

Roll That Cotton

This is a capstan and windlass shanty version of a work song originating in about 1860 from the American cotton fields. Great piece of research here: <http://shantiesfromthesevensesas.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/93-101-roll-cotton-down-series.html>

screw = load, hoosier = resident of Indiana: on a Mississippi flatboat carrying corn from Indiana to New Orleans. Flatboats only went downstream: at their destination they were usually broken up and sold for lumber. The crew would have walked or ridden back home. Roud 2627. Our words are very different from other versions - elaborated by J. Hancox

Oh was you ever in Mobile Bay?

Roll the cotton down

Where they screws the cotton all through the day

Oh roll the cotton down

Chorus

Roll that cotton <solo> bosun

Roll the cotton bosun

Roll that cotton

Oh roll the cotton down

Now a dollar a day is a hoosier's pay

And screw for more is what they say

Now rock them blocks and make them cry

That ruddy topmast sheave is dry

Now I wish I had a drop of gin

I'd bowse that block right to the pin

And I wish I had a tot of rum

I'll sing you a song if you gives me some

Now if the landlord offers me one free

Instead of one pint I'll have three

Oh! I wish John Salt would keep his luff

The beggar thinks we've hauled enough