

MISTAKE At The LAKE — The BALLAD of ARCHIBALD JONES

Song & Lyrics © 2010 By Doc Stuart

Shall I tell you the story of Archibald Jones?  
One of history's great unknowns.  
It's a story of the catastrophe,  
At Crystal Lake in 1873.

Some thought he was a genius;  
Some thought he was mad;  
Some thought he was only foolin'.  
He worked for years on the Erie Canal.  
That's where he got his schoolin'

Said Jones to the folks to the folks of Benzie County,  
There's wealth by the lake — magnificent bounty;  
Hardwood a plenty ready for sale;  
To get it to market gotta' build a canal.

Said Jones to the folks by Crystal Lake,  
To Lake Michigan we'll deliver.  
They dammed the project from the start,  
To connect to Lake to the River.

Well, no engineer was Archibald Jones,  
And no engineers were consulted,  
Just a long white-bearded dreamer's' idea,  
And you all know what resulted.

A quarter of the water came rushing out.  
You could hear the roar for miles.  
Trees uprooted, swamps disappeared,  
The Betsie River ran wild.

The beautiful Lake was now twenty feet down;  
The Improvement Company bankrupted.  
It's a miracle that nobody drowned,  
When the lakeshore was disrupted

When the Mud Hen steamer got stuck in the muck,  
He said the people bought her.  
“The boat won't float if the bottom of the River's  
Too close to the top of the water.”

Though many investors lost their shirts,  
Because Jones was over zealous,  
Out of bad sometimes comes good  
Only passing time could tell us

In Benzie County they celebrated,  
The day that Jones made the breach.  
One man's mistake by the Lake,  
Is another man's day at the beach.

At Crystal Lake once was a mistake,  
But Beulah tell your sons and daughters,  
Had it not been for Archibald Jones  
Your resort would be under water.  
Had it not been for Archibald Jones,  
Your land would be under water.