

## COUNTRY MUSIC

# FLOYD COLLINS BALLADS LYRICS

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### THE FLOYD COLLINS BALLADS

In chronological order by recording date

LY-CY-FC1

#### THE DEATH OF FLOYD COLLINS \*

Mus. & Lyr: Andrew JENKINS (CY-OT-FC-EY1 & 2 & 4 to 14 and CY-OT-FC-LT1 to 15)

Music Transcription: Irene SPAIN

Rts: James K. Polk Inc., 1025 & Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., 1925

- I. Oh, come all you young people  
And listen while I tell;  
The fate of Floyd Collins,  
A lad we all know well;  
His face was fair and handsome,  
His heart was true and brave;  
His body now lies sleeping  
In a lonely sandstone cave.
- II. How sad, how sad the story,  
It fills our eyes with tears;  
Its memories too will linger  
For many, many years;  
A broken-hearted father,  
Who tried his boy to save;  
Will now weep tears of sorrow  
At the door of Floyd's cave.
- III. Oh! Mother, don't you worry;  
Dear father, don't be sad;  
I'll tell you all my troubles  
In an awful dream I've had;  
I dreamed that I was pris'ner,  
My life I could not save;  
I cried, "Oh, must I perish  
Within this silent cave?"
- IV. "Oh! Floyd," cried his mother,  
"Don't go, my son, don't go  
'Twould leave us broken-hearted  
If this should happen so."  
Tho' Floyd did not listen,  
Advice his mother gave  
So his body now lies sleeping

In a lonely sandstone cave.

- V. His father often warned him  
From follies to desist  
He told him of the danger  
And of the awful risk  
But Floyd would not listen  
To the oft advice he gave  
So his body now lies sleeping  
In a lonely sandstone cave.
- VI. Oh! How the news did travel  
Oh! How the news did go  
It traveled thru the papers  
And over the radio  
A rescue party gathered  
His life they tried to save  
But his body now lies sleeping  
In a lonely sandstone cave.
- VII. The rescue party labored,  
They worked both night and day  
To move the mighty barrier  
That stood within the way  
To rescue Floyd Collins,  
This was their battle cry  
"We'll never, no, we'll never  
Let Floyd Collins die."
- VIII. But on that fatal morning  
The sun rose in the sky  
The workers still were busy  
We'll save him by and by  
But, oh! How sad the ending  
His life could not be saved  
His body then lies sleeping  
In a lonely sandstone cave
- IX. Young people, oh, take warning  
From Floyd Collins' fate  
And get right with your maker  
Before it is too late;  
It may not be a sand cave  
In which we find our tomb  
But at the bar of judgment  
We too must meet our doom.

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#### Variant Stanza 7

(As performed by Jenkins – Stanza 5 – See below)

That rescue party labored  
They toiled night and day  
To rescue Floyd Collins  
His body still then lay;  
They worked all night 'til morning  
But the stone they could not move  
So now we stand around him  
And mourn in deepest love.

#### Modified Additional Stanza 8-B

(Written in April 1925, this stanza should be placed between stanzas 8 and 9)  
(From Jenkins 78rpm – Stanza 7 – See below)

The mining experts gathered  
They sought to find a plan  
To move poor Floyd's body  
From far beneath the sand.  
It seemed a mighty struggle  
But with hearts brave and stout  
They finally, overcoming,  
Pulled Floyd's body out.

Variant of Stanza 8-B

(This stanza should be placed between stanzas 6 and 7 of the copyrighted text) (From Horstman, 1996)

The mining experts gathered,  
They sought to find a plan  
To lift poor Floyd's body  
From far beneath the sand  
And oh, how they did struggle  
With hearts brave and stout  
But the cave that swallowed Collins  
Would never let him out.

**Ref:** Blind "Andy" (Andrew Jenkins) 1925, Version of this ballad on 78 phonodisc, OKeh 40393, Stanzas 5 & 7

Horstman Dorothy 1996, *Sing Your Heart Out, Country Boy*, Country Music Foundation Press, Nashville, TN, p. 76-77

The Death of Floyd Collins, Sheet Music, Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., New York, 1925

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**LY-CY-FC2**

**FLOYD COLLINS IN SAND CAVE \***

Mus. & Lyr: Andrew JENKINS (CY-OT-FC-EY3)

Music Transcription: Irene SPAIN

Rts: (?), 1925

- I. Oh, come all you young people  
And listen while I tell;  
The fate of Floyd Collins,  
A lad we all knew well;  
His face was fair and handsome,  
His heart was true and brave;  
His body now lies sleeping  
In a lonely sandstone cave.
- II. How sad, how sad the story,  
It fills our eyes with tears;  
Its memories too will linger  
For many, many years;  
A broken-hearted father,  
Who tried his boy to save;  
Will now weep tears of *sadness*  
At the door of Floyd's cave.
- III. Oh! Mother, don't *be worried*;  
Dear father, don't be sad;  
I'll tell you all my *trouble*  
In an awful dream I had;  
I dreamed I was *prisoner*,  
My life *I could not save*;  
I cried, "Oh, must I perish  
Within this silent cave."

- IV. Oh! How the news did travel  
 Oh! How the news did go  
 It traveled *in the paper*  
 And *on* the radio  
 A rescue party gathered  
 His life they tried to save  
 But his body now lies sleeping  
 In a lonely sandstone cave.
- V. That rescue party labored  
 They *toiled* night and day  
 To rescue *Floyd Collins*  
 His body still then lay;  
 They worked all night 'til morning  
 But the stone they could not move  
 So now we stand around him  
 And mourn in deepest love.
- VI. *The sun on the fatal morning*  
*Rose in the cloudless sky*  
 The workers still were busy  
 We'll save him by and by  
 Then, oh! How sad the ending  
 His life could not be saved  
 The body then lay sleeping  
 In a lonely sandstone cave
- VII. *The mining experts gathered*  
*They sought to find a plan*  
*To move poor Floyd's body*  
*From far beneath the sand.*  
*It seemed a mighty struggle*  
*But with hearts brave and stout*  
*They finally, overcoming,*  
*Pulled Floyd's body out.*
- VIII. Young people, oh, take warning  
 From Floyd Collins' fate  
 And give your heart to Jesus  
 Before it is too late;  
 It may not be a sand cave  
 In which we find our tomb  
 But at the *mighty* judgment  
 We *all* must meet our doom.

Ref: Blind "Andy" (Andrew Jenkins) 1925, Version of this ballad on 78rpm phonodisc, OKeh 40393

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LY-CY-FC3

## SAND CAVE \*

Comp: George HUNT (CY-FC-OTH1)

Rts: (unknown)

- I. When you're singing songs of men who dared,  
 When you're tellin' tales of souls unscared,  
 Don't forget wherein Floyd Collins  
 When Sand Cave fell upon him  
 For he never flinched a moment or despaired.
- II. He was eighty feet down in the gloom  
 And the rocks fall in like the crack of doom  
 But he said, "Don't you worry,  
 Just do your best an' hurry,

Tell the boys that [I'm off ?] singing in my tomb.”

- III. We dug like mad but all in vain  
For the rocks fell upon him once again,  
The floor was a' swellin'  
An' our sad tears up-wellin',  
But he never thought a moment to complain.
  - IV. He went in where no man had ever been  
And he saw what no man had ever seen  
But he murmured with a smile,  
“If I die, it's been worthwhile.”  
He's the gamest man that I have ever seen.
  - V. Yes, he's layin' down there in the cold  
But he faced death unafraid and bold  
You could hear him a' prayin'  
An' here's what he was sayin',  
“Lord above me, won't you give me strength to hold.”
  - VI. He laid there for seventeen long days  
And death won a long an' [troublesome?] race.  
Though the rock held him fast  
He was game 'til the last  
For they found him with a smile upon his face.
  - VII. Yes, he's layin' down yonder all alone  
With his work here on earth forever done  
In his tomb he shall lay  
'Til the great Judgement Day  
When the angels come an' roll away the stone.
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#### LY-CY-FC4

### FLOYD COLLINS DREAM \*

Comp: Andrew JENKINS (CY-FC-OTH2)

Rts: (unknown)

- I. I wish I had someone to love me  
Someone to say a last good-bye;  
I know, my darling, that you will miss me  
When deep beneath these rocks I lie.
- II. I wish, my darling, that you are near me  
Then I would not feel so alone;  
I wish your smile was here to cheer me  
Beneath this heavy weight of stone.
- III. I know, my darling, that you do love me  
And that our love you'll always reap,  
But if I thought you loved another  
Within this cave I'd rather sleep.
- IV. Now far beneath these rocks I'm lying  
No pillow for my aching head;  
Oh God, I know I must be dying  
Far from my home and childhood bed.
- V. In chil'hood days, happy I wandered  
With those in life I loved the best  
But in this cave of silent wonders  
My aching heart will soon find rest.

- VI. Farewell, dear father, farewell, dear mother,  
Goodbye to all my sweet loves too  
My silent prayer at this sad parting  
May heaven bless and comfort you.
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**LY-CY-FC5**

**MEMORIES OF FLOYD COLLINS \***

Comp: (On label) (Polk) BROCKMAN

Actual Comp: Andrew JENKINS (CY-FC-OTH3, 4, &7)

Rts: George Buck; Decatur, GA

- I. How well we all remember  
Not many years ago  
How the great ship Shenandoah  
Met an awful overthrow;  
And the wreck of 97  
With the engineer so brave;  
And the hero Floyd Collins  
In the lonely sandstone cave.
- II. Remember the storm of Florida  
And the many lives there lost;  
And the Mississippi Valley  
Where hundreds paid the cost.  
But the saddest of all memories  
Though they tried so hard to save  
Is the memory of a boy still sleeping  
In a lonely sandstone cave.
- III. Our heroes in their aeroplanes  
Tried to span the ocean's breast;  
They tried for glory and for fame  
And gladly pay with death.  
But sadder still than the story  
Of an end they could avoid  
Is the tale down in Kentucky  
Of a poor young hero Floyd.
- IV. Good people, now take warning  
All over this fair land  
And get right with your Maker  
For before Him you must stand.  
Be in air, or plain, or ocean  
Wherever you may roam  
Just like poor Floyd Collins  
The call to you will come.
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**LY-CY-FC6**

**FLOYD COLLINS' FATE \***

Comp: Al EGGERS (CY-FC-OTH5 & 6)

Rts: (unknown)

- I. Now listen, friends and brothers,  
To what I have to state  
About a man Floyd Collins  
And how he met his fate.  
A man of mighty courage  
Who went to meet his doom  
In the hills of old Kentucky  
In a dreary, living tomb.

II. He left his dad and mother  
With courage in his eye;  
His happy family never knew  
This was their last good-bye.  
He wandered through the mountain  
To parts that were unknown  
And caught his strong and sturdy leg  
Beneath a heavy stone.

III. His cries and groans were all in vain  
But still his heart was brave;  
And there he lay for many days  
In that cruel and sandy cave.  
His father tried to save his boy  
With friends and neighbors all,  
But 'ere they broke the barrier down  
He heard his Master's call.

IV. God, forbid that anymore  
Should meet this awful fate;  
So take a lesson from this tale  
Before it is too late.  
Remember that the golden rule  
Is a thing we all should learn,  
For when you leave your happy home  
You may ne'er again return.

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#### LY-CY-FC7

### MEMORIES OF FLOYD COLLINS \*

Comp: (On label) (Polk) BROCKMAN

Actual Comp: Andrew JENKINS (CY-FC-OTH7)

Rts: (?)

I. Young people if you listen  
A story I will tell  
The fate of Floyd Collins  
For I remember well  
That very day it happened  
Far down beneath the ground  
But little did he think he'd die  
Before the sun went down.

II. Way out in ole Kentucky  
That good old southern state  
He left his home that morning  
To meet an awful fate  
He went down in that Sand Cave  
Its secret for to learn  
But little did the poor boy think  
He never would return.

III. A rescue party gathered  
Around that lonely cave  
They put forth every effort  
His precious life they tried to save  
He's fair an' square an' handsome  
His heart was true an' brave  
But his body then lay sleeping  
In the lonely sandstone cave.

IV. On January thirty

In nineteen twenty five  
A nation sadly wondered  
If Floyd was still alive  
The rescue party labored  
While thousands stood an' prayed  
And then the news was flashed across  
They told us he was dead.

- V. Young people, oh, take warning  
Before it is too late  
Don't take so many chances  
You're troubling with fate  
There may not be a sand cave  
In which you'll find your tomb  
But at the final judgment  
We all must meet our doom.
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### LY-CY-FC8

## FLOYD COLLINS \*

Comp: G. W. BLEVINS (CY-FC-OTH8)

Rts: Archives of Folk Culture; Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

- I. Those men they labored hard  
There life they tried to save  
The poor ole Floyd Collins  
In the sandstone cave.
- II. But the shaft it gave them trouble  
The logs were falling in  
An' [bent in ?] the lives of all  
Those hard-workin' men.
- III. "We'll take chances on Our Lord,"  
All the workers said  
But when they found poor Floyd  
His number drifted in.
- IV. We'll seal him up forever  
Until the Judgement Day  
When God will send his angels  
An' roll the stone away.
- V. The people began to murmur  
They said, "Take him from the cave  
And have his funeral preached  
And prepare him for the grave."
- VI. One poor miner said,  
"I'll take chances on my life  
I'll take him from the cave  
To satisfy his wife."
- VII. So the story broke away,  
"Brought Floyd to the top,"  
While the people gathered 'round  
That sad and lonely spot.
- VIII. Poor Floyd roamed the mountains  
To found an openin' in the ground  
But this one that he entered  
Was the last one that he found.



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**LY-CY-FC9**

**FLOYD COLLINS THE CAVIN' MAN \***

Comp: Bill HUSKEY & J. SURBER (CY-FC-OTH9)

Rts: Jakebil Music (BMI), 1969

- I. Way back in Cave City  
There on a mountain side  
Now the stones mark the cave  
The place Floyd Collins died.
- II. On a mountain in Kentucky  
A cave they've left alone  
Floyd, he crawled down in the dark  
There cavin's, goin' it alone.

CHORUS:

Floyd Collins  
A cavin' man, a cavin' man, a cavin' man.

- III. Some men are fools for women  
Or gamblin' they may crave  
They gonna love a person wrong  
The deep of a mountain cave.

CHORUS

(Piano bridge)

- IV. Many men they tried to save him  
They tried an' they were brave  
But no one could find a way  
Floyd Collins could be saved.
- V. Then they stood above Floyd Collins  
To wait there 'til he died  
Being [...] he looked that day  
An' women prayed an' cried.

CHORUS

(Repeat Stz. 3) (Piano bridge)

- VI. The days went by kept turnin'  
Down in that famous [stone?]  
When they finally reach him  
They [...] a man with stone
- VII. They filled the cave an' sealed it  
With mountain stone an' dirt  
An' left him there forever  
Deep down in the earth.

CHORUS:

Floyd Collins  
A cavin' man (9X)

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**LY-CY-FC10**

**THE BALLADE OF FLOYD COLLINS \***

Comp: Kern RAMBLE (CY-FC-OTH10)

Rts: 2003

- I. It was in the winter of 1925 and Kentucky was the state  
A little ways off interstate 65 in a place they call Sand Cave  
A man was 60 feet under ground when one of his feet got stuck  
That's all it took to bring him down, he'd run into a string of bad luck

He'd got himself in a narrow space only two feet wide  
Floyd Collins was his name and Sand Cave is where he died  
He couldn't move, he cried and he prayed but there was nothing he could do.

CHORUS:

Floyd Collins went into the ground in search of another cave  
100,000 people tried for 27 days straight to pull him up out of the grave  
Consequence of one mistake

- II. Within two days there was a crowd with a harness and plans to pull him out  
A lot of people they just stood around, not too many had the nerve to go down  
Then a reporter named "Skeets" Miller arrived to see what this fuss was all about  
He was small enough to fit inside so they put him to work underground  
He brought a lightbulb and put it over Floyd's head, brought a crowbar, a jack, and some wood  
He dug until his fingers bled he did all that he could  
But he couldn't get him out, the more gravel he dug up, the more fell down.

CHORUS

- III. After digging gravel for 30 hours straight Skeets collapsed from fatigue  
Floyd he had a lot to say, and what a dead man says you can believe  
"I know I've cheated I know I've lied I've done some things that was wrong  
It's not that I'm afraid to die, it's just taking so damn long."  
The very next day that conversation was on the front page of the New York Times.  
Ain't it strange how an entire nation can get caught up in the fate of one man's life  
He couldn't move, he cried and he prayed but there was nothing he could do.

CHORUS

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**LY-CY-FC11**

**BATTLE OF FLOYD COLLINS \***

Comp: Matt AMMERMAN ([CY-FC-OTH11](#))

Rts: Matt Ammerman, 2006

CHORUS:

Kentucky loves everyone  
Kentucky loves everyone  
but she just ate her favorite son  
in her belly it was done  
we petition mother earth  
and we pray for a birth  
of a baby that will never come.

Floyd Collins went a searching  
for his fortune in the morning  
where the moon bats were a sleepin'  
and the salamanders swimmin'  
In the limestone he went diggin'  
he was held up by his riggin'  
to find a path to Mammoth  
still unknown.

Now the going wasn't easy  
but with some pushin' and some squeezin'  
he found the heart to whistle a song  
as he penetrated deeper  
and the incline grew quite steeper  
his weathered face grew a little long.

The cave had gone to eatin'  
and started with his feet, then  
pinned his arms beside him  
as his oil light flickered out  
With darkness all around him

his heart within was poundin'  
that sand cave wouldn't let him out her mouth.

Now Jesus and the angels  
they save at every angle  
but that damn cave was so hungry  
and still old Floyd reclined  
Jesus brought Floyd's brothers  
and his brothers brought some others  
and they dug just like the miners do their mines.  
CHORUS

[caveinspiredmusic.com](http://caveinspiredmusic.com)