

Blue Canyon Mine

words & music by John Dwyer

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On an April afternoon, fifteen minutes before closing time, a thunderous explosion at the Blue Canyon Mine near Lake Whatcom ended the lives of twenty-three men. This tragic event occurred in 1895, and was the worst disaster in Whatcom County mining history.

John Dwyer, a Marysville songwriter and musician, resided for a time on Lake Whatcom, and became fascinated with the rich history of the area. He wrote the following ballad after reading of the Blue Canyon Mine disaster.

The musical score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of four staves of music. The lyrics are written in a cursive script below the notes. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: Dm, F, Dm, A, Dm, F, Dm, Gm, Dm, Am, Dm.

On the shores of Lake Whatcom, there rises a hill. It's
wooded and steep and it's won-der-ful still. And
up on that hill, if so high you should climb, you'll
find there the ghost of the Blue Can-yon Mine.

It was not shiny silver or glamorous gold,
But sparkling black diamonds the earth did enfold.
In late 1880's by prospectors found,
The richest, 'twas said, in all Puget Sound.

The vein was reported as 13 feet thick,
But getting it out of there, that was the trick.
For the rock in the mine shaft did swell when exposed,
And shattered the timbers and tunnels did close.

On the eighth day of April, the year '95,
The mine shaft did move as though 'twere alive.
'Twas fire damp that did it, that treacherous gas,
That lifted and twisted and tore the whole shaft.

Rescuers got to the mine very fast,
But rescuing teams were held back by the gas.
While grief-stricken families were waiting in vain,
But out of that shaft only came charred remains.

In Bellingham, high on the hill at Bay View,
Still lie a-resting the men of that crew.
James Kerns and Ed Jellum, the two who survived,
But twenty-three others were ne'er seen alive.

