

COUNTRY MUSIC

FLOYD COLLINS BALLADS LYRICS

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.

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

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

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.
-

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.
-

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.
-

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.
-

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.
-

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.

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)

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

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

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