

Analysis of Artifacts

Item # 13

Shaft at South Shore beach

WHO FOUND	Bob Dunfield Dan Blankenship
WHEN FOUND	1965 1966
WHERE FOUND	25 ' South of "Stone Triangle"
FIRSTHAND/ SECONDHAND	"F"
REFERENCES	Dan Blankenship helped Dunfield excavate this 8' diameter, uncribbed shaft to about 45' in 1965. Dan Blankenship reopened and deepened shaft to about 90' where round granite rock layer encountered. D'Arcy O'Connor,, "The Big Dig" pg. 146 & 167 R.V. Harris, Pg. 80 & 81
LOCATION TODAY	Still there but backfilled
ODDITY FACTOR	5
ASSESSMENT OF AUTHENTICITY	5: could be determined to be originators' work if artifacts found in it can be conclusively dated.
COMMENTS	"Wrought iron nail" in South Shore Shaft: and "Nut/Washer" in South Shore Shaft. R.V. Harris claims Dunfield excavated this shaft to about 60 ft.

therefore confident that he had blocked the eastern tunnel. But obviously at least one other flood tunnel, probably from the south shore, was still operational.

Dunfield's next plan was to bring in even heavier machinery. He leased a 70-ton crane with a 90-foot boom and dragline bucket capable of digging a hole 200 feet deep and 100 feet across. But there was no possibility of getting this behemoth out to the island on a barge. On October 17, 1965, Oak Island ceased to be an island. That day bulldozers completed a 600 foot causeway linking the island's western end to the mainland. Dunfield got the crane across and was now ready for his major assault.

The machine was first put to work on the south shore to find and block the second flood tunnel. A trench about 15 feet deep and 80 feet long was dug along the beach. In one section of the trench they encountered a refilled shaft 8 feet in diameter. It had no cribbing in it, and there is no record of it in any of the previous search attempts, so Dunfield was certain it had been excavated prior to 1795. Significantly, the shaft was about 25 feet south of the mysterious triangle of stones. The shaft was followed to a depth of about 45 feet, which seemed to be the extent of the original digging, but its purpose was never discovered. The south shore trench didn't intersect the flood tunnel, nor did it decrease the flow of seawater into the Hedden shaft. Rather than deepen the hole, Dunfield decided to move the crane up to the Money Pit itself.

For the next two months Dunfield was plagued with mechanical failures and heavy rains. Digging the pit became a constant struggle, with the sides caving in and refilling the bottom portion. Each time work was halted for a day or more, as much as 20 feet of fill would slide into the hole, and it would take another couple of days just to reexcavate it. He eventually created a pit almost 140 feet deep and 100 feet across. In the course of digging it, he scooped out most of the timbers from early shafts, leaving only the Hedden shaft intact.

Dunfield later refilled the huge hole he had spent two months digging in order to gain a suitable surface from which

being worked by man, was also brought up from cavities below bedrock.

One borehole in the Money Pit came to an abrupt halt at 198 feet. Blankenship and the professional driller operating the machine were positive, because of the high-pitched whining sound, that the drill was biting into hard metal. It required twenty-five minutes for the diamond drill to bore through a half inch of the material. But the core sample was lost just before it reached the surface.

Concurrent with the drilling program Blankenship explored other parts of the island. Here too he made some important discoveries. In 1966 he reopened and deepened the shaft that Dunfield had found the year before on the south shore. At about sixty feet Blankenship found an ancient hand-wrought nail and a kind of nut or washer. The hole was dug to about ninety feet, where he encountered a layer of round granite rocks, all about the size of a man's head, lying in a pool of black stagnant water. Blankenship was sure he had intersected a part of the south shore flood tunnel, and he spent several months trying to crib the shaft and evacuate deeper. But even wood and steel casing couldn't hold back the collapsing earth, and the hole was eventually abandoned.

The following year Blankenship dug up parts of the Smith's Cove beach. This yielded more coconut fiber. Tobias recalls that he was present when some of the material was found. "I remember picking it up and thinking maybe it was some sort of seaweed. But we sent a sample off to the National Research Council [in Ottawa], and sure enough, their botanists confirmed that it was coconut fiber. That was the first time I really believed there was coconut fiber under Oak Island."

Blankenship also uncovered the remains of the artificial drainage network under Smith's Cove. Beneath one of the stone drains he found a pair of wrought-iron scissors. These were submitted to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, which found them to be Spanish-American in origin, probably made in Mexico. They were examined by Mendel Peterson, former curator of the Smithsonian's Historical Archaeology