

The Ballad of Archibald Jones

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."
So they dammed the project from the very
start,
To connect the Lake to the River.

Well, no engineer was Archibald Jones,
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.
Well 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,
'Cause Jones was overzealous,
Out of bad sometimes comes good
Only passing time could tell us

In Benzie County they celebrate,
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.

Yeah! Had it not been for Archibald Jones,
Your land would be under water.

"Doc Stuart" (Shapiro) (*) composed the original ballad, "Mistake at the Lake", for the First Archibald Jones Day celebrated on 28 Aug 2010. Rights were conveyed for exclusive local use.

[(*) "Doc Stuart" Shapiro of Amherst, NY, an attorney with Cohen & Lombardo P.C. of Buffalo, is also a musician. His first career was as professional solo guitarist, opening for noted acts including Paul Anka, John Mellencamp and Buddy Rich. He won the grand-prize winner of the first Erie Canal songwriting contest sponsored by the Discovery Center/City of Lockport Visitors Center. He composed, recorded and performed "The Lockport Locks (On The Erie Canal)," which celebrates the genius of canal construction. Shapiro researched the canal's history before he put pen to paper. He learned enough to compose lyrics that made sense, but says he didn't really "get" the magnificence of the story until he visited the canal and the Discovery Center. Shapiro plays guitar, banjo, bass, keyboard, percussion harmonica and synthesizer, and is a member of a jug band that makes the rounds in regional festival-and-events circuit.]