

# 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**

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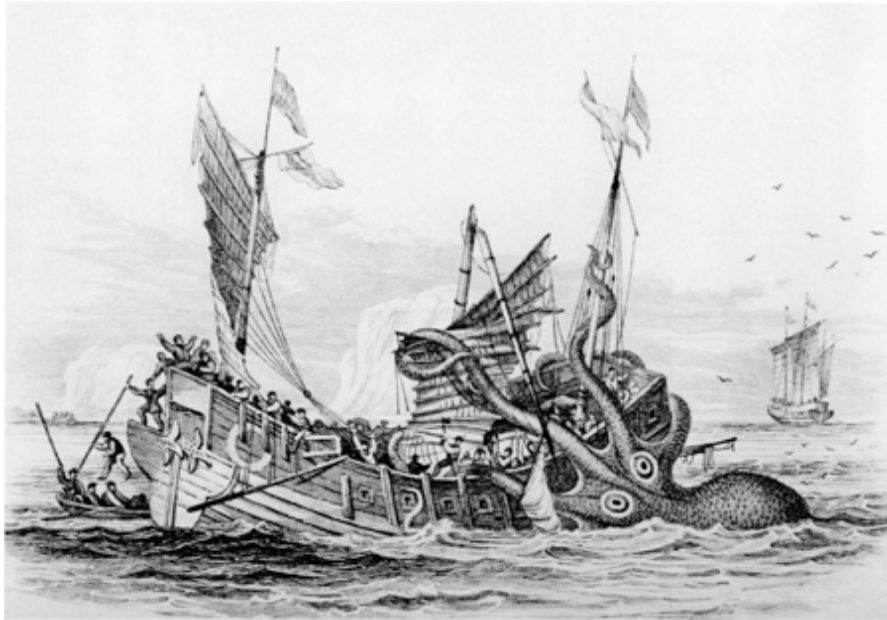
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### **Acknowledgement to Graphic Artists**

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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 fifty 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, Lincoln Colcord, Burt Franklin Jenness, Harry Kemp, Henry Lawson, Hamish Maclaren, John Masefield, William McFee, Angus Cameron Robertson, 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 Jessop, Joe McGrath, Vince Morash, Rudy Sunde, and Bob Watson. 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 CD's 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,  
as photographed by Alison Lee Freeman in 2006

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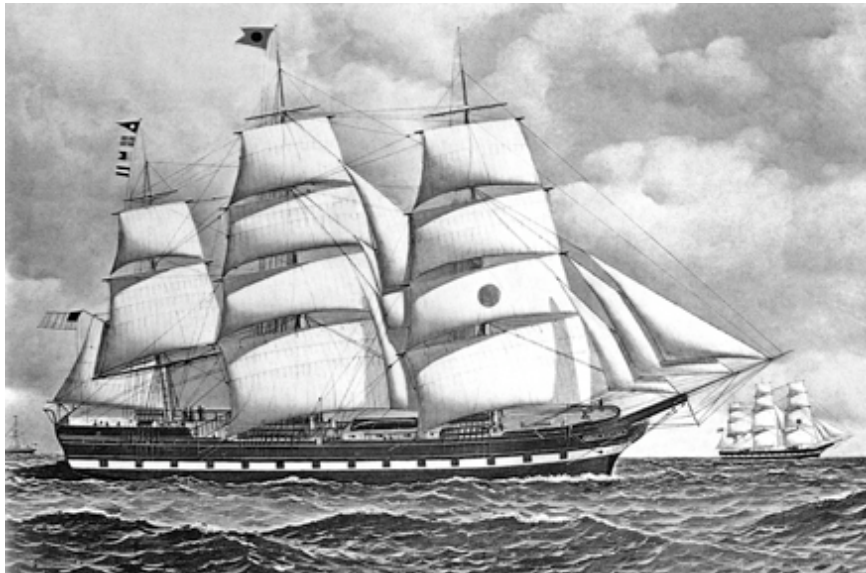
View of piers along South Street, New York City, 1878, from **Nautical Illustrations**, reprinted by Dover Publications, New York, US, p. 36

# 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)

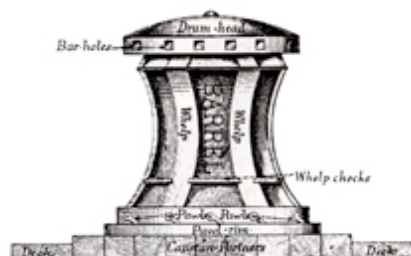
#### Notes:

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 1890's, 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 Henry Lawson, ©1896  
 Words slightly modified by Charles Ipcar, 2002  
 Tune: after Gerry Hallom, © 1982

## The Outside Track

F G min F B<sup>b</sup> F C F B<sup>b</sup>

There were ten of us there on that moon-lit quay And one on the for'-ard hatch; — No

F G min F B<sup>b</sup> F B<sup>b</sup> F C

straight - er man to his mates than he, No one could be his match; "Twill be

F B<sup>b</sup> F B<sup>b</sup> F C

long, old man, 'fore our glass - es clink, 'Twill be long 'fore we grasp — your hand!" Then we

F G min F B<sup>b</sup> F C F

dragged him a-shore for a fin - al drink, Till the whole — wide world seemed grand.

F Chorus: C F C F B<sup>b</sup> F

For they mar-ry and go, as the world rolls back, They mar-ry and van-ish and

C F G min F B<sup>b</sup> F C F

die; But their spir-it shall live on the out-side track, As long—as the years go by.

The port-lights glowed in the morning mist  
 That rose from the waters so green;  
 And over the railing we grasped his fist  
 As the dark tide came between;  
 We cheered the captain, we cheered the crew,  
 And our own mate, times out of mind;  
 We cheered the land he was going to,  
 And the land he'd left behind. (CHO)

We roared Lang Syne as a last farewell,  
 But me heart felt out of joint;  
 I well remember the hush that fell  
 As the steamer cleared the point;  
 We drifted home through the public bars,  
 We was ten times less by one,  
 Who'd sailed out under the morning stars,  
 Into the rising sun. (CHO)

And one by one, two by two,  
 They've sailed from the quay since then –  
 I've said good-bye to the last I knew,  
 The last of the careless men –  
 And I can't help but think that the times we had  
 Were the best times after all –  
 As I turn aside, raise my glass,  
 And drink to this bar-room wall. (CHO)

### Notes:

From **Verses Popular and Humorous**, by Henry Lawson, published by Angus and Robertson, Sydney, Australia, © 1900, p. 7; the poem first appeared in a Sydney periodical called **Truth** on December 27, 1896; reprinted in **Poetical Works of Henry Lawson**, published by Angus and Robertson, Ltd., Sydney, Australia, © 1967, pp. 127-128.

This song is based on a poem by the Australian poet Henry Lawson (1867-1922), as set to music by Gerry Hallom (UK), © 1982. I first heard it sung by Margaret Walters and John Warner in Sydney, Australia. In this song the old gang breaks up as one of its members returns to England. Those left behind feel the loss strongly, and as their numbers diminish year by year, the remaining ones become increasingly bitter. In the original poem there is a final verse where the last one left behind talks about earning more money and then shipping out as well:

But I'll try my luck for a cheque Out Back  
Then a last good-bye to the bush  
For my heart's away on the Outside Track  
On the track of the steerage push.

Words and tune slightly modified by Charles Ipcar, as recorded on **Old Sailor-Poets**, © 2007; also recorded by Roll & Go on **Rolling Down to Sailortown**, © 2006.

The header graphic shows international passenger steamers moored along the waterfront of Circular Quay in Sydney Harbour, Australia, about 1905. In the foreground are the ferry piers for cross-harbour passage to Manly and Watson Bay, photographer unknown.



*Outward Bound: The Dunnottar Castle Leaving the Tilbury Dock, London, 1891, by Sir Frank Brangwyn*



## Bibliography of Selected Nautical Poets

Bill (Bertram Martin) Adams (1879-1953)

**Ships and Women**, Little Brown & Co., Boston, Massachusetts, US, © 1937

**Wind in the Topsails**, George G. Harrap & Co., London, UK, © 1931

Edwin J. Brady (1869-1952)

**The Ways of Many Waters**, The Bulletin Newspaper Co., Sydney, Australia, © 1899

Lincoln Colcord (1883-1947)

**Sea Stories from Searsport to Singapore**, North Country Press, Thorndike, Maine, US, © 1987

Burt Franklin Jenness (1895-1971)

**Man o' War Rhymes**, The Cornhill Publishing Co., Boston, Massachusetts, US, © 1918

**Ocean Haunts**, Empire Publishing Co., New York, US, © 1934

**Sea Lanes**, The Cornhill Publishing Co., Boston, Massachusetts, US, © 1921

**Service Rhymes**, Press of El Paso Printing Co., El Paso, New Mexico, US, © 1917

**Spindrift & Sagebrush**, The Naylor Co., San Antonio, Texas, US, © 1960

Harry Kemp (1883-1960)

**Chanteys and Ballads**, Brentano's Publishers, New York, US, © 1920

Hamish Maclaren (1900-1987)

**Sailor with Banjo**, The Macmillan Co., New York, US, © 1929, 1930

John Masefield (1878-1967)

**Salt-Water Poems & Ballads**, The Macmillan Co., New York, US, © 1914

William McFee (1881-1966)

**Reflections of Marsyas**, The Slide Mountain Press, Gaylordsville, Connecticut, US, © 1933

## **Bibliography of Selected Sea Music Books (chronological)**

**The Music of the Waters**, Laura Alexandrine Smith, Kegan Paul Trench & Co., London, UK, © 1888.

**Real Sailor-Songs**, John Ashton, Leadenhall Press, London, UK, 1891; reprinted by Benjamin Blom, Inc., New York, US, © 1972

**A Sailor's Garland**, John Masefield, The Macmillan Co., New York, US, © 1906

**Songs of Sea Labour**, Frank T. Bullen & W. F. Arnold, The Orpheus Music Publishing Co., London, UK, © 1914

**Songs of the Sea & Sailors' Chanteys**, Robert Frothingham, Houghton Mifflin Co., Cambridge, Massachusetts, US, © 1924

**A Book of Shanties**, Cicely Fox Smith, Methuen & Co., Ltd., London, UK, © 1927

**Sea Songs and Shanties**, W. B. Whall, Brown, Son and Ferguson, Ltd., Glasgow, UK, © 1927

**The Shanty Book**, Richard Runciman Terry, J. Curwin & Sons, Ltd., London, UK, © 1931

**Songs of American Sailormen**, Joanna Colcord, Bramhall House, New York, US, © 1938

**Shanties from the Seven Seas**, Stan Hugull, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, UK, © 1961; reprinted by Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut, US, © 1994

**Songs of the Sea**, Stan Hugill, McGray-Hill Book Co., New York, US, © 1977

**Grey Funnel Lines**, Cyril Tawney, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, UK, © 1987

**Songs of the Sailor and Lumberman**, William Main Doerflinger, Myerbooks, Glenwood, Illinois, US, © 1990

**An American Sailor's Treasury**, Frank Shay, Smithmark Publishers, New York, US, © 1991

**Chanteying aboard American Ships**, Frederick Pease Harlow, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut, US, © 2004

**Songs the Whalersmen Sang**, Gale Huntington, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut, US, © 2005

## Select Discography

**The Drunkard's Song (There is a Tavern in the Town)**, Rudy Vallée and His Connecticut Yankees, © 1934

*The Tattooed Lady (Fox Trot)*

**Mark Twain's 1601**, by Richard Dyer-Bennet, © 1962; re-released by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, © 2006

*The Old She-Crab*

**A Run a Minute**, Gerry Hallom, © 1983

*The Outside Track*

**The Outside Track**, by Garnet Rogers, © 1985

*The Outside Track*

**Shantyman**, by Tilitha Mackenzie et al, © 1986

*Dramamine*

**The Songs of Chris Kempster**, Chris Kempster, © 2006 (the recording was made in the ABC studios in 1993)

*The Outside Track*

**Hearts of Gold**, by William Pint and Felicia Dale, © 1994

*Wreck of the Lady Washington*

**Who Was Here**, by Margaret Walters and John Warner, © 1997

*The Outside Track*

**Harbors of Home**, by Gordon Bok, Ed Trickett & Ann Mayo Muir, © 1998

*The Outside Track*

**Keep on Fishing**, by Jon Campbell, © 2000

*Frederick's of Galilee*

**Hold On**, by Vince Morash, © 2000

*Haul Away the Nets*

**Outward Bound**, by Roll & Go, © 2002

*Dramamine, Yangtse River Shanty*

**Between the Dark and Light**, Nancy Kerr & James Fagan, © 2002

*The Outside Track*

**Salt Water Ballads**, Andy Kenna, Liverpool Forebitters, © 2002

*Pier Head Chorus*

**Tom Lewis 360°**, by Tom Lewis, © 2003

*Christmas at Sea*

**Ye Mariners All**, by John Roberts et al, © 2003

*Yangtse River Shanty*

**Uncommon Sailor Songs**, by Charlie Ipcar, © 2004

*West Indies Blues, Christmas at Sea, Windlass Chanty, Yangtse River Shanty, Hell's Pavement, Mariner's Compass, Widgery Wharf, Wake Up Susiana, Swabbing Days Are Gone, Pearl Diver, A Cowardly Act, Wrecker's Song, Freedom Schooner Amistad*

**More Uncommon Sailor Songs**, by Charlie Ipcar, © 2005

*Haul Away the Nets, Capt. Baily's Mistake, Pirates Own Song, Rodent Mariners, The Old She-Crab, Dr. Dogbody's Leg*

**Auckland to the Bluff**, by Rudy Sunde & The Maritime Crew, © 2005

*Auckland to the Bluff*

**Rolling Down to Sailortown**, by Roll & Go, © 2006

*Mariner's Compass, West Indies Blues, The Outside Track*

**Albatross**, Joanna Wren, © 2006

*Neptune's Daughter*

**Old Sailor-Poets**, by Charlie Ipcar, © 2007

*A Pier-Head Chorus, Tasman Buster, The Chantey of the Cook, Sea Cook, Merchants Island, The Tattooed Lady, Bumboats, The Salvage Men, A Ballad of John Silver, Neptune's Daughter, Sea Dreams, Mid-Watches*

**Fathom This**, by Barry Finn and Neil Downey (Finn & Haddie), © 2007

*Yangtse River Shanty*

**Rolling the Whole World Round**, by Fore 'N' Aft, © 2007

*Tramps (Chantey for Steam)*

**Sailortown Days**, by Charles Ipcar, © 2009

*Sea Traders, Tramps (Chantey for Steam), Auckland to the Bluff, A Ballad of the Old Navy, Frederick's of Woolloomooloo, Wreck of the Lady Washington, Mother Carey, The Outside Track*

**Bold Reilly Gone Away**, by Danny Spooner, © 2009

*Yangtse River Shanty*

**Yup I Said That**, by Jon Campbell et al, © 2009

*Frederick's of Galilee, Frederick's of Woolloomooloo*

**A Piece of the Universe**, by Great Bay Sailor, © 2009

*West Indies Blues*

**Look Out**, by Roll & Go, © 2010

*Bound Away, The Salvage Men, A Ballad of John Silver, Neptune's Daughter, Wreck of the Lady Washington*



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The mission of this songbook is to provide ready access to a selection of 50 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 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 a developer of energy efficient buildings.

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 1950's. 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 two cats, in the Kennebec River town of Richmond, Maine.