

Friday, August 26, 2016 9:14 AM

## Hell Hole

**From:** James Ambrose

**Sent:** Thursday, August 31, 2017 11:50 PM

**Subject:** Missive #7

Hello again, CC History Buffs,

### Ode To A Door

A year ago, we wrote of a door.  
Since that, we've heard no more.

This year, one pipe led to another  
So last year's pipe, now has a brother

From the pipe up high, to the pipe down low  
It is through the door, that you must go

Go carefully down, the granite crack  
That goes west, just south of the plaque

Turn north too soon, and you will dead end  
At the second chance, go around the bend

Slip on the pine needles, just won't do  
The door appears, and you go through

Straight down the hill, and across the plateau  
To find the brother, you must go

Door GPS is: 36-58.826 North, and 118-58.850 West  
But follow the ode, gets you there best.

Attach #1      The Plaque  
Attach #2      The Crack  
Attach #3 -4    The Door  
Attach #5      The Brother

79 year old man  
Secretary, CCHS







**From:** James Ambrose  
**Date:** August 23, 2016  
**Subject:** Summer Scribbles

**THE CLUE AT N 36\*58.830', W 118\*58.808'**

Late in the morning on a sunny June day in 2016, a group led by James Philmore Collins and his son, Cooper Whitfield Collins left the New Cabin at Cliff Camp and set off for fishing at Hell Hole on the North Fork of the Kings River. The leaders had fished the Hell Hole area many times. Wearing shoes that gave a good grip to granite, they could enter the river canyon at several places.

Hell Hole (or Hell's Hole) is a downstream pool of a number of pools that extends through a deep narrow granite gorge. The pools extend upstream to the Old Bridge and beyond to Wishon Dam. It was so named because of the difficulty getting to it. It was notorious in Fresno County for being 'One mile down, 10 miles back'. From early 1900's to middle 1940's, Hell Hole had been the almost exclusive fishing hole of William Alfred (Daddy Bill) Collins, Supervisor of Fresno County, and an expert fly fisherman. The size and quantity of trout caught at Hell Hole and associated pools was legendary. Even so, others such as Daddy Bill's sons-in-law, Julian Monroe Ambrose and John Twiname (Jack) Crooker, who were often coerced into going to Hell Hole, felt the fishing did not justify the scramble to get there.

The group moved west of the New Cabin, through the fir and aspen thickets, past the three ephemeral ponds, and onto the granite plateau above the river gorge. The group walked along the edge of the gorge, looking for an easy way down. Suddenly, they came upon a steel pipe sticking up out of the granite. Nobody had noticed it before. The pipe was about 30 inches tall, was 3/4 inches in diameter and looked very rusted. It appeared old, like the pipe used early in the last century before pipe was galvanized. The group speculated that maybe PG&E put it there or maybe it was part of a land survey.

In the group was a 78-year-old man. He had been to Cliff Camp many times as a youth and well knew the stories about Hell Hole. He had never been to Hell Hole as far as he could remember. He had come with the group not to fish, but to take GPS coordinates of Hell Hole and if possible get pictures for Collin's genealogy.

As the old man looked at the pipe, he recognized a clue left by his father. Without saying anything to the group, he started over the edge, going left, down the ledge, then right through the rock door. The group stayed on top, waiting for the old man to come back. He didn't. A few minutes later, the old man appeared far down the gorge. The amazed group followed.

The old man was later asked if he had recognized the pipe. He had not. He was asked if he had been to Hell Hole before. He now believed he had. There was a hint of Deja vu going through the granite rock door. It was such a perfect rectangular door. At the creek, there was a faint recollection of having been led or carried there as a youth. He was asked how he knew the pipe marked an entrance to Hell Hole.

It was not the pipe that was the clue. It was the hole the pipe was in. The hole was not natural. It was a man made perfect hole. Only one person would have had the knowhow and the tool to make such a hole and that person was Julian Ambrose. Julian, in his teen years, had worked on his father's mining claims in Arizona. Julian also possessed the tool necessary to make such a hole, a star drill.

A star drill has an end with 4 chisel blades shaped like a cross. You hit it with a hammer and every few hits, you turn it a little bit so the hole goes down evenly. Every so often, you use a tube to blow out the dust in the bottom of the hole. In the hands of a miner, a star drill can make a perfect hole. A star drill can be made to any size, but the most common size is a size that makes a 7/8-inch diameter hole, just right to hold a stick of dynamite or a 3/4-inch pipe. Julian had three such star drills at his ranch in Trinity County in the 1950's. They were left when the ranch sold.

So, Daddy Bill probably wanted a marker for his best way down to the river and his son-in-law, Julian provided a hole and maybe the pipe. The pipe was probably installed in the 1930's.

**From:** James Ambrose [<mailto:j-kambrose@att.net>]



**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2016 10:54 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Summer Scribbles

All,

1. Steve is correct, there is a typo (only one 58).
2. I'm the 78 year old man, my father was Julian and my mother was Thelma.
3. The granite door is amazing to me. As a guess, One side may have split off vertically and moved approx. 3'. Then another piece fell on top of both. It's a very good rectangle that you can (and should) walk through. To see the door is worth the walk over (my opinion).
4. I think your analysis of the coordinates is O.K. They represent where the pipe is. Where you should start down from the uppermost plateau to get down to the lower plateau (really steep part) in an easy manner.
5. I never heard of 'Rattlesnake Den', Rattlesnakes don't like to get far from a water source, so it could have been a riverspot.
6. All genealogical data I have for Betty (my grandmother) comes from a newspaper clipping of her death. I would like to get more info from you. If you approve, I will send you what I have and you can fill in what you know.

Jim

On Thursday, August 25, 2016 7:03 PM, Steve Kliewer at gmail <[skliewer@gmail.com](mailto:skliewer@gmail.com)> wrote:  
Hi Jim,

Thank you for the fascinating history of Hell Hole. It is a treasure.

It has been many years since I last visited Hell Hole and it was a major challenge then. My hat to all of you.

Who was this "78-year-old" man and what kind of "granite door"?

The coordinates (N 36\*58.58.830', W 118\*58.808') you gave in your title may have a typo. "58.58.830'" probably should have been 58.830'. However, they still locate a point that seems too high above the river and in a relatively easy to navigate area.

According to Google Earth, this point is 1400 ft NE of Hell Hole pool and still about 450 ft above the pool. The point at which, I remember the slope getting dangerously steep is about 1000ft SW of your coordinates and about 250 ft lower (still 200 ft above the pool)

Have I misunderstood and can you elaborate upon the tantalizing description of a "granite door".

My memory is that my father and Daddy Bill talked about two locations that I may have confused. "Hell Hole" and "Rattlesnake Den". I always thought one of the locations was the river and pools another mile south, just below Granite Gorge, where Long Meadow Creek falls spectacularly down the cliff. Can you clarify this terminology for me?

Good Energy,  
Steve Kliewer

**Attachment 1: Fresno Bee clip (unknown date, but after Wishon Dam was built). Sent from James Franklin Collins (son of Robert Fulton Collins, Daddy Bill's brother) to Thelma Davis Collins Ambrose (Julian's wife).**

**Attachment 2: The pipe at N 36\*58.830', W 118\*58.809'**

**Attachment 3: Star drills. Long drills used by hand with hammer. Small tips screwed onto rods (short piece in picture crosswise to drills) operated by air pressure from jack hammer like devices (after 1920's). Rods and tips had hole in center for running air or water to clean out hole.**

**Attachment 4 and 5: The folks in the group who made it all the way down to Hell Hole in June 2016. Actual Hell Hole Pool believed to be just behind (to left) of people in A5.**

Thelma -

You probably remember your Dad talking about old "Hell Hole", which was mostly his private fishing hole, since it was almost impossible to get to...

about old "Hell Hole", which was mostly his private fishing hole, since it was almost impossible to get in and out.

He took Dad down there once, but Dad would not go again. I think your Dad also took Julian down there once.

I was never down there.



## Rescue team finds Prather deer hunter alive but cold after night in Hell's Hole

### The Fresno Bee

A deer hunter reported missing in the Wishon Reservoir area Wednesday night by his companions was found safe early Thursday by a Fresno County sheriff's rescue team.

Lt. Roger Greening said the hunter, Robert Wadding, 58, of Prather was found at the bottom of a deep gorge known as Hell's Hole, about three miles from where he had last been seen.

Wadding was not injured, but spent an uncomfortable night in the cold before being found, Greening said. Wishon Reservoir is in the Sierra National Forest northeast of Fresno.

Wadding was lifted out of the area by a Fresno-based California Highway Patrol helicopter crew.

Wadding and friends reportedly had been hunting in an area southwest of Wishon Reservoir when he set out by himself about 8:30 a.m. Wednesday without telling anyone his destination.

By 7:30 p.m. when he failed to return, his companions became worried and reported him missing to sheriff's deputies.

Greening said Wadding's companions said he had recently survived open heart surgery.

A search and rescue team found Wadding shortly before 7 a.m.











