



Summer/Fall  
2008  
Webcasts  
Odetta

## The Leaving of Liverpool

AFS 9169 A 1 and 2 transcribed by Jennifer Cutting from the singing of Patrick Tayluer

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13  
19  
22

Now I'm lea-ving Li-ver-pool, bound out\_ for Fris-co Bay\_ I'm leav-ing my sweet-heart be-hind me, but I'll  
come back and mar-ry you some-day\_ Oh when I'm far a-way at sea\_ I'll al-ways think of you\_ and the  
day I'm leav-ing Li-ver-pool and the land ing stage for sea. Sing fare you well, my own true love, when  
I re-turn u - ni - ted we will be; for it ain't the leav - ing of Li-ver - pool that  
grieves me, but my dar - ling when I thinks of you.

American Folklife Center  
The Library of Congress



# “Sung With Gusto by the Men”: A Unique Recording of “The Leaving of Liverpool” in the AFC Archive

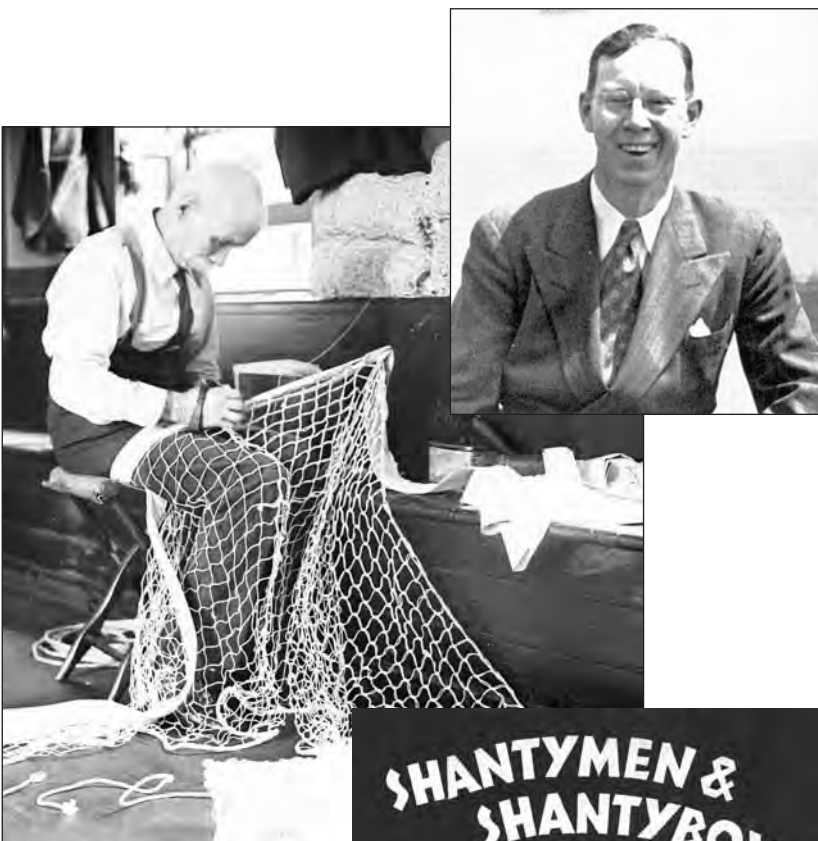
By Stephen D. Winick

In the 1960s and 1970s, during the flowering of the folk revival, everyone knew “The Leaving of Liverpool.” The song is the lyric lament of a nineteenth-century mariner who leaves his hometown of Liverpool for San Francisco, through the treacherous seas around Cape Horn. It was recorded by many of the important revival groups in Britain, Ireland, and the U.S. The melody and some of the lyrics were borrowed by Bob Dylan, and the melody alone was adapted as a banjo instrumental by Randy Scruggs [1]. In short, it was one of the most influential folksongs of the 1960s. One might think that such widespread success in the revival reflected a similar popularity in the oral tradition. Surprisingly, this is not the case. In fact, “The Leaving of Liverpool” was so rare in oral tradition that there is currently only one place in the world where the public can hear a field recording of it: the American Folklife Center Archive at the Library of Congress.

“The Leaving of Liverpool” was collected from oral tradition only twice. On both occasions, the collector was William Main Doerflinger (1910-2000). The singers were both retired sailors in New York City in the late 1930s and early 1940s; their names were Richard Maitland and Patrick Tayluer. As you will read, unfortunate circumstances arose to ensure that Tayluer’s version remained obscure while Maitland’s became famous. Because of this, Maitland’s version is the source of all the well-known revival versions. Ironically, however, it is Tayluer’s version that has been preserved in the AFC Archive, and thus Tayluer’s version that is available for the public to hear, not Maitland’s more famous rendition. This is most fortunate; as we shall see, Tayluer’s song has the potential to radically change our understanding of the song’s history and function.

## “The Leaving of Liverpool” in the folk revival

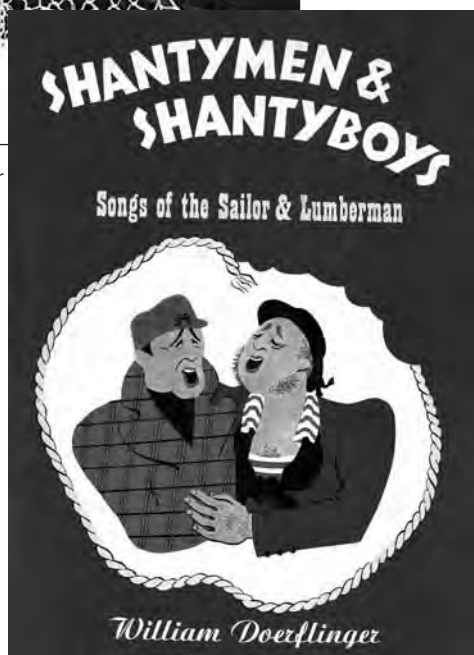
Doerflinger published “The Leaving of Liverpool” in 1951, in *Shantymen and Shantyboys*, a book of sailors’ and lumberjacks’ songs that is now considered a classic in the field. He published only the version he had collected from Richard Maitland. Maitland



Top: William M. Doerflinger (photo from *Shantymen and Shantyboys*).

Middle: A retired sailor at Sailor’s Snug Harbor, mending nets, LC Prints and Photographs Division.

Bottom: Doerflinger’s book, *Shantymen and Shantyboys*



was a retired captain who lived at Sailor's Snug Harbor, a retirement home for sailors, in Staten Island, New York. The lyrics to Maitland's version are as follows:

Fare you well, the Prince's Landing Stage,  
River Mersey, fare you well.  
I'm off to California,  
A place I know right well.

Chorus:

So fare you well, my own true love,  
And when I return, united we will be.  
It's not the leaving of Liverpool that grieves me  
But my darling, when I think on you.

I'm off to California,  
By the way of the stormy Cape Horn,  
And I will send to you a letter, love,  
When I am homeward bound.

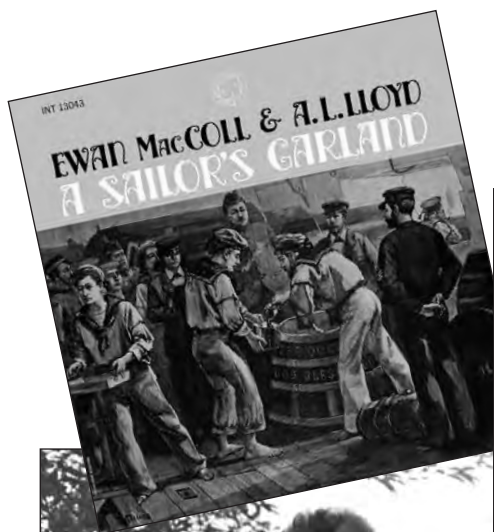
Farewell to Lower Frederick Street,  
Anson Terrace and Park Lane;  
Farewell, it will be some long time  
Before I see you again.

I've shipped on a Yankee clipper ship,  
Davy Crockett is her name;  
And Burgess is the captain of her,  
And they say she's a floating hell.

It's my second trip with Burgess in the Crockett,  
And I think I know him well.  
If a man's a sailor, he can get along,  
But if not, he's sure in hell.

The tug is waiting at the pierhead  
To take us down the stream.  
Our sails are loose and our anchor secure,  
So I'll bid you good-bye once more.

I'm bound away to leave you,  
Good-bye, my love, good-bye.  
There ain't but one thing that grieves me;  
That's leaving you behind.



Top, l-r: The first two revival recordings of "The Leaving of Liverpool"; Louis Killen in 1967, photo by Diana Davies, courtesy Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives, Smithsonian Institution; Ewan MacColl with Peggy Seeger in 1960, photo courtesy Peggy Seeger. Bottom: Bob Dylan in 1965, AFC Robert Corwin Collection.

Now, fare you well, the Prince's Landing Stage,  
 River Mersey, fare you well.  
 I'm off to California,  
 A place I know right well.

No other traditional version of this song has ever been published, so all folk revival performances of the song derive ultimately from this one publication.

The early progress of this song in the folk revival has been described by singer Louis Killen [2]. In 1962, Killen was asked to provide vocal harmonies for an LP record of sailors' songs by Ewan MacColl and A. L. Lloyd. The LP, entitled *A Sailor's Garland*, was produced by American folklorist Kenneth S. Goldstein for the Prestige International label. One of the songs MacColl sang was "The Leaving of Liverpool," which he had adapted from Doerflinger's book. This was the first revival recording of the song, and the first recording of any kind since Doerflinger collected it from Tayluer. Killen dutifully learned it for the recording session.

Killen soon began performing "The Leaving of Liverpool" on his own, and recorded his own version of the song in 1963, adding a concertina accompaniment. Soon after that, he taught it to Luke Kelly, an Irish singer living in England. Kelly taught the song to members of The Dubliners, one of the most popular folk groups in Ireland. (Kelly later achieved great fame as a member of The Dubliners, but at that time he was a solo performer.) He also taught it to his friend, Liam Clancy, a member of the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, the most popular Irish folk group in America. In 1964, both the Dubliners and the Clancy Brothers released recordings of "The Leaving of Liverpool." By 1966, when a popular English version was recorded by The Spinners, the song could be considered a folk-revival standard in Britain, Ireland, and America.

A final indication of the song's popularity is the fact that it was adapted by Bob Dylan in 1963, and became the basis for Dylan's own song, entitled simply "Farewell." "Farewell" has not been released on an official Bob Dylan album, but Dylan recorded it several times, and it appears on the well-known bootleg release *Ten of Swords*. Opinions are divided as to Dylan's direct source for "The Leaving of Liverpool"; the Clancy Brothers, Nigel Denver, and Louis Killen have all been suggested. In fact, Dylan probably heard it from all these singers, and all of them might have influenced his understanding of the song. Whichever direct source he used, however, the traditional version on which his song was based was certainly Richard Maitland's—until now, the only traditional version to be published.

### "The Leaving of Liverpool" in the Archive

To understand how a recording of "The Leaving of Liverpool" found its way into the AFC Archive, we need to revisit the song's collection history. The song was first collected by Doerflinger from Maitland, whose repertoire he recorded at Sailor's Snug Harbor from 1938 to 1940. At the time, Doerflinger was an independent collector, recording the songs of sailors and lumbermen out of personal interest.

Soon after recording Maitland, in early 1942, Doerflinger found another retired sailor named Patrick Tayluer, and realized that Tayluer had an extraordinary repertoire and an extraordinary voice. He recorded Tayluer that same year, and one of the songs he got was "The Leaving of Liverpool." For reasons that will be explained below, Tayluer's version of the song was not included in Doerflinger's book, and sank into undeserved obscurity. Ironically, however, the same circumstances also preserved the song for posterity.



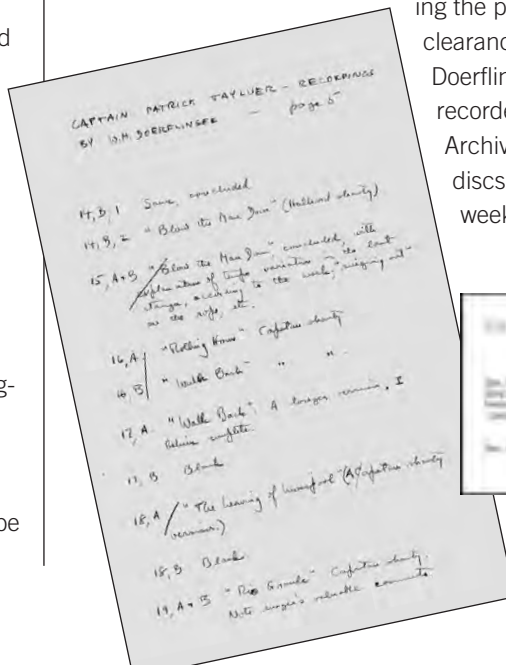
*The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem.*

The Archive of Folk Song, then a part of the Library of Congress's Music Division, came to be involved because Doerflinger no longer had access to a disc recorder when he discovered Tayluer. He contacted Alan Lomax, who was "assistant in charge" of the Archive, seeking an equipment loan. In his letter to Lomax, dated March 5, 1942, Doerflinger wrote:

"I've interviewed and recorded scores of seamen, but with only one or two exceptions none of them approach[es] Captain Tayluer. He represents the best and straightest merchant marine tradition. Although I have come to know sailing-ship men of the old school, I

find that nearly all of the Captain's contemporaries have either passed away or no longer possess anything like his mental clarity and keen memory. A complete record of his material will be an important step in rounding out our knowledge of the sea's folk-songs and traditions. [...] It would be a permanent loss to let Tayleur [sic] go unrecorded at this eleventh hour." [3]

Lomax apparently agreed. On March 24, 1942, after obtaining the proper government clearances, he shipped Doerflinger a Presto disc recorder belonging to the Archive, along with blank discs. During the first two weeks of May, Doerflinger



*Doerflinger's notes, AFC catalog Card.*

recorded thirty-eight twelve-inch discs of Tayluer's song and speech, reporting to Lomax on May 14th that the recording of Tayluer's repertoire was finished. On side A of disc 18, Doerflinger had recorded "The Leaving of Liverpool."

Because aluminum was needed for the war effort during World War II, the discs Doerflinger used were made of acetate coating on a glass base, and they were very fragile. Doerflinger employed a moving company to repack the discs and send them to the Library. At some point in this process of packing and shipping, several of the glass discs broke. The Presto machine, meanwhile, remained in New York for other projects during the summer.

In a letter sent on July 28, 1942, Josephine Schwartz, an assistant at the Archive, informed Doerflinger of the cracked discs (which did not include number 18), and requested that he ship back the machine. He dutifully did so. Then, on August 14, Schwartz wrote to Doerflinger again, stating, "On rereading my last letter, I see that I failed to mention that no number 18 arrived in the shipment at all." This missing recording is the one that included "The Leaving of Liverpool."

When Doerflinger heard that this disc was missing, he was particularly dismayed. He speculated that one of the moving men must have broken the disc and removed it from the shipment to conceal the breakage. "One side of No. 18," he wrote, "was 'The Leaving of Liverpool,' a very rare recording—unique, in fact—though I have the same in somewhat different form from one other seaman. Could you let me know whether a record of this song is on any of the other records. There's a possibility of a mistake in numbering, though it was carefully done. If the song is completely lost I will get Captain Tayluer to make another copy of it."

There was no mistake in numbering, and Doerflinger was obliged to re-record the song. It seems likely that he would have kept the Presto machine in New York for another week if he had known that "The Leaving of Liverpool" needed to be re-recorded. But since the Archive had failed to mention the absence of this disc, he had sent it back. Because of this, he once again had no disc recorder to re-record the song. He proceeded by borrowing a Dictaphone, which recorded on wax cylinders, and which made recordings that were far inferior to the acetate discs recorded on the Presto. Using this antiquated equipment, he asked Captain Tayluer to re-record not only 'The Leaving of Liverpool,' but the songs from the cracked discs as well. These cylinders, recorded by Doerflinger and Tayluer in August, 1942, still reside in the AFC Archive.

Reference copies of all the recordings, both discs and cylinders, have been made on reel-to-reel tapes, and visitors to the Archive are welcome to listen to Tayluer for themselves. For the benefit of those who can't visit, however, *Folklife Center News*

is printing Tayluer's version of "The Leaving of Liverpool," along with Tayluer's spoken commentary. As we shall see, Tayluer's version is very different from what Doerflinger printed in *Shanty-men and Shantyboys*. It has completely different verses and a somewhat different tune; the refrain, however, is quite close to what Maitland sang.

### Patrick Tayluer's Performance: A Transcription

Spoken:

This is the song that was sung by the men, when they were leaving the landing stage in Liverpool. The landing stage was

about half a mile long, and it would hold anything from two to three ships. And every ship that was leaving there, both with emigrants and with passengers, they all had to land on the landing stage before they went on board of a ship.

Now, this song, it originated in the year eighteen hundred and forty-nine, and it was sung with gusto by the men as they were leaving Liverpool. It was

made up by a man who was leaving his sweetheart behind him, and going out to 'Frisco in search of gold maybe, and maybe to come back with the ship.

Sung:

Now I'm leaving Liverpool, bound out for 'Frisco Bay  
I'm leaving my sweetheart behind me, but I'll come back and marry you someday

Oh, when I'm far away at sea, I'll always think of you  
And today I'm leaving Liverpool and the landing stage for sea

Chorus:

Singing fare you well, my own true love  
When I return, united we will be  
For it ain't the leaving of Liverpool that grieves me,  
But, me darling, when I thinks of you

Now I know I'll be a long time away on this voyage to 'Frisco Bay,

We're off to California, where there's lots of gold today,  
I'll bring you back silk dresses, and lots of finery  
I'll bring you presents of all sorts, and my money I'll get from the sea

Chorus

Well, I wrote a note and dropped it on the landing stage for her

Telling her that I would pray for her, God knows, when I was at sea

I'll go about my duties, always thinking about you  
And when I do return, I'll marry you, my Sue

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Leaving of Liverpool". The title is centered at the top. Below the title, it says "transcribed by Jennifer Cutting from the singing of Patrick Tayluer". The score is written on a grand staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 2/4. The lyrics are written below the notes. The lyrics are: "Now I'm lea-ving Li-ver-pool, bound out for Fris-co Bay. I'm leav-ing my sweet-heart be-hind m come back and mar-ry you some-day. Oh when I'm far a-way at sea, I'll al-ways think of you. day I'm leav-ing Li-ver-pool and the land ing stage for sea. Sing fare you well, my own tru I re-turn u-ni-ted we will be, for it ain't the leav-ing of Li-ver-".



The documents shown above are Tayluer's medal card from the British Army, and two 1930s newspaper stories on Tayluer. The ship on the left is the Mongolia, on which Tayluer sailed in the 1920s. The tallest building in the photo at right is the Seamen's Church Institute, where Tayluer lived in the early 1940s.

Chorus

And when I'm homeward bound, I'll write you a letter and let you know that I'm coming home  
 And I'll let you know what I've done at sea, when I am bound to you  
 I'll gather all my strings in, and I hope you'll do the same  
 When I'm bound back to Liverpool, you know just what I mean

Chorus

Now, a strong Westerly wind, it blows us home around Cape Horn for land  
 We're coming back for Liverpool, and we'll soon be hand in hand  
 When I pass the light ship, oh, this prayer I'll say for you  
 May God bless the two of us and our happy union prove.

Chorus

Spoken:

Now, these warps and ropes that we used to pull in, sometimes the warps were sixteen inches thick. They were known as "grass warps" to sailors, and they were heavy. And the sailors used to lead a rope along there to the afterdeck, and back to the forecandle head through a snatch block, and that is the song they would sing.

And when the ship was clear of the wharf, that was still known as the landing stage, the tug would take hold of the ship, and take her down the river, as far as Seaforth. There the tug would let her go, and she would set all her sails, and beat on, sail on, for Holyhead. And from Holyhead, there she would make the Irish Channel, and out to sea. Which sometimes was very hard, because mostly in the Irish Channel, the winds were always easterly, so therefore, you see, it made it a lot of passes, out beating and tacking the ship, as she get down towards the Mull of Galloway. Thank you.

### Patrick Tayluer: The Man Behind the Song

Who was Captain Patrick Tayluer? Although Doerflinger met with Tayluer many times in 1941 and 1942, and recorded many of his songs, the correspondence indicates that Doerflinger himself did not know much about his informant. He did publish a brief biographical paragraph in his book, *Shantymen and Shantyboys*. However, on some points, his private notes and this publication differ. For example, he wrote in the book that Tayluer first went to sea in 1885, but in his notes wrote that his songs were of a slightly earlier era than Maitland's. Since Maitland started on a training vessel in 1869, this makes little sense.

Luckily, Tayluer was profiled by major newspapers several times in the 1930s and 1940s. From these sources, it is possible to glean a more complete biography. They indicate that Tayluer was born in 1856 or 1857. He told several conflicting stories about his birth: In 1937, the *New York Times* reported that he was born in Maitland, Nova Scotia; in 1941, he told the *Washington Post* that he was born on a schooner, between Maitland and Eastport, Maine; finally, in 1942, he told Doerflinger that he was born in Eastport. The reason for his changing story is unclear, but it seems likely that he was being careful in case questions were raised about his citizenship; his parents, he said, were a Frenchman and an Englishwoman who lived in Nova Scotia, but he was raised in the United States, and later served in both the United States Merchant Marine and the British Army.

Tayluer's story becomes more consistent on other points. According to Tayluer, at thirteen or fourteen, in about 1870, he had his first overseas voyage on the *El Capitán*, a merchant vessel that sailed from Canada to India and China. He worked up through the ranks, and at twenty-four (about 1880) got his master's papers. He was placed in command of the *Luzon*, a merchant vessel from Halifax, Nova Scotia, and commanded her for some years. He then lived ashore for several years in Africa. Doerflinger claims he served in the British Army in Sudan, but later newspaper accounts place his service in Rhodesia, probably with the British South Africa Police, a paramilitary

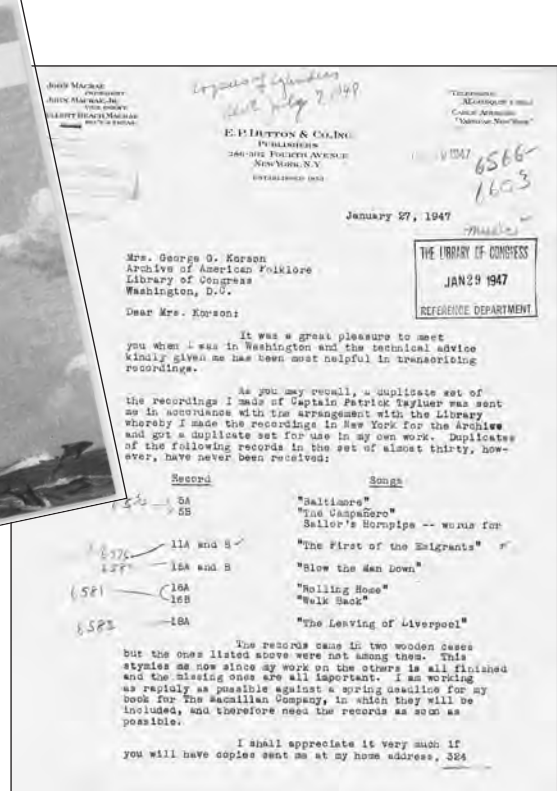
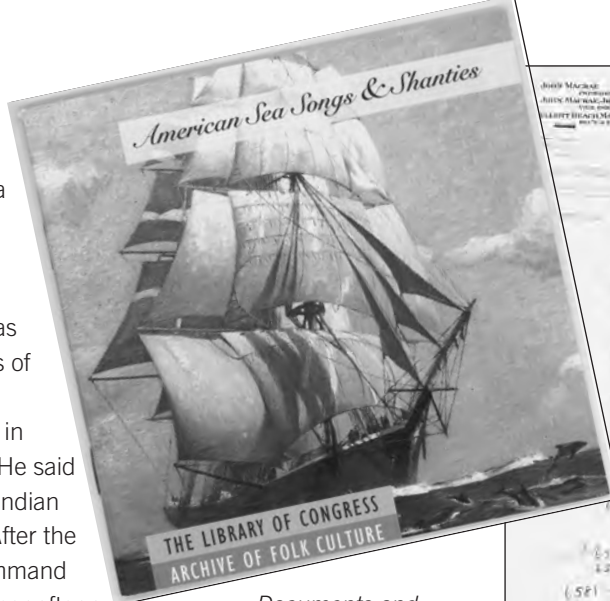
force with allegiance to the Crown. During this time, which encompasses some ten years in the 1880s and 1890s, he married a Boer woman, with whom he eventually had eleven children. He returned sporadically to sea, and between voyages made several long-distance walking trips, one of which was covered in Australian newspapers, clippings of which he later showed to Doerflinger.

Tayluer further reported that he had lived in many countries in his life, including India. He said that he joined the British 10th Lancers, an Indian cavalry regiment, to serve in World War I. After the war, he said, he served his last nautical command aboard the *Mongolia*, his first and last steamer after a career on sailing vessels. He said that he gave her up in 1921, and told the *New York Times*, "I was glad to quit her." However, he was not glad of two events that he said occurred in that same year: at sixty-five, he was pronounced too old to serve at sea; and his beloved wife died. He continued wandering for a time, and maintained his habit of walking long distances; he claimed in 1937 that he had walked further than any other living person, but gave no real evidence to support this claim.

Tayluer seems to have been, above all, a fascinating storyteller, and some of his claims about his own life seem at odds with other available evidence. For example, the New York passenger lists do show Patrick Tayluer sailing on the *Mongolia*, but in 1929 rather than 1921, and as her bosun, not her captain. The same record states his birthdate as "about 1880," and a later record shows him working aboard the *West Honaker* in 1931, with a birthdate of "about 1882." These records suggest that he began lying about his age as he got older, to extend his career at sea. They also suggest that he never attained the rank of captain, since the captain of a ship would certainly not return to the same vessel as bosun eight years later.

Another such discrepancy concerns Tayluer's military service. His medal card, one of about five million such cards created by the British army to keep track of soldiers who were awarded medals, shows him serving in the Army Service Corps, the transport and supply branch of the army, rather than in the cavalry as he claimed. His medal card also shows him living at 56 Stainsbury Road in Poplar, London, and a death record shows an infant named Patrick C. H. Tayleur dying in Poplar in 1910. Since we know Tayluer's name was more often than not misspelled in this way, it seems likely that Tayluer had already moved to England with his family by the start of the war, and that he joined the army in England rather than in India.

These discrepancies aside, we do know that Tayluer eventually came to live on the east coast of the United States, spending time in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., and, if the newspaper accounts are to be believed, traveling from one city to another on foot. In 1936, Tayluer's visit to Washington was covered in the *Washington Post*, which said that he was still living a nomadic lifestyle, "earning his own way by making ship models, telling sea stories over the radio, mending



*Documents and recordings from AFC collections.*

awnings and sails." A 1937 report in the *New York Times* stated that Tayluer had finally settled down at the Seamen's Church Institute at 25 South Street, New York. In 1938 and 1939, the *New York Times* reported that he was employed at the New York World's Fair, making ship models in the Hall of Inventions.

Tayluer continued making trips between New York and Washington for several years thereafter; in 1941, during a visit to Washington, he was again profiled by the *Post*. In 1942, Doerflinger met and interviewed him. At that time he was living in New York, but still seemed on the verge of departure; there are several references in the Lomax correspondence to Doerflinger "holding Tayluer in New York" until the recording equipment arrived. Doerflinger lost touch with Tayluer after leaving the country in 1943 to serve with the Office of War Information, and we have found no more records of Tayluer thereafter. The old salt was about eighty-seven years old.

**Patrick Tayluer's "The Leaving of Liverpool": an eventful history**

All of Doerflinger's correspondence indicates that he thought Patrick Tayluer and his version of "The Leaving of Liverpool" to be among his greatest finds as a folklore collector. Yet, strangely, the song has never been published until now. A series of near-misses occurred, beginning with the fateful loss of disc 18 from Doerflinger's original recording project. These near-misses have resulted in the song's remaining obscure for all these years.

The arrangements under which Doerflinger recorded the cylinders remain unclear, but it seems from the later correspondence that Doerflinger used cylinders he had purchased at his own expense, and that he therefore originally owned the cylinder recordings. However, since he had no cylinder player, he preferred the Library to copy the cylinders onto discs for him, and to have the Library keep the cylinders. To that end,

he brought the cylinders to the Archive for copying during a business trip to Washington in 1942. The Archive passed the cylinders on to the Library's recording lab for copying, and apparently even paid the lab's fee. However, the Library's equipment was being used for tasks related to the war effort, and the copies could not be made. On April 5, 1943, Botkin wrote Doerflinger that, since it had been impossible to copy the cylinders, they would be returned to him by the lab.

The cylinders, however, were not returned in 1943; in fact, the Archive still has them. It is likely that, by the time the lab was preparing to send them, there was no obvious place for them to go; World War II was a busy time for both Doerflinger and his wife Joy, and both went overseas, William to North Africa and Italy to work for the Office of War Information, and Joy to India on a humanitarian mission. In the circumstances, it was safer to keep the cylinders at the Library until the Doerflingers were back.

The next correspondence relating to this collection occurred on January 27, 1947, when Doerflinger, back at his New York publishing job, was preparing the manuscript of *Shantymen and Shantyboys*. At that time, he wrote Rae Korson, the reference librarian at the Archive, stating that he urgently needed several songs for inclusion in the manuscript, with a deadline in spring, 1947. The songs in question included all the ones from the broken and missing discs, including Tayluer's "The Leaving of Liverpool." In the letter, he noted the original disc numbers, and seemed surprised that copies of those discs were not made for him along with the others. "This stymies me now," he wrote, "since my work on the others is all finished and the missing ones are all-important." In those five eventful years, Doerflinger had completely forgotten the loss of the original discs and his subsequent need to record on cylinders. Needless to say, Korson could not find any discs that matched his description.

In June, 1948, Doerflinger realized his error, and wrote to Korson. "I had forgotten," he explained, "that these particular songs...were not recorded on discs, but on Dictaphone cylinders." On receipt of this letter, Korson easily found the cylinders and made disc copies. She sent them to Doerflinger on July 7, 1948—more than a year after the deadline he alluded to in 1947. In other words, Doerflinger finally did get his promised duplicates of the cylinders, but it was too late to include the songs in his book.

This makes one thing clear. Tayluer's version of "The Leaving of Liverpool" was left out of Doerflinger's book, not because Doerflinger thought it was inferior, but as a result of the unfortunate loss of the original disc. As late as January, 1947, he

was intending to include it but did not actually have it, and by the time he got it back, his deadline had passed. Curiously, in the notes to the song at the back of the book, Doerflinger never even mentions that Tayluer also sang it; this contributed to the continued obscurity of Tayluer's version.

That Doerflinger was planning to include Tayluer's song is an important point, because there is a general belief among the few folksong enthusiasts who know of the recording that Doerflinger thought poorly of it. Dan Milner, who knew Doerflinger as an older man, has reported: "When I asked Bill about it, he simply said Captain Tayluer did not sing 'The Leaving of Liverpool.' Bill was a very kind, courtly man. I did not press

him but I believe he was telling me that Captain Tayluer did not have a real grasp on the song and it was a matter not worth pursuing." In fact, it seems possible that after an eventful fifty years, Doerflinger had simply forgotten that Tayluer had sung "The Leaving of Liverpool."

Even after he ceased to collect songs, Doerflinger certainly continued to regard Tayluer as one of the best and most important singers he had ever recorded. In 1952, he wrote to Duncan Emrich at the Archive, "The remarkable thing about Tayluer was, despite his age, the strength and resonance of his voice—one of the best voices I've ever heard. Much

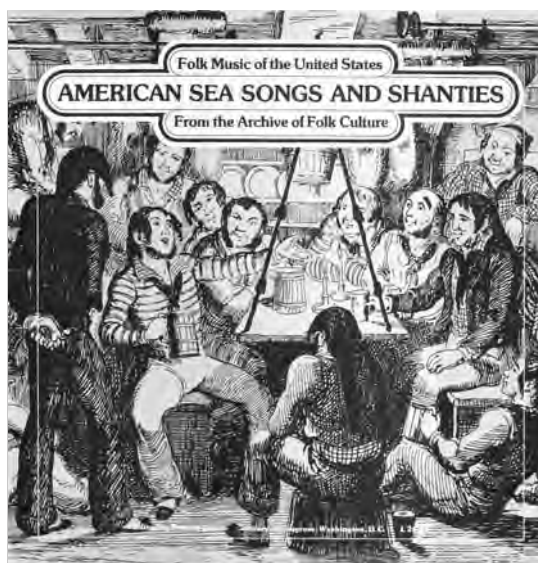
stronger than Dick Maitland's."

Doerflinger's correspondence with Emrich on this occasion ushered in another frustrating near-miss for Tayluer's recordings. At that time, the Archive had had great success releasing field recordings on long-playing records, and Emrich was planning two LPs of sea songs. Emrich, who became head of

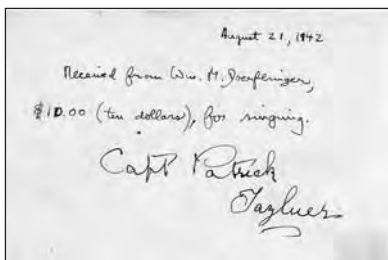
the Archive in 1945, had not been involved in any of Doerflinger's or Lomax's recording projects. He began his work on the LPs by simply surveying the contents of the Archive, and from this survey he selected four singers to include on the sea songs LPs: Hunt, Robinson, Maitland, and Brown. He then contacted Doerflinger, as an expert

in the field, for advice. In his letter responding to Emrich, Doerflinger wrote:

"No doubt you've also considered the recordings of shanties and sea songs as sung by Captain Patrick Tayluer, which I made in cooperation with the Archive of American Folk-Song in 1942.... It has always seemed to me that his renditions of "Sacramento" and "Time for Us to Leave Her" were particularly good. [...] If there is room on the record for a little descriptive background from a recording of a sailor's words, Patrick Tayluer's account of reefing a topgallantsail in heavy weather might be worth considering. It seemed to me very vivid, and to



Documents and recordings from AFC collections.





me was the most effective of his prose descriptions.”

Emrich responded to Doerflinger that, since Tayluer’s recordings had been done originally on Dictaphone cylinders, the sound was not good enough for them to be considered for release on the LPs. He stipulated, “If we can locate Tayluer on good discs, I would be glad to consider including him.” Doerflinger wrote back, patiently clarifying that the cylinder recordings were only a small fraction of the Tayluer material. Emrich located the disc recordings, and wrote back to Doerflinger on April 7, 1952.

By then, it was too late to re-edit the LP materials to include Tayluer; Emrich states in his letter that there was some urgency if the project was to be done by the end of the fiscal year. Still, Emrich was captivated by the old sailor’s recordings, stating, “I am really glad, however, that we did not have them to begin with, because the very high quality of his material would have pushed some of our other singers into the shade.”

Emrich therefore laid out the following plan: “As it is, we shall issue our other singers—Maitland, Robinson, Brown, Hunt—now, and then follow later with, I hope, at least two full long-playing records of Tayluer alone, including much of his descriptions of life at sea and on shore. His accounts of getting a ship underway, of setting the topsails, of boarding-house masters, and other matters are magnificent, and deserve independent issue on records.” Finally, it seemed, Tayluer was to get his due as one of the greatest shanty-singers on record.

In the end, these Tayluer LPs never came to fruition. We can only speculate as to why, as there is no further correspondence about them. Emrich remained at the Archive for less than three years after these letters were written, and it seems likely that he simply did not get around to editing the LPs before leaving. The original two LPs of sea songs, meanwhile, were among the Archive’s most successful, and were reissued on CD as recently as 2004—once again, without Patrick Tayluer.

The obscurity of the Tayluer recording of “The Leaving of Liverpool,” then, can be blamed on many factors. The disappearance of the original disc—which seems to have been the fault of the shipping company—set in motion a series of events that worked against the recording’s being transcribed for Doerflinger’s book: Josephine Schwartz failed to inform Doerflinger that “The Leaving of Liverpool” was among the missing songs, and Doerflinger lost his chance to re-record it on a disc; the Library’s “war work” prevented Doerflinger’s cylinders from being copied immediately; the war also prevented the cylinders themselves from being returned to Doerflinger in 1943; and finally, Doerflinger’s own mistake in 1947, of forgetting that Rae Korson should be looking for cylinders and not discs, prevented him from having a copy in time to transcribe it for the book.

The recordings were kept from being issued on LPs by some of the same factors: the existence of cylinders in the collection confused Emrich, and that in turn was a consequence of the loss of the original disc. Before Emrich learned the truth, the deadline passed for changing the original LPs. Finally, Emrich’s



Two views of Sailor’s Snug Harbor, where Maitland lived in the late 1930s.  
LC Prints and Photographs Division

departure from the Archive prevented him from pursuing a two-LP set of Tayluer’s recordings. In short, everyone involved bears a little of the blame for Patrick Tayluer’s continued obscurity—except, it seems, for Patrick Tayluer.

### **The Lost Recording: Richard Maitland’s “The Leaving of Liverpool.”**

It is doubly ironic that, while the obscure recording of Tayluer has been accessible to the Library of Congress’s visitors all along, the better-known performance by Maitland has not. Despite being available as a transcript, Maitland’s version has been inaccessible to the public for listening since Doerflinger recorded it.

Of Doerflinger’s original recordings, only those that documented Tayluer originally belonged to the Library of Congress, because they were recorded with the Library’s equipment and on the Library’s blank discs. Doerflinger made the rest of his recordings between 1938 and 1940, on his own equipment, and they remained a private collection for over forty years. (The recordings of Maitland released by the Archive on LP were not Doerflinger’s work, but songs recorded separately by Alan Lomax in 1939. Since this was years before Doerflinger published his book, no one except Maitland, Tayluer, and Doerflinger even knew of “The Leaving of Liverpool.” Lomax did not know to ask for it, and Maitland did not sing it for him.)

The Archive did finally acquire Doerflinger’s recordings of Maitland, however. In 1981, Doerflinger generously loaned most of his collection of field recordings to the Archive, which made reel-to-reel preservation copies for the Archive’s collections, as well as reference tapes to serve to researchers. Ironically, there is one (and only one) recording that we know Doerflinger had, but did not include in this 1981 loan: the disc containing Richard Maitland’s performance of “The Leaving of Liverpool.”

Why Doerflinger did not send that one disc remains a mystery. While working at the Archive in the early 1990s, Joe Hickerson met with Doerflinger. “He told me he had one more disc recording he wanted the Library to have,” Hickerson wrote.



The clipper ship *Three Brothers*, 1875, LC Prints and Photographs Division. L: Captain John A. Burgess of the *David Crockett*.

“The Leaving of Liverpool’ sung by Richard Maitland.” It is not entirely clear why that loan never occurred before Doerflinger’s death in 2000, but AFC continues to investigate. To have both recordings here, so that researchers could hear both for comparative purposes, would be an ideal arrangement.

### What can we learn from Tayluer’s version?

“The Leaving of Liverpool” has been a well-known sea song for over fifty years. However, the song has been known through only one traditional source, Richard Maitland, and one scholar, William Doerflinger. Doerflinger did a good job of representing Maitland’s ideas about the song, and of his own research into the song’s background, but he never published Tayluer’s version of the song, or his fascinating opinions about it. By attending to Tayluer’s opinions, sea song researchers will realize that many of the things they think they know about this song are true of only one of the two known traditional versions. In other words, decades of discussion and opinion about this song, in both the revivalist and scholarly communities, have led to conclusions that are, at most, only half right.

The first thing that Tayluer’s version encourages us to revise is our view of the song’s relation to history. One of the reasons that “The Leaving of Liverpool” is so treasured by revivalists is the sense of genuine history the song imparts. In particular, history buffs can look up the *David Crockett* and Captain Burgess, and learn about their voyages through Liverpool. Ever since Doerflinger’s book, songbooks that reprint the song tend to include historical tidbits about the *David Crockett* and Burgess. Doerflinger himself wrote:

“The three-skysail-yarder *David Crockett* of New York [is] the ship mentioned in this song. Her figurehead now hangs in the Marine Museum at Mystic, Connecticut, where she went down the ways in 1853. The *David Crockett* often called at Liverpool on her passages homeward from California. It was in 1863 that she first arrived in the port while under command of Captain John A. Burgess of Massachusetts, her skipper for many years. In 1874, on what was to have been his last voyage before retiring from the sea, Captain Burgess was lost overboard in a

storm in the South Atlantic.”

Because the song mentions the ship, her captain, and the city, Doerflinger is able to determine that this version of the song must date from between 1863, the first time Burgess visited Liverpool in the *Crockett*, and 1874, when he died. This is a far more specific time frame than we have for most traditional songs. Doerflinger’s historical detective work here makes the song seem much more historically grounded than it otherwise would.

Tayluer’s version, on the other hand, does not mention Burgess, the *David Crockett*, or indeed any of the events recounted in Maitland’s version. It is far more general, and Tayluer’s own dating of the song to 1849 seems to be little more than a guess. However, the absence of the verses about Burgess does tell us one thing: versions of the song may well have existed in the oral tradition without any specific historical grounding, and it is thus possible that the Burgess verses are an accretion onto an older song.

The second thing suggested by Tayluer’s version is that scholars should re-classify “The Leaving of Liverpool” as a work song. Maitland’s version occupies a prominent position as the first song in chapter five of *Shantymen and Shantyboys*; this is the chapter dedicated to “forebitters,” or sailors’ songs that were not used to coordinate labor. “The songs in this section,” Doerflinger wrote, “were sung not for work, like shanties, but for entertainment.” “The Leaving of Liverpool” has thus come to be known as a forebitter rather than a shanty, an off-duty song rather than a work song.

Tayluer’s comments on the song call this judgment into question, however. Tayluer clearly describes the work that was done while the song was sung. The task was warping the ship out of dock, which identifies the song as a capstan shanty. Doerflinger was well aware of this, and considered it a significant distinction; on the original handwritten notes that he made to accompany the ill-fated disc 18, he entitled the song “‘The Leaving of Liverpool’ (capstan shanty version).” Thus, one thing we learn from Tayluer is that “The Leaving of Liverpool” was, in fact, a sea shanty, at least part of the time.

This fact may also help to explain some of the differences between the two versions of the song. One striking thing about Tayluer’s “Leaving of Liverpool” is the fact that the verses seem, to some degree, extemporized. This contrasts with Maitland’s version, whose verses seem more fixed. In particular, some of Tayluer’s lines, such as “you know just what I mean” and “my money I’ll get from the sea,” are typical of the formulae found in songs composed in performance; they do not relate closely to the context in which they appear in the song, but each supplies a half-line of the song’s meter along with a common end-rhyme. By all accounts, sea shanties typically employed a good deal of improvisation; Frederick Pease Harlow, Stan Hugill, and other sailors who wrote about shantying agree with Doerflinger on this point. Therefore, Tayluer’s free-form lyrics may be a reflection of the song’s function as a shanty.



Figurehead of the David Crockett. Photo by Tim Campbell, San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park

It is also interesting that these lines that seem like free-floating filler both occur as the fourth line of a four-line stanza. Some folksong scholars believe that there is a relationship between “The Leaving of Liverpool” and a rarely collected Irish song called “The Leaving of Limerick.” One verse of the latter song runs as follows:

In the morning when I am going, I  
will take you by the lily white hand  
And I'll wave it oer my shoulder say-  
ing adieu to the Limerick strand  
So farewell to the boys of Thomond  
Gate, It's to them I'll bid Adieu  
Its not the leaving of Limerick that  
grieves me, but my darling, leaving you

Compare the last line of that verse with the end of the chorus of “The Leaving of Liverpool”:

“It's not the Leaving of Liverpool that grieves me, but my darling when I think of you”

The lines are almost identical; however, in “The Leaving of Limerick,” there is no chorus, and this line is repeated as the fourth line of every four-line verse, while in “The Leaving of Liverpool” each verse has four unique lines, and this line serves to end the chorus. This suggests that, if one song was indeed based on the other, at some point the three-line verses of a song derived from “The Leaving of Limerick” might have been expanded to four lines. In this case, we would expect to find four-line verses whose last lines seem like filler, and this is exactly what we hear in Tayluer's song.

Finally, the leaving-and-returning motif in the plot of Tayluer's song has parallels in other songs he sang. Specifically, Tayluer gave Doerflinger a version of the shanty “Swansea Town,” which appears on page 154 of the second edition of Doerflinger's book. Like his version of “The Leaving of Liverpool,” Tayluer's “Swansea Town” is a textually loose song about leaving a town, missing a girl, and hoping to return to her. The song has several direct textual parallels to his version of “The Leaving of Liverpool.” Compare, for example, the following sets of lines:

I'll write you letters when I land there,  
And you'll know then that I am homeward bound, old girl, old girl (“Swansea Town”)

And when I'm homeward bound, I'll write you a letter and let you know that I'm coming home (“The Leaving of Liverpool”)

I'll buy you dresses of silk (“Swansea Town”)

I'll bring you back silk dresses, and lots of finery (“The Leaving of Liverpool”)

I know you'll pull the string, old girl (“Swansea Town”)

I'll gather all my strings in, and I hope you'll do the same (“The Leaving of Liverpool”)

These make it clear that there is a relationship between Tayluer's versions of these two songs. One might explain this relationship by saying that, in the manner of all shantymen, he was extending the length of “The Leaving of Liverpool” by importing verses or ideas that properly belonged to “Swansea Town.” Alternatively, scholars might say that the couplets about silk dresses, strings, and letters exist as “floating verses,” or “commonplaces,” that are shared by both songs; this is a phenomenon very common in the lyric song tradition, so it would not be surprising to find it here. A scholar versed in oral-formulaic theory might say that Tayluer, like a seafaring “singer of tales,” was composing in performance, filling out his lines extemporaneously, using formulae familiar to him. To determine which of these is the most accurate explanation is a research project in itself, beyond the scope of this article. This alone points to the value of Tayluer's recording, and his full recorded oeuvre, for understanding the sea-shanty tradition.

### Conclusion.

Patrick Tayluer's version of the “The Leaving of Liverpool” survived through the resourcefulness and determination of William Main Doerflinger, and his conviction that it was an important recording of an unusual song. But it also survived due to the American Folklife Center's commitment to preserving field recordings and serving them to researchers. All of Tayluer's recordings, including the unbroken discs and the cylinders, are kept in the Library of Congress's National Audiovisual Conservation Center (NAVCC) in Culpeper, Virginia, an unparalleled preservation facility. Listening copies, on reel-to-reel tapes, can be heard in the Library of Congress's Folklife Reading Room in Washington, D.C. Ultimately, the American Folklife Center would like to digitize these recordings and make them even more accessible, either as a published CD or online through the Library's web site. To do that, the Library needs to seek permission from Tayluer's heirs. If any reader of *FCN* has information on Patrick Tayluer or any of his children, please contact AFC at [folklife@loc.gov](mailto:folklife@loc.gov).

### Notes

[1] The Randy Scruggs banjo piece is entitled “Highway's End.” The identification of the piece as an adaptation of “The Leaving of Liverpool” was made by Bob Waltz in the March 1998 issue of the magazine *Inside Bluegrass*.

[2] This information came in the form of an email from Louis Killen. The email was originally sent to Derek Schofield, editor of *English Dance and Song*. Schofield kindly passed it on to *Folklife Center News*. We also thank Dan Milner, Robert Walser, and Anne Bishop for providing information about both Tayluer and Doerflinger.

[3] This quotation demonstrates an interesting fact about Patrick Tayluer: his name was often spelled “Tayleur,” by Doerflinger, by newspaper reporters, and by others who recorded it. Indeed, it is spelled “Tayleur” more than half of the time. However, from receipts that Tayluer signed himself, which are preserved in the AFC Archive, we know that he spelled his own name “Tayluer.” ○

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Clipper ship trade card for one of Captain Burgess's voyages in the David Crockett. The ship and her skipper are mentioned in one of two traditional versions of "The Leaving of Liverpool." For more about the song, see the article on Page 3.



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