaves and free blacks were serving in the crews of merchant vessels in increasing numbers (Bolster 1997; Malloy 1990), bringing with them their songs and age-old African singing traditions. These mingled haphazardly with Anglo-Scots-Irish genres, popular minstrel songs, parlor songs, and various other European and American musical influences, resulting in a distinctive occupational type.

Chanteying blossomed when larger ships emerged in response to increasing demands for maritime commerce after the Napoleonic Wars (the American theatre of which was the War of 1812). It grew to maturity in the Industrial Revolution, notably in the cotton trade and North Atlantic packet trade from the 1820s to the American Civil War (1860-65). Hard-nosed economy measures and the resulting depersonalization of maritime labor practices led many owners to ship the smallest possible numbers of men for their crews, in order to save on wages and provisions. This left ships under-manned and made chanteying all the more indispensable. Mobility among the seafaring trades rendered chanteying itself and the chantey repertoire virtually universal. The practice spread through the merchant trades, into the whale fishery, and into European ships.

Chanteys were occupational worksongs, seldom if ever sung on shipboard for any purpose not connected with actually working ship (however, see "Occasional and Ceremonial Chanteys," #7 below). As steam navigation gradually eclipsed commercial sail in the decades after the Civil War, chanteying too descended into obsolescence. By the 1880s and '90s sail was relegated to carrying long-distance bulk cargoes, and by the 1930s had become virtually extinct. As early as the 1880s chanteys were being romanticized and popularized in arrangements for the parlor, glee clubs, and schools. Future American playwright Eugene O'Neill served in both sail and steam circa 1910-12, and throughout his life took pride in the Able Bodied Seaman's papers he earned in youth. In his play *Moon of the Caribbees,* written around the time of the first World War, he employs chanteys symbolically as an explicit point of pride among "real" deepwater sailors, as distinguished from the newer, cruder breed of steamship men who—like the Hairy Ape—toil inside a machine and have no use for chanteys.

Chanteys were typically sung by whatever portion of a sailing ship's crew might be at work on a given task. They were hardly ever accompanied on a musical instrument, and were led by a so-called *chanteyman* (*shantyman*) who was formally or informally selected from the crew. For ostensible reasons of discipline, the practice was frowned upon or prohibited outright in the navy:

> The chantey is the invention of the merchant service. In the navy they have what is called the silent routine, and the men fall back upon their ropes in silence, "like a lot of soldiers," when the boatswain pipes. It must be very horrible to witness. In the merchant service, where the ships are invariably undermanned, one sings whenever a rope is cast off the pin. (Masefield, 304)

> When I listened to these jolly Africans, thus making gleeful their toil by their cheerful songs, I could not help murmuring against the immortal rule of men-of-war, which forbids the sailors to sing out, as in merchant vessels, when pulling ropes, or occupied at any ship's duty. (Melville, *White-Jacket,* 1850)

On some ships a particular chanteyman was designated for each *watch* (work shift) to lead the men at their work—though there seems to be little evidence for the claims that a chanteyman would be hired especially for the job, or would receive wages somewhat higher than others in the crew, or indeed that chanteyman was ever an official berth on shipboard. The chanteyman's responsibilities were akin to those of a foreman or bosun's mate. Success or failure depended more upon his ability to lead and to improvise than upon his musical *savoir.* He was not necessarily the ship's musician, if such there were; he might or might not be the fellow who also sang songs during the leisure hours to entertain his shipmates; another crewman might have a superior singing voice, or might play a musical instrument (a skill not required of a chanteyman). Rather, a chanteyman had to be an experienced, intuitive seaman who "knew the ropes" and was familiar with all the tasks that a crew was called upon to perform. Sometimes he was a bit older, and presumably wiser about nautical matters; sometimes he worked alongside the men, sometimes not. The means of his selection varied: sometimes he arose by self assertion or popular acclaim from among the crew, sometimes he was designated by one of the officers. Some ships certainly had several chanteymen who alternated *ad hoc* as the work required. Custom varied from ship to ship and from trade to trade. But the qualities that made a good chanteyman did not: experience in seamanship, engendering the respect of officers and fellow-crewmen; a strong even if not melodious voice, so as to be heard above the din of wind and sea; an extensive repertoire of good chanteys, for the sake of variety and versatility; and the ability to improvise and innovate with wit, humor, and, perhaps, compassion. If he could do all this and sing well too, he was ideal.

The chantey was intended both as a hedge against boredom and as an aid in maintaining a steady and efficient pace. Each shipboard task had its own characteristic rhythm, so each shipboard task had its own repertoire of chanteys which, in theory, were used for no other job (but, as will be seen, there was actually quite a bit of crossover). Halyard-hauling differs in rhythm from capstan-heaving, or from windlass- and bilge-pumping, or from sail-furling; thus, each of these had a special group of chanteys suited to its special purpose. The rough-hewn texture of chanteys is explained in the manner of their evolution and use. Like many other occupational genres—the prison and chain-gang songs of the black South, the portage and agrarian songs of West Africa, the canoe-paddling songs of French-Canadian *voyageurs,* railroad spike-driving songs, and the shanty-songs of West Indian beach-dwellers—chanteys were not characteristically "written" or "composed." Rather, they emerged and evolved in oral tradition, a folk process of adaptation and improvisation which "borrowed" shamelessly from popular culture. A given chantey might differ slightly from crew to crew and from ship to ship. A good chanteyman had his own style, his own versions, and his own way of retelling the tale. He might rearrange some components to make a song's references more relevant to a particular voyage. He might be outlandish, exotic, dramatic, or humorous. A chantey could differ each time it was sung, with new jests and twists added each time. The only constant factor was the chorus or refrain, which any experienced sailor would be expected to recognize and any green hand could readily learn.

The African genesis can be illustrated in sacred songs of African-American origin, the so-called Negro Spirituals, which embody the same kinds of age-old call-and-response structures that are found in the worksongs of West Africa and in the cotton fields and canebrakes of the American South. Many Spirituals could easily have been adopted directly as halyard chanteys; some were in fact employed as hauling-in chanteys by African-American menhaden fishermen in North Carolina as recently as the 1980s. A familiar Spiritual form allows for the same degree of standardization in the solo lines, and the same degree of improvisation:

SOLO:	Swing low, sweet chariot
CHORUS:	*Comin' for to carry me home*
SOLO:	Swing low, sweet chariot
CHORUS:	*Comin' for to carry me home*

4. Taxonomy

With respect to *origin,* chanteys can be identified as belonging to four groups: [a] Songs and chants adopted directly from the African-American stevedores, of which few survive in their original forms. [b] Chanteys indigenous to the deepwater merchant service—the characteristic body of songs made up by sailors themselves for the performance of specific shipboard tasks: these are descended from African-American worksong conventions and are a hybridized mixture of lyrics, melodies, and rhythms of Anglo-Scots-Irish, African, African-American, and American origin. [c] Songs and airs imported intact directly from general culture and turned to the purpose of accompanying shipboard tasks: these include minstrel songs from the popular stage and parlor songs from the likes of Stephen Foster. [d] Various kinds of hybrids, mostly adaptations, derivations and parodies of popular culture ashore. Like any folk process of oral tradition, there were no explicit rules, and as the songs were passed from ship to ship they were expanded and improvised upon until they became inextricably intermixed and the distinctions and influences obscure.

With respect to *function,* chanteys are classified into three main types, distinguished by the specific use and also, therefore, by rhythm and structure: [a] *hauling chanteys,* used for *pulling;* [b] *heaving chanteys* used for pushing; and [c] *ceremonial* and *occasional chanteys,* employed for a few special purposes not necessarily related to working ship.

5. Hauling Chanteys

Hauling chanteys are of four species: [1] *Long-drag* or *long-haul* halyard chanteys were used for hoisting topsails, the largest and heaviest aboard a square rigger; also for other types of heavy hauling, and occasionally (though not customarily) for rowing and other rhythmic chores of long duration. They are typified by a one-line call-and-response format, with a single line sung as a solo, followed by a one-line refrain joined by all hands; the crew would haul on the accentuated downbeats of the chorus. One of the best known of these is "Blow the Man Down":

SOLO: Come, all you young fellows who follow the sea,
CHORUS: *To me WAY, aye, BLOW the man down!*
SOLO: Now pray pay attention and listen to me.
CHORUS: *GIVE me some time to BLOW the man down!*

Another is "Reuben Ranzo":

SOLO: Oh, poor old Reuben Ranzo
CHORUS: *RAN-zo, boys, RAN-zo!*
SOLO: Oh, pity poor Reuben Ranzo
CHORUS: *RAN-zo, boys, RAN-zo!*

When not in use the topsail and topgallant spars and sails on a typical nineteenth-century square-rigger were carried on the mast several feet below where they would need to be positioned to catch the wind (this was to lower the center of gravity, thus increase efficiency and stability of the ship when these particular sails were not in use). To set a topsail or topgallant thus involved raising the heavy yard, sail, and attendant rigging several feet up the mast. Standard procedure was for the watch to line up in single file, fore-and-aft along the deck, with an officer in charge and one man pulling lead; they would then take take the halyard in hand and haul in position, leaning with the strength of their backs to raise the sail. An alternative procedure if enough hands were available was the so-called *walkaway* or *stamp and go:* the halyard was gripped over the shoulder and held tightly while the line of men would walk or stomp or trot along the deck in one continuous action, hauling the halyard after them.

[2] *Short-drag* or *short-haul* chanteys were for hoisting smaller topgallants, royals, skysails, and other lighter sails (which ones depended upon the size of the ship, the sizes of the respective sails, and the size of the crew) and for working sheets, clews, bunts, and braces to position square sails laterally. Rather than the prolonged, rhythmic hauling of the long drag, the action here was lighter, shorter, or even hand-over-hand. These chanteys could also be used in the *walkaway* or *stamp and go* method of setting sail.

SOLO:	Boney was a warrior
CHORUS:	*Away ay-YAH!!*
SOLO:	A harrier and a terrier
CHORUS:	*John Fran-SWAH!*

Most long-drag chanteys—like "Blow the Man Down"—consist of four lines (solo / chorus / solo / chorus) before the melody begins to repeat. Short-drag chanteys sometimes have the same, but whereas "Blow the Man Down" has a two-pull chorus, some short-drag chanteys have three- and four-pull choruses which could also be used for hand-over-hand hauling and for *stamp and go.* The chanteyman could choose something appropriate to fit whatever hauling task was at hand:

SOLO:	Saint Patrick was an Irishman, he came from decent people
CHORUS:	*WAY, haul AWAY!, we'll HAUL away JOE!*
SOLO:	He built a church in Dublin town and on it put a steeple
CHORUS:	*WAY, haul AWAY!, we'll HAUL away JOE!*

[3] *Furling* chanteys were a small family of songs intended for *furling sail* aloft, which requires a unified haul among several hands to gather, fold, and tuck the bunt. The structure of these is unique, the important feature being a recognizable burden (sung as a solo or in unison) leading up to final syllable that was the signal to haul:

To me way, hey, YAH! We'll pay Paddy Doyle for his *BOOTS*!
To me way, hey, YAH! We'll all throw muck at the *COOK*!

Or:	SOLO:	Oh do, my Johnny Boker, come rock and roll me over;
	CHORUS:	*Do, my Johnny Boker, DO!*

Technically, these are short-haul types intended for a special purpose, as are [4] *sweating-up* and *hand-over-hand* chanteys, used for setting jibs, staysails, and the smaller square sails high aloft. While almost any halyard chantey might do, one that was particularly associated with hand-over-hand work is nowadays probably the most famous chantey of all (also used for *stamp and go*):

SOLO:	What shall we do with a drunken sailor?
CHORUS:	*What shall we do with a drunken sailor?*
	What shall we do with a drunken sailor?
	Early in the morning

According to the late John F. Leavitt, retired a schoonerman turned artist and maritime historian, sailors were so accustomed to singing out at their work that even when the job was not sufficiently taxing to merit a real song, they would grunt, holler, and yowl anyway—even when they were pulling the laces tight on their shoes!

6. Heaving Chanteys

Heaving chanteys are the types used for working the capstan, brake windlass, and pumps—thus for weighing anchor, cutting-in whales, onloading or offloading cargo, and pumping ship. These may be generally (but not rigidly) subdivided by rhythm and structure into *capstan* chanteys, *windlass* chanteys, and *pumping* chanteys, after the specific tasks and the specific apparatus for which they were intended. There was perhaps more crossover among these categories than with other types of chanteys.

The *capstan* is a barrel- or mushroom-shaped winch on a vertical axis, an apparatus used for heavy lifting, primarily to weigh anchor, to hoist cargo, or to "warp ship" (to heave a vessel in to a dock or wharf). Originally made of wood reinforced with iron bands, by the middle nineteenth century the typical capstan was made of iron, requiring from 4 to 300 men to operate it (depending on the sizes of ship, anchor, and crew). Long oak poles called *capstan bars* were fitted into slots called *pigeon holes* (because of their size and shape resembling the cubicles of a dovecote) set at waist or chest height along the top rim of the capstan, with the capstan bars thus fanning out like spokes of a wheel. Then, with one or several men at each capstan bar, the crew would heave against the bars, causing the capstan to rotate on its vertical axis; the men would walk or march around the capstan, pushing against the bars as the capstan slowly reeled up cable. The whole process is analogous to an oversized fishing reel and line, with a hook (the anchor) so large that it required many anglers to reel it in.

British Navy men-of-war, ships of large tonnage with crews of several hundred men, often carried anchors exceeding 20 feet [6m] in length and weighing four tons. Two or more capstans and the whole crew might be required in the several hours' chore of weighing several anchors. The American frigate *Constitution,* built in 1797, has a capstan aft of the mainmast that is two stories high and was operated simultaneously from both the upper and lower decks by virtually the entire ship's company. As chanteying was not generally permitted in the navy, the rhythm was provided by drummers and military fifers as the crew walked in silence.

"Capstan." Ink, watercolor, and wash drawing by Canadian-born seaman E.C. Sears, from his sketchbook, representing a scene based on his service in the Royal Navy circa 1885. [Collection of the Kendall Whaling Museum.]

Capstans on merchant vessels were generally much smaller. Typically, they were located near the bow of the ship, forward of the foremast; sometimes there was more than one. Usually they were equipped to accommodate the entire crew, which aboard a merchant ship, designed for commerce rather than war, might be from 10 to 40 men—who had the advantage over Navy tars of being permitted, or even encouraged, to sing at their work. *Capstan* chanteys were sung at the capstan primarily to allay boredom and promote morale; they are suited to walking around the capstan in waltz or march time. Many are structured like halyard chanteys, the distinction being more one of customary usage than of rhythm or format:

SOLO: Oh the times are hard and the wages low.
CHORUS: *Amelia, where you bound to?*
SOLO: The Rocky Mountains is my home.
CHORUS: *Across the Western Ocean.*

However, capstan chanteys frequently have a longer solo of a few lines or even an entire stanza, followed by a chorus of two or more lines; and because of the long duration of the tasks for which they are intended (weighing anchor, loading cargo, cutting-in, and pumping ship could take hours), the lyrics are often ballad-like narratives that tell a story:

SOLO: From the West Indies docks I bid adieu
To lovely Sal, and charming Sue;
Our ship's unmoored, our sails unfurled,
We are bound to plough the watery world.

CHORUS: *For we are outward bound;*
Hurrah! we are outward bound!

While chanteys were usually sung unaccompanied, especially towards the end of the nineteenth century capstan and windlass chanteys were sometimes accompanied by a musical instrument, most often a fiddle, button accordion, or piano accordion. The late Carl Andersen, a native of Denmark, three-decade veteran of square rig, and Master Rigger at Mystic Seaport, told yarns of weighing anchor in the great steel-hulled grain and wood traders in the 1920s, with a chanteyman sitting atop the capstan itself as it (and he) went round and round, pumping wildly on a "Stockholm Steinway"—also known as a "Stomach Steinway" or "Norwegian piano"; better known to landlubbers as an accordion—while the crew hove with a will and belted out the choruses.

Variations in deployment of solo and chorus were many. "Shenandoah," one of the most famous, has both a one-line intermediate refrain and two-line chorus at the end of each stanza:

SOLO: Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter,
CHORUS: *Away, you rolling river,*
SOLO: Oh, Shenandoah across the water,
CHORUS: *Away, we're bound away,*
Across the wide Missouri.

"Away Rio" (which refers to the Rio Grande de la Plata in South America) has a similar structure and an even longer chorus:

SOLO: Oh say was you ever in Rio Grande?
CHORUS: *Away, Rio!*
SOLO: Oh say have you ever been down to that strand?
CHORUS: *And we're bound to the Rio Grande.*

And away, boys, away! Away, you Rio!
It's fare-thee-well, my pretty young girls,
We're bound to the Rio Grande.

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century the capstan was superseded on many ships by the *brake windlass.* This was a winch on a horizontal axis lying athwartships near the bow—usually with an iron or steel shaft, surmounted by a wood-and-iron barrel superstructure. It could be operated by hand using smallish steel analogues of capstan bars called *handspikes,* but the preferred method was a gear mechanism turned by means of a seesaw-like "jiggity-jig" up-and-down pump [see illustration, page 20]. It was regarded as safer and usually required fewer hands to operate than a capstan but accomplished the same work; and because it was better suited to the constant stop-and-start action required in cutting-in whales, whalers greatly preferred the brake windlass to the capstan. The rhythm was more staccato than in capstan work—more like halyard hauling; and while many of the same capstan chanteys were recycled for the windlass, the brake windlass also gave rise to its own family of windlass chanteys.

One of the least popular tasks on shipboard was "pumping out"—manning manually-driven pumps to rid the bilges (in the bottom of the ship) of the inevitable leakage and seepage of water. Sailor so disliked this monotonous and exhausting task that with the advent of iron and steel hulls in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it became increasingly difficult for owners to ship crews in wooden vessels: iron and steel hulls tended to leak less and needed to be pumped less often. The pumps themselves were operated either by up-and-down levers or round-and-round crank-wheels, manned by several hands simultaneously for several hours at a time. Naturally, a vessel would tend to fill up more quickly in a storm, with gale winds driving torrential rains and with the hull being buffeted about and worked loose by the sea. The work was so physically, mentally, and spiritually debilitating that a chantey was needed as much to preserve sanity as to declare a rhythm. Virtually the same stroke required to work the brake windlass was required to operate the up-and-down versions of the pumps. Another form of bilge pump had crank handles and a large flywheel (the ensemble resembled a giant, old-fashioned, crank-handled coffee mill) requiring a smoother turning or cranking motion. As with capstan and windlass chanteys, songs that became traditional at the pumps were a mixture of chanteys imported from other tasks and chanteys indigenous to the pumps. Because of the nature of the work, indigenous pumping songs are not only frequently long, ballad-like stories—or, occasionally, just nonsense syllables—but are often the lewdest and most explicit in the seaman's repertoire.

The extent to which chanteys were interchangeable among capstan, windlass, and pumps seems to have been a matter of individual preference among chanteymen and crews. Because of the great similarity of rhythms, windlass chanteys and bilge-pumping chanteys were virtually interchangeable. As halyard chanteys and capstan chanteys were converted for the walkaway or stamp-and-go method of hoisting a sail (that is, walking along the deck with the halyard, rather than hauling it in place), so the rhythmic halyard chanteys were also recruited for use at the brake windlass and pumps. Often, shore songs were employed; others were hybridized, such as "Banks of the Sacramento," a ubiquitous derivative of Stephen Foster's "Camptown Races":

SOLO: A bully ship and a bully crew,
CHORUS: *Doodah! Doodah!*
SOLO: A bully mate and a captain too,
CHORUS: *Doodah, doodah day!*
The blow, ye winds, high-O
For Californy-O,
There's plenty of gold, so I've been told,
On the banks of the Sacramento.

7. Occasional and Ceremonial Chanteys

A few chanteys were reserved for special ceremonial occasions during a voyage. The so-called "Salt Horse Chantey" or "Poor Old Man" (Colcord, 63; Harlow, 69; Hugill 553-557; Shay, 26), while unrelated to the practical heaving-and-hauling required in the sailors' regular work, has ritual significance as an ironic tribute to the sailors' paying off their advances after a month or two at sea. "Outward-bound" chanteys were sung when first setting off to sea, and "homeward-bound" songs for the capstan and windlass are chanteys (or specific variants of chanteys) purported to have been sung only at the very conclusion of a voyage, when the bowsprit was pointed home.

8. Forecastle Songs and Ballads

There were of course no particular rules governing what was sung on shipboard to fill the leisure hours. Such songs were of all types. Some were made up by the sailors themselves, including the characteristic types that are occupationally rooted in ships and seafaring. These are often called "forecastle songs," after the common sailors' belowdecks quarters in the prow of the ship. Both Herman Melville and Richard Henry Dana indicate that the great sea ballads, especially patriotic songs of naval prowess, were fundamental components of the seagoing repertoire; and each of the firsthand anthologists —Captain Whall, Captain Harlow, Joanna Colcord, and Stan Hugill, among others—identifies particular forecastle songs and what Whall calls shellback songs that were perpetual favorites. There were also many salty adaptations and parodies of shore songs. But by far the largest number of songs sung during leisure hours at sea were popular songs of all kinds imported from generic culture. A systematic survey of approximately 1100 sailors' shipboard journals and copybooks in the Kendall Whaling Museum, covering the period 1795-1895, found that only about 103 (9.4%) contained at least one song transcription (several contained only one; most a mere handful; the maximum was 165). This survey yielded transcriptions of the lyrics of some 460 individual songs, many (almost half) in multiple transcriptions. Of these 460 songs, only 159 can be classified in any way, shape, or form as folk songs: 12 old ballads of pre-1750 vintage (including a couple of Francis James Child's "English and Scottish Popular Ballads" and a few that Child missed), some 76 generic broadside ballads from circa 1760-1860 (coeval with the Industrial Revolution), 56 sailor-made ballads and songs (including a mere 7 chanteys), and a paltry 15 generic Anglo-Scots-Irish and American folk songs and traditional tunes unrelated to seafaring. The overwhelming majority of what the whalemen and whaling wives saw fit to transcribe—301 songs, comprising 65% of the total—were professionally-composed, commercially-motivated songs of one sort or another: parlor songs, minstrel ditties, and patriotic anthems, most of them from immediately contemporaneous general culture, and only 30 directly related to seafaring. These 301 "composed" songs constitute a kind of rogues gallery "hit parade" of the middle nineteenth century, including 16 by Stephen Foster, 8 by Charles Dibdin, and many others by the likes of Thomas Haynes Bayly, Henry Rowley Bishop, Eliza Cook, Henry Russell, Septimus Winner, and Isaac Baker Woodbury. A comprehensive, annotated inventory of these is planned as an appendix in my forthcoming book, *Ballads and Songs of the American Sailor* (however, teachers and researchers may contact the Kendall Whaling Museum to obtain a pre-publication copy); 20 of the traditional and popular tunes are anthologized in my monograph *"Musick on the Brain": Frederick Howland Smith's Shipboard Tune List, 1854-1869* (Kendall Whaling Museum Monograph N° 12).

Given these statistics, it is clear that characteristic "sea songs"—authentic, sailor-made folk songs related to ships and seafaring—were only a part of what sailors customarily sang to amuse themselves in the leisure hours. It is equally clear that the limitations of the present monograph prevent our presenting here anything more than a tiny sample of representative forecastle songs. For a host of others, teachers and performers are referred to the many fine anthologies listed in the Bibliography.

Part Two: The Songs

A Note on Sources, Bibliography, Accompaniment, and Copyright

Unless otherwise noted, the words and music of the chanteys and songs in this anthology are composites, collectively drawn from the most authoritative American sources on sea chanteys: Joanna Colcord's *Songs of the American Sailormen* (1938; expanded from *Roll and Go,* 1924); Frank Shay's *Sea Songs from the Days of Iron Men and Wooden Ships* (1948; expanded from *Iron Men and Wooden Ships,* 1924); Captain Frederick Pease Harlow's *Chanteying aboard American Ships* (1961); and William Main Doerflinger's *Songs of the Sailor and Lumberman* (1972; expanded from *Shantymen and Shantyboys,* 1951). The formidable compilations by Captain W.B. Whall (1910), Cecil J. Sharp (1914), Captain David Bone (1931), Stan Hugill (1961), and Roy Palmer (1986) were rejected only for being too preponderantly British; likewise the Swedish collection by Sigurd Sternval (1935) and the French anthology by Admiral Hayet (1942). However, serious students, teachers, and performers are encouraged to consult all of the aforementioned works and explore the great variety of extant chanteys and sailor songs; and also various specialty items. Frederick Pease Harlow's narrative *The Making of a Sailor* (1928) is filled with chanteys and other musical materials from a variety of cultures, transcribed by the author on several voyages in the last part of the nineteenth century, all presented in context. Stan Hugill's *Shanties and Sailors' Songs* (1969) provides a curiously insightful sailor's-eye view of chanteys. And such topical compilations as my own *The Book of of Pirate Songs* (1998) and *"Musick on the Brain": Frederick Howland Smith's Shipboard Tune List, 1854-1870* (2000) are filled with a host of authentically historic songs, tunes, and ballads of nautical interest.

Chanteys were customarily sung on shipboard unaccompanied, and most of them are better off that way. Chords—for guitar, banjo, concertina, autoharp, or whatever—are provided here as a concession to modernity, but the chords should be regarded merely as guidelines; the ones you actually use should reflect your own tastes and preferences, so you are encouraged to experiment. You are also encouraged to transpose the songs into whatever keys may suit your own voice or your own group (the Transposition Chart is provided for that purpose). Pianists may wish to try some arrangements of their own, but if prepared accompaniments are desired, the ones in *Naval Songs* (1883) and in Admiral Luce's expanded version of the same anthology (1889) impart an authentic nineteenth-century flavor, and the exquisite arrangements by Ralph Vaughan Williams in Cecil J. Sharp's *Folk Songs of England* (5 vols., 1908-12) are especially recommended.

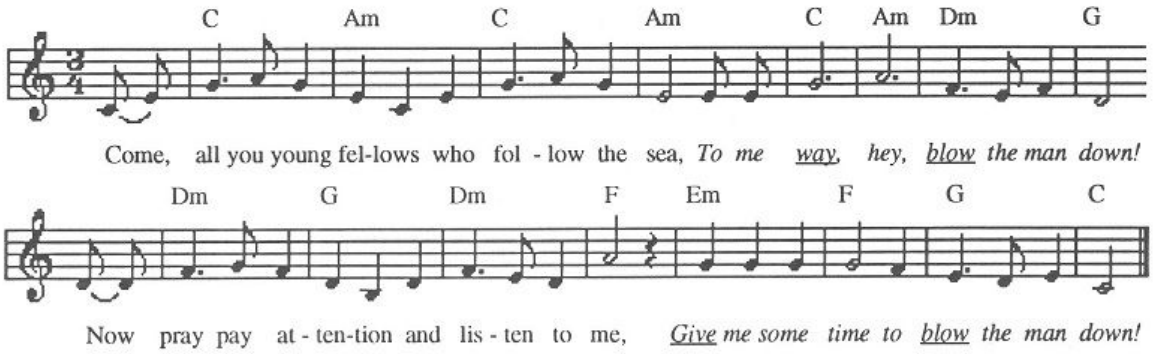
Because they are composites, the versions and arrangements of the songs in this booklet are in the copyright of the author and the Kendall Whaling Museum. And as the booklet is intended for education and singing, teachers, group leaders, performers, and choral directors are invited not only to use the songs in the classroom, on stage, and for personal enjoyment, but also to use the booklet as a blackletter master—a kind of hard-copy shareware—for photocopying individual songs to facilitate group singing.

Consistent with the principles of shareware, we ask only the following: [1] that you conform to United States and International copyright law by not photocopying, scanning, or otherwise copying or reissuing the entire publication; [2] that you refrain from copying it electronically or posting it on the internet; [3] that if you need multiple copies and can afford to do so, you purchase the number of copies you require in order to help offset the cost of publication (and thus help make it possible for us to publish additional materials); and [4] that when you use the songs or the booklet for any public purpose, you acknowledge the source wherever possible (citing the author's name, title, and the Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Massachusetts USA). If it turns out that you use this publication for teaching or group singing or some other purpose that we may never have thought of, we ask that you let us know about your experiences and your opinions about what works and what doesn't, so that we can improve it in further editions.

Blow the Man Down

LONG-DRAG HALYARD CHANTEY

There are several versions of this famous chantey, all sung to the same powerful tune. Among the three given here, the first two refer to the prestigious China trade and disparage the Black Ball Line, one of the largest and hardest of the packet lines running between New York and Liverpool in the middle nineteenth century. The dual association of the China Trade and the Atlantic packet service epitomizes the mobility of seamen from one trade to another. The third text relies on a series of famous nautical metaphors. Paradise Street was a major byway in the Sailortown district of Liverpool. Herman Melville made his first voyage out of New York on a Liverpool packet in the 1830s, providing him the materials for the romance *Redburn,* published in 1849.



Blow the Man Down (I)

1. Oh, blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down;
   To me way, hey, blow the man down!
   Oh, blow the man down in Liverpool town;
   Give me some time to blow the man down!

2. As I was a-walking down Paradise Street,
   A brass-bound policeman I happened to meet.

3. Says he, "You're a Black Baller by the cut of your hair;
   I know you're a Black Baller by the clothes that you wear."

4. "Policeman, policeman, you do me great wrong;
   I'm a *Flying Fish* sailor just in from Hong Kong."

5. They gave me three month in the Walton Gaol
   For booting and kicking and blowing him down.

Blow the Man Down (II)

1. Come, all you young fellows who follow the sea,
   To me way, hey, blow the man down!
   Now pray pay attention and listen to me.
   Give me some time to blow the man down!

2. I'm a deepwater sailor just in from Hong Kong;
   Give me some whiskey, I'll sing you a song.

3. 'Twas on a Black Baller I first served my time,
   And on that Black Baller I wasted my prime.

4. It's when a Black Baller's preparing for sea,
   You'd split your sides laughing at the sights you would see.

5. With the tinkers and tailors and so'gers and all,
   That ship for prime seamen on board a Black Ball.

6. It's when a Black Baller is clear of the land,
   Our bosun then gives us the word of command.

7. "Lay aft!" is the cry, "to the break of the poop!
   Or I'll help you along with the toe of my boot!"

8. It's larboard and starboard on the deck you will sprawl,
   For "Kicking Jack" Williams commands the Black Ball.

9. Pay attention to orders, now you one and all,
   For right there above you flies the Black Ball.

10. It's when a Black Baller comes back to her dock,
    The lads and the lassies to the pierhead do flock.

Blow the Man Down (III)

1. As I was a-walking down Paradise Street,
   To me way, hey, blow the man down!
   A saucy young clipper I happened to meet,
   Give me some time to blow the man down!

2. Her flag was three colors, her masts they were low,
   She was round in the counter and bluff at the bow.

3. I dipped her my ensign, a signal she knew,
   For she backed round her main yards and heaved herself to.

4. I hailed her in English, she answered me clear,
   "I'm from the *Black Arrow* just down at the pier."

5. I passed her my hawser and took her in tow,
   And yardarm to yardarm away we did go.

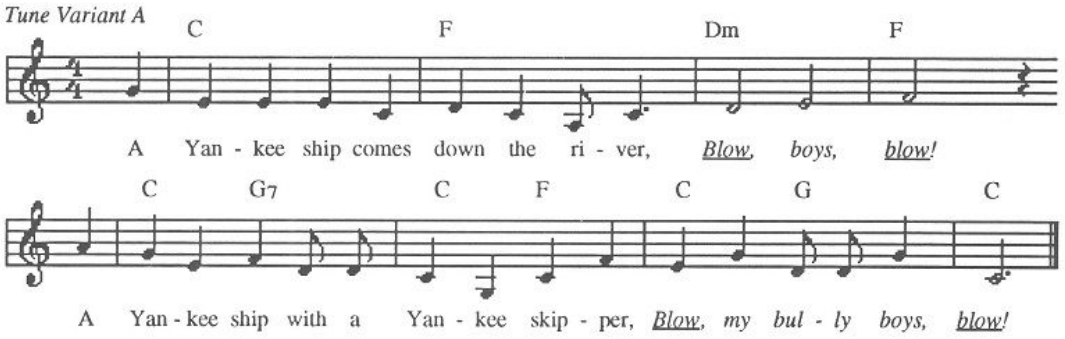
6. We tossed along gaily, both frisky and fleet,
   Till she dropped her bow anchor at the end of the street.

Blow, Boys, Blow

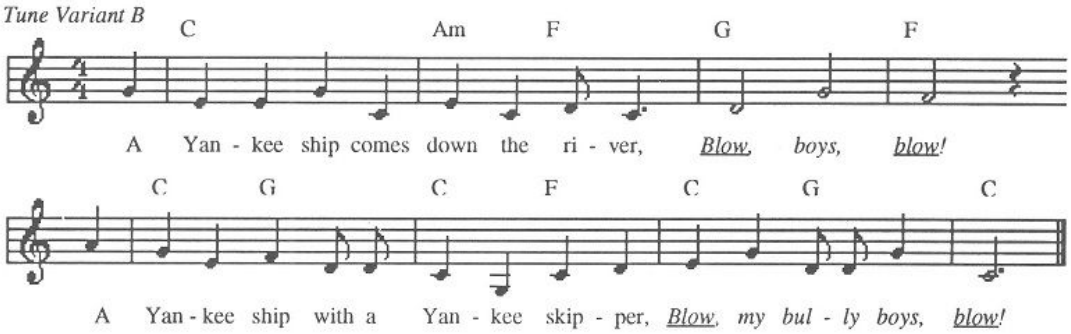
LONG-DRAG HALYARD CHANTEY

This colorful chantey is ideally suited for improvisation and name substitution: every officer and every man in the crew could have his name featured in some humorous or not-so-humorous way, and any horrible concoction can be featured for dinner. Which is exactly the way it was used to enliven the work at sea, and the way a quick wit can use it to amuse an audience today.

Tune Variant A



Tune Variant B



1. A Yankee ship comes down the river,
   Blow, boys, blow!
   A Yankee ship with a Yankee skipper,
   Blow, my bully boys, blow!

2. How do you know she's a Yankee liner?
   The Stars and Stripes float out behind her.

3. And how d'you know she's a Yankee clipper?
   Her masts and yards they shine like silver.

4. Who d'you think is the captain of her?
   Why, Bully Hays and there is no other.

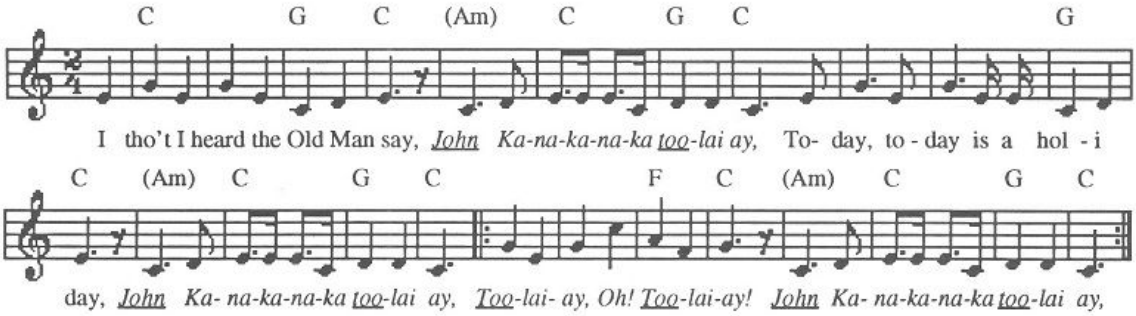
5. And what d'you think they have for dinner?
   Why, monkey's tails and pickeld liver.

6. Then blow, my bullies, all together,
   Blow, my boys, for better weather.

John Kanaka

LONG-DRAG HALYARD CHANTEY

Kanaka is a term of Polynesian origin referring to Polynesians in general and Native Hawaiians in particular. Whalers and China traders frequently encountered Polynesians in the Pacific, and often recruited them into British and American ship's crews. The clickety-clackety chorus of this chantey is a perpetual favorite with modern audiences, especially kids. I learned it from Stan Hugill, who used to yodel sailor-fashion with demi-semiquavers at every opportunity.



John Kanaka

I thought I heard the Old Man say,
John Kanakanaka, too-lai-ay!
Today, today is a holiday!
John Kanakanaka, too-lai-ay!

Chorus:
Too-lai-ay, oh too-lai-ay,
John Kanakanaka, too-lai-ay!
Too-lai-ay, oh too-lai-ay,
John Kanakanaka, too-lai-ay!

We'll work tomorrow, but not today,
But we'll take home a full day's pay.

We're bound away at break of day;
We're bound away for 'Frisco Bay.

We're bound away around Cape Horn;
We wish that we had never been born.

Haul Away, Joe

Oh, once I was in Ireland,
A-diggin' turf and 'taties,
Away, haul away, we'll haul away Joe!
But now I'm in a limejuice ship,
A-hauling on the braces.
Away, haul away, we'll haul away, Joe!

Away, haul away, haul away t'gether;
Away, haul away, we'll haul away, Joe!

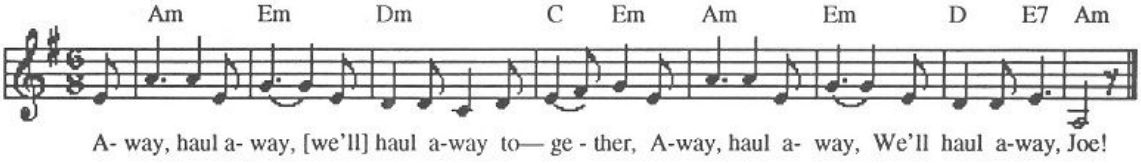
King Louis was the King of France
Before the Re-vo-lu-shy-un,
But then he got his head cut off,
Which spoiled his Con-sti-tu-shy-un.

St. Patrick was a gentleman,
He came from daycent payple,
He built a church in Dub-a-lin Town
And on it put a steeple.

Haul Away, Joe

SHORT-DRAG AND MULTI-PURPOSE CHANTEY

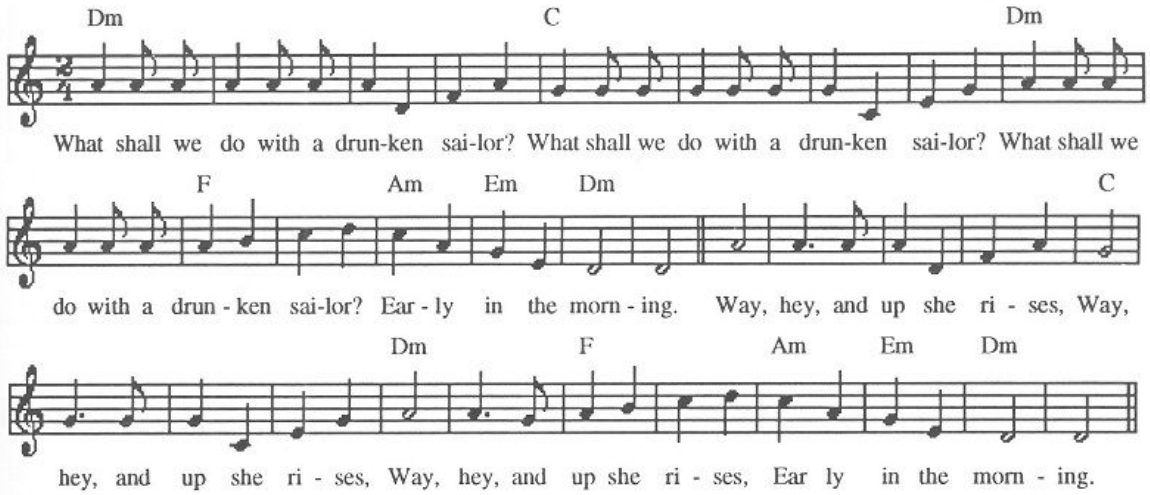
This likely dates from the early post-Napoleonic era. A *limey ship* is a British ship, so called for the anti-scobutic ingredient in the daily grog ration. Verse and chorus are sung to the same air.



Early In the Morning

SHORT-DRAG, WALKAWAY, AND CAPSTAN CHANTEY

Alternatively known as "Drunken Sailor," this was one of the first chanteys to be published, in Francis Allyn Olmsted's narrative, *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage* (New York, 1841). It was popular on shipboard and has been even more popular on shore—the universally-known chantey—partly because it is so easy to think up amusing punishments for the drunken sailor. In a group, the improvisation can done be round-robin, with each participant in turn either making up an answer to the question "What shall we do with a drunken sailor?" or (the previous question having been answered) posing some other question entirely, such as "What can we do with a sleepy monkey?"—which then requires a clever answer of its own. Group leaders may wish to experiment with the many ways of alternating solo and chorus, though the solo is usually limited to the first "giveaway" line only, with everyone joining in for the remainder of each stanza and all of the choruses. By the way, sailor pronunciation was always "*Er´-lye* in the morning."



1. What shall we do with a drunken sailor?
   What shall we do with a drunken sailor?
   What shall we do with a drunken sailor?
   Early in the morning.

   Way, hey, and up she rises,
   Way, hey, and up she rises,
   Way, hey, and up she rises,
   Early in the morning.

2. Put him in the longboat and make him bail her, *(3 times)*
   Early in the morning.

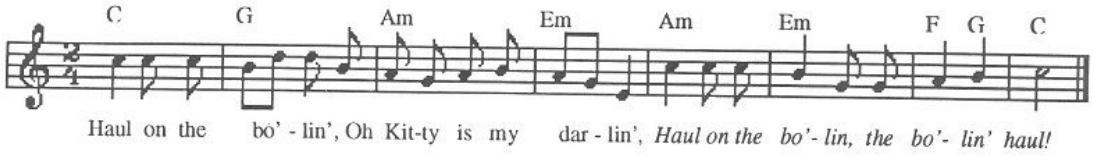
3. What shall we do with a drunken soldier? *(3 times)*
   Early in the morning.

4. Put him in the guardroom 'til he's sober, *(3 times)*
   Early in the morning.

Haul on the Bowline

SHORT-DRAG CHANTEY

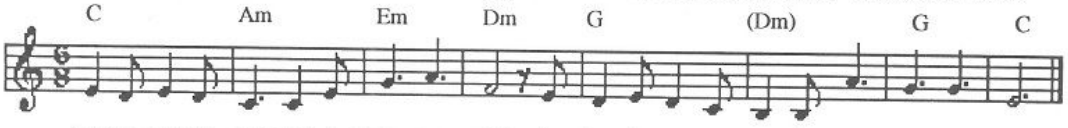
Frank Shay points out that this "is reputed to be the oldest of all chanteys," perhaps as early as the reign of Henry VIII.



Boney

SHORT-DRAG CHANTEY

Sailors had many songs and tunes involving Bonaparte. Homeward-bound whalers, China traders, and British Navy ships were among the few who ever had occasion to call at St. Helena, the remote South Atlantic island that was the site of Napoleon's final exile (1815) and original burial (1821) (his remains were moved to Paris in 1840). A French chantey, "Jean François de Nantes," may have inspired the lyrics. Sailors would exaggerate or deliberately mispronounce the foreign names: "Elbow" is the Italian island of Elbe, the site of Napoleon's original exile; "Billy Ruffian" is the British warship *Bellerophon.* Colcord claims that sailors would say the name of the island "Saint A-*lee*-na," but the last stanza here suggests that in this version it was "Saint *Hel*-en-a."



Johnny Boker

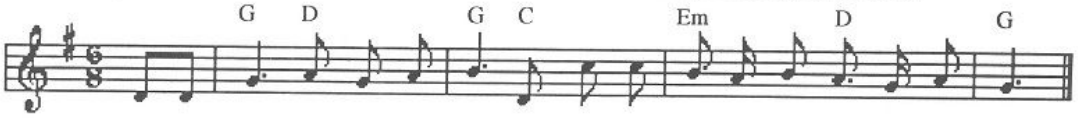
SHORT-DRAG CHANTEY

Colcord says that "'Johnny Boker' is one of the mysterious heroes of shantydom, about whom nothing more is known than his name." But the name may have arisen from "Johnny Poker," an obscure British parlor song of the early 19th century; "Johnny Schmoker" is a later spin-off by an American, G.F. Root. A bit of sailor lingo in the first stanza of the chantey is the ancestral form of a phrase that later came to identify the hottest popular music of the 20th century.

Paddy Doyle

FURLING CHANTEY

This chantey "was used for only one operation, the 'bunting' of a sail in furling; and was sung in chorus throughout, the last syllable, when all hands give a teremendous lift to the heavy roll of canvas to get it on top of the yard, being simply a yell" (Colcord, 43). The extra stanzas could be used when the crew moved to the next sail to be furled. The chantey arises from 19th-century Liverpool, with Paddy Doyle a representative type of the Liverpool-Irish outfitters and boarding-house keepers to whom sailors would be indebted for their seagoing togs (clothes).



Haul on the Bowline
SHORT-DRAG CHANTEY

Haul on the bo'lin',
the fore and main-top bo'lin,
Haul on the bo'lin, the bo'lin, haul!

Haul on the bo'lin,
the packet is a-rollin'.

Haul on the bo'lin,
the skipper is a growlin'.

Haul on the bo'lin,
to London we are goin'.

Haul on the bo'lin,
Oh, Kitty is my darlin'.

Haul on the bo'lin,
My Kitty is from Liverpool

Boney
SHORT-DRAG CHANTEY

Boney was a warrior,
Away, ay, yah!
A harrier, a terrier,
Jean Fran-swah!

Boney fought the Roo-shi-ans,
Then he fought the Proo-shi-ans.

Moscow was a-blazing,
And Boney was a-raging.

Boney went to Elbow [Elbe],
But later he came back again.

Boney went to Waterloo,
There he got his overthrow.

Then they took him off again,
Aboard the *Billy Ruffian.*

Then to Saint Helena,
There he was a prisoner.

Johnny Boker
SHORT-DRAG CHANTEY

Oh, do, my Johnny Boker,
Come rock and roll me over,
Do, my Johnny Boker, do!

Do, my Johnny Boker,
The skipper is a rover.

Do, my Johnny Boker,
The mate, he's never sober.

Do, my Johnny Boker,
The bosun is a so'ger.

Oh, do, my Johnny Boker,
Come roll me in the clover.

Paddy Doyle
SHORT-DRAG FURLING CHANTEY

Variations are many how the lyrics in the first line are to be structured. The various stanzas given here show a few of the possible permutations. Experimentation is recommended.

To me way, hey, yah!
And we'll pay Paddy Doyle for his *boots.*

To me way, hey, and we'll furl,
And we'll pay Paddy Doyle for his *boots.*

To me way, hey, and we'll furl, Aye,
And we'll pay Paddy Doyle for his *boots.*

To me way, hey, yah!
And we'll all drink brandy and *gin.*

To me way, hey, yah!
And we'll all shave under the *chin.*

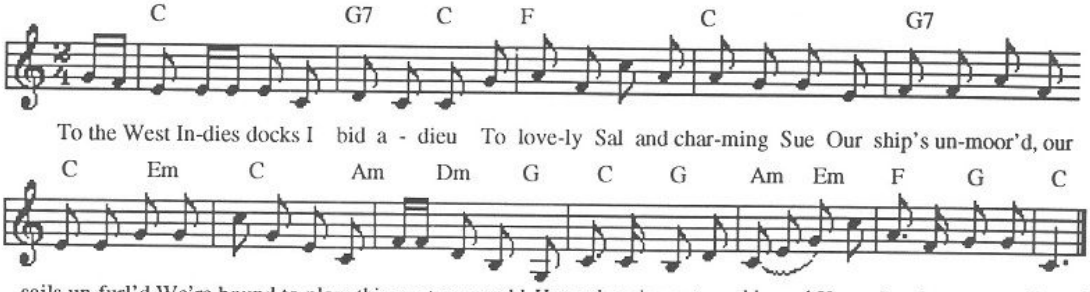
To me way, hey, yah!
And we'll all throw muck at the *cook.*

To me way, hey, and we'll furl, Aye,
And we'll hang Paddy Doyle for his *boots.*

Outward and Homeward Bound

CAPSTAN CHANTEY

There are innumerable versions of this chantey: it seems that every time a sailor sang it he would localize it to the names, places, and circumstances of his own voyage. This text is adapted from a transcription in seaman John S. Coquin's journal of several merchant voyages out of Boston, New Bedford, and Wellfleet, Massachusetts, during 1869-73 [collection of the Kendall Whaling Museum]. It places the action at London's West India Docks and on the Malabar Coast of India. *Flashman* is slang for beau or boyfriend; *The Dog and Bell* is a saloon; *Jack* is *Jack Tar,* the common slang term for a seaman. Many sailor songs end like this one, with several months' or several years' pay "gone and spent" in one Sailortown binge, followed by expulsion from the pub to make room for sailors who still had money in their pockets. Accordingly, the final chorus of this chantey is often "Hurrah, we're *out*ward bound."



1.
To the West Indies docks I bid adieu,
To lovely Sal, and charming Sue;
Our ships unmoored, our sails unfurled,
We are bound to plough the watery world.

Chorus:
Hurrah! we're homeward bound! (repeat)

2.
The wind blew a gale from the Sou'Sou'east,
Our ship did make nine knots at least,
Our purser well our wants supplied:
While we have grub we will never say die.

3.
When we arrive at Malabar
Or any port that is twice as far,
Our thundering great guns we'll let fly:
While we have shot we will never say die.

4.
Then for America we will steer,
To see our wives and families dear,
When every man can take his glass
And drink success to his favorite lass.

5.
In hauling into the West Indies docks
The girls of the town come down in flocks,
And if you listen you will hear them say,
"Here is my flashman from Americay."

6.
When we arrived at the West Indies docks
The girls of the town come down by flocks,
And if you listen you will hear them say,
"You'e welcome, Jack, with your three
years [*or* three months] pay."

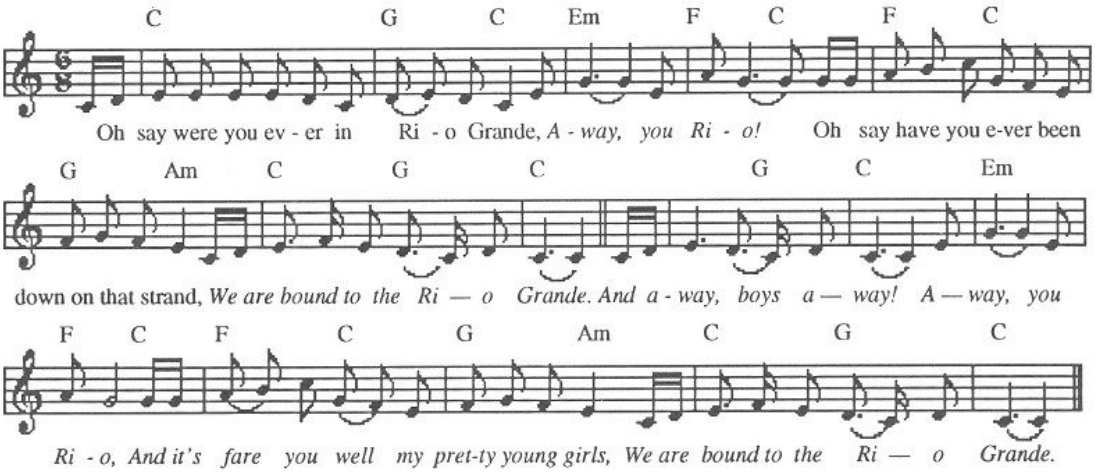
7.
When we arrived at the Dog and Bell
Where the best of liquors they do sell,
In comes the landlord with a smile,
"Come drink, my boys, it's worth your
while!"

8.
Now my money's all gone and spent,
There's none to be borrowed and none
to be lent;
I twigged the landlord with a frown:
It's, "Rise up, Jack, let John sit down!"

Rio Grande

CAPSTAN CHANTEY

The melody of this outward-bound chantey was evidently imported virtually unchanged from Cameroon in West Africa. I learned it at age nine from Professor Brewster Smith of Columbia University, who knew it as "Yaounde"; however, the provenance of its intact survival from Africa is unknown to me. "Rio Grande" does not refer to the river forming the Mexico-Texas border, but to the Rio Grande de la Plata in South America. The sailor pronunciation is *Ry´-o Grand* or *Ry´-o Gran´-dee,* depending on the rhyme in a particular stanza, but never *Ree-o.* There are so many different texts that Hugill gives a taxonomy of the "main patterns": (1) Leaving Liverpool; (2) Gold Rush; (3) The Milkmaid; (4) Leaving New York; (5) The Fishes; and (6) The Mail ("Gam"). He gives a few examples and has some critical words to say about the degraded quality of a version sung in British schools ("savours too much of a Scottish ballad and hardly the sort of thing one would expect from robust, tarry seamen"). Colcord's version is an American rendition of what Hugill calls the "Leaving New York" form. Here's another, similar to Colcord's, learned from Stan Hugill himself in my car on a drive through Rhode Island in 1977.



1.

Oh say were you ever in Rio Grande?
Away, you Rio!
Oh say have you ever been down to
that strand?
We are bound to the Rio Grande.

Chorus:

And a-way, boys away,
Away, you Rio!
And it's fare you well,
my pretty young girls,
We are bound to the Rio Grande.

2.

Oh, New York town it is no place for me;
I'll pack up my bags and I'll ship out to sea.

3.

So it's goodbye to Kate and goodbye to Sue,
And if you are listening, its goodbye to you.

4.

You Bowery ladies who live in this town,
We've left you sufficient to buy a silk gown.

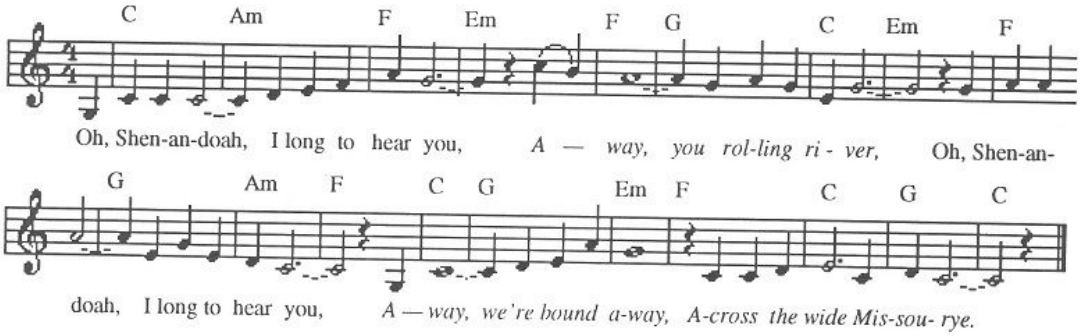
5.

Our good ship is going out over the bar,
And we'll point her prow towards the
Southeastern Star.

Shenandoah

CAPSTAN AND WINDLASS CHANTEY

Many people are surprised to learn that this, one of the greatest indigenous American folk songs, is actually a sailor-made chantey. Comparing the musical settings printed in the various chantey anthologies, one finds that the cadence and meter differ widely. Having experimented with this chantey with a full crew working the 1841-vintage brake windlass on the *Charles W. Morgan* as well as the circa 1882 capstan on the *Joseph Conrad* at Mystic Seaport, I am convinced that the time signature and rhythm given below are correct for the windlass and compatible with capstan work, where the pace can vary considerably. Tradition has it that *Shenandoah* (which is also a river, a river valley, and a mountain range in Virginia) here refers to an Indian chief. In sailor lingo, *Missouri* is pronounced *Mi-zoo´-rye.*



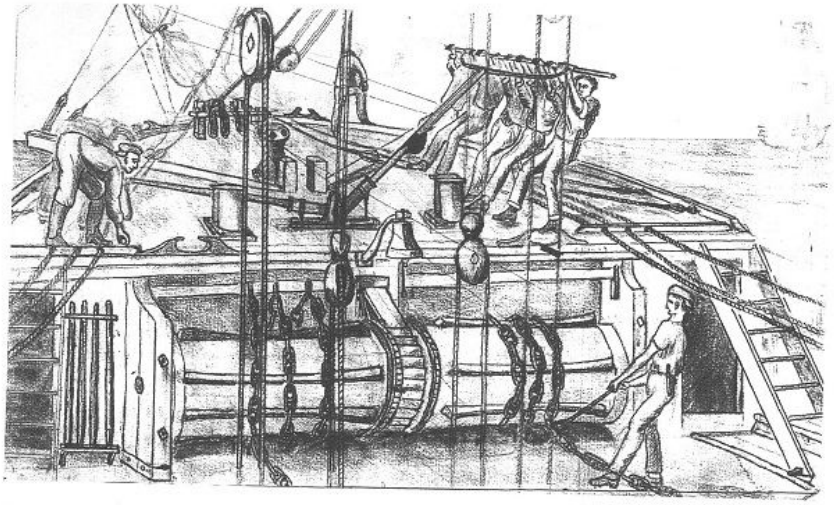
1. Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you,
   Away, you rolling river,
   Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you,
   Away, we're bound away,
   Across the wide Missouri.

2. Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter;
   Oh, Shenandoah across the water.

3. Missouri she's a mighty river;
   When she rolls down her topsails shiver.

4. For seven long years I courted Sally,
   And seven more, I hope we'll marry.

5. Oh, Shenandoah, I'm bound to leave you,
   Oh, Shenandoah, I'll not deceive you.

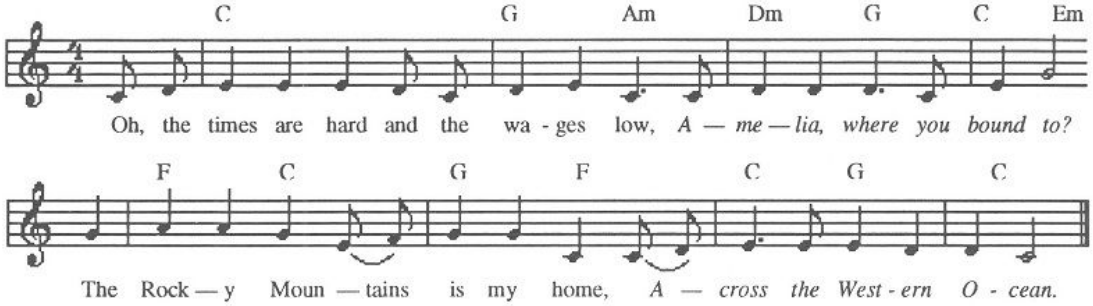


"Windlass." Ink, watercolor, and wash drawing by Canadian-born seaman E.C. Sears, from his sketchbook, representing a scene based on his service in the Royal Navy circa 1885. [Collection of the Kendall Whaling Museum.]

Across the Western Ocean

CAPSTAN CHANTEY

This outward-bound chantey arose from the North Atlantic packet trade. "Western Ocean" is an English and Irish reference to the Atlantic, which lies to the west of the British Isles. (Colcord gives a later, somewhat degraded fragment, colored by the California Gold Rush of circa 1849. It has an alternative chorus, "You sailor, where you bound to?")



Leave Her, Johnny

PUMPING CHANTEY

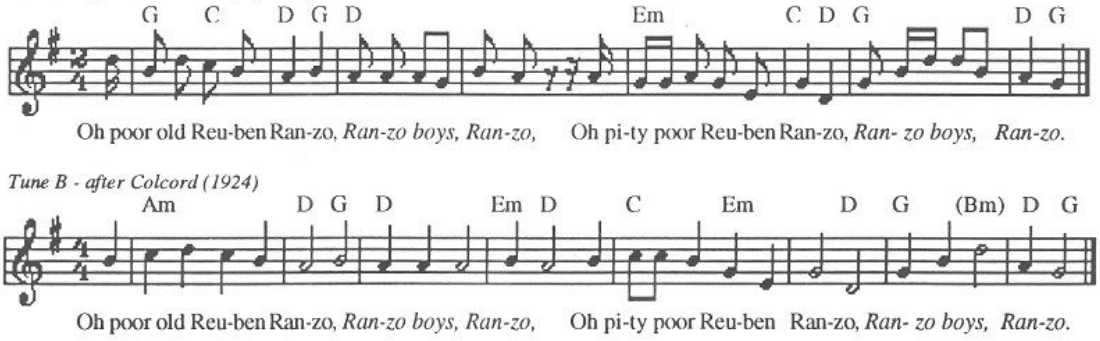
Colcord says of this chantey (also known as "Time for Us to Leave Her") that it "was reserved for the last task after the ship was fast to the pier, and the crew were about to go ashore—the last spell at the pumps. It was the sailor's farewell song, in which he expressed without fear—since the voyage was over—his opinion of ship and officers." It is also said to have been used at the capstan for warping the ship into the dock for the last time. While there are variant tunes (e.g., Colcord, 119), nowadays it is usually sung to the same tune as "Across the Western Ocean."

Reuben Ranzo

LONG-DRAG HALYARD CHANTEY

Although chanteying was common on whaleships, this is one of few chanteys that specifically mentions whaling, and does so disparagingly. It is of British origin and refers to the 19th-century British Arctic whale hunt on the so-called Greenland grounds. Colcord says of it that "there were as many variants in the words and air of this shanty as there were shantymen to sing it." The "five and thirty" referred to is thirty-five lashes with a cat-o'-nine-tails or bosun's starter. The prevailing sentiment is a type of irony that characterizes naval and military humor: What do you do with the most incompetent sailor who ever ploughed the salt wave? Why, make him an officer!

Tune A - after Davis & Tozer (1887)



Tune B - after Colcord (1924)

Across the Western Ocean

LONG-DRAG HALYARD CHANTEY

1.
Oh, the times are hard and the wages low,
Amelia, where you bound to?
The Rocky Mountains is my home,
Across the Western Ocean.

2.
The land of promise there you'll see;
I'm bound across that Western sea.

3.
I'll take my way from Liverpool
In Liverpool, that Yankee school

4.
There's Liverpool Pat in a tarpaulin hat,
And Yankee Jack, the packet rat.

5.
Beware these packet ships, I say,
They steal your stores and clothes away.

Leave Her, Johnny

PUMPING CHANTEY

1.
I thought I heard the Old Man say,
Leave her, Johnny, leave her,
You can go ashore and draw your pay,
It's time for us to leave her.

2.
You may make her fast and pack your gear,
And leave her moored to the West Street Pier.

3.
The winds were foul, the work was hard,
From Liverpool docks to the Brooklyn yard.

4.
She would not steer nor ware nor stay,
She shipped green water night and day.

5.
She shipped it green and made us curse,
The mate's a devil and the old man's worse.

6.
The winds were foul, the ship was slow,
The grub was bad, the wages low.

7.
The winds were foul, the trip was long,
But before we go we'll sing this song.

Reuben Ranzo

LONG-DRAG HALYARD CHANTEY

1. Oh poor old Reuben Ranzo,
Ranzo boys, Ranzo,
Oh pity poor Reuben Ranzo,
Ranzo boys, Ranzo.

2. Oh Ranzo was no sailor,
So he shipped on board a whaler.

3. He washed once in a fortnight,
He said it was his birthright.

4. Oh, Ranzo was no beauty,
He would not do his duty.

5. So they took him to the gangway,
And they gave him five and thirty.

6. But the captain was a good man,
Took Ranzo to his cabin.

7. And he taught him navigation,
To fit him for a station.

8. And he gave him wine and water,
Introduced him to his daughter.

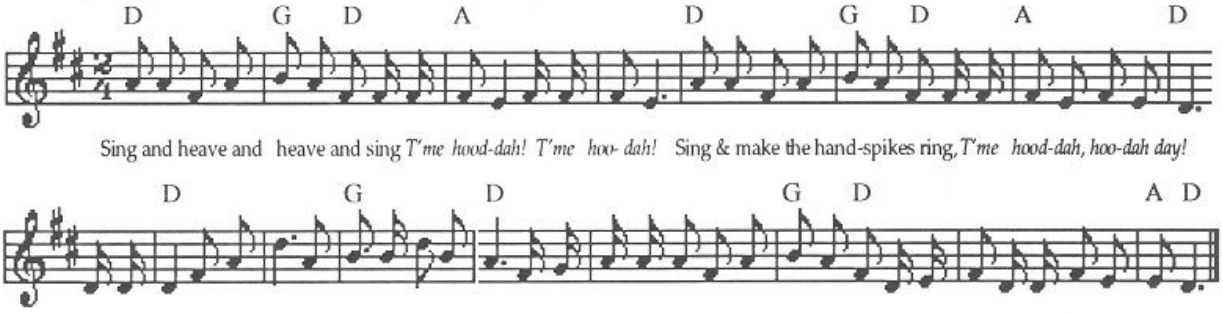
9. He married the captain's daughter,
'Cause he did more that he ought to.

10. Now he sails upon the water,
Captain Ranzo gives the orders.

Banks of the Sacramento

WINDLASS AND PUMPING CHANTEY

This nautical parody of Stephen Foster's "Camptown Races" (1850) is one of several derivative sailor songs that emerged in the Gold Rush era, when "Camptown Races" was brand new and at the top of the charts. Another is "Salem City" [p. 24]. The whaling song "Wild and Ugly" [p. 28], from a slightly later era, is also a nautical parody of a Stephen Foster composition. *Handspikes* are crowbar-like handles used to rotate a windlass, counterparts of *capstan bars. Limehouse* is in the Docklands district on the Thames River in London, and *Sydney Heads* refers to the principal port of Australia; the route between them was a famous Cape Horn clipper-ship run. *Skyhoot* (*skiute; skihoot*) seems originally to have signified a kind of frenzied hurry, perhaps derived from *scoot,* especially hurrying in an upwards direction (perhaps suggested by the *sky* prefix?); it seems even more common in cowboy parlance than sailor lingo, and by the 1940s had come to mean either "to rise; to increase" or "to daydream; to idle away the time" (Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang,* New York: Crowell, 1960, p. 484). But the most interesting occurrence of slang in the "Banks of the Sacramento" text is *galoot,* which emerged in American usage around 1866 as a pejorative term for a *man* (*guy; chap; bloke*) and was later Anglicized (circa 1880); however, regarding its appearance in a chantey of circa 1850, according to Eric Partridge *galoot* actually originated in nautical usage around 1835, signifying "A young or inexperienced marine" (*A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English,* New York: Macmillan, [1937] 1961, p. 313).



1.

Sing and heave and heave and sing,
To me hood-dah! To me hoo-dah!
Heave and make the handspikes ring,
To me hoo-dah, hoo-dah day!

Chorus:

Then it's blow, boys, blow,
For Californy-O.
There's plenty of gold, so I've been told
On the banks of the Sacramento

2.

A bully ship and a bully crew;
A bully mate and a captain too.

3.

From Limehouse Docks to Sydney Heads
Was never more than seventy days.

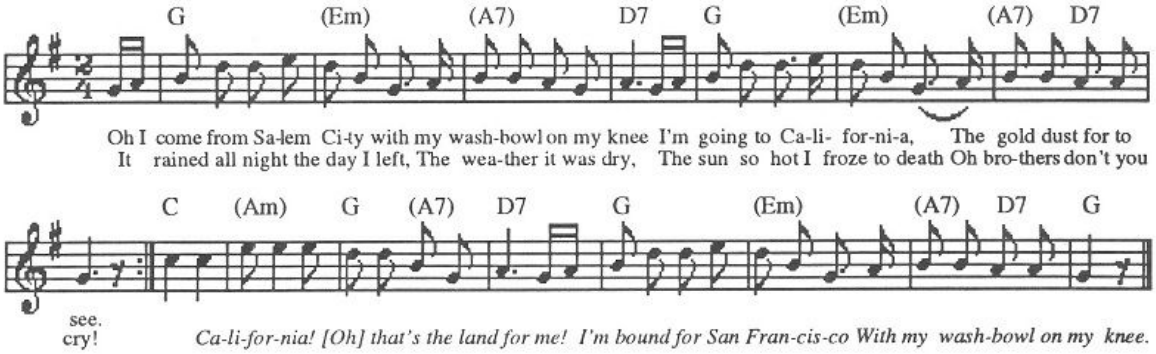
4.

We cracked it on, on a big skyhoot,
And the Old Man felt like a swell galoot.

I Come from Salem City

CAPSTAN CHANTEY

This authentic sailor-made parody of Stephen Foster's famous minstrel song "Oh! Susanna" (first published in 1848) is from the Calfornia Gold Rush era and originates with the multitude of ships carrying Forty-Niners around Cape Horn to San Francisco Bay. The melody is from the original sheet music for "Oh! Susanna" (New York: C. Holt, Jr., 1848; also repr. in R. Jackson 1974, 89).



1. Oh, I come from Salem City
   With my washbowl on my knee;
   I'm going to California,
   The gold dust for to see.
   It rained all night the day I left,
   The weather it was dry,
   The sun so hot I froze to death;
   Oh, brothers, don't you cry!

   Chorus:
   California! That's the land for me!
   I'm bound for San Francisco
   With my washbowl on my knee.

2. I jumped aboard the 'Liza ship
   And traveled on the sea,
   And every time I thought of home
   I wish'd it warn't me.
   The vessel reared like any horse
   That had of oats a wealth;
   I found it wouldn't throw me, so
   I thought I'd throw myself.

3. I thought of all the pleasant times
   We've had together here,
   I thought I ought to cry a bit
   But I couldn't find a tear.
   The pilot bread was in my mouth,
   The gold dust in my eye,
   And though I'm going far away,
   Oh, brothers, don't you cry!

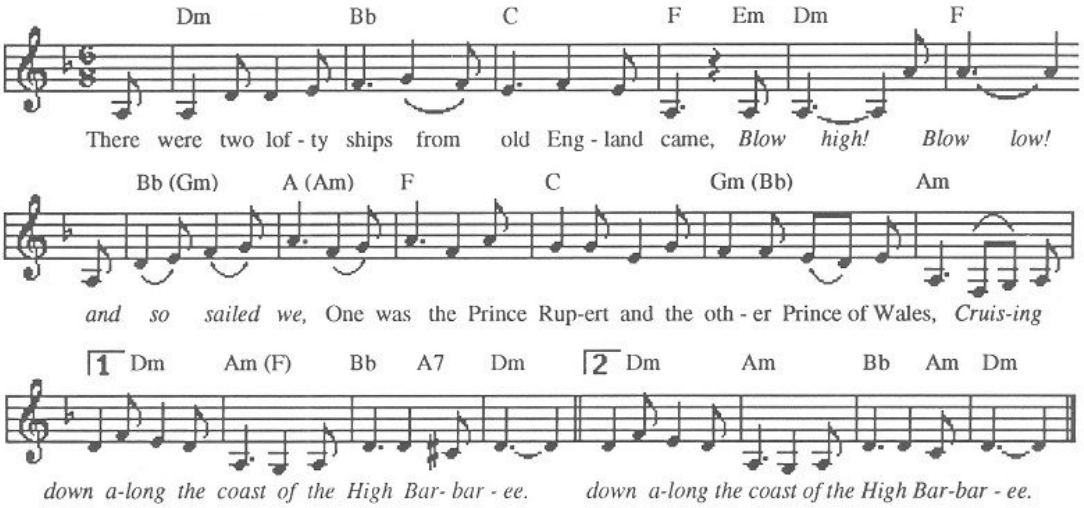
4. I soon shall be in 'Frisco, boys,
   And there I'll look around,
   And when I see the lumps of gold
   I'll pick them off the ground.
   I'll scrape the mountains clean, my boys,
   I'll drain the rivers dry,
   And a pocket-full of rocks bring home,
   So, brothers, don't you cry!

   Chorus:
   California! That's the place for me!
   There's plenty of gold, so I've been told,
   By the far Pacific sea.

High Barbary

FORECASTLE SONG

This old pirate ballad has roots in the 1590s, when it was called "The Sailor's onely Delight, Shewing the brave Fight between the *George-Aloe,* the *Sweepstake,* and certain Frenchmen at Sea." It is #285 in Francis James Child's classic compilation of *English and Scottish Popular Ballads,* and forms of it have been collected from tradition wherever English is sung. This is the version from *The Book of Pirate Songs,* with the tune printed in *Naval Songs* (New York, 1883) and the text from Admiral S.B. Luce's anthology of the same name (New York, 1889).



1. There were two lofty ships from Old England came,
   Blow high! blow low! and so sailed we;
   One was the Prince Rupert, and the other Prince of Wales,
   Cruising down along the coast of the High Barbaree

2. "Aloft! aloft!" our jolly bos'n cries,
   "Look ahead, look astern, look a-weather and alee."

3. "There's none upon the stern, there's none upon the lee,
   But there's a lofty ship to windward, she is sailing fast and free."

4. "Oh! hail her, oh! hail her," our gallant captain cried,
   "Are you a man-of-war or a privateer?" said he.

5. "Oh! I am no man-of-war—no privateer," said she,
   But I am a salt-sea Pirate, a-looking o'r my fee!"

6. "If you are a jolly pirate, I'd have you come this way!
   Bring out your quarter-guns, boys; we'll show these pirates play."

7. 'Twas broadside to broadside a long time they lay,
   Until the Prince Rupert shot the Pirate's masts away.

8. "Oh, quarter! oh, quarter!" these pirates did cry,
   But the quarters that we gave them—we sunk them in the sea.

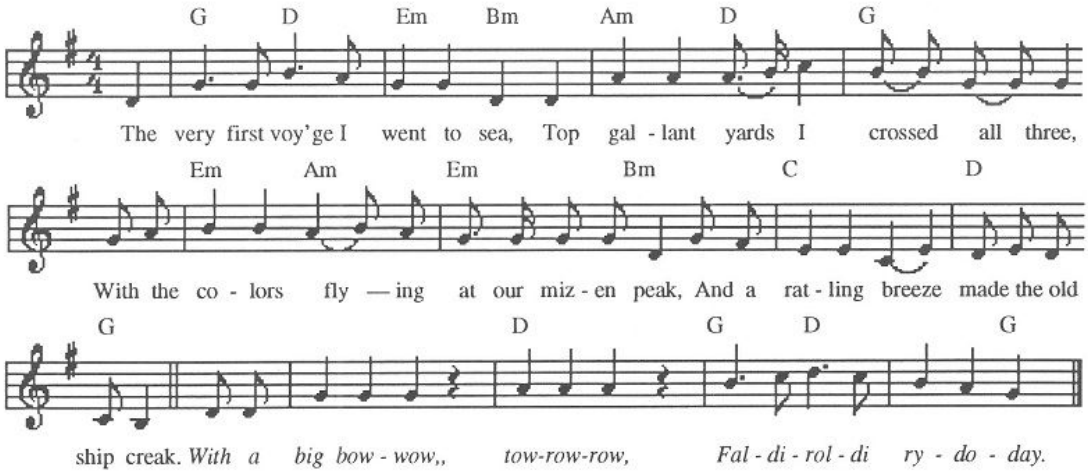
Boston

FORECASTLE SONG

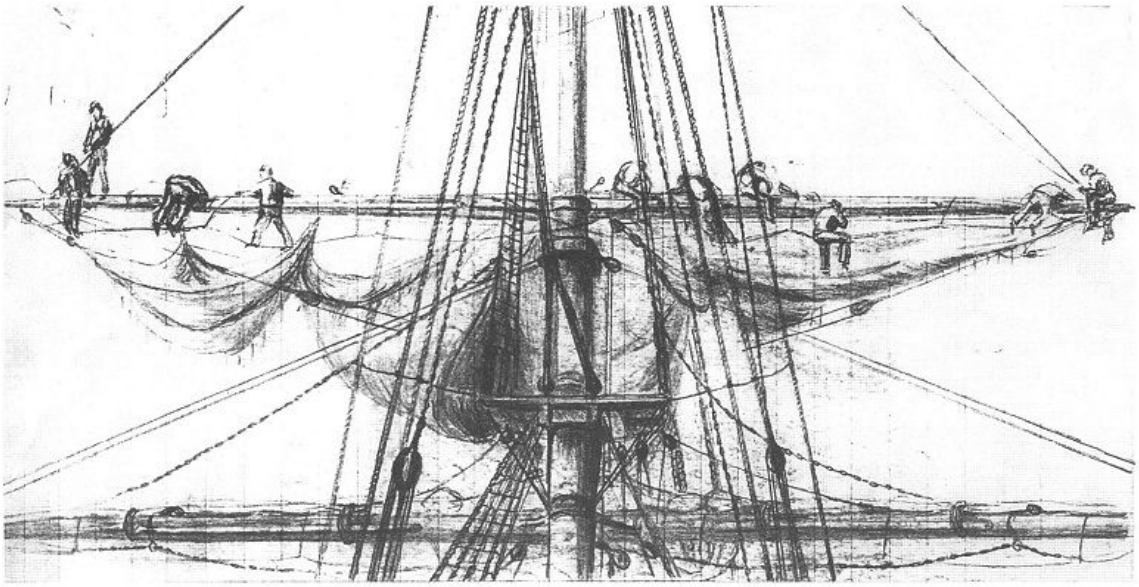
In his British anthology of 1910, Captain W.B. Whall included a song remembered from around 1870 which he called "Boston" after the first line, "From Boston Harbor we set sail." Frederick Pease Harlow (whose text and tune are copied from Whall's) identified it as a capstan chantey. But before it was adopted as a chantey it was a forecastle song, and there are two slightly older American transcriptions in sailors' journals in the Kendall Whaling Museum. Neither mentions Boston, but both are fine examples of sailors' articulate grousing. One, from the whaling bark *Waverly* of New Bedford circa 1859-63, has a rare PG-rated text. A milder version was written down by George Wilbur Piper of Concord, New Hampshire, a seaman on a Pacific Ocean voyage in the whaleship *Europa* of Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard, during 1868-70. Happily, Captain Whall set down the tune or we might not have a clear idea what it was. Except for the last line of stanza 4, which was imported from the *Waverly* transcription, the lyrics are whaleman George Wilbur Piper's; the tune and chorus are from Captain Whall.[2]

The dense nautical lingo requires a bit of deciphering. *Studding sails* (pronounced *stuns'ls*) are light-weather sails mounted on *studding sail booms,* expandable extensions of the yard-arms. These can be very troublesome in heavy weather. *Alow and aloft* or *aloft and alow* is a catch-phrase referring to the deck (*below* or *alow*) and the masts, rigging, and spars overhead (*aloft*), the two places where the sailor's work principally transpires. In another context in stanza 5, *below* signifies *below decks. Topgallants* and *topgallant sails* (pronounced *t'gallants* and *t'gans'ls* respectively) are sails high aloft that are normally taken in in heavy weather. Above these are the *royal sails* or *royals* (pronounced in New Englandese *ryalls*), which also must be furled in anticipation of a gale. *Gaskets* and *points* (*reef points*) are ropes attached to the sails making it possible to *reef*—that is, literally to *shorten sail* (lessen the size of a sail) by tucking and tying a fold in it. This is commonly done in a howling wind with the vessel underway, and requires that the sailors climb aloft up the *shrouds* and out onto the *yards,* stepping on *foot-ropes* and bending over the swaying yard with only a *jackstay* to hold onto. The heavier the weather, the more necessary and the more difficult and dangerous the chore. *Colors* refers to the national flag or *ensign,* customarily flown in the stern; and the *mizen peak* is to a high place on the *mizen mast,* the aftmost or stenmost mast of three on a ship or bark. Shipboard meals for common sailors were customarily served to each *mess* in a *kid,* a kind of large metal pan.

For singing, certain allowances have to be made to match the cadence of the words with the tune. With a bit of tinkering they should fit together just fine.



2 For more background on the three texts of this song, see my article "'Boston': Two 'New' Texts of an Old Favorite Sea Song," in *The American Neptune,* 45:3 [Summer 1985], pp. 175-80.



1.
O the very first voyage I went to sea,
Top gallant yards I crossed all three;
With the colors flying at our mizen peak,
And a rattling breeze made the old ship creak.

Chorus
With a big bow-wow, tow-row-row,
Fal-di-rol-di ry-do-day.

2.
Now our breakfast has come down,
There are empty kids a lying all around;
One kicks them here and another kicks
them there,
Saying, blame the old cook for a-leaving
of them there.

3.
Now our breakfast is all done;
Turn to your duty, boys, every one;
Some to the gaskets, others to the points,
While it is curse the old ship for limbs
and joints.

4.
A squall, a squall is now coming on,
Along the weather quarter, boys, allalong;
Take in your studding sails alow and aloft,
Clew up t'gallant sails and royals fore and aft.

5.
Now our Captain came on deck
And loudly calls for his boy Jack,
Saying, Fill us a bumper with a full and
hearty glass,
For it is far better weather below than aloft.

6.
Now cursed and hanged be the great old fool
That first invented studding sail booms:
May he be hanged and his generation cursed,
O the humbugging rascal that invented
of them first!

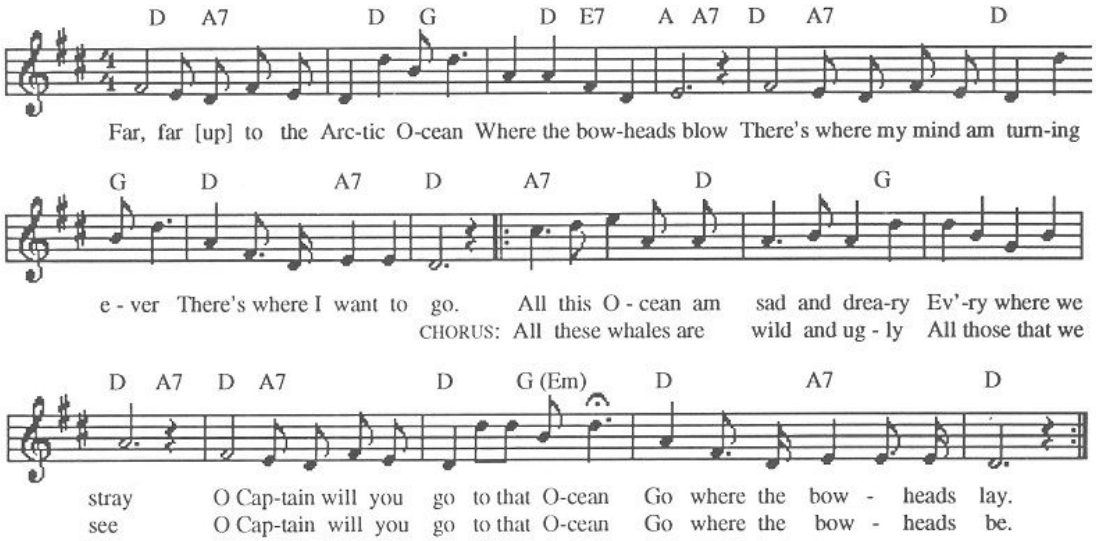
7.
There is one more thing that I do crave,
That he may meet with a watery grave,
No bells for to ring no bells for to toll:
May the sharks take his body and the devil
take his soul!

Illustration: Furling Sail. Ink, watercolor, pencil, and wash drawing by E.C. Sears. [The Kendall Whaling Museum.]

Wild and Ugly

WHALING SONG

This "Song to Captain S.D. Oliver" was written somewhere in the Pacific in 1855 aboard the New Bedford whaleship *Leonidas,* commanded by Samuel D. Oliver. The original lyrics are by third mate George Edgar Mills in clever parody of Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home," published in 1851. The idea is that the *Leonidas* is hunting whales in low latitudes—probably gray whales, which tend to be feisty and obstreperous; and the song is a plea to "go northward" after the docile and blubbery Arctic bowhead whale. (The Western Arctic grounds beyond the Bering Strait were new at the time, pioneered by whalers only a few years before, in 1848.) The melody is Foster's own, reprinted here from the original sheet music, with guitar chords added.



1.

Far, Far [up] to the Arctic Ocean
Where the bowheads blow
There's where my mind am turning ever
There's where I want to go
All this Ocean am sad and dreary
Every where we stray
O Captain will you go to that Ocean
    Go where the bowheads lay

Chorus:

All these whales are wild and ugly
All those [that] we see
O Captain will you go to that Ocean
    Go where the bowheads be

2.

All up and down this sea we've wandered
Since I've been with you
Then Captain let us go to the North'ard
Then we will see something new
All the whales that are in this ocean
All are wild we see
Then Captain will you go to the Northard
    To where the bowheads lay

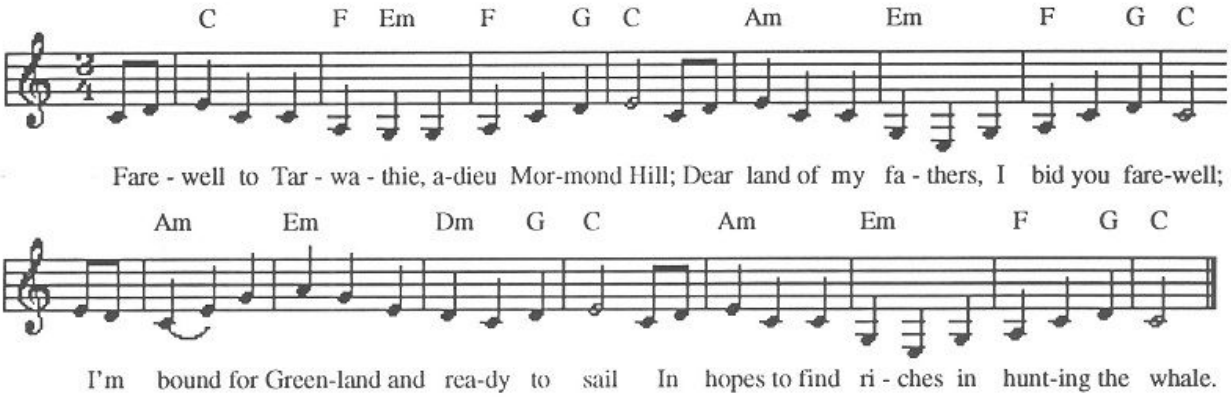
3.

When shall I see the hills and valleys
    Far away on the Nor'west shore
O Captain let us leave this Ocean
And not cruise here anymore
All this ocean am sad and dreary
Every where we stray
O Captain will you go to that Ocean
Go where the bowheads lay

Farewell to Tarwathie

SCOTTISH WHALING SONG

This Scottish ballad is included because of sentiments beautifully expressed by a whaleman-poet: George Scroggie of New Deer in Buchan (Scotland) went whaling in the Arctic in the 1850s and was later a farmer and a miller. His lyrics (reprinted from Gavin Greig, *Folk-Song of the North-East,* Peterhead: Buchan Observer, 1914, p. 85) are sung to the traditional English air "Blow Ye Winds Westerly." Tarwathie is in Aberdeenshire, northwest of the whaling port of Peterhead.



1. Farewell to Tarwathie, adieu Mormond Hill;
   Dear land of my fathers, I bid you farewell;
   I'm bound for Greenland, and ready to sail
   In hopes to find riches in hunting the whale.

2. Adieu to my comrades, a while we must part;
   Likewise the dear girlie who has won my heart;
   The cold ice on Greenland my love will not chill;
   The longer my absence, the stronger love's thrill.

3. Awhile I must leave you and go to the sea;
   Wish luck to the bonnie ship that I'm going wi';
   And when I am sailing upon the wide main,
   Be cheerful and happy till I come again.

4. Our ship is well rigged and ready to sail,
   Our crew they are anxious to follow the whale
   Where the icebergs float and the stormy winds blow,
   Where the land and the ocean are covered with snow.

5. The cold land of Greenland is barren and bare;
   No seed-time or harvest is ever known there;
   The birds here sing sweetly on mountain and dale,
   But there's nary a birdie to sing to the whale.

6. There's no habitation for man to live there;
   The king of that country's the fierce Greenland bear;
   There'll be no temptation to tarry long there,
   With our ship bumper-full we'll homeward repair.

Transposition Chart

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Tonic ("Key")			Sub-Dominant	Dominant	Relative Minor	*Flatted*
Ab	Bbm / Bb7	C	**Db**	**Eb**(7)	Fm	Gb
A	Bm /B7	C#	**D**	**E**(7)	F#m	G
Bb	Cm / C7	D	**Eb**	**F**(7)	Gm	Ab
B	C#m / C#7	D#	**E**	**F#**(7)	G#m	A
C	Dm / D7	E	**F**	**G**(7)	Am	Bb
Db	Ebm / Eb7	F	**Gb**	**Ab**(7)	Bbm	Cb
D	Em / E7	F#	**G**	**A**(7)	Bm	C
Eb	Fm / F7	G	**Ab**	**Bb**(7)	Cm	Db
E	F#m / F#7	G#	**A**	**B**(7)	C#m	D
F	Gm / G7	A	**Bb**	**C**(7)	Dm	Eb
F#	G#m / G#7	A#	**B**	**C#**(7)	D#m	E
G	Am / A7	B	**C**	**D**(7)	Em	F

The **MAJOR KEY** (*do*) is shown in column I. The **RELATIVE MINOR KEY** (the minor key with the corresponding key signature (the same number of sharps or flats)—is shown in column VI. **CHORDS** for each key lay out horizontally (for example, the principal chords for C Major are C, F, G, and A minor). To **TRANSPOSE** (convert) from one key to another, simply substitute vertically using the Roman numerals as your guide. For example, to transpose from C Major to A Major: instead of a C chord (column I) play an A chord; in place of an F chord (column IV) use a D chord; instead of a G (column V) use an E, and instead of Am use F#m. If a minor or 7th chord is indicated, you can substitute the same way: for example, where an Em chord occurs in the key of C (column VI), to play in the key of G you should substitute Bm; to play in the key of D use F#m. Or if a G7 chord is indicated in the key of C (column V), to play in the key of D use an A7 chord instead. **MINOR KEYS** can be transposed in either of two ways: [1] locate the original minor key and the destination minor key in column VI, and substitute directly; or [2] ignore column VI and find both keys in column I, then substitute as though they were Major keys (but playing a minor chord each time a minor chord should occur).

To find the correct position for your **GUITAR CAPO** in order to play in a particular key, find the key for the chords you want to use in column I, then locate the destination key (the key in which you want to play the song) and count down column I until you reach the destination key. If you reach the bottom of the chart before you get to your destination key, jump up to Ab (counting one for the jump), then count down again until you reach the destination key. Then count the same number of frets, and put your capo there. For example, if you want to play the chords for C Major but want to sing in D Major: find C in column I; count down to D (2 rows): capo at the 2nd fret. If you want to play in C Major but sing in A, count down from C in column I (jumping up to Ab when you reach G): C to A is 7 spaces, so capo at the 7th fret.

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Frank, Stuart M. 2000. *"Musick on the Brain": Frederick Howland Smith's Shipboard Tune List, 1854-1870.* Kendall Whaling Museum Monograph N° 12. Sharon, Mass. Culled from a musical sailor's manuscript journal.

Harlow, Frederick Pease. 1928. *The Making of a Sailor.* Salem: Marine Research Society. Engaging firsthand narrative of the author's youthful voyages, on which he collected an astounding variety of chanteys and musical materials from a variety of cultures, presented here in context.

Harlow, Frederick Pease. 1962. *Chanteying Aboard American Ships.* Barre, Mass.: Barre Gazette [Barre Press]. A quintessentially American anthology, gleaned from the author's firsthand experience at sea, 1870s to 1920s.

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Hugill, Stan. 1969. *Shanties and Sailors' Songs.* London: Herbert Jenkins; New York: Prager. A truly eccentric sailor's-eye treatment that explains a great deal about the context of chanteys, with many historical errors.

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Mead, John Halstead. 1973. *Sea Shanties and Fo'c'sle Songs, 1768-1906, in the G.W. Blunt White Library at Mystic Seaport.* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Kentucky. Intelligent survey includes many texts, useful insights.

Miller, Pamela A. 1979. *And the Whale Is Ours: Creative Writing of American Whalemen.* Sharon: The Kendall Whaling Museum; Boston: David R. Godine. Many original song texts by the whalemen themselves.

Naval Songs. 1883. New York: Wm. Firth & Co. A worthwhile early collection with piano arrangements.

Sharp, Cecil J. 1908-12. *Folk Songs of England.* 5 vols. London: Novello. The collection is altogether excellent; a handful of piano arrangements by the great composer/folklorist Ralph Vaughan Williams are without peer.

Sharp, Cecil J. 1914. *English Folk Chanteys.* London: Simpkin, Marshall / Schott. Authoritative British collection assembled by one of Britain's most eminent early folklorists.

Shay, Frank. 1948. *American Sea Songs and Chanteys from the Days of Iron Men and Wooden Ships.* New York: W.W. Norton. (Revised and expanded from *Iron Men and Wooden Ships,* New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1924.) This decidedly populist anthology by one of Eugene O'Neill's drinking buddies has surprising merit and appeal but lacks substantial annotation.

Sternval, Sigurd. 1935. *Sång Under Segel.* Stockholm: Bonniers Forlag. The preeminent European anthology.

Walser, Robert Young. 1995. *The Shantyman's Canon.* Master's Thesis, University of Wisconsin - Madison. One of very few truly scientific studies of chanteys, with a useful discography, by a folklore scholar and former chanteyman/manager of the Mystic Seaport sea music program.

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Author's Vita

Stuart M. Frank has been Director and Chief Curator of the Kendall Whaling Museum since 1981. He originated the sea music program and annual Sea Music Festival and Symposium at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, and with his wife Mary Malloy has presented traditional sea music across the USA and Canada, and has recorded *Sailors' Songs and Ballads* (published by Whalers Village, Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii) and *Pirate Songs* (Grey Horse Productions, Lubbock, Texas). He is the author of numerous articles and monographs on nautical art, music, history, and culture, as well as the books *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery, Dictionary of Scrimshaw Artists, More Scrimshaws Artists,* and *The Book of Pirate Songs,* and the monographs *Oooh, You New York Girls! The Urban Pastorale in Ballads and Songs about Sailors Ashore in the Big City* and *"Musick on the Brain": Frederick Howland Smith's Shipboard Tunes, 1854-1869* (among others). His books *"The Wealth of Seven Shores": Japanese Woodblock Prints of Whales and Whaling* and *Ballads and Songs of the American Sailor* are currently in preparation, the latter expanded from his Ph.D. thesis at Brown University, *Ballads and Songs of the Whale-Hunters, 1825-1875.*

The Kendall Whaling Museum

Founded in 1956, The Kendall Whaling Museum holds a sumptuous international array of artworks and artifacts about whales and whaling, spanning the seven seas and all seven continents—Dutch Old Master paintings, British and American art, Japanese prints and scrolls, Native American and pre-columbian art, wood carvings, ship models, the world's largest collection of scrimshaw, a fully equipped Yankee whaleboat, whaling gear, and exhibitions of American whaling, Eskimo whaling, modern whaling, ancient treasures, and African Americans at sea. Located 30 minutes south of Boston and 30 minutes north of Providence off I-95, the Museum is open all year, Tuesdays thru Saturdays and most Monday holidays 10-5, Sundays 1-5. Low family rates, gift shop, free parking. Group tours are available by appointment. Please visit our web site (*kwm.org*) or call for information and directions (781) 784-5642.