

Because of the nature of its economy, Harbour Grace was deserted by its able-bodied men during the spring and summer. Consequently social activities took place during the winter months, particularly during the twelve days of Christmas. Songs, music, and dancing were popular pastimes in the Harbour Grace area, although some other northern outports were more austere in their choice of entertainment because of religious beliefs of their inhabitants. As can be expected the Labrador fishery and the seal fishery figured tragically or humorously, but always vividly in many of the songs and recitations of the period. Here are two of the more humorous examples. The first, "Jack Was Every Inch A Sailor," has remained a very popular folksong while the second, "The Spring Maurice Crotty Fought the Old Dog Hood", while once popular, is practically unknown today. These and many other folk songs can be found in Kenneth Peacock, Songs of the Newfoundland Outports (Ottawa, National Museums of Canada, 1965, 3 vols, NMC bulletin no. 197).

### JACK WAS EVERY INCH A SAILOR

'Twas twenty-five or thirty years since Jack first saw the light.  
He came into this world of woe one dark and stormy night.  
He was born on board his father's ship as she was lying to.  
'Bout twenty-five or thirty miles southeast of Bacalieu.

Chorus

Jack was every inch a sailor, five and twenty years a whaler,  
Jack was every inch a sailor, he was born upon the bright blue sea.

When Jack grew up to be a man, he went to the Labrador.  
He fished in Indian Harbour, where his father fished before.  
On his returning in the fog, he met a heavy gale,  
And Jack was swept into the sea and swallowed by a whale.

Repeat Chorus

The whale went straight for Baffin's Bay, about ninety knots and hour,  
And every time he'd blow a spray he's send it in a shower.  
"O, now," says Jack unto himself, "I must see what he's about."  
He caught the whale all by the tail and turned him inside out.

Repeat Chorus

### THE SPRING CROTTY FOUGHT THE OLD DOG HOOD

Sit down boys, I'll sing you a ditty,  
'Bout the spring I was out in the Dan  
Maurice Crotty was one of the sealers  
A comical sort of man.  
He could spin out old yarns by the hour  
And lies he could tell by the score,  
And when he came down in the ball-room  
All hands in her body would roar.

It was his first spring at ice-hunting,  
Not a rope in the ship did he know;  
Not even to fold up the bunting,

And awkward to lace up a tow.  
When the captain called out one fine morning,  
Come, Crotty, your trick at the wheel  
Come, He shook like a mouse in a skillet,  
So nervous and timid did feel.

We struck the white coats the next morning  
And over her side every man.  
With his bat and his gaff on his shoulder  
All copying from pan to pan;  
And Maurice a half mile behind us,  
And he cutting all kinds of queer frills  
He was bowing and scraping on tip toe  
Like a man in a set of quadrilles

Coming home `bout a mile from the schooner,  
We saw Maurice stripped off for a bout,  
And a big old dog hood with his flippers  
And he stretching him out every clout;  
"I challenged him fair," said poor Maurice,  
"For a fight if before me he'd stand  
And he took the mean dirty advantage,  
And hit me with rocks in his hand."

We backed him in turns to the schooner  
And tucked him up snugly in bed;  
And next morning he came to his senses  
And he called me out and then said:  
"He must have got drunk from the liquor,  
But for that he would beat me to death;  
For I'm certain he had a nice jag on,  
I got the smell of Old Tom from his breath."

Note: The dog hood was the old male of the hood species, a very fierce and extremely dangerous seal which often weighed as much as a thousand pounds. Armed only with gaffs it generally took two men to kill one. The dog hood in the above song apparently knocked Maurice unconscious and Maurice maintains in the song that it would have killed him except for the fact that it was partly drunk (ie. 'had a nice jag on') for as Maurice goes on to say, 'I got the smell of Old Tom (rum) from his breath'. Not all the verses have been included here.