

# Market House Museum's Tragedy of Floyd Collins Trivia Game

*(Answers are at the bottom of page four.)*

The tragic story of Floyd Collins, a Kentucky caver, is terrible to contemplate. Yet it has become a story which has a large following of historians, and those who are immersed in the facts surrounding the story, insist that perhaps something could have been done differently, in order to rescue Collins. An exhibit on Floyd Collins, with artifacts relating to the story, is located at the Market House Museum as of 2015. (Please advise caution for younger students taking this quiz due to the graphic subject matter.)



1. William Floyd Collins was born July 20, 1887 in Aburn, in Barren County, Kentucky. His family owned an area which had interconnecting underground caves. They had already “discovered” the Crystal Cave...but it was hard to gain access to, to attract the tourists who would pay admission to see it. Floyd had given many tours of the Crystal Cave himself, and loved the “cave” atmosphere. He decided to look for another new cave, and an easier way to get folks to the underground attractions. On the early morning of January 30, 1925, he started out on a mission, to further that exploration. A) True B) False.



2. Floyd went by himself to investigate a small crevice he had seen earlier, that led downward to what he thought might be large cavern below the ground. He was hoping to find another cave or another entrance into the Crystal Cave. He called this crevice opening ‘The Sand Cave,’ though most of the rock in the area was of limestone. He worked there for a few weeks, enlarging the opening. On the last day he arrived at the site, he went into the crevice with three items; two biscuits wrapped in a homespun napkin, a small cave lamp, and a length of rope. A) True B) False.



3. On his way down the crevice, he reached a room, which would later be called ‘the turn around room’. A person could straighten up a bit and rest one’s muscles. Then he went on down farther in the crevice until he was almost 55 feet below the surface. He noticed a strange ham shaped rock hanging from the ceiling, connected only by a small piece of limestone. He thought to himself, “I’ll wiggle carefully under that rock and go past it, and see if the crevice leads to an unexplored cavern .” A) True B) False.



4. Floyd dropped his lamp on the way back up, after not finding anything definitive (he would later become delirious and tell of a beautiful room of nice proportions and lovely formations.) He also had a hard time climbing back up the crevice because there was water running from the ground supply above the crevice. It was slippery. His foot slipped, and struck the lock hanging rock. It fell on what part of his body, trapping him? A) his foot B) his chest C) his arm.



5. Floyd panicked! He wriggled and scrambled about, but in the tight crevice he could not free his foot from the v-shaped crevice his heel had been lodged in, before the rock came crashing down, pinning his foot effectively to the cave floor. The falling rock brought down an avalanche of small gravel as well, that filled up the crevice from his foot to his waist. The more he struggled, the worse it got. And the crevice was so tight, he couldn't bend down to free his foot! Floyd was in a bad situation. When he finally stopped struggling and wiggling, the rock was up to his chest and he could only move one arm and turn his head from side to side. And he was in total darkness. What did he think at that point? A) My family know where I am, and they'll come looking B) I will die here all alone as no one knows where I went C) I'll be out of this mess by this time tomorrow.



6. In 1925, one didn't have a cell phone to call anyone. Floyd just had to wait. It seemed forever, but at last, within a day, he heard his brother's voice calling to him from up above. Oh, yes! He would have help now! But his brother could not crawl over the top of Floyd thru all the gravel, to get to the rock which was pinning his foot to the crevice floor. The best Homer could do was leave his brother with some crackers and a container of coffee and go for help. The rock that pinned his foot weighed how much? A) apx. 16 lbs B) apx. 25 lbs C) apx. 32 lbs.



7. Floyd waited patiently, but he needed to go to the bathroom. He needed a light in the darkness to feel he wasn't forgotten. The water running down the crevice made him cold and miserable in the 54 degree environment, and he wanted someone near him so he wouldn't feel so alone. But no matter what the rescuers did, they couldn't overcome the fact the crevice was too small and narrow to allow another person to free Floyd's foot. They tried to dig him out, but working upside down, passing rock up to the crevice entrance in little pails took forever and absolutely drained the desperate rescuers. They even tried to pull him out with a rope tied under his arms. Floyd screamed to stop as he felt they were pulling him apart, he was so tightly wedged in the rock! And then tragedy happened. A) On Feb 4, there were two cave-ins above where Floyd was located, due to the ground water running down the crevice B) there was a gas leak and Floyd could likely suffocate before they could rescue him C) everyone threw up their hands and said rescue was impossible with the conditions they faced.



8. Floyd was delirious by this time; he was calling out to his Mamma, asking why didn't somebody build a fire in the stove, and that he was hungry and why wouldn't somebody feed him? He could not be seen after the cave-ins took place. His voice could only be heard, but he was still talking. The rescuers decided to sink a shaft close by and try and tunnel under the spot Floyd was trapped at. The watery surface of the earth did not help matters at all. They had a tent erected over the new shaft site, but ground water was the big problem. Everyone was afraid what had happened to Floyd might happen to them. Who was the pilot that flew twice a day updates to the Louisville paper to keep the nation apprised of the doleful situation? A) Charles Lindbergh B) Tim Murray C) Arthur Post.



9. Rescue leaders, among them, Henry St George Tucker Carmichael, did everything possible to reach Floyd through digging the new vertical shaft. When they estimated they were underneath Floyd's location, they dug sideways towards the underside of the crevice. When they opened up the crevice, and got to Floyd, they discovered he was already dead. He had not been heard for at least 3-4 days, and he had evidently died from starvation and/or exposure. The rescuers still could not free the leg, since they had reached him from behind but from above, so they did what? A) filled the shaft with debris and left Floyd as he was B) Pulled him out with a chain and hoist, leaving his leg behind in the crevice, C) made a natural burial place for him where he was found and he is there to this day.



10. Floyd is thought to have died on Feb 13th. They had reached his body on Feb 17th. Funeral services were held at the surface of the Sand Cave. In the aftermath, 78 rpm records were made and sold about the Floyd Collins story (A blind preacher named Vernon Dalhart made the most famous.) Two months later, in better weather, Homer Collins and several friends reopened the shaft and dug a new tunnel to the opposite side of the cave passage, and recovered brother Floyd's body. The body was buried on the Floyd farm, near the Crystal Cave that Floyd so loved. In 1927, Floyd's elderly and ailing father sold the farm and cave. What was done with Floyd's body after that? A) Floyd's body was exhumed, embalmed and placed in a casket with a glass window within the Crystal Cave so visitors would pay homage to the greatest caver in the world, (enhancing admissions) B) Floyd's body was cremated and sprinkled over the mouth of the Sand Cave C) Floyd was left in the cemetery and a large headstone placed above him at the time of the farm sale.



11. On the night of March 18-19, 1929, Floyd's body was stolen from the cave. It was later thought to possibly have been planned and carried out as a gruesome publicity agenda by the owner of the cave. The body was found near the cave's entrance, but minus the injured left leg, which was missing. It was never found. After this horrible occurrence took place, what was done with Floyd's remains? A) they were reinterred in a metal casket in a secluded portion of Crystal Cave, and kept there in place by massive chains B) he was cremated and sprinkled about the area C) he was buried in an impressive mausoleum nearby.



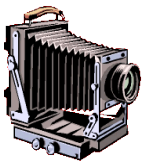
12. In 1961, Mammoth Cave National Park purchased Crystal Cave and closed it to the public. The family had objected to Floyd's body being exhibited in the cave, and at their request, he was reinterred (the third time he was moved to a new location!) in the Flint Ridge Cemetery on March 24, 1989. It was a hard job to get the body of Floyd to leave his "cave home." Why? A) It took a team of 15 men three days to remove the massive metal casket from the cave B) The casket fell apart from being so corroded by the extreme cave conditions C) a terrific ice and snow storm hit and slowed down the exhumation process.



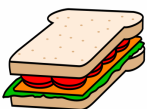
13. Newspaperman William Burke “Skeets” Miller of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* reported on the rescue efforts from the scene as events transpired. Miller, who was of small stature, was able to move a lot of gravel from around Collins. He also interviewed Collins in the cave, and received a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage and playing a part in Collin’s attempted rescue. His reports were transmitted by telegraph and were printed by newspapers around the country. What happened as a result, during his reporting? A) tens of thousands of tourists arrived in cars and jalopies wanting to witness firsthand the attempted rescue B) Hawkers arrived and started selling items to the tourists, such as felt pennants with the words ‘Sand Cave’ and ‘Floyd Collins Crystal Cave’ emblazoned upon them, along with helium balloons saying the same C) Vendors arrived and sold hot dogs, popcorn and sodas at the cave site to the hungry crowds waiting for news of Floyd’s situation D) All of the above.



14. Even the President of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, (who never showed a lot of interest in many things, and certainly never wasted words) was following the story. He wanted twice-a-day updates on Floyd’s condition, and the situation at the cave site. The newspapers and the radio carried daily and even hourly updates; it was the main topic of the day in America while the tragic story was unfolding. Congress was adjourned for half a day; churches held day long vigils of prayer for Floyd. His mother begged the rescuers to get her boy out of the cold cave. A dog sat at the mouth of the cave for days on end, and whined for days and could not be persuaded to leave. Why was he sitting there? A) He was Floyd’s dog B) he wasn’t Floyd’s dog but people fed him scraps so he stayed and begged for more C) He was a cadaver sniffing dog, used to indicate death was present.



15. The whole episode reached epic status as a news event; it became the third largest media event in America between WWI (1914-1918) and WWII (1941-1945). The photographic negatives that had been flown by plane from the cave site to the newspapers to be entered into the pictorial editions of the Louisville paper were mesmerizing to those who eagerly sought the images, in order to picture the terrible story that was unfolding. Was a death photo made of Floyd’s body once it was brought to the surface by his brother Homer and his friends? A) Yes, complete with a preacher holding a bible at the head of Floyd, and the rescuers on either side of Collin’s body B) No, there was a quick burial but no picture made C) There was a death mask of plaster and a photo made of Floyd for posterity.



16. Today, the entrance to Sand Cave is sealed with a huge, heavy steel grate for public safety. People are a little wary of the area after dark and it is a bit of a lonesome looking place. It was later discovered in the 1970s that Floyd might have been reached by another access in order to have provided him with water, food and heat for a longer time. A) True B) False.

**ANSWERS:** 1- A, 2-A, 3-A, 4-A, 5-A, 6-A, 7-A, 8-A, 9-A, 10-A, 11-A, 12-A, 13-D, 14-B, 15-A, 16-A.