

Yankee Whalersmen

1. Farewell and adieu you fair Spanish ladies,
Farewell and adieu to you ladies of Spain,
For we've received orders to sail to New
England,
And we hope in a short time to see you again.

**We'll rant and we'll roar
Like true Yankee Whalersmen,
We'll rant and we'll roar on deck and
below.
Until we sight Gayhead
Off old Martha's Vineyard
And straight up the channel to New
Bedford we'll go.**

2. We hove our our ship to with the wind from
the sou'west, boys.
We hove our our ship to, deep soundings to
take.
'Twas 45 fathoms with a light sandy bottom.
We squared our main yard and up channel did
make.

**We'll rant and we'll roar
Like true Yankee Whalersmen.
We'll rant and we'll roar on deck and
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Until we sight Gayhead
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3. I went to a dance one night in Tombaz.
There were plenty of girls there as fine as you

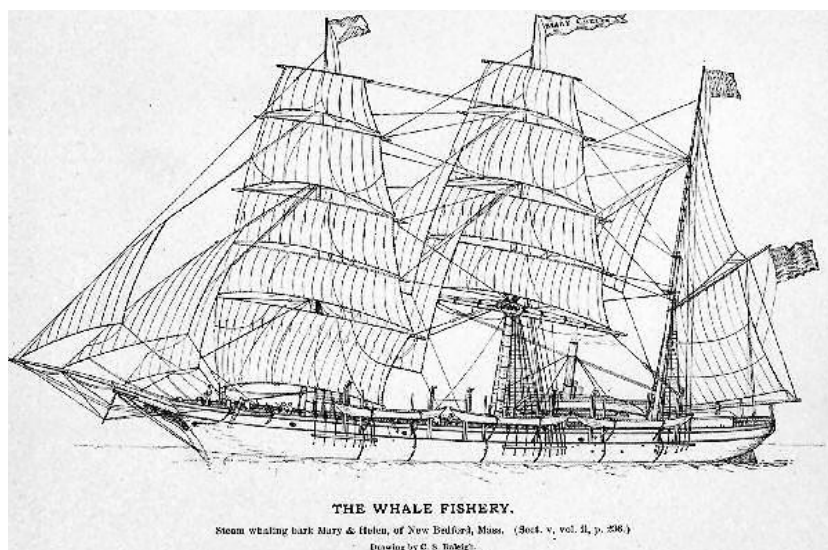
wish.
There was one pretty maiden a chewin'
tobacco
Just like a young kitten a chewin' fresh fish.

**We'll rant and we'll roar
Like true Yankee Whalersmen.
We'll rant and we'll roar on deck and
below.
Until we sight Gayhead
Off old Martha's Vineyard
And straight up the channel to New
Bedford we'll go.**

4. Then the signal was sent for the grand ship
to anchor,
And all in the downs that night for to lie.
Let go your shank painter, let go your cat
stopper
Haul up your clew garnets, let tacks and
sheets fly.

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Like true Yankee Whalersmen
We'll rant and we'll roar on deck and
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Until we sight Gayhead
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And straight up the channel to New
Bedford we'll go.**

Hear a version of this capstan shanty by **David Coffin** at youtu.be/BZRk8Xc1KB4 and another by **Andrew Calhoun** at youtu.be/Ng7kVZySZSw



Whaling Ship /Steam Bark "Mary & Helen" of New Bedford (Massachusetts, USA)
Line drawing / print by C.S. Raleigh (late 19th/early 20th), via [Wikimedia](#)

Notes:

A homeward-bound **capstan** shanty and sea-song. An American variant of the English **Spanish Ladies**. Other versions mention of different places.

Gay Head is a run of cliffs of clay on the western-most part of the island of **Martha's Vineyard**, Massachusetts.

New Bedford was an important whaling station in the 19th century. Its **whaling museum web site** is very interesting..



Map of Buzzards Bay off the coast of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, USA, showing **Martha's Vineyard**, **Gayhead** and **New Bedford**.
By [NormanEinstein](#) at via [Wikimedia Commons](#).

Nautical terms

45 fathoms with a light sandy bottom - the sea-bed was 45 fathoms down and sandy.(a fathom is 6')

main yard - spar (yard) set across the main mast to

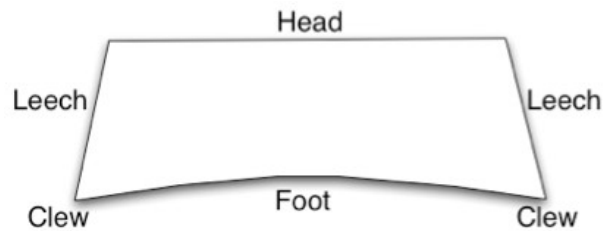
support a sail

Chewing tobacco etc... this simile crops up in a number of shanties.

Shank painter - a short rope or chain by which the shank of an anchor is held fast to a ship's side when not in use and prevents the flukes from flying off the bill-board; where a bill-board is not used it bears the weight of the fluke end of the anchor.

cat stopper - a piece of rope rove through the ring of an anchor to secure it for sea.

clew - a lower corner of a square sail, to which **clew lines** are attached,



Parts of a square sail, [Wikimedia Commons](#)

clew garnet - the tackle attached to the **clew line**; the clew line or tackle (of a lower square sail in a full rigged ship) by means of which the clews are hauled up to the yard. [Oxford Companion]

The sails are thus **clewed up** (or clued up) ready for gathering up or **furling**.

tacks - ropes attached to the sails; leading forward

sheets - ropes attached to the clew and leading aft

fly - when tacks and sheets "fly" they are no longer pulling on the sail; the sail spills the wind and the ship is no longer being driven by it.



Gay Head Cliffs MV, from [Wikimedia Commons](#).