

Santy Ana

J~ 68

Form: ABCD

Informant: Capstan Chanteyman Stuart Frank ([link](#))

Capstan Shanty
Call & Response
s,I,t,drm s
Incomplete minor

The musical notation consists of four staves of music. The first staff starts with a '4' and ends with 'fame'. The second staff starts with 'Heave' and ends with 'na'. The third staff starts with 'He' and ends with 'name'. The fourth staff starts with 'all' and ends with 'CO'. Below each staff, the lyrics are written in blue ink.

Staff 1:

- m Oh
- l, San -
- t, ty
- d a - na
- r fought
- d for fame

Staff 2:

- s Heave
- s a-way,
- m
- l, San -
- ty t,
- d a - na

Staff 3:

- t, He
- r fought
- t, for
- fame
- t, and
- r gained
- t, his
- s, name

Staff 4:

- l, all
- d on
- the
- t, plains
- s, of
- s, Me-
- l, xi -
- l, CO

Oh Santy Ana gained the day
And General Taylor ran away

I thought I heard the old man say
He gave us grog this very day

Oh, Santy Ana fought for gold
And the deeds he done have oft' been told

Oh, Santy Ana fought for fame
He fought for fame and gained his name

Source: Frank, S. M., Gillespie, S., & Cohn, E. (1978). *Sea Chanties and Forecastle Songs at Mystic Seaport* [Album]. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. ([link](#))

What stands out to me pedagogically:

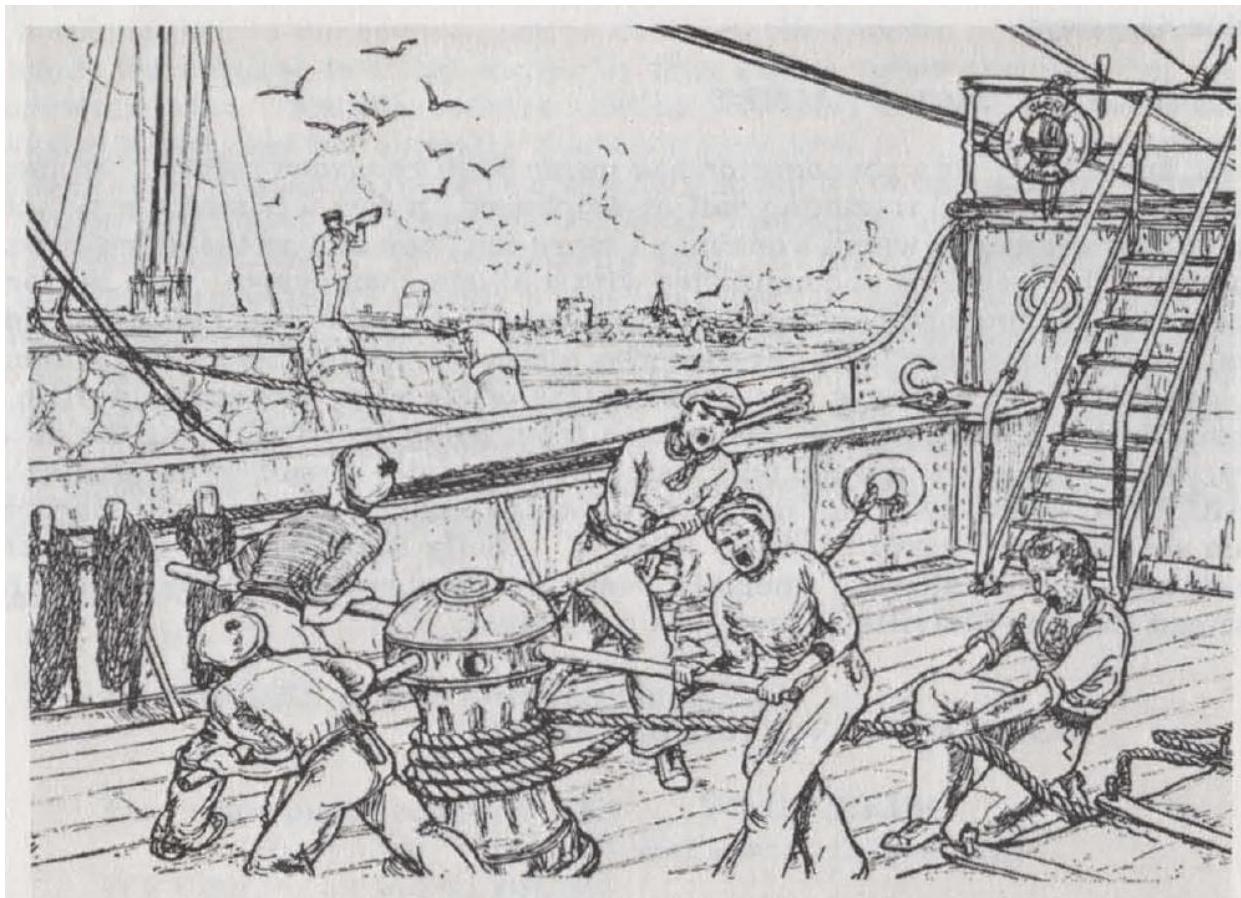
Rhythm: The accompanying "clank" of the chain in the recording makes this song almost feel as if it could be notated in cut time, and it should be moved to as such. This is an excellent song to internalize the consistent 1-beat anacrusis but using it for any written rhythmic concept would require extracting that portion and tapping a clear beat. I would prioritize aural identification with this song.

Melody: The descending outline of the dominant chord in line 3 is particularly salient.

Other: The d-r slurs in lines 1 and 2 are consistent, yet they fall on different words and beats of the measure. "Where do you hear two notes on one word sound?"

Contextual Information

From the source liner notes:



"Warping Ship Alongside by Capstan." Drawing by Stan Hugill from his Shanties from the Seven Seas (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1965.)

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THE CAPSTAN is a barrel- or mushroom-shaped windlass or winch—an apparatus used primarily for weighing anchor, hoisting cargo, and "warping ship" (hauling the ship in to a dock or wharf). Originally made of wood, by the mid-nineteenth century virtually all capstans were of cast iron; it required from 4 to 300 men to operate it (depending on the size of ship, anchor and crew). Long oak poles called "capstan bars" were fit into slots called "pigeon holes," at waist or chest height along the top rim of the capstan, like spokes of a wheel. Then, with one or several men at each capstan bar, the crew would heave against the bars, causing the capstan to rotate on its vertical axis—and the men would walk around the capstan, pushing against the bars, as the capstan reeled up cable. The whole process is analogous to an oversized fishing reel and line, with a hook (the anchor) so large that it requires many anglers to reel it in.

British men-of-war, ships of large tonnage with many guns and crews of 400 or more, often carried anchors exceeding 20 feet in length and four tons in weight. Two or more enormous capstans and the whole crew were required in the several hours' chore of weighing anchor. The American warship CONSTITUTION (built 1797) has a capstan aft of the mainmast that is two "stories" high, and was operated from both the upper and lower decks by the entire ship's company. However, chanteys were seldom, if ever, used in the Navy. Usually the men marched around warship capstans to the rhythm of a drumbeat, sometimes accompanied by military tunes played on fife or fiddle.

Capstans on most merchant vessels were much smaller. Typically, they were located in the bow of the ship, foreward of the foremast; sometimes there was more

than one. Usually they were equipped to accomodate the entire crew—which aboard a merchant ship, designed for commerce rather than war, might be from ten to forty men—who had the advantage over Navy tars of being permitted (even encouraged) to sing at their work.

Chanteys were sung at the capstan primarily to allay boredom and promote morale. They were usually sung in waltz or march time, and include many of the jolliest and most melancholy chanteys. Some were structured like halliard chanteys, with each solo line followed by one line of chorus; others had a two- or four-line solo lead, with a longer chorus also of two or four lines. While they were frequently sung unaccompanied, capstan chanteys were the only chanteys ever to be accompanied by a musical instrument on shipboard—most often an accordion, concertina or fiddle. Carl Andersen, Master Rigger at Mystic Seaport and a three-decade veteran of square rig, tells rollicking yarns of weighing anchor in the great iron-hulled grain and wool traders of the 1920s and '30s, with the chanteyman sitting atop the capstan itself as it (and he) went 'round and 'round, pumping wildly on a "Norwegian piano" (accordion) while the crew hove with a will and belted out the choruses.

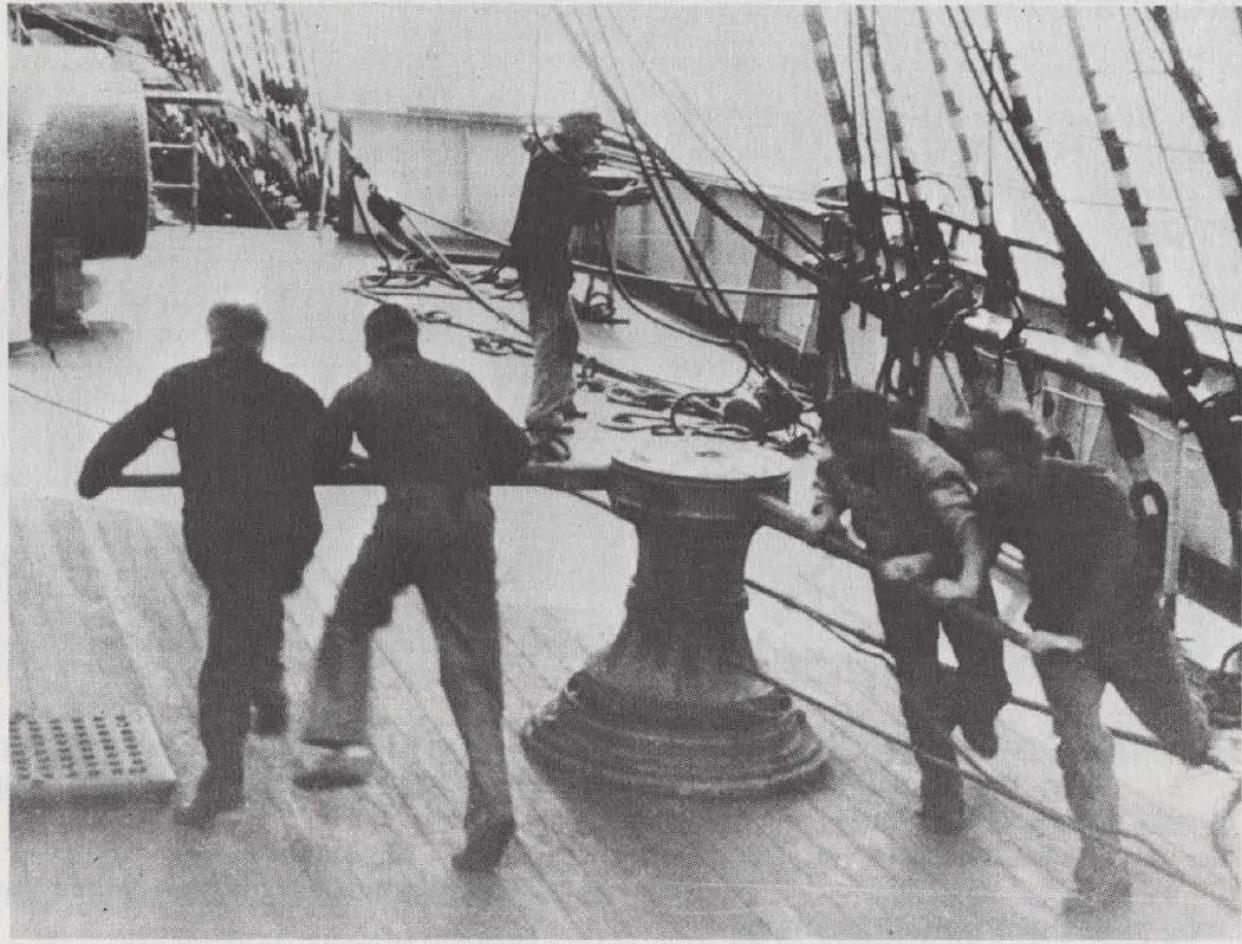
The capstan chanteys on this record were recorded with a crew of ten aboard the full-rigged ship JOSEPH CONRAD (1882) at Mystic Seaport. The syncopated clanking and occasional groan of metal on metal, are the noises of the capstan itself as it rotates; harbor traffic on the Mystic River can sometimes be heard in the background—the authentic sounds of traditional capstan work in port on a nineteenth-century ship.

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Like "Shenandoah," this traditional capstan and windlass chantey (vintage circa 1850) has been recently popularized with guitar accompaniment. Thus the hefty power of the original worksong may be unfamiliar, even to those who know it. The protagonist is, of course, Don Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, President of Mexico and General-in-Chief of the armies opposing General Zachary Taylor in the Mexican War (1845-1848). In the historical event, it was Santa Anna who, despite a four-to-one numerical advantage, retreated from the Battle of Buena Vista (23rd February 1847), leaving Taylor victorious. Taylor became an instant hero, and was the successful Whig candidate for President of the United States the following year. Yet in most versions of the chantey, Santa Anna is the hero. Nobody knows why their roles have been reversed. Perhaps the song fell into derisive British hands; or Confederate ones during the Civil War. Or perhaps it was made up by Democrats. In any case, Santa Anna joins Napoleon Bonaparte ("Boney") and other mispronounced war heroes whose deeds are celebrated and virtues extolled in sea chanteys and sailor songs.

Chanteyman: Stuart Frank



In the Holy Names Collection, Gail Needleman documented the song's history with a land-locked variant called Santy Anno ([link](#)).

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Mainly Norfolk lists this song as Santy Anno/The Plains of Mexico with an exhaustive discography ([link](#)). ► At least one version here, featuring A.L. Lloyd (who was a British folk singer in the folk revival of the 1950's and 60's) contains text that is pejorative and violent towards women. Shanties are improvisatory in nature, and given the environment in which they proliferated, this is unsurprising. The verses in question do not seem central to the song as it was passed; rather, the (un)historical narrative captured here is the central theme.