



KelticDead Music

Stories, Tunes and Songs in the Traditions of our Celtic Dead

To the Four Ayrts to Guide Us, and
For the Four Winds to Get Us There!

The mission of the **KelticDead Music** initiative is to find tunes and songs from around the world that have Celtic, Folk, World, Americana, and Seafaring origins, and arrange them into simple sheet music formats for folk musicians to use and share. In addition, the KDM initiative provides the in-depth stories with possible lyrics for a more complete music-education experience.

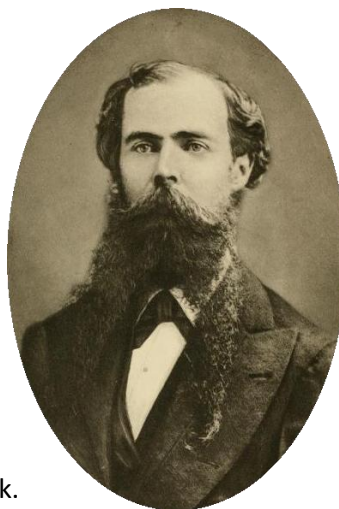
*All the selections and sheet music content provided in the **KelticDead Music** initiative are from traditional, made-public, made-public with credits, or cited credits where applicable. This material content is from various internet sources and the personal interpretations of the subject is provided by **Patrick O-Shaun Young, KelticDead Music**. All graphics are either public domain or cited where applicable. Validation and verification are left up to the reader.*

The Ship That Never Returned

Before the days of radio or Morse code, ships that set sail in the mid 1800s would set sail from a port and encounter storms or other mishaps that would leave a mystery about their fate by those who remained behind. This seafaring tale was not written by any sailor, but rather by a printer who specialized in setting musical type.

Henry Clay Work was born on October 1st, 1832 to Alanson and Aurelia (Forbes) Work in Middletown, Connecticut. He died on June 8th, 1884. Henry was a self-taught American composer and songwriter, and at 23 he worked as a printer by trade in Chicago, Illinois.

It is said that he composed the tune in his head as worked, using the noise of the machinery as his inspiration. He published the tune in 1865 about a ship that left a harbor and never came back for reasons unknown.



Photograph of Henry Clay Work.

The melody is lively though the telling is about a sad event. The tune was adapted by Vernon Dalhart in 1924 as the "Wreck of the Old 97" about a train crash. It was popularized by Johnny Cash.

The most famous adaptation of the melody was done by The Kingston Trio as "M.T.A." in 1959. They used the melody to make a sarcastic tale about a man who got on the Boston subway transit, but did not have a nickel to get off the train, and was stuck on the subway forever.

The Ship That Never Returned

On a summer day, as the waves were rippling
By a soft and gentle breeze
Did a ship set sail with her cargo laden
For a port beyond the seas.

Chorus

Did she ever return?
No, she never returned
And her fate was yet unlearned
Tho' for years and years
there were fond ones waiting
For the ship that never returned.



Said a feeble lad to his anxious mother,
"I must cross the wide, wide sea,
For they say, perchance, in a foreign climate
There is health and strength for me!"

Chorus

'Twas a gleam of hope in a maze of danger
And her heart for her youngest yearned;
She sent him forth with a smile and a blessing
On a ship that never returned.

Chorus

"Only one more trip," said the gallant captain,
As he kissed his weeping wife.
"Only one more bag of that gold 'n' treasure,
And will last us all through life. "

Chorus

"Then we'll spend our days in a cozy cottage
And enjoy the rest I've earned."
But, alas, poor man, who sailed as commander
On a ship that never returned.



Chorus



The Ship That Never Returned

Arrangement by KelticDead Music

Traditional Americana
Henry Clay Work, 1865



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNm0mHMAZYk>

The sheet music arrangement shown above is the version played by the KDM Group Musicians and was written in C Major.

Shaun Young arranged the sheet music, and adjusted the lyrics of the song to play with it. He uses an Irish-Tuned, Low Octave Bouzouki to set the rhythm and beat, a Kerry Mezzo C whistle, a bodhran, as well as voice and chorus parts.

Earnie Taft featured the fiddle in this melody, and

Alan Beck provided a guitar.

For this and other “KDM Story Broadside” visit <https://kelticdeadmusic.org/story-broadside/>

For Bios of the KDM Volunteers visit <https://kelticdeadmusic.org/Friends/>

KelticDead Music Initiative

is a private, on-line music-education initiative. All the music projects are recorded with live, acoustic instruments and performed in accordance with simplified sheet music arranged in eight bar formats (whenever possible) in accordance with the guidelines that are within the Celtic music traditions. For more music videos and stories visit ...

<https://KelticDeadMusic.org>



Shaun Young



Earnie Taft



Alan Beck

The Ship That Never Returned

Arrangement by KelticDead Music

Traditional Americana
Henry Clay Work, 1865



D Major sheet music arrangement. No Sound Link.

Some versions of the tune and song were written in the key of D Major, shown above.

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