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A Sailor's Life

During the four centuries before the advent of the steamship, the most common form of worldwide transport was the sailing ship. The lure of the sea and its promise of adventure drew many young men to sign on with the merchant service or ships of war, forming an eternal bond of brotherhood among the hardy band of seamen who faced daily hardship and adversity. Once John Townley opens his sea chest, this remarkable part of history comes alive. Mr. Townley's show, "A Sailor's Life," is based on a creative mixture of prints, artifacts and live entertainment. For the first few days of the exhibit, John Townley is on hand to set up the show, distribute and explain the hand-held artifacts which range from sailors' personal gear and clothing to food, marlinspikes and sailors' knots, and examples of common home remedies found aboard ship.

An accomplished musician, Mr. Townley also sings and performs on period instruments, including concertinas, fiddles, banjos and pennywhistles. His repertoire is a musical legacy of chanteys, ballads, hornpipes and sea songs which Mr. Townley has recorded on various folk labels.

"A Sailor's Life" also includes some forty reproductions of period prints by George Cruikshank and other artists, depicting scenes from a sailor's life in both satirical and sentimental veins.

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