

The Wide Canyon Tunnel Cave-in

(The story of an actual occurrence at Wide Canyon)

The following was written by Del Jones' grandfather, Charles F. Thomas, Jr., who owned a coal mine in Colorado and supervised tunnel work on the Aqueduct And Hoover and Coulee dams.

Standing grimly, dark mouth yawning;
Stretching far 'neath mountain's crest;
Days are marked by no bright dawning
Where the tunnel hides its breast.

Timbers large, great rocks upholding,
Steel and crown bars keyed and blocked;
Wedge and foot blocks hold unfolding,
Myst'ries Mother Earth has locked.

But as Nature, in great fury
At the secrets from her torn,
Manmade structures break and crumble;
Of their strength she shows her scorn.

Creak! Snap! Shouts! A roar! A grinding!
Dust and ground stench fill the air!
Strong men flee! A safe place finding,
From the dangers hidden there!

Lights are gone! The darkness smothers!
Matches flicker through the haze!
Names are called! Each thinks of others
As they stagger from the maze!

One man missing? Tom McColgan
Is he caught beneath that fall?
Was poor Tom buried as he ran?
Surely they could hear him call!

But at last there comes faint tapping,
From that fallen mass of ground!
Listen closely! Hear that rapping?
That's old Tom a moving 'round!

For Dame Nature, through some error,
Left a place for Tom to hide!
And though he was weak with terror,
Soon he crawled to the outside.

But this story has an ending,
Different far from one you've read,
With a cheerful color lending
To a tale of fearsome dread.

Tom lay dreaming of a cave-in,
In the quiet of his room,
When into his mind sub-conscious,
Came the rending crack of doom!

Slipped to floor from bedclothes, groaning;
Crawling there on hands and knees;
Frightened! Searching! Feeling! Moaning!
Lost in dreamland's mysteries.

Craw led three times 'tween chairs and table,
Bumped his head against the trunk!
Blindly searched for light or cable;
Even crawled beneath the bunk!

Found a hammer near the doorway,
Crashed his way through plaster wall!
And at last emerged in safety
In the dormitory hall!

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