

Oak Island treasure

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There is an island for every day of the year scattered throughout the waters of Mahone Bay. Oak Island, off the coast of Western Shore, isn't unique in its stature or appearance.

It looks like any other stranded mass of land; nothing draws you nearer for a closer look — or at least that's the way it used to be.

In 1795, the discoveries from this island were unfolding and being recorded; the first written accounts were of three young men who stumbled upon a depression while on the Island.

Donald McInnis (owned land on Oak Island) and his two friends, John Smith and Anthony Vaughn, will forever be known as the opening chapter in this saga and the events and antics that have transpired since range from the sublime to the utterly stupid.

Donald's discovery was fittingly named the Money Pit. The men discovered a clearing by an oak tree with a depression 13 feet in diameter, as if someone had dug up the earth and filled the area in again. In the oak tree a tackle block hung over the centre of the circle. This sight peaked their interest and this group eventually dug 30 feet.

They found layers of oak logs at 10, 20 and 30 feet, firmly embedded in the sides of the shaft as if to make platforms. No treasure.

For the next 40 to 50 years, the details are sketchy. It is without a doubt stories were being discussed and circulated world wide about what could be on the island. Could it be pirates' treasure?

One theory is it is the original works of Francis Bacon who is believed to have penned the theatrical works that William Shakespeare laid claim to, or a conspiracy theory between the Templar Knights and the Masons'?

"When seven have died and all the oaks are gone, the treasure will be found." Nobody knows who said that or when it started. The first death was in 1861, the second occurred in 1897. Treasure hunters came and went. Franklin Roosevelt was part of one such expedition.

But with the lust for treasure came more death — in August 1965 four men lost their lives, bringing the total to six. The original species of oak the tackle block hung from are all gone....

For the current resident of Oak Island it has been a long and slow voyage of discovery. Dan Blankenship and his new partners (from Traverse City, Michigan) own 78 per cent of the island and he still resides on the island, connected to the rest of the South Shore by a causeway. Many millions have been spent trying to find treasure. The information is so great and yet not concrete.

The Oak Island Tourism Society has been putting forth a plan to establish an interpretive centre on the island so visitors that come from all over the world have a world-class destination to learn from and share the information that is Oak Island.

For now, Explore Oak Island Days, June 20 to 22, is a weekend of pirates, treasure, knowledge and fun. There will be guided tours of the island, displays, artifacts, movies and more.

"The lure of Oak Island is very strong and a tourism project here can be strong and viable, an asset to the larger community and a great way to display our rich heritage and cultural identity," explains Danny Hennigar of the Oak Island Tourism Society.

Once you have been bitten by the treasure bug, you are just never the same.

For more information go to

www.oakislandsociety.ca.

Original article: <http://thechronicleherald.ca/Search/1055750.html>