

# UNCOMMON SAILOR-SONGS



Edited by Charles Ipcar

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*Forecastle Songs* by Gordon Grant from **Songs of American Sailormen**,  
edited by Joanna C. Colcord, published by Bramhall House,  
New York, US, ©1938, p. 123

**Musical Notation by David Maxwell  
And Pam Weeks**

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**Contact:**  
**Charles Ipcar**  
**80 Main Street**  
**Richmond, Maine 04357**  
**E-mail:** ipbar@gwi.net

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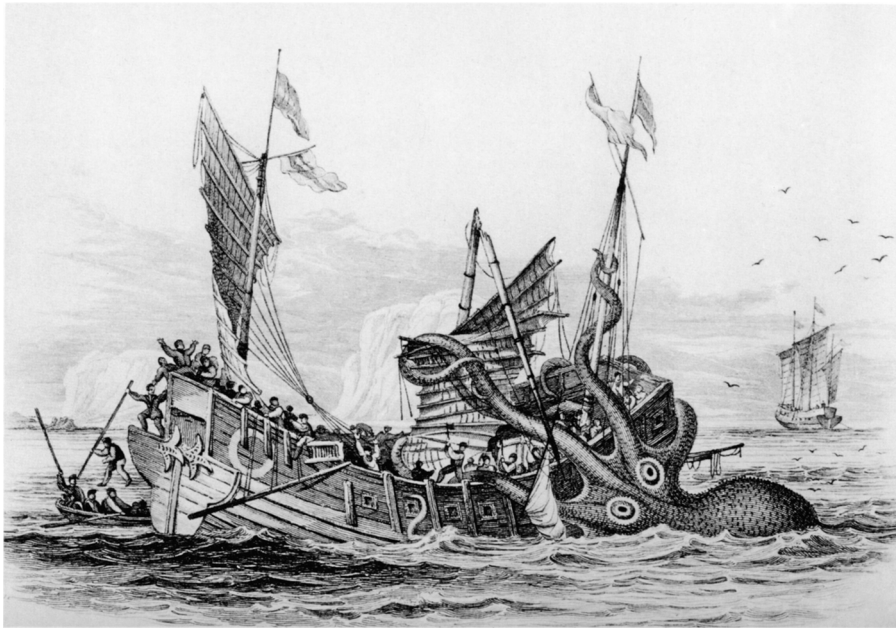
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*Attack of Chinese Junk by Giant Squid* from **The Illustrated London News**, 1875

## Preface

There has long been a keen interest in songs describing the world of the deep-water sailor from the Age of Sail, through the Age of Steam, and continuing to our present time. There's something about the power of the seas and the winds that provokes strong emotions in the most hardened shellback as well as the most ardent armchair sailor. And one consequence of this has been the publication of many fine volumes featuring songs of the sea.

The mission of this songbook is to provide ready access to seventy-eight finely crafted sailor songs that are not commonly sung by contemporary nautical singers, primarily because the songs are unfamiliar to them. Some are very old but have eluded the attention of our singers. The vast majority, however, are recently adapted for singing from vintage nautical poems and are only just beginning to be added to the sea music repertoire. Poets include Bill Adams, Edwin J. Brady, Hiram A. Cody, Lincoln Colcord, Burt Franklin Jenness, Harry Kemp, Henry Lawson, Hamish Maclaren, John Masefield, William McFee, Angus Cameron Robertson, John Smith, and Robert Louis Stevenson; most of these poets had actual experience as sailors. Other songs are newly composed in the tradition of older sea songs, and are testament to the continuation and revitalization of nautical singing: Ron Baxter, Jon Campbell, Amos Jessup, Mike Kennedy, Joe McGrath, Vince Morash, Rudy Sunde, Bob Watson, and John Williams. And some are parodies of traditional sea songs: Talitha MacKenzie, and Micki Perry.

As a person who sings traditional and contemporary songs of the sea, I am drawn to "uncommon sailor songs." I contribute myself to the inventory of such sea songs by adapting nautical poems for singing or by composing new songs. I also sing songs that other contemporary nautical singers have composed. Anyone who would like to hear a sample of how I lead each song in this songbook may access the "list of lyrics page" from my website, [www.charlieipcar.com](http://www.charlieipcar.com), or order one of my CDs as described on the inside back cover of this songbook.



In adapting old poems for singing, there are a number of choices to be made. One can sing the poem exactly as it is written. One can modify the words slightly so that they may be sung more readily. Or one may do major surgery, eliminating entire verses and adding chorus or refrain. There are examples of all these approaches in the songs that I've worked with. You are the ultimate judge of how successful I have been. If you are not satisfied with the resulting song, there are references to where to find the original wording and you can work up your own renditions. I do think that the nautical poets and songwriters who are featured in this songbook have done extraordinarily good work and merit more attention.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to my friend and dear wife Judy Barrows who is primarily responsible for recording and editing the CDs I have produced. It was she who first persuaded me to record my initial CD, also titled **Uncommon Sailor-Songs**.



Judy Barrows running the board at the Mystic Sea Music Festival,  
photographed by Alison Lee Freeman in 2006

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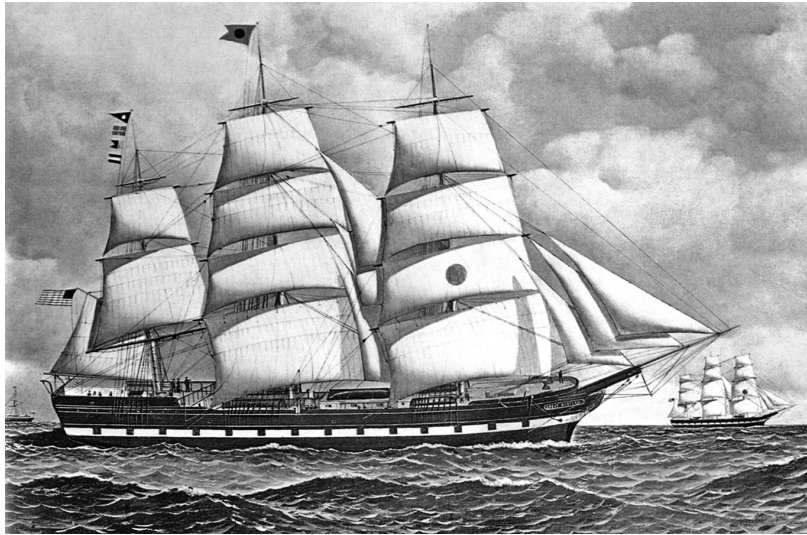
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# The Songs



*A Dog-watch Concert* by Gordon Grant,  
from his book **Sail Ho!**, published by William Farquhar Payson,  
New York, US, ©1931, p. 59



Based on a poem by Bill Adams, ©1931  
 Adapted for singing by Charles Ipcar, ©2007  
 Tune: after traditional *Liverpool Packet*

## Bound Away

Chorus: G C G C F C F

Bound a - way! (bound a - way!) Through the ice, sleet and snow, She's a Liv - er-pool

C G G7 C C F

packet, Oh, Lord, let 'er go! There's a three-skys'l yard-er with her hatch-es bat-tened

C F C G

down, The grey skies a - bove her, and the Mer-sey run-ning brown, She's

C F G C

an-chored in the riv-er, the tug's up a - head; The chant-ey-man's sing-ing would

F G G7

wak - en the dead (CHO)

Hear the windlass a-clanking as the mate shouts, "Heave away!  
 Heave a pawl an' lift 'er or there'll be hell to pay!"  
 "Lower Blue Peter!" The anchor's off the mud;  
 There's cheering, there's laughter, and the tide's at full flood. (CHO)



"Loose tops'ls!" he shouts; "Haul away, stamp an' go!"  
And we haul away together in the rising sun's glow;  
Her lofty spars shine through the smoke blowing past;  
"Up aloft!" shouts the skipper, and we race up the masts. (CHO)

We're out on the footropes, we're casting loose sail;  
The pilot shakes hands, clammers over the rail;  
"Haul in the hawser!" Just see her sails draw;  
Her white wake trails behind, she's running from shore! (CHO)

There's a three-skys'l-yarder with her hatches battened down;  
The grey skies above her, and the Mersey running brown;  
There's a three-skys'l-yarder, with her holds jammed full;  
Hear the cheer from the pier for the pride o' Liverpool! (CHO)2X

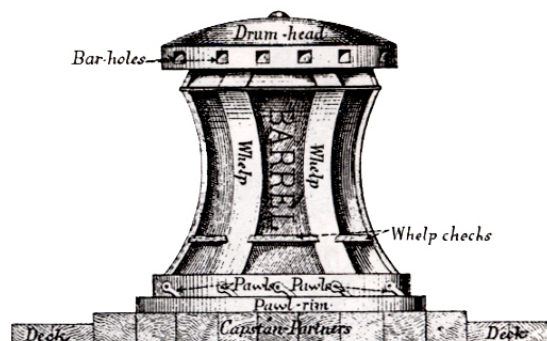
### Notes:

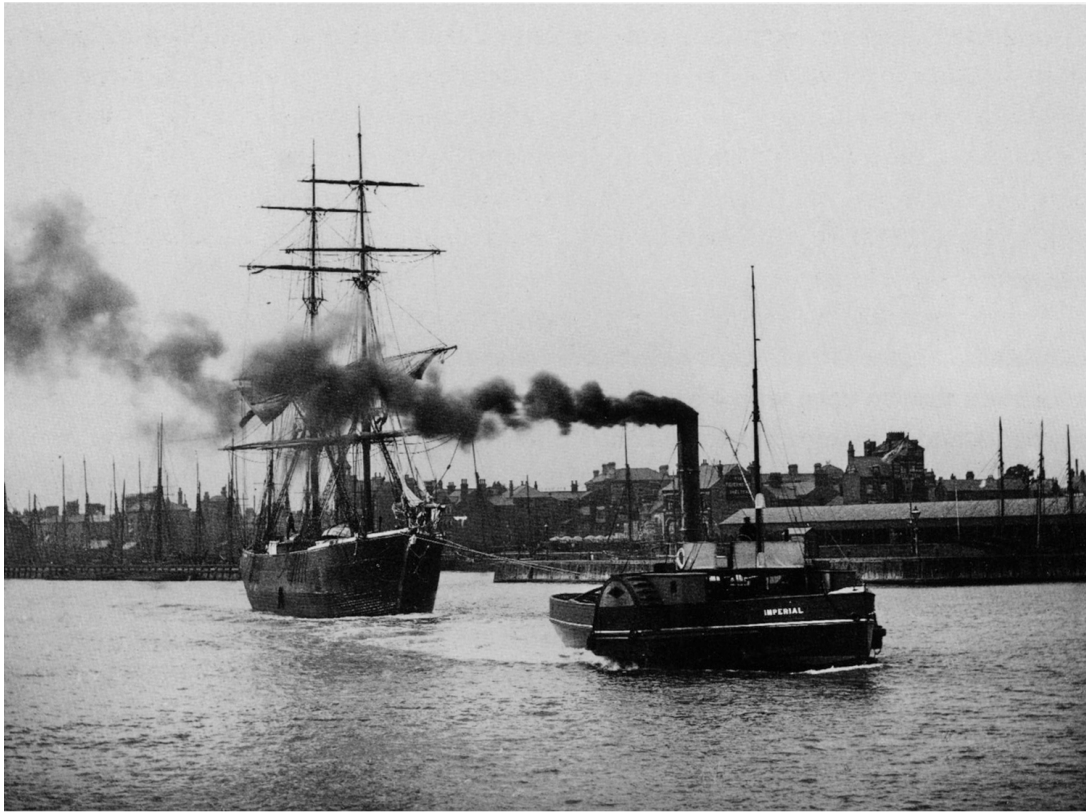
From **Wind in the Topsails**, edited by Bill Adams, published by George G. Harrap & Co., London, UK, ©1931, pp. 76-77.

Based on a poem by old sailor-poet Bill Adams (UK & US), adapted for singing by using the traditional *Liverpool Packet* capstan shanty tune and incorporating its chorus. This is a joyful song that could have been belted out by the young apprentice lads on their first voyage. Adams was just such a "brass-bounder" shipping out of Liverpool in the 1890s, before he was forced ashore three years later in 'Frisco for chronic health reasons. Let's sing this one for Adams one more time!

Adapted for singing by Charles Ipcar in 2007, as recorded on **Old Sailor-Poets**, ©2007; also recorded by Roll & Go on **Look Out**, ©2010.

The header graphic titled *Across the Atlantic* by Antonio Jacobsen depicts the *Great Western* of the Black Ball Line running between New York City and Liverpool.





Based on a poem by John Masfield, ©1912  
 Adapted for singing by Charles Ipcar, ©2007  
 Tune: after gospel song *Little Black Train*

## A Pier-Head Chorus

C F C

Now I'll be chew-ing salt horse an' bit-ing flint - y bread,

F C F

Danc - ing with the stars up - on the fo' - c'le head; Hark - ening to the bow-

C F

- wash an' the welt - er of the tread - of a thou - sand tons of clip-per run-ning

C

free.

Chorus:

C F C F C F C F C G C

For the tug has got the tow-rope, she'll lead us to the  
Downs, Her pad-dles churn the riv-er wrack to mud-dy greens an' browns; But I have swapped the  
riv-er - wrack and all the filth of towns For the roll - ing, surg - ing, comb-ers of the  
sea. For the roll - ing, surg - ing, comb-ers of the sea.

For we'll sheet her tops'ls home, glide on down the Bay,  
The sea-line blue with billows, the land-line blurred an' grey;  
The bow-wash will be piling high an' thrashing into spray,  
As the clipper's forefoot tramples down the swell. (CHO)

She'll log a giddy seventeen an' rattle out the reel,  
The weight of all the run-out line will be a thing to feel,  
As the 'bacca-chewing shellback shambles aft to take the wheel,  
An' the seasick little middy strikes the bell. (CHO)

### Notes:

From **Salt Water Poems and Ballads**, John Masefield, published by The Macmillan Co., New York, US, ©1912, p. 51.

A fine setting-out song based on a poem composed by the well known sailor-poet John Masefield (UK), adapted for singing using a tune inspired by the 19th century gospel song *Little Black Train*. Masefield served as an apprentice lad on tall sailing ships, similar to the one that Bill Adams sailed on but was forced to retire from deep-water sailing because of health reasons.

"Rattle out the reel" is a reference to how the speed of a 19th century sailing ship which was determined by use of the knotted log-line and reel.

Adapted for singing by Charles Ipcar in 2007, as recorded on **Old Sailor-Poets**, ©2007.

The header graphic shows a brig being towed by the paddle tug *Imperial* out of New York Harbor, photographer unknown, from **Square Rigger Days**, edited by Charles W. Domville-Fife, published by Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, US, ©2007, p. 46.



Based on a poem by Hamish Maclaren, ©1929 Maclaren Family Estate  
 Adapted for singing by Charles Ipcar and Barry Finn, ©1992, 2007  
 Tune: after traditional *Tommy's Gone to Hilo/Congo River*

## Yangtse River Shanty

**Chorus:**

G A min C

A - way-ay, boys, a - way - o! Blow me down — this

G D7 G

Yang - tse Riv - er; A - way, boys, lift and walk a - way!

G C G C G A min

My lo-tus la-dy, I'll see — no more; — A - way, boys, a - way - o!

C G D7 G

Since I left her on the Chi-na shore, A - way, boys, lift and walk a - way! —

When we first met, she was like a queen,  
*A-way, boys, a-way-o!*  
Prettiest gal I'd ever seen,  
*A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way! (CHO)*

She'd flashing eyes and long black hair,  
*A-way, boys, a-way-o!*  
All I could do was stand and stare,  
*A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way!*

I bought her silks and a golden comb,  
*A-way, boys, a-way-o!*  
Trouble's o'er now, the anchor's home,  
*A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way! (CHO)*

I blowed my silver for to win her,  
*A-way, boys, a-way-o!*  
Now there's nothing left but donkey's dinner,  
*A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way!*

We're homeward bound, Cookie's in the galley,  
*A-way, boys, a-way-o!*  
Farewell, Young Moon, of the Yangtse Valley,  
*A-way, boys, lift and walk a-way! (CHO)*

#### Notes:

From **Sailor with Banjo**, by Hamish Maclaren, published by The Macmillan Company, New York, US, ©1930, p. 15; used with the permission of the Estate of Hamish Maclaren.

Originally composed by Royal Navy officer Hamish Maclaren for his "entertainment in rhyme and song" **Sailor With Banjo** in 1930. I've extensively revised the lyrics, and my good friend Barry Finn revised the musical arrangement to a working shanty; the original tune by Maclaren was not published and is unavailable. I've made use of the traditional shanty tunes *Tommy's Gone to Hilo* in the verse and *Congo River* in the chorus. This is another outward bound/lost love song, this time from the China Shore. As Maclaren said:

"Strictly speaking, this type of song – from the shanty model – is, I suppose, now quite out of date; but personally I like to think that it has some life in it yet, and may note, in support of this whim, that I have myself helped to weigh anchor by hand, tramping round the capstan to music."

Adapted for singing by Charles Ipcar in 1992 as recorded on **Uncommon Sailor-Songs**, ©2004; it has subsequently been recorded by Roll & Go, John Roberts, Barry Finn & Neil Downey, Danny Spooner, Two Black Sheep & a Stallion, and Mudhook.

The header graphic titled *House-Boats and Singsong Girls, Canton, 1860s* is drawn by Stan Hugill from his book **Sailortown**, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., London, UK, ©1967, p. 55.





Words by Charles Ipcar, ©2014  
Tune: after traditional *Stagger Lee Blues*

## *Natchez and Delta Queen Race*

*Chorus*

G

G7

Now the Nat - chez, she's a - com - in', Kick-ing up her heels, She's

5

C

G

D7

roll - ing up the riv - er boys, How dat make you feel? Just see the black smoke

10

C

curl-in'; — Hear her whis-tle blow, — Give a cheer 'long the lev-ee, —

15

G

As you watch her go!

They opened up her fire box door,  
Heaved in more hardwood;  
The boiler pressure surged up high,  
An' her paddles dug in good;  
Now the *Natchez* she's a-flyin',  
The spray sweeps o'er her rail;  
The *Delta Queen* she's turnin' green,  
As the *Natchez* flashed her tail! (CHO)

The *Natchez* wheeled into N'Orleans,  
Nosed up to the pier;  
The deck-crew moored her stem and stern,  
'Fore the *Delta Queen* drew near;  
There's a set of antlers mounted  
On her pilot house so high;  
"The *Natchez* runs just like a deer,  
It's a joy to watch her fly!" (CHO)

This song is a tribute to the excursion steamboat *Natchez*, based in New Orleans, which has raced and beat the *Delta Queen* several times. My wife and I got to take an evening cruise aboard this steamboat in 2014. The *Delta Queen* is now being rebuilt in New Orleans and they hope one day to beat the *Natchez*.

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Recorded by Charles Ipcar on **Steamboat Days**, ©2019

The header graphic was photographed in New Orleans by Charles Ipcar in 2014.



The sternwheel steamboat "Natchez" in New Orleans, circa 1906,  
from the Detroit Publishing Co., via Library of Congress.



Words and tune composed by Charles Ipcar, ©2015

## Ballad of Captain Blanche Leathers

*Verse*

C F C G

Now I got to know the riv-er when I was a young girl, I got to know the riv-er and the riv-er was my

8 G7 C F C F

world; Ev'-ry steam-boat, ev'-ry cap-tain, on the riv-er I did know; Yes, I got to know the riv-er and I learned to love her

16 C C F C

so. I got to know the riv-er, got to mar-ry a steam-boat man; He taught me all he knew, — and

24 G G7 C F C

helped ful-fill my plan; I got to know the riv-er, her shift-ing chan-nel and her shores, And I got my pi-lot's li-cense back in

32 F C

eight-een-nine-ty four

*Chorus*

You've got to know the riv-er, yes you've got to know the riv-er, You've got to know the

40

riv-er, \_\_\_\_\_ as she swirls and flows; You've got to know the riv-er till you have no more to give her; Yes, you've

47

got to know the riv-er as a friend, as a friend, \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, you've got to know the riv-er in the end.

I got to know the river and I got to know my boat;  
 She was the flying *Natchez*, the fastest boat afloat;  
 I got to know the roustabouts, I got to know the crews,  
 And how to stow the cargo, it's what I had to do.  
 I got to know the river, and know just where to look;  
 I got to know the river and read her like a book;  
 The shallows and the deeps, every snag and every log,  
 And I loved her in the moonlight and I cursed her in the fog. (CHO)

I got to know the river, and I got to learn her song,  
 Every verse and chorus, we'd be singing all day long;  
 I got to know the river, by the levees in the towns,  
 The roustabouts a-singing, "Roll the Cotton Down."  
 Now my steamboat days are over and I make my life ashore,  
 But I still love the river and I'll love her ever more;  
 And if there comes a time when they need someone to steer,  
 I still have my pilot's license and renew it every year. (CHO)

### Notes:

Capt. Blanche Leathers (1860-1940) was one of the first women to earn her pilot's license and command a steamboat on the Mississippi River; the song is based on an interview with her by George William Nett in 1927, from the archives of the State Library of Louisiana.

Recorded by Charles Ipcar on **Steamboat Days**, ©2019

The header graphic is not actually Capt. Blanche Leathers but passenger Edna Walker who borrowed the cap from the captain of the steamboat *Rose Hite*, courtesy of the Dave Thomson Steamboat Online Museum.





By Charles Ipcar, ©2018  
Tune after traditional *When I First Came to This Land*

## The *Katahdin's* Battle with the Gale

As we steamed out from Ban - gor Town, For Bos - ton Har - bor

we were bound; The seas ran high as we shov - eled coal; We did what we

could! And we called that coal "Bless My Soul!" And the old *Ka - tah - din*,

she steamed good; She did what she could!

Off Cape Porpoise we were assailed  
By a raging Nor'east Gale;  
We ran low on coal and turned to wood;  
*We did what we could!*  
And we called that wood, "You Burn Good!"  
*And we called that coal, "Bless My Soul!"*  
*And the old Katahdin, she steamed good;*  
*She did what she could!*

As the Gale increased its blow,  
Our birch cargo was running low;  
So we took ax to the cabin doors;  
*We did what we could!*  
And we called those doors, "Almighty Roar!"  
*And we called that wood, "You Burn Good!"*  
*And we called that coal, "Bless My Soul!"*  
*And the old Katahdin, she steamed good;*  
*She did what she could!*

Next we sighted old Boone Isle,  
And in her lee we steamed awhile,  
The doors were gone, we tossed in chairs;  
We did what we could!  
And we called those chairs, "We Don't Care!"  
*And we called those doors, "Almighty Roar!"*  
*And we called that wood, "You Burn Good!"*  
*And we called that coal, "Bless My Soul!"*  
*And the old Katahdin, she steamed good;*  
*She did what she could!*

We steamed all night till the wind went down;  
Then set course for Portsmouth Town;  
The chairs were gone, we tossed in hams;  
*We did what we could!*  
And we called those hams, "Great God Damn!"  
*And we called those chairs, "We Don't Care!"*  
*And we called those doors, "Almighty Roar!"*  
*And we called that wood, "You Burn Good!"*  
*And we called that coal, "Bless My Soul!"*  
*And the old Katahdin, she steamed good;*  
*She did what she could!*

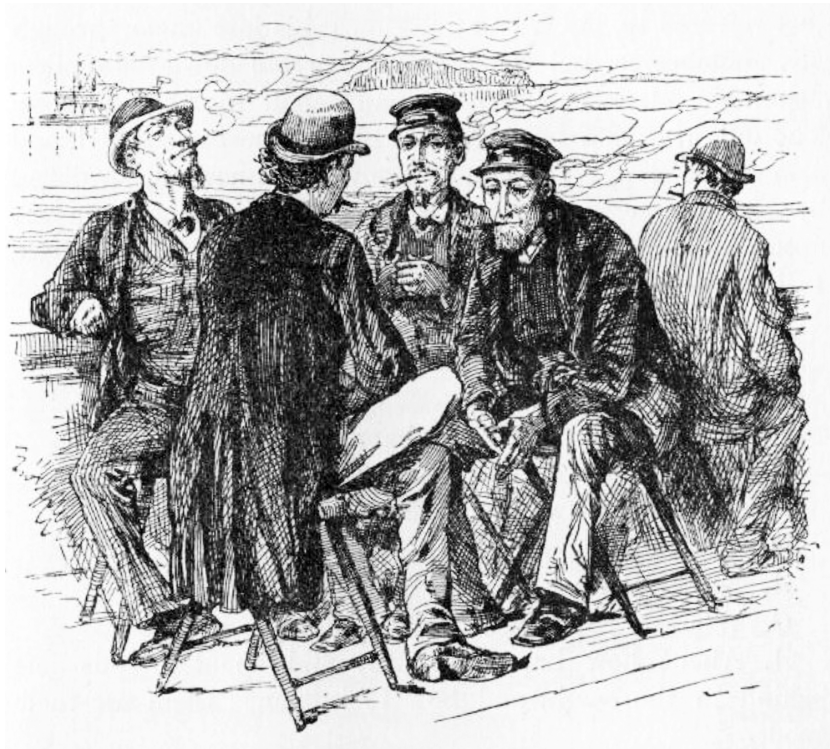
Now we're moored at Portsmouth Pier,  
We bid farewell to every fear;  
Let's raise a glass to ham and wood;  
*We did what we could!*  
Let's raise a glass to the old steamship,  
Come wind or wave, let her rip!  
*"To the old Katahdin, she steamed good;  
She did what she could!"*  
And we called those hams, "Great God Damn!"  
And we called those chairs, "We Don't Care!"  
And we called those doors, "Almighty Roar!"  
And we called that wood, "You Burn Good!"  
And we called that coal, "Bless My Soul!"  
And the old Katahdin, she steamed good;  
*She did what she could!*

**Notes:**

This is a song of extreme survival. The steamboat *Katahdin* ran between Bangor, Maine, and Boston, Massachusetts, and as she set out from Bangor in 1886 she got caught in a fierce Nor'east gale. All they could do was head into the wind to keep from capsizing and after running low on coal they had to improvise for fuel. No one aboard expected to survive after three days of fighting the gale but they did.

Recorded by Charles Ipcar on **Steamboat Days**, ©2019.

The header graphic shows the sidewheel steamboat *Katahdin* after surviving a Nor'east gale, Portsmouth Harbor, NH, January 9, 1886, from **Storms and Shipwrecks of New England**, p. 153.



*Smoke and Gossip* from **Life on the Mississippi**, by Mark Twain, ©1883.



By Charles Ipcar, ©2020  
Tune: traditional field holler

## Way Down Under the Hill

*Chorus* Dm C Dm C Dm Dm


Way down! Way down! Way down un-der the hill! Roll on down and

6 C Dm C Dm

get your fill, — Way down, un-der the hill!


Dm C

*Verse*



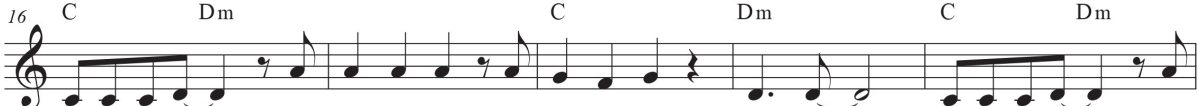
There was a place, there may be still, —

11 Dm C Dm C Dm




Way down, un-der the hill, A sal-oon well known as Un-der-the-Hill — Way down

16 C Dm C Dm C Dm



un-der the hill! That joint was loud, the beer was cold, Way down, un-der the hill, It

21 C Dm C Dm



chilled the bod - y but not the soul, Way down, un - der the hill! —

Now when you gets to Natchez town,  
*Way down, under the hill,*  
 You sing and dance the night around,  
*Way down, under the hill;*  
 You spend and spend all your pay,  
*Way down, under the hill,*  
 And roll away at the break of day,  
*Way down, under the hill! (CHO)*

Now who was dancin' the "Funky Chicken"?  
*Way down, under the hill,*  
 Ol' John Hartford, his banjo pickin',  
*Way down, under the hill;*  
 Swing 'er high an' swing 'er low,  
*Way down, under the hill,*  
 It's time for us to roll and go,  
*Way down, under the hill! (CHO)*

Here's to that gal Coal-Black Rose,  
*Way down, under the hill,*  
 She's coal-black from head to toes,  
*Way down, under the hill;*  
 And how that gal could dance and sing,  
*Way down, under the hill,*  
 Why she could do most anything,  
*Way down, under the hill. (CHO)*



And here's to the crew where'er they be,  
*Way down, under the hill,*  
Ed Smith, Shorty, and The Cherokee,  
*Way down, under the hill;*  
They done their work and they done it well,  
*Way down, under the hill,*  
And there's many a tale that's left to tell,  
*Way down, under the hill. (CHO)*

And here's a round to Captain Don,  
*Way down, under the hill,*  
And may he steam forever on,  
*Way down, under the hill;*  
He know the river and he know it well,  
*Way down, under the hill,*  
He'd even run the Gates of Hell,  
*Way down, under the hill. (CHO)*

C-----Dm  
*Way down, under the hill!*

### Notes:

This old riverman saloon was the subject of discussion one day among retired steamboat men on the Facebook forum Paddlewheelers and Steamboats of the World, and their discussion inspired this song. The Saloon still exists to this day in Natchez, Mississippi.

Recorded by Charles Ipcar, ©2020

The header graphic shows the Under the Hill Saloon as it looked in 1933, Natchez Bluffs & Under-the-Hill Historic District, Silver Street and adjacent area, Natchez, MS, Historic American Buildings Survey, from Library of Congress.



A group of motorcycles parked outside the Under the Hill Saloon in 2000, photographer unknown



Words and music by Charles Ipcar, ©2001

## Wake Up Susiana

**Chorus:**

D min C D min C D min

Wake up, Sus - i - an - a, wake up! \_\_\_\_\_ Wake up, Sus - i - an - a, wake up! \_\_\_\_\_

D min C D min C D min

Now we've both been sound a - sleep - Umph! Wake up, Sus - i - an - a and weep -

C D min C

- - - Umph! Blue Pet - er's \_\_\_\_\_ flying, there's no de - nying,

D min C D min F D min

We're in trou - ble \_\_\_\_\_ deep! Wake up Sus - i - an - a! \_\_\_\_\_

F D min F D min

Umph! Wake up, Sus - i - ana! - - - Umph! We got - ta ship out! \_\_\_\_\_ (CHO)

Now we said we'd be aboard by ten – *Umph!*  
Susiana, we've goofed again – *Umph!*  
The bosun's a-calling, the capstan's a-pawling,  
And we're three sheets to the wind!  
*Wake up, Susiana! – Umph!*  
*Wake up, Susiana! – Umph!*  
We gotta ship out! (CHO)

Now the rum it wasn't so hot – *Umph!*  
But we drank up all of our tot – *Umph!*  
You're still asleep, our duff is deep,  
Our reputation is shot!  
*Wake up, Susiana! – Umph!*  
*Wake up, Susiana! – Umph!*  
We gotta ship out! (CHO)

Now the mudhook's up and down – *Umph!*  
But we're still stuck in town – *Umph!*  
What we gonna tell the Old Man  
When he looks at us with a frown?  
*Wake up, Susiana! – Umph!*  
*Wake up, Susiana! – Umph!*  
We gotta ship out! (CHO)

We've both been sound asleep – *Umph!*  
Wake up, Susiana, and weep – *Umph!*  
Blue Peter's flying, there's no denying,  
It's time for the pierhead leap!  
*Wake up, Susiana! – Umph!*  
*Wake up, Susiana! – Umph!*  
We gotta ship out!  
We gotta ship out!

### Notes:

This song was inspired by Felice and Boudleaux Bryant's 1960's rock & roll classic *Wake Up Little Suzie*. It's clearly a working shanty, good for a powerful haul on the line with an appropriate grunt. Contrary to popular rumor, it was not discovered inside the lining of an old sea chest.

Composed by Charles Ipcar in 2001, as recorded on **Uncommon Sailor Songs**, ©2004.

The header graphic is a photograph of apprentice Elisabeth Jacobsen down below in the four-masted barque *Parma* in 1933, photographed by her friend Alan Villiers, from his book **Last of the Wind Ships**, as re-published by W. W. Norton & Co., New York, US, ©2000, picture 50.



The picnic scene in **Porgy**

By Anonymous

Adapted for singing by Charles Ipcar, ©2001

Tune: after traditional *I've Been All Around This World*

## West Indies Blues

C G C G C F

Now I've been all o-ver dis dog-gone world, Been as far as Chi-na; \_\_\_\_\_

C G C G C G C F

Worst - es' place I ev - er did see Was Charles - ton, South Car - o - lin - a.

F **Chorus:** C G7 C F

I's gwine home, won't be long, Gwine home, sure's you bo'n; I's gwine

C G7 F G7 C

home, won't be long, Got dem Wes' In - dies blues! \_\_\_\_\_

Got me grip and trunk all packed,  
The ship, I's gwine take her;  
Say good-bye to Charleston Town,  
Gwine to Jamaica. (CHO)

Dem Charleston folks eat alligator meat,  
Fried wi' rice and taters;  
Bestes' eatin' I ever did have  
Was monkey hips an' tomaters. (CHO)

Now when I gets ter Kingston Town,  
Gonna hang around the water;  
Make me livin', sure's you bo'n,  
Diving after quarters. (CHO)

An' when I gets ter Kingston Town,  
Gwine get meself a carriage;  
Roll on down ter Sally's house  
An' make a Creole marriage. (CHO)

So good-bye, dear ol' Charleston Town,  
Me packet sail temorrer;  
Good-bye, all yo's dance hall gals,  
I leave you without sorrer. (CHO)2X

#### Notes:

From a popular 1920s blues song as sung by my mother's African-American nursemaid Ella Robinson Madison (1854-1933), but including some unique Charleston verses that were not recorded by any of the urban Black singers of the time who led other versions of this song. Those verses may well go back to Madison's days as an internationally known minstrel singer in the late 19th century. After she helped raise my mother, my grandparents helped Madison secure a singing part in the Guild Theatre production of **Porgy**, an early version of **Porgy and Bess**.

I've done some rewording and added the last verse. In addition, instead of using the original blues tune, I've set the song to a traditional Southern Appalachian tune. This is a classic song of the West Indies urban immigrant longing to return home.

Adapted by Charles Ipcar in 2001, as recorded on **Uncommon Sailor Songs**, ©2004; also recorded by Roll & Go on **Rolling Down to Sailortown**, ©2006.

The header graphic is a photograph of the picnic scene from the DuBose and Dorothy Hayward production of **Porgy**, Theatre Guild, New York City, 1927. Wesley Hill as Jake (third from left); Ella Madison (fourth from right), from the New York Public Library Digital Gallery.



Words by Charles Ipcar, ©2015  
Tune: inspired by chorus of *The Walloping Window Blind*

## The Day Namotu's Ship Came In

C F  
 It was a fair and pleas-ant day, — All shi-ning sand and sea; The waves were gen-tly  
 6 C D G C F  
 roll-ing in, Borne by a trop-ic breeze; Borne by a trop-ic breeze, me lads, Borne by a trop-ic  
 12 C G7 C  
 breeze, Na - mo - tu sat as he of - ten sat In the shade of a rub - a - gub tree.

In the shade of a rubagub tree,  
Now what do you think 'bout that?  
Such a curious sight this elephant might  
As on his bench he sat;  
*As on his bench he sat, me lads,*  
*As on his bench he sat;*  
With his brown suitcase and bumbershoot,  
And sporting a red top hat.

And as he gazed beyond the foam,  
Such longing and despair,  
He wished with all his aching heart  
Some ship might take him there;  
*Some ship might take him there, me lads,*  
*Some ship might take him there;*  
He'd roam no more this jungle shore  
And drive away dull care.

Then, a flash of white upon the blue,  
Was that a sail he spied?  
Could that speck be his ship,  
Sailing on the evening tide?  
*Sailing on the evening tide, me lads,*  
*Sailing on the evening tide,*  
That ship grew clear as she drew near,  
"My ship's come at last!" he cried.

"My ship's come at last!" he cried,  
And his top hat he did wave,  
He gave a toot from his great trunk  
As she anchored in the bay;  
*She anchored in the bay; me lads,*  
*She anchored in the bay;*  
They launched a lifeboat overside,  
And pulled in through the spray.

As Namotu dashed to greet the boat,  
He was most surprised to see,  
An elephant seated in the bow  
Waving back at he;  
*Yes, waving back at he, me lads,*  
*Waving back at he,*  
A pink straw hat perched on her pate  
As jaunty as could be.

He gallantly offered her his trunk,  
As she stepped out on the shore,  
"What a paradise this is," said she,  
"Who could ask for more?"  
*Oh, who could ask for more, me lads?*  
*Who could ask for more?*  
She wrapped her trunk all round his neck,  
Saying, "Who could ask for more?"  
*And she wrapped her trunk all round his neck,*  
*Saying, "Who could ask for more?"*

**Notes:**

This song is inspired by *The Day Namotu's Ship Came In*, an artwork painted by Paul Bond, ©2014, San Clemente, CA.

Bond in turn was inspired by a quote from T.S. Elliot: "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."

Bond went on to say:

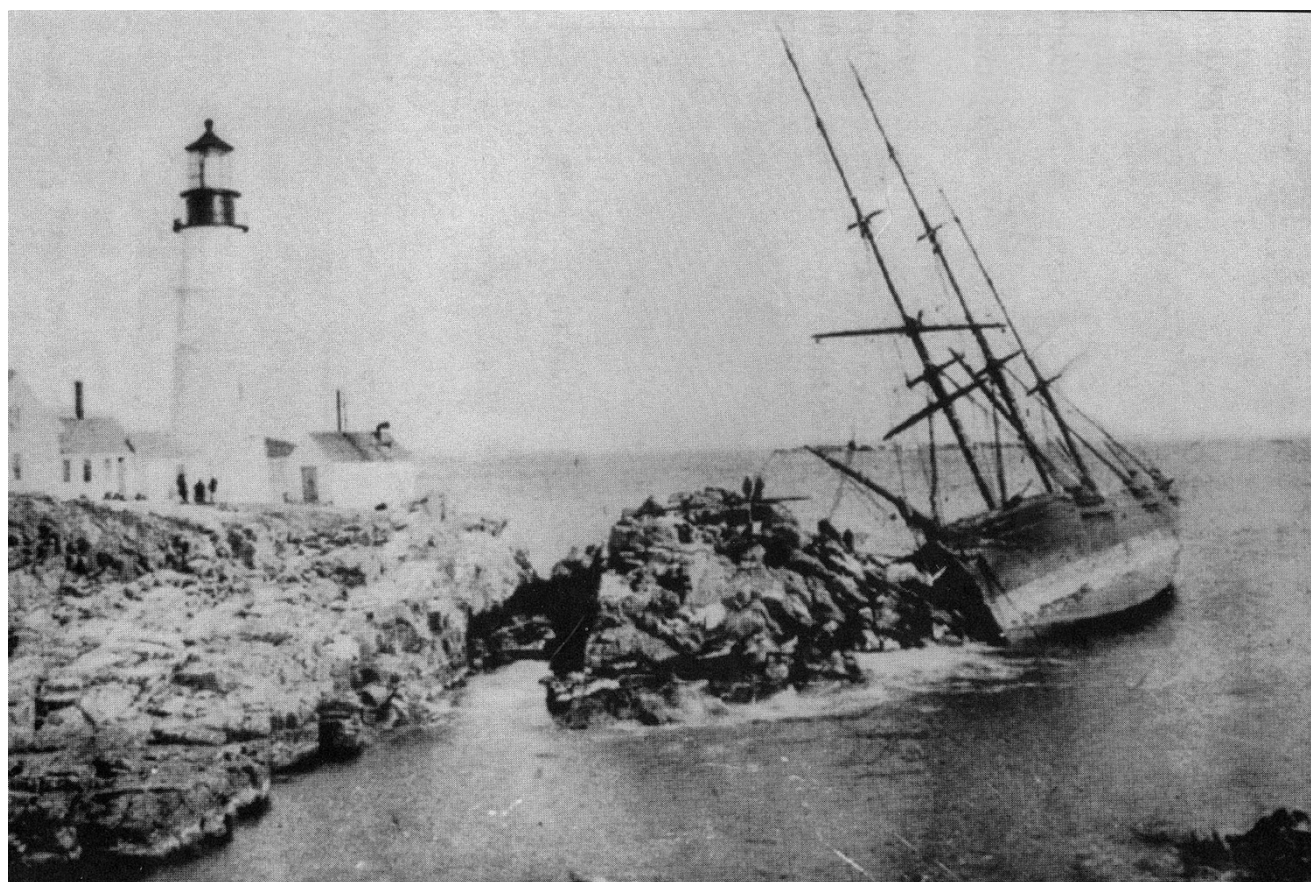
"Namotu leaves his jungle paradise for what he hopes will be a grander life. Perhaps he will find it. And perhaps, he will simply come to discover that his source of happiness was no further than the depths of his own heart. It doesn't always require an external journey to discover it. But following the callings of our hearts is the only truly worthy voyage in life."

My own song ended up with a somewhat different twist to the story.

Recorded by Charles Ipcar in 2015.

The header graphic is a black and white rendition of Paul Bond's original artwork, used with permission.





By Charles Ipcar, ©2021  
Tune traditional *Whiskey before Breakfast*

## The Wreck of the *Anne C. Maguire*-1886

F B $\flat$  F B $\flat$  F C F B $\flat$  F  
 On a moon-lit night so clear, Whisk-ey for me John-ny-o, Port-land Head was draw-ing near,

7 B $\flat$  F C F C  
 Whisk-ey for me John-ny-o! Our gal-lant bark sped through the night, She struck the ledge be-fore

12 F C B $\flat$  F B $\flat$  F C F  
 the Light, And it was a to-tal-ly awe-some sight, Whisk-ey for me John-ny-o! '

The *Anne Maguire* swung half around,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o,*  
Broadside to the cliff, hard aground,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o,*  
"All hands on deck!" our Captain cried,  
We pounded the deck from side to side,  
But she wouldn't budge, though hard we tried,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o!*

The year was eighteen eighty-six,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o,*  
We found ourselves in a helluva fix,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o,*  
'Twas Christmas Eve, disaster bound,  
Our Captain's shout did resound,  
"Abandon ship, 'lest we all drown!"  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o!*

We heaved a ladder o'er the rail,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o!*  
And tumbled ashore without fail,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o!*  
The lighthouse keeper and his spouse,  
Warned us up with Liverpool scouse,  
On salvaged Scotch we all got soused,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o!*

Early next morn to town we rode,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o!*  
The ship was bilged, her bottom stove,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o!*  
Wreckers saved her sails and chains,  
Only her standing rigging remained,  
While we drowned our sorrows and pain,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o!*

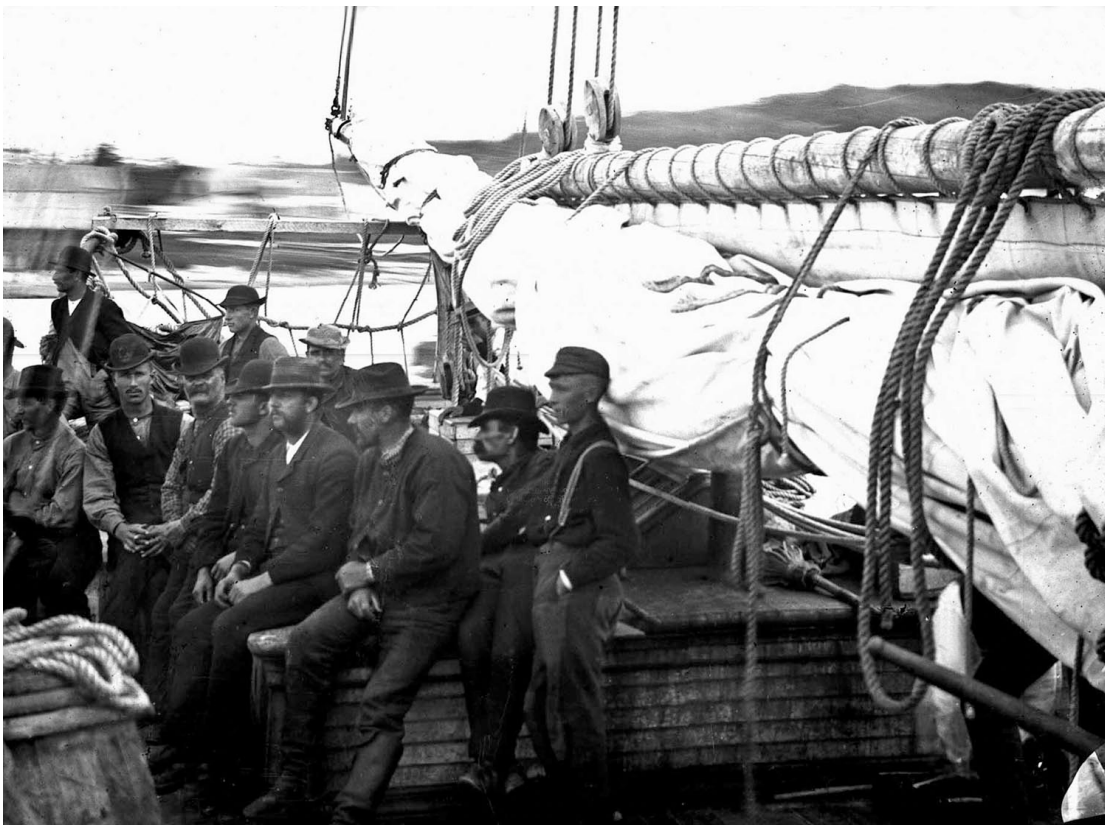
Here's to our Captain where e'er he be,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o!*  
A friend to the sailor on land or sea,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o!*  
And may his soul fore'er be blessed,  
Of all good fellas he was the best,  
For he shared the insurance at our request,  
*Whiskey for me Johnny-o!(2X)*

## Notes:

The photo of this wreck, broadside to Portland Head Light, riveted my attention when I first saw it and I couldn't sleep till I learned the rest of the story. It was not a stormy night, nor a foggy one; the bark was run straight onto a ledge at the foot of the lighthouse and captain and crew clambered over the rail to safety before she broke up. Most people at the time were highly suspicious of the captain, who was part owner of the bark, and in composing the song I channeled the rest of the story.

Recorded by Charles Ipcar, ©2021

The head graphic is titled *The Bark "Anne C. Maguire" Wrecked at Portland Head Light, ME, on Christmas Eve, 1886*, from the Maine Historical Society.



The crew of the bark *Anne C. Maguire*, from the Maine Historical Society

## Never Turn a Blind Eye to the Storm

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in treble clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is accompanied by a series of chords indicated by letters (G, C, D, Em) above the staff. The lyrics are written below the staff, with some words hyphenated across lines. The score consists of eight staves of music.

G C D G Em  
Now she went down last Oc - to-ber in a mas-sive hur - ri - cane; The

C D G D C  
waves were run-ning moun-tain high, with driv-ing wind and rain; Nine-ty miles off

D G Em C D  
Hat-ter-as, she could-n't take no more, And the H. M. S. *Boun-ty* she rolled

Em C D G  
o'er! There were six-teen souls a - board her, Cap-tain Wal-bridge and his

Em C D G  
crew; He'd sailed this ship nigh twen-ty years knew just what to do;

D C D G  
But her frames were filled with rot, and her pumps were known to

Em C D Em C  
fail; Should such a ship e-ver have set sail? Should such a ship

D G  
e-ver have set sail?

*Chorus:*                      D                      G

Ne-ver turn a blind eye to the storm, I \_\_\_\_\_

Em                      C                      D                      G                      D

say; \_\_\_\_\_ The sea is un - for - giv-ing; she'll snatch your life a - way;

C                      D                      G                      Em                      C

Learn your trade, weigh the risks, and you'll see bet-ter days, \_\_\_\_\_ Nev-er turn a

D                      Em                      C                      D                      G

blind eye to the storm, Nev-er turn \_\_\_\_\_ a blind eye to \_\_\_\_\_ the storm!

What was that captain thinking to leave port that day,  
 With a fast approaching hurricane directly in his way?  
 But he reassured his crew, "We'll be safer out to sea!"  
 And who were they to question his decree?  
 They refit the ship in Boothbay, so much rot was found;  
 Planks and frames ripped out, replaced, but still more were unsound;  
 "Caulk her up and paint her; I'm sure she'll do just fine;  
 We've got to reach St. Petersburg on time!"(2X) (CHO)

The ship was working hard, as she beat into the wind,  
 The captain shifted course southwest to save more time again;  
 But the only time he saved was the cruelest kind of pause,  
 As the great storm snatched the ship into its mighty claws;  
 The engine room was flooded as the seams gaped open wide;  
 The pumps were overwhelmed as the diesel engines died;  
 For the captain and his crew, it was their final trip,  
 They prepared the life rafts to abandon ship. (2X)(CHO)

Fourteen souls the Coast Guard saved on that fateful day;  
 The captain, he's still missing since he was swept away;  
 One deckhand was found dead, the newest member of the crew;  
 She'd always dreamed of sailing out into that endless blue;  
 Now there's nothing left to fathom but the questions and the pain;  
 The *Bounty's* on the bottom, she'll never rise again;  
 Ye mariners take warning, heed the sea in all its forms,  
 And never turn a blind eye to the storm,  
 Never turn a blind eye to the storm!

## Notes:

This song is largely based on the testimony provided at the Coast Guard inquiry into the sinking of the tall-ship *Bounty* on October 29 of 2012. I'd been following the testimony live and the summaries by retired Coast Guard officer Mario Vittrano at the Facebook g-Captain forum; I find Vittrano's summaries compassionate to the crew members but critical when it comes to safety and good judgment. I resisted composing the song until the hearing was complete. I think a message needs to be sent out to our friends in the tall-ship community, while this event is still fresh in our minds. It's true that the message won't be welcome by some, and painful to others. I regret that. But we should do all we can to ensure such a tragedy does not happen again.

Recorded by Charles Ipcar on **Never Turn a Blind Eye to the Storm**, ©2015.



Photo by the U.S. Coast Guard showing the tall ship *Bounty* as she sank in the Atlantic Ocean during Hurricane Sandy approximately 90 miles southeast of Hatteras, N.C., October 29, 2012, photographed by Petty Officer 2nd Class Tim Kuklewski





Words and music by Mike Kennedy, ©2010  
 Words slightly revised by Charlie Ipcar, 2011

## *Angelina*

C F G A min F

Three times 'round the cap - stan, the ca - ble takes the strain, As we

C F G F

pulled her from the pier side and out in - to the lane, And she

C G A min F

rose up oh so gent - ly, — on the ear - ly morn - ing tide, As

C F G F A min

straight - way down the Chan - nel, — An - ge - lin - a, she did glide. —

They said we had to move her, we had to move her soon,  
As the frost of late October cast its rings around the moon;  
So we led her through the Tickle, then let the cable play,  
Turned her to the south-south-west, out across the Bay.

We left the land behind us, far out on the grounds;  
As the wind died to a whisper, we swung her full around;  
We were on a painted ocean, beneath a painted sky;  
In the gray light of the morning, we came to say good-bye.

She was old when we first met her; old when we were young;  
Our lives were all before us, hers was all but run,  
But we were all enchanted by her lines and sheer,  
And if fortune stood against us, well, we really didn't care.

We calked her and we scrubbed her, mended every line,  
And we learned to sail her smartly, though it took a bit of time;  
We were masters of the world, of wind and sea and sky,  
And for six good years we sailed her; then it was good-bye.

We took her to the back bay, tied her up at old Gayle's pier;  
Gayle, he looked after her for more than twenty years,  
And then we got this letter sayin' Gayle had passed away,  
And they'd sold the land for condos and they said she couldn't stay.

I opened up her sea cocks and then cast off the line,  
And I thought for just a moment when we were in our prime,  
And I felt the deck rock gently, with the movement of the tide,  
As I climbed down to the towboat, and pushed off from her side.

We circled once around her, the water ebbed and flowed,  
As the sea commenced to fill her, she began to settle low,  
And when it reached her timber ports, she gave a quiet sigh,  
As her bow sank ever lower, and her stern rose to the sky.

Then Nor, he cut the engine, we drifted with the swell,  
As the sea birds circled over, with the mewing of the gulls,  
And Mike, he flaked out the line, the last of the tow,  
As she leaned her port rail under, I said "There she goes."

We stood there for a moment, caught as in a trance,  
As she curtsied like a lady at a spring cotillion dance,  
And now she's on the bottom with the fishes of the sea;  
May she be as good a home to them, as she's been a home for me. (2X)

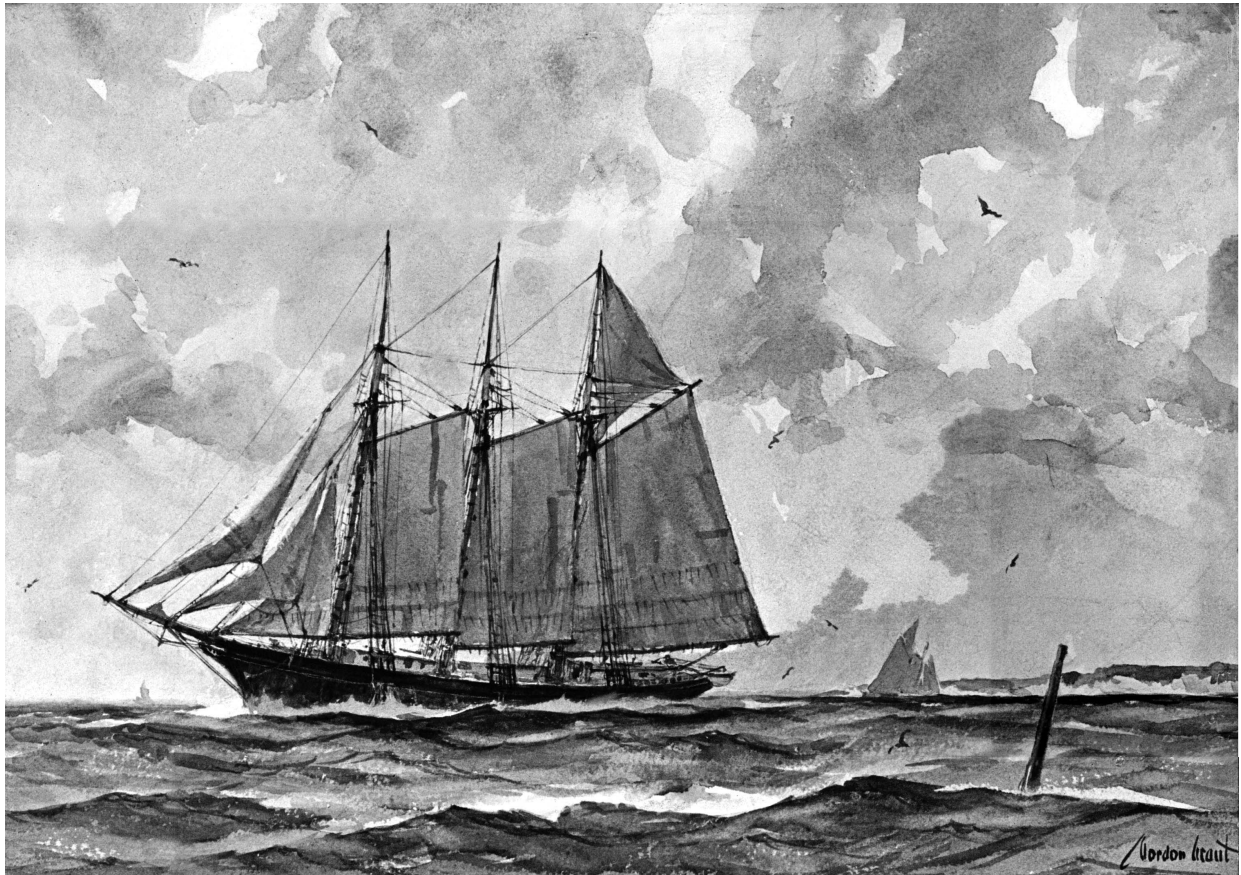


## Notes:

This song by Mike Kennedy, used with permission, is a tribute to all the old windjammers that used to roam the Seven Seas, the young men who crewed them, and the old men who still remember and cherish them. I've dropped one of Mike's verses and changed some of the names.

Recorded by Charles Ipcar on **Songs from an Old Sea Chest**, ©2012; also recorded by Mike Kennedy on **A Dog's Life**, ©2022.

The header graphic is titled *Ultimate Tow*, a lithograph drawn by John A. Noble, 1983, from **Hulls and Hulks in the Tide of Time**, Erin Urban, The John A. Noble Collection, New York, ©1993, p. 238.



3-Masted Coastal Schooner, painted by nautical artist Gordon Grant

*Natchez & Delta Queen Race, Steamboat Days, Old Fall River Line, Mobile Bay, Storm Along Stormy, Roll Out! Heave Dat Cotton!, De Bad Bob Lee, Capt. Jim Rees & the Katy, Riverboat Gambler, Katahdin's Battle with the Gale, Ballad of Capt. Blanche Leathers*

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## Order a CD Recording of These Songs

### Uncommon Sailor Songs, ©2004

*West Indies Blues, Flying-Fish Sailor, Christmas at Sea, Windlass Chanty, Outward Bound, Yangtse River Shanty, Shanghai Passage, Hell's Pavement, Limehouse Reach, Mariner's Compass, Widgery Wharf, Wake Up Susiana, Swabbing Days Are Gone, Pearl Diver, Cowardly Act, Wreckers' Song, Freedom Schooner Amistad, Port o' Dreams, Mariquita, Pastures of Memories*

### More Uncommon Sailor Songs, ©2005

*Rio Grande, Lee Fore Brace, Lumber, Hastings Mill, Old Fiddle, Haul Away the Nets, Capt. Bailey's Mistake, Dead Dog Cider, Pirates' Own Song, Rodent Mariners, Old She-Crab, Dr. Dogbody's Leg, Anderson's Coast, Rosario, Pacific Coast, So Long (All Coiled Down)*

### Old Sailor Poets, ©2007

*Bound Away, Pier-Head Chorus, Tasman Buster, Chantey of the Cook, Sea Cook, Merchants Island, Tattooed Lady, Bumboats, Salvage Men, Ballad of John Silver, Neptune's Daughter, Sailor Town, Shipmates, Ship in a Bottle, Sea Dreams, Mid-Watches, Long Road Home*

### Sailortown Days, ©2009

*Sea Traders, Mobile Bay, Tramps (Chantey for Steam), Auckland to the Bluff, Ballad of the Old Navy, News in Daly's Bar, Old Pagoda Anchorage, Frederick's of Woolloomooloo, Concrete and Glass, Traveller, Wreck of the Lady Washington, Sailor's Farewell, Mother Carey, Outside Track, Leave Her Johnnie, Evening Shadows Fall*

### Songs from an Old Sea Chest, ©2012

*Storm Along Stormy, Laying on the Screw, Rathlin Head, Chalk Ginger Blue, Night at Dago Tom's, Drink to the Men, Angelina, Clan Alpine, Steamboat Days, Jolly Bargeman, Farewell to ANZAC, Spectral Fishing Fleet, So They Said Good-bye, Old Tea Clipper Days, A Parting, High Tide at 4 AM, Press Room's Extra Voice*

### Never Turn a Blind Eye to the Storm, ©2015

*Never Turn a Blind Eye to the Storm, Ballad of the Bolivar, Wreck of the Norfolk Express, Natchez and Delta Queen Race, Rhyme of Charon the Ferryman, High Noon in the Tropics, Old Ship Riggers, Battle between Enterprise and Boxer, Day of Little Ships, Three Kitties Set Out to Sea, Seven Subs of Severn, Rogue Time-Police, Nile Is a River, Christmas Night, Life's Journey, Chanteyman*

### Steamboat Days, ©2019

*Natchez and Delta Queen Race, Steamboat Days, Old Fall River Line, Mobile Bay, Storm Along Stormy, Roll Out! Heave Dat Cotton!, De Bad Bob Lee, Capt. Jim Rees and the Katy, Riverboat Gambler, Katahdin's Battle with the Gale, Ballad of Blanche Leathers, Where's an Old Time Riverman Go*

Each recording may be purchased for \$15, postage and handling included, check made payable to Charlie Ipcar and mailed to 80 Main St, Richmond, ME 04357.

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There has long been a keen interest in songs describing the world of the deep-water sailor from the Age of Sail, through the Age of Steam, and continuing to our present time. There's something about the power of the seas and the winds that provokes strong emotions in the most hardened shellback as well as the armchair sailor. And one consequence of this has been the publication of many fine volumes featuring songs of the sea in the last century.

The mission of this songbook is to provide ready access to a selection of 78 finely crafted sailor songs that are not commonly sung by contemporary nautical singers, primarily because the songs are unfamiliar to them. Some are very old but have eluded the attention of our singers. The vast majority, however, are recently adapted from the nautical poems of old sailors from around 1900 and are only just beginning to be added to the repertoire. Others are newly composed in the tradition of older sea songs, and are a testament to the continuation and revitalization of nautical singing. And some are parodies of traditional sea songs.



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The author leading songs at the Mystic Sea Music Festival in 2006

Charles Ipcar is a singer of traditional and contemporary sea music who has toured from coast to coast in the States as well as in Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Ipcar has also been featured as a solo performer and workshop leader at the prestigious Mystic Sea Music Festival in Connecticut, and has performed with his band Roll & Go at that same Festival.

He is professionally trained as an Urban Geographer, with a Ph.D. from Michigan State University. He has also taught geography as a Peace Corps volunteer in the secondary schools of Ethiopia. He is currently retired but still an active singer.

Ipcar's interest in nautical singing was inspired by folk singers and neighbors Bill and Gene Bonyun and other folk singers who would show up at the family song parties in the 1950s. Ipcar is best known for his interest in the nautical poems of Cicely Fox Smith. He has also adapted poems for singing by many other nautical poets, as well as composed his own songs of the sea.

He resides with his wife Judy, along with their calico cat, in the Kennebec River town of Richmond, Maine.