

Shall I tell you the story of Archibald Jones?
One of history's great unknowns!
It's the 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'.
But he worked for years on the Erie Canal (!)
That's where he got his schoolin'.

Said Jones 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 20 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 to the people that brought 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,
And only passing time could tell us.

In Benzie County they celebrate
The day 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 your 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 !!!

-- MISTAKE AT THE LAKE (?) By Doc Stewart
("The Ballad of Archibald Jones") © 2010
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