

## Roll Alabama Roll

1. When the Alabama's keel was laid  
**Roll, Alabama, roll**  
It was laid in the yards of Jonathan Laird  
**O roll, Alabama, roll**
2. It was laid in the yards of Jonathan Laird  
**Roll, Alabama, roll**  
It was laid in the town of Birkenhead  
**O roll, Alabama, roll**
3. Down Mersey way she sailed then  
**Roll, Alabama, roll**  
Liverpool fitted her with guns and men  
**O roll, Alabama, roll**
4. Down mersey way she sailed forth  
**Roll, Alabama, roll**  
To destroy the commerce of the North  
**O roll, Alabama, roll**
5. To Cherbourg harbour she sailed one day  
**Roll, Alabama, roll**  
To collect her share of the prize money
6. And many a sailor saw his doom  
**Roll, Alabama, roll**  
When the Yankee Kearsarge hove in view  
**O roll, Alabama, roll**
7. A shot from the forward pivot that day  
**Roll, Alabama, roll**  
Blew the Alabama's stern away  
**O roll, Alabama, roll**
8. Off the three mile limit in sixty-four  
**Roll, Alabama, roll**  
She sank to the bottom of the ocean floor  
**O roll, Alabama, roll.**

This version is sung by [Portsmouth Shantymen](#) on CD: *Hangin' Round the Yard*,

[Swan Arcade](#)'s sing at <https://youtu.be/xlPtXpEeWFE> accompanied by some lovely, uncredited, photos and also displaying their lyrics.

### Notes

A tack and sheet, short pull, sweating up, or possibly halyard shanty ...

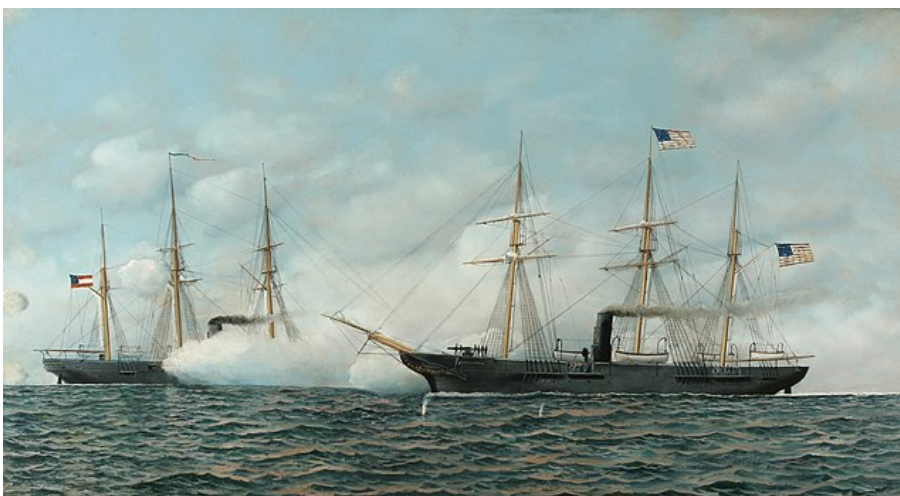
Richard Runciman **Terry**, 1921, *The Shanty Book, Sailor Shanties* says it's a **foresheet** shanty

Capt W.B. **Whall**, 1913, *Ships, Sea songs and Shanties*, says it is used as a last **short pull** for sweating up.

Stan **Hugill**, 1994, *Shanties from the Seven Seas*: This is another famous **tack and sheet** shanty. I learnt much of my version from Paddy Griffiths, who told me it was used mainly for hauling aft the foresheet after reefing the foresail.

**The Alabama** was a wooden steam propeller, built 1862. Read her specification at **Chris Ryall's** page <https://chrisryall.net/birkenhead/alabama.htm>

Commissioned on August 24, 1862, the CSS [Confederate Steam Ship] **Alabama** was the Confederacy's most effective weapon on the seas in the [American] Civil War. It captured 65 Union vessels and sank one warship, the USS Hatteras, on January 11, 1863. The Alabama was sunk by the USS [US Steamship] **Kearsarge** in the English Channel [in the Battle of Cherbourg] on June 19, 1864. [Encyclopedia of Alabama](#).



Antonio **Jacobsen**, (1850-1921)  
*USS Kearsarge vs CSS Alabama*, 1914  
via [wikimedia commons](#)