



The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife  
Annual Proceedings 2016  
Edited by Peter Benes

# New England at Sea: Maritime Memory and Material Culture

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Published by the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife



## “A complete suit of flannel under-clothing, for bad weather”: Rediscovering and Reproducing Richard Henry Dana Jr.’s Cape Horn Wardrobe

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In the midst of a research project I was conducting about the clothing made and worn by early American sailors, staff at Mystic Seaport ushered me into their collection storage area on a rainy day in 2014. On a study table a set of old clothes lay ready for inspection. At first blush, they were relatively unremarkable. Off to the side sat a black hat (*Figure 1*) shaped something like the straw “boaters” popular in the early twentieth century and at political conventions. Next to it lay a pair of old pants, the kind with the wide flap in the front, often associated today with “sailor”-style garments, whose wide legs looked something like bell-bottoms (*Figure 2*). And finally came a pair of garments that most people do not wear anymore and would not recognize, but that were, in fact, a set of flannel underwear, top and bottom. These clothes, according to museum records, once belonged to Richard Henry Dana Jr., author of the famous sea memoir *Two Years Before the Mast*, first published in 1840.



*Figure 1.* Dana’s hat. Courtesy, Mystic Seaport.

Curious details emerged. The hat was not a flimsy boater but made of sturdy plaited, or braided, straw, stiffened in the top with the insertion of two pieces of wood about the size and shape of tongue depressors. Someone had covered it with painted canvas and tied a black ribbon in a bow around the base of its crown. The stained trousers looked as if they had been made not by a tailor or seamstress but by someone less practiced in garment construction. Their shape was quite unlike the tighter trousers fashionable in the mid-nineteenth century. Perhaps most interesting of all was the underwear. Undergarments from this period (or any



*Figure 2.* Dana's trousers. Courtesy, Mystic Seaport.

period) survive in museums much less commonly than other clothing because they were so unremarkable; people used them up and threw them away. After all, even today we save wedding dresses and special suits, but who would think to preserve old underwear? Dana's set, truly rare, was made from a white wool flannel. On the undershirt the blue

selvedge stripe from the original length of fabric had been left intact, a typical time-saving construction technique that in this case also decorated certain seams (*Figure 3*).<sup>1</sup> The shape of a human leg was apparent in the cut of the drawers and the way they would have hugged the thigh and then ended below the knee (*Figure 4*). At the time of construction the maker had added a reinforcement patch where the seams were likely to tear in the crotch. Only one button remained, moved to make the drawers fit even tighter in the waist than originally intended. What could we make of these garments?

People have credited *Two Years Before the Mast* with encouraging the reform of shipboard discipline and inspiring a new genre of adventure memoirs.<sup>2</sup> Land-bound and seafaring readers have absorbed it with equal interest, and when it was first published some assumed that, like most other narrative works of the day, it was fiction. When Elizabeth Davis Bancroft, an American author, visited England in 1847, one of her hosts could recite portions of the book, and the other guests, according to Bancroft, "were so glad to hear from me that it was as *true* as interesting,

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The author thanks Nicole Belolan, Joseph Privott, Jeffrey Amestoy, Matthew Brenckle, Rebecca Bayreuther Donohue, Charles Fithian, Neal Hurst, Mark Hutter, James L. Kochan, Michael McCarty, Mike Stiles, and David Rickman. The University of Delaware's Center for Material Culture Studies provided a grant to cover certain image reproduction fees. The staff of Mystic Seaport allowed me to examine Dana's items and participate in the 38th Voyage of the *Charles W. Morgan*. The crew and students of C256 aboard the SSV *Corwith Cramer* taught me what it means to have shipmates.

<sup>1</sup> This technique reduces construction time because the maker does not need to "fell," or enclose, the seam allowance by rolling it under and sewing it down, because unlike a cut fabric edge, a selvedge will not unravel over time.

<sup>2</sup> See introduction to Richard Henry Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast: A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea*, ed. Thomas Philbrick (New York: Penguin Books, 1981). Citations that follow (except those formatted otherwise) are to this widely accessible edition. The editor justifies using the text of Dana's first edition, rather than later ones that Dana edited, in *ibid.*, 14–15. For historical and literary commentaries one can consult various introductions to editions of the book as well as Robert F. Lucid, "'Two Years Before the Mast' as Propaganda," *American Literature* 31, no. 3 (November 1959): 243–56; Robert F. Lucid, "The Influence of *Two Years Before the Mast* on Herman Melville," *American Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (autumn 1960): 392–403; Douglas B. Hill Jr., "Richard Henry Dana, Jr., and 'Two Years Before the Mast,'" *Criticism* 9, no. 4 (fall 1967): 312–25; Allan Christensen, "Dana's 'Two Years Before the Mast,'" *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 12, no. 13 (2006): 219–38.



*Figure 3.* Dana's undershirt. Courtesy, Mystic Seaport.



*Figure 4.* Dana's underdrawers. Courtesy, Mystic Seaport.

for they had regarded it as partly a work of imagination.”<sup>3</sup> Years later, Dorothea Balano, the seafaring wife of a Maine ship captain, was exasperated when her husband derided the book as fiction. “I doubt Fred ever read one page of *Two Years Before the Mast*,” she wrote. “It was written by no landsman.”<sup>4</sup> The book’s veracity and its evocation of the realities of life at sea and ashore made it an enduring classic. Since its first publication, *Two Years Before the Mast* has appeared in over 900 editions.<sup>5</sup>

Dana went to sea for his health and for adventure. He was born in Massachusetts in 1815 and received a good education as a young man, including studying under Ralph Waldo Emerson.<sup>6</sup> In 1831 he entered Harvard College, but a temporary expulsion and failing eyesight led him to question his academic pursuits. In 1834 he put to sea, with no experience, as a common sailor, bunking in the fo’c’s’le in front of, or “before,” the foremast aboard a brig called the *Pilgrim* headed for California. For two years he stood watches, hauled lines, rowed boats, lugged cow hides onto ships, and made friends and enemies among sailors, laborers, and Californians.

In December 1835 Dana was on board the ship *Alert*, preparing to round Cape Horn and return home after over a year working in the hide trade on the coast of California. He remembered how he and his shipmates braced for the voyage.

We all employed our evenings in making clothes for the passage home, and more especially for Cape Horn.... We seated ourselves on our chests round the lamp, which swung from a beam, and each one went to work in his own way, some making hats, others trowsers, others jackets, &c. &c; and no one was idle.... I also sewed and covered a tarpaulin hat, thick and strong enough to sit down upon, and made myself a complete suit of flannel under-clothing, for bad weather.<sup>7</sup>

Here was the explanation for the clothing at Mystic Seaport. These were not just a few things Dana’s family happened to save from his effects.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Richard Henry Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast: Illustrated Copyright Edition* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), xi.

<sup>4</sup> Dorothea Honora Moulton Balano, Diary, 19 November 1911, in *The Log of the Skipper’s Wife*, ed. James W. Balano (Camden, Maine: Down East Books, 1979), 67.

<sup>5</sup> The antiquarian book dealer and bibliographer Bill Ewald owns over 700 versions and has identified over 200 others on the market: “How This Title Bibliography Began” page, “*Two Years Before the Mast* by Richard Henry Dana, Jr.: A Work in Progress towards Developing a Comprehensive Title Bibliography of This Book,” <http://www.twoyearsbeforethemastdana.com/>.

<sup>6</sup> Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*, 9. The most recent biography of Dana is Jeffrey L. Amestoy, *Slavish Shore: The Odyssey of Richard Henry Dana Jr.* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*, 304. This particular passage relates to December 1835.

These were likely the very same garments he had made in 1835.

Dana's garments had somehow survived the dockside accident in which he lost most of his other voyage souvenirs.<sup>8</sup> He had carefully preserved them, perhaps tucked away in some trunk, though apparently with no note about their personal history. Years later, in a 1915 exhibition celebrating the centennial of Dana's birth, Harvard's Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library displayed them in its Treasure Room along with other paintings and manuscripts from his family.<sup>9</sup> Around the time of Dana's grandson's death in 1931, someone pinned the garments in front of a wall of editions of *Two Years Before the Mast* for a photograph (Figure 5). In 1954 Dana's great-grandson realized that their connection to the author might make them of interest to Mystic Seaport.<sup>10</sup> His donation included a fragile old provenance note,<sup>11</sup> perhaps from the 1915 exhibition:

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<sup>8</sup> Dana's published memoir was actually his second effort, drawing on a diary he kept at sea. In the introduction to a 1911 edition, Dana's son explained what happened to the first version. "While at sea he made entries almost daily in a pocket notebook and at leisure hours wrote these out fully. This full account of his voyage was lost with his trunk containing sailors' clothes and all souvenirs and presents for family and friends by the carelessness of a relative who took charge of his things at the wharf when he landed in Boston in 1836." Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast: Illustrated Copyright Edition*, xii. The mention of "sailors' clothes" here is notable and leaves lingering questions about the garments that do survive. Were they in another container or on his body? They bear close resemblance to Dana's descriptions and their style suits the 1830s, but, of course, without a more explicit provenance, it is impossible to prove they are the same ones Dana made and wore on that voyage.

<sup>9</sup>An image of this exhibition, with Dana's hat and folded garments just visible on the right end of the rear table, is available at <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/via/olvwork368176/catalog> ("Dana Exhibition in the Treasure Room, Oct. 14–22, 1915 [photograph]," Harvard University Archives HUV 49 [4–6]). The full description of Dana's garments in this exhibition reads: "Tarpaulin hat worn by R. H. Dana, Jr., while at sea. These hats were worn on the back of the head, the sea fashion of those days. It was sewed and covered by Dana. (See chapter 26 of "Two Years Before the Mast.") / Flannel jacket and trousers cut and sewed by R. H. Dana, Jr., while at sea, as told in "Two Years Before the Mast." / Some of his other sea-clothes." "Appendix: Exhibit in Connection with the Dana Centenary in the Treasure Room of Harvard College Library, October 14–22, 1915," in *Exercises in Sanders Theatre, Cambridge, Mass., Under the Auspices of the Cambridge Historical Society Celebrating the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Richard Henry Dana, October 20, 1915* (Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge Historical Society, 1916), 41.

<sup>10</sup> One news story announcing an exhibition at Mystic Seaport described the garments as "the suit worn by Richard Henry Dana on that voyage from Boston to California aboard the brig Pilgrim back in 1843," "Historic Sailor Suit on Display at Mystic Seaport," *New London (Conn.) Evening Day*, Thursday afternoon, 13 May 1954, 13. By this time the garments had become connected with Dana's more famous outbound voyage aboard the *Pilgrim*, rather than his return aboard the *Alert*, when he actually made them.

<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Maribeth Bielinski, Collections Access Manager, Mystic Seaport, for locating this information in correspondence files related to the donation. A sharp-eyed viewer may note a pencil inscription in the lower corner of the note that seems to read "[illegible] of his [illegible] R.H.D. Jr."

Rich<sup>d</sup> H. Dana, Jun<sup>r</sup>  
(Some of his sea clothes.)  
Sailed Aug. 16<sup>th</sup>, 1834 —  
Returned, Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> 1836

The note did not go far enough. Not only were these some of Dana's sea clothes. He had made and worn them on the return leg of a voyage about which he wrote one of the most famous sea memoirs of American history.



Figure 5. Photograph of Richard Henry Dana's clothing pinned against editions of his book. 1931. Courtesy of Harvard College Library.

Dana's book and manuscripts provide us with some clues about his clothing and how important it was to him. He went to sea with attire that included six checked shirts, eight pairs of shoes and boots, two full suits of oilcloth rain gear, four flannel shirts, and two pairs of flannel drawers.<sup>12</sup> But by the time he had spent a year sailing and working on the California

<sup>12</sup> Dana's accounts, the originals of which are held by the Massachusetts Historical Society, are printed in Richard Henry Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast: A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea*, ed. John Haskell Kemble, 2 vols. (Los Angeles, Calif.: Ward Ritchie Press, 1964), 2:375–378.



coast, his wardrobe was in poor shape. Using canvas sent from home, he stitched new garments and “displayed, every Sunday, a complete suit of my own make, from head to foot.”<sup>13</sup> But how good was his stitching, and how did he look in his Sunday suit?

Most sailors before and after Dana’s period could sew, and many were quite adept at it. Sewing was important work aboard ships driven by hand-sewn fabric sails. For men on long voyages, sunshine and salt air took their toll on even the sturdiest of clothes, forcing sailors to turn their hands to repairing and constructing clothing. “Every sailor knows a little about his needle, though, and can cut clothes, particularly trousers,” the British mariner Robert Mercer Wilson wrote in the early nineteenth century. He remembered watching sailors mark and cut linen for shirts, “and sew away, and that not slow.”<sup>14</sup> Among the rare garments recovered from the 1785 shipwreck of the British vessel *General Carleton* are numerous items made and modified by sailors, including some showing how sailors crudely lined existing clothing to prepare for cold weather.<sup>15</sup> But when they made landfall, few sailors were so thoughtful about their sea clothes as Dana, and they simply wore out their garments or sold them to a rag man for pennies.

Dana’s clothing is remarkable not only for its association with the famous author, but also because his garments are among the only ones from before the mid-nineteenth century that were both made and worn by an identified sailor at sea.<sup>16</sup> They have much to tell us about the world of Dana and sailors like him. They prove, for example, that he learned to cut and sew relatively complicated patterns. Trousers, for instance, require that the maker both understand how to cut the variously shaped pieces needed for a good fit as well as grasp a variety of construction tech-

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<sup>13</sup> Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*, 228. The same parcel from home also contained “flannel shirts,” *ibid.*, 227. But Dana’s surviving set of shirt and drawers seems to be made from the same material, which would be unlikely if the extant shirt arrived separately. The original manuscript version of Dana’s book, which according to John Haskell Kemble reads “dashed out” instead of “displayed,” leaves it open to debate whether Dana actually managed to make a new suit every Sunday for a period, though that would have been a tall order. Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*, ed. Kemble, 1:165.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Mercer Wilson, “Remarks on Board His Majesty’s Ship *Unité* of 40 Guns...,” in *Five Naval Journals, 1789–1817*, ed. H. G. Thursfield (London: Navy Records Society, 1951), 257. Thanks to Matthew Brenckle for bringing this quotation to the author’s attention.

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence Babits and Matthew Brenckle, “Sailor Clothing,” in *The General Carleton Shipwreck, 1785*, ed. Waldemar Ossowski (Gdańsk, Poland: Polish Maritime Museum in Gdańsk, 2008), 167–98.

<sup>16</sup> For an elaborate and identified early 1850s sailor’s suit and duffel bag, see Harold D. Langley, “From the Collection: Warren Opie’s Sailor’s Uniform at Winterthur,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 38, no. 2/3 (summer/autumn 2003): 131–42.

niques. Dana's garments go beyond his words to demonstrate that his sewing skills, though not especially refined, were not crude or clumsy.

They held up well, too. Dana's wardrobe is in remarkably good condition. His hat still looks firm enough to serve as a makeshift seat. "A sailor has a peculiar cut to his clothes," Dana had written. And his trousers were indeed as he described, "tight round the hips, and thence hanging long and loose round the feet."<sup>17</sup> The wool underclothes, their flannel dotted with only a few moth holes, look as warm as the day they were made. They probably served him well when he rounded the Horn, a frigid voyage he described in a passage Herman Melville said "must have been written with an icicle."<sup>18</sup> But these are museum objects, fragile and irreplaceable relics. We cannot sit on them or try them on to get a sense of Dana's experiences. But what if we could?

Experimental archaeology, in which scholars use historical materials and techniques to test assumptions and hypotheses about the creation and use of the material culture of the past, is one way to learn new things about objects like Dana's garments. This methodology became especially popular among archaeologists in the mid- and late twentieth century as a way of solving problems generated by the archaeological record. Experimental archaeologists built Iron Age houses to understand what sort of imprint they might leave on the landscape and knapped flint into stone tools to determine what sort of waste came from what sort of projectile point.<sup>19</sup> Food historians at Hampton Court Palace outside London have spent years replicating the processes of Tudor cooking and examining its effects not only on contemporary palates but also on the clothing they wear and the dishes they use and break.<sup>20</sup> Other scholars have used the methodology for textile projects.<sup>21</sup> Such investigations have included

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<sup>17</sup> Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*, 40–41. The extant trousers are plain-woven and show no sign of having been oiled, so they are not the twill-woven, oiled ones that Dana described making ahead of the Cape Horn passage (*ibid.*, 304). But in construction and style, they are just the sort a sailor such as Dana would have made and worn. The maritime historian and sailor clothing expert Matthew Brenckle agreed via email to this author, 7 May 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Herman Melville, *White-Jacket; or, the World in a Man-of-War* (1850; Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1970), 99.

<sup>19</sup> For surveys of this methodology, see John Coles, *Archaeology by Experiment* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973); *idem*, *Experimental Archaeology* (London: Academic Press, 1979); and Dana C. E. Millson, ed., *Experimentation and Interpretation: The Use of Experimental Archaeology in the Study of the Past* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxbow Books, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Lauren Collins, "The King's Meal: A Popularizing Historian Cooks Up the Past," *New Yorker*, 21 November 2011, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/11/21/the-kings-meal>.

<sup>21</sup> On archaeological textiles and an argument for how replication can lead to new information, see Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years: Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1994).

projects to replicate ancient Mediterranean linen body armor, a seventeenth-century embroidered jacket, and George Washington's Revolutionary War marquee tent.<sup>22</sup> In the best recent scholarly publication on the subject, the costume scholar Hilary Davidson discusses reproducing and documenting a silk pelisse coat reputedly worn by the author Jane Austen.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, a myriad of bloggers from the "costuming" hobby detail their efforts to reproduce historical dress of all stripes.

Reproducing historical clothing provides insights into the lives of garments' original makers and wearers. The process also results in clothing that museums can display without concern for fragility and that visitors can handle and even wear. Both of these ends, answering research questions and interpreting the investigation itself for public audiences, should be the aims of historians today.

The project to replicate Dana's garments was itself no easy task, and that tells us a lot about how the world has changed since the 1830s. It was impossible, for example, without expensive custom weaving, to acquire flannel with precisely the same weave structure and blue selvedge as Dana's material. According to his accounts, Dana bought his flannel for \$3.00 from the ship's "slops" stores, the supply of clothing and fabric carried onboard ships.<sup>24</sup> In some cases, reproduction projects go to great lengths to duplicate the precise weave and pattern of an original textile, but in this case it was more practical to use a similar 100-percent wool flannel already available on the retail market.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Gregory S. Aldrete, Scott Bartell, and Alicia Aldrete, *Reconstructing Ancient Linen Body Armor: Unraveling the Linothorax Mystery* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013). The best documentation of the "Plimoth Jacket" project is a slideshow available at <http://www.winterthur.org/pdfs/Plimoth-Jacket.pdf>. On Washington's marquee and the "First Oval Office" project, see <https://www.facebook.com/FirstOvalOffice/>. On the reproduction of specific costumes for theatrical purposes, see Jenny Tiramani, "Janet Arnold and the Globe Wardrobe: Handmade Clothes for Shakespeare's Actors," *Costume* 34, no. 1 (2000): 118–22; and Elaine Webster and Fiona Milne, "Cicero's New Clothes: Recreating and Investigating Dress and Dress Effects," *Costume* 38, no. 1 (2004): 12–25. For an argument about the value of replicating a variety of textile objects, see Beverly Gordon, "The Hand of the Maker: The Importance of Understanding Textiles from the 'Inside Out,'" in *Silk Roads, Other Roads: Proceedings of the Fourth Biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America* [CD], 2003, available at [http://www.beverlygordon.info/uploads/1/9/6/7/19674513/hand\\_of\\_the\\_maker.pdf](http://www.beverlygordon.info/uploads/1/9/6/7/19674513/hand_of_the_maker.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Hilary Davidson, "Reconstructing Jane Austen's Silk Pelisse, 1812–1814," *Costume* 49, no. 2 (2015): 198–223. For a detailed discussion of replicating fragile museum garments for research and display purposes, see Janet Arnold, "Make or Break: The Testing of Theory by Reproducing Historic Techniques," in *Textiles Revealed: Object Lessons in Historic Textile and Costume Research*, ed. Mary M. Brooks (London: Archetype Publications, 2000), 39–47.

<sup>24</sup> Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*, ed. Kemble, 2:378.

<sup>25</sup> The flannel of Dana's undergarments, for example, is a plain or "tabby" weave, while the flannel this author used is twill-woven and has a white selvedge.

Dana was not a professional tailor. It is unlikely he had ever handled a needle and thread before his voyage. Most men in the 1830s, like most men today, knew little or nothing about sewing. Tailors and sailors were among the exceptions, but Dana had no experience in either trade until he walked onto the deck of the *Pilgrim* in 1834. He learned quickly, and replicating his garments requires the same basic understanding of measuring, patterning, and sewing that he developed in the 1830s as well as experience handling and studying similar antique garments. In the twenty-first century, we have relegated the former to very specialized tradesmen or, more commonly, international labor, and the latter is a rare skill developed only through a substantial amount of time spent in museum collections.<sup>26</sup>

Dana's undergarments were relatively fast to reproduce, indicating the ease with which he may have made them. The shirt incorporated only eight pieces of fabric. Making a typical shirt of the 1830s involved "gathering" or "pleating" material to take a wide sleeve down to a narrow cuff, for example, as well as the application of separate cuff and collar pieces, all time-consuming steps. Dana's undershirt included none of that. The pattern pieces themselves, like those of most shirts of the period, were cut based on rectangular shapes.<sup>27</sup> Making an undershirt like it involves only seaming the body and sleeves, inserting gussets at the neck and armpits, attaching the arms to the body, and hemming the wrists, bottom edge, and neckline. On land, a practiced hand could construct the undershirt and drawers in less than a day of work.

We should keep in mind that Dana was employed at sea, in the down time between watches, the work shifts during which sailors were on duty.<sup>28</sup> We can imagine Dana's undergarments taking some time to sew in the *Alert's* fo'c's'le, and his trousers being even more time-consuming, even if he had a good grasp of fundamental sewing skills by 1835.

What do these reproductions reveal about their original maker and wearer? The historic tradesman and interpreter Joseph Privott fit the wardrobe (*Figure 6*), and his basic measurements (*Table 1*) give us some idea of Dana's physical size and shape at the time of his voyages.

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<sup>26</sup> The author has developed these skills over ten years of practice, studying and recreating historical garments, including making reproductions for museums and living history sites and through a historic trades internship at Colonial Williamsburg.

<sup>27</sup> The pieces are a single long, rectangular body piece, two sleeves (notably not rectangular but trapezoidal, being slightly wider at the shoulder than at the wrist), two sleeve gussets, two neck gussets/shoulder reinforcements, and a heart-shaped reinforcement at the base of the front slit.

<sup>28</sup> During a sea voyage in 2014 the author reproduced a different maritime garment, a woolen sailor's jacket recovered from the 1785 wreck of the *General Carleton* mentioned earlier. Though such a jacket would take a tailor only a couple days to complete, it took the author the entire twenty-three-day voyage to sew in spare hours when he was not on watch, eating, asleep, or otherwise occupied.

Figure 6. Joseph Privott dressed in reproductions of Dana's clothing.

Neck	15.5
Chest	35
Waist	28
Hip	34
Bicep	12
Forearm	10.4

Table 1. Essential circumferences, in inches, of Joseph Privott wearing reproductions of Dana's clothing.



Men could be able sailors, it turns out, without being brawny. Privott's arms match the dimensions of the undershirt sleeves and indicate that Dana's biceps measured no larger than twelve inches around, a full inch less than the average (much less laboring) male in his age group today.<sup>29</sup> Dana was in the best shape of his life when he disembarked from the *Alert* in 1836. He had gone to sea for health reasons, chiefly to cure failing eyesight, and, apparently, it had worked.<sup>30</sup> He returned to Massachusetts hearty and healthy, ready to finish classes at Harvard (*Figure 7*). We might expect that the strenuous life of a sailor, hauling cow hides and dining on beefsteaks, would have made him and any other seaman

<sup>29</sup> The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services listed the mean midarm (between shoulder and elbow) circumference for twenty- to twenty-nine-year-old males as 33.4 centimeters (13.1 inches); Cherly D. Fryar, Qiuping Gu, and Cynthia L. Ogden, *Anthropometric Reference Data for Children and Adults: United States, 2007–2010*, National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Health Statistics 11(252) (Hyattsville, Md., 2012), [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr\\_11/sr11\\_252.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_11/sr11_252.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*, 40.

into a burly man.<sup>31</sup> In fact, Dana at least was a perfectly able seaman without exceptional muscle mass.<sup>32</sup>

Privott will not be the last person to wear these reproductions. They now belong to Mystic Seaport, where the originals also reside, for use in museum programming. Unlike Dana's original clothing, these new undergarments can be worn by interpreters and handled by visitors. They can get wet in the rain and be hung up to dry on the deck of a ship. Eventually, they will show us how long such garments might have lasted when exposed to human bodies and the elements.

Richard Henry Dana Jr. never expected his underwear to mean much. Having lost the bulk of his souvenirs and sea relics, he relegated them, along with his trousers and hat, to the bottom of a chest somewhere. He turned from the sea to the land, pursuing an active law career and advocating for common sailors. Clothing was still important to him. Traveling in later years, he sometimes donned a pair of "blue loose trousers, rough jacket & glazed cap" and, thus disguised as a sailor, toured the seedier sides of towns like Halifax and New York.<sup>33</sup> He died in 1882, ending a remarkable life and leaving a profound memoir of life at sea.

But he also left us his clothing. Studying and reproducing garments like Dana's allow us to create an avatar, something we can take off collections storage shelves and out into the real world. Accurate reproductions—garments that closely mimic the material, cut, and construction techniques of original clothing—help us challenge our ideas about historical subjects and confront museum visitors with the very physical reality of life in the past. Richard Henry Dana Jr. wrote one of the most evocative sea stories of all time. And now his clothing can help us tell that story in a new way.

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<sup>31</sup> On the remarkable, and exceptional, amount of beef the sailors consumed while loading hides into a ship, see *ibid.*, 343–44.

<sup>32</sup> The same might also hold true of other stereotypically muscular trades. Privott noted that after nine months' working as a full-time (forty hours per week) blacksmith at Colonial Williamsburg, "my biceps and forearms are only ¼" larger...but the muscle tone is much tighter." Joseph Privott to the author, email, 4 June 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Robert F. Lucid, *The Journal of Richard Henry Dana, Jr.*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), 18 July 1842 (1:74); see also 24 February 1844 (1:232). Thanks to Jeffrey Amestoy for bringing Dana's disguise, these entries, and the photograph of Dana's garments from the Longfellow House to this author's attention.



RICHARD H. DANA, JR., IN 1842

*Figure 7.* Dana as he appeared shortly after his voyage. From Richard Henry Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast: Illustrated Copyright Edition* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911).