

Blow, Boys, Blow

Informant/Performer:
Noble B. Brown
Woodman, WI, 1946

Source:
Library of Congress AFS 8427 B
Collected by Helene Stratman-Thomas
and Aubrey Snyder

Solo: A Yan - kee ship came down the ri - ver, Group: Blow, boys, — blow,

Solo: A Yan - kee ship came down the ri - ver, Group: Blow, boys, bon - ny boys, blow.

Transcribed by Gail Needleman

2. And how do you know she's a Yankee clipper?
Blow, boys, blow,
Oh, how do you know she's a Yankee clipper?
Blow, boys, bonny boys, blow.
3. The stars and bars they flew behind her.
Blow, boys, blow,
The stars and bars they flew behind her.
Blow, boys, bonny boys, blow.
4. And who do you think was the skipper of her?
Blow, boys, blow,
A blue-nosed Nova Scotia hardcase.
Blow, boys, bonny boys, blow.
5. And who do you think was the chief mate of her?
Blow, boys, blow,
A loud-mouthed disbarred Boston lawyer.
Blow, boys, bonny boys, blow.
6. And what do you think we had for breakfast?
Blow, boys, blow,
The starboard side of an old sou-wester.
Blow, boys, bonny boys, blow.
7. Then what do you think we had for dinner?
Blow, boys, blow,
We had monkey's heart and shark's liver.
Blow, boys, bonny boys, blow.
8. Can you guess what he had for supper?
Blow, boys, blow,
We had strong salt junk and weak tea water.
Blow, boys, bonny boys, blow.
9. Then blow us out and blow us homeward,
Blow, boys, blow,
Oh, blow today and blow tomorrow.
Blow, boys, bonny boys, blow.
10. Blow fair and steady, mild and pleasant,
Blow, boys, blow,
Oh, blow us into Boston Harbor.
Blow, boys, bonny boys, blow.
11. We'll blow ashore and blow our payday
Blow, boys, blow,
Then blow aboard and blow away
Blow, boys, bonny boys, blow.
12. We'll blow until our blow is over.
Blow, boys, blow,
From Singapore to Cliffs of Dover,
Blow, boys, bonny boys, blow.

Note: free rhythm, often dotted to
correspond to speech

Background Information

Both Doerflinger and Colcord are in agreement that this halyard shanty is purely American in origin, and came into being during the days of the North Atlantic packet trade with Liverpool, shortly after the War of 1812. It was widely popular, as the four variants which Doerflinger gives attest.

-- liner notes to *American Sea Songs and Shanties* (AAFS L26)