

## *Analysis of Artifacts*

### **Item # 48**

*Whistle "made of bone or ivory, of a very ancient pattern and peculiar design*

**WHO FOUND**

**WHEN FOUND**

1885 (circa)

**WHERE FOUND**

The soil of the shore between the cofferdam and the shore line

**FIRSTHAND/  
SECONDHAND**

**REFERENCES**

R.V. Harris, Pg. 73 (picture on page 117)  
Furneaux's, "The Money Pit Mystery", Pg. 40  
O'Connor's, "The Big Dig", pg. 10

**LOCATION TODAY**

Last known to be in the possession of Ms. Mary B. Stewart of New York  
(now deceased)

**ODDITY FACTOR**

**ASSESSMENT OF  
AUTHENTICITY**

**COMMENTS**

Furneaux quotes *The National Maritime Museum* in Greenwich, England as saying that Boatswains whistles "were always made of silver or plated" O'Connor, in "The Big Dig" mentions Smith, McGinnis and Vaughan finding one circa 1795+

## The Guessing game

Although no major operations were undertaken between 1867 and 1894 two incidents occurred which require later discussion, and several minor discoveries were made.

A whistle, made of bone or ivory, was found on the shore of Smith's Cove in 1885. This was wrongly described as a 'bosun's whistle', which, according to the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England, 'were always made of silver or plated'. Another whistle, about three in. long, was found in 1901. It was also made of bone or ivory and was shaped like a violin. Another discovery, prior to 1895, was a copper coin weighing an ounce and a half, dated in one version of the story, 1317, and in a more probable account, 1713. The coin is reputed to have borne 'various strange devices'.

None of these finds provided any clue to the identification of the mystery men who had dug the Money Pit, the puzzle which had intrigued searchers from the time of the Pit's discovery. The fibrous material, quantities of which had been found in the original shaft and in the catchment at Smith's Cove, was believed to provide such a clue. It was thought to be coconut fibre.

In 1916 samples were submitted to the Smithsonian Institute of Washington, DC, which reported: 'The specimen of fibre submitted is undoubtedly from the fibrous husks surrounding a coconut. This fibre is especially resistant to the effects of sea water and under the conditions under which it was found may have been there for several hundred years.'

The Curator of the Institute, Dr. Frederick L. Newton, made a similar report in 1930.

The Bureau of Plant Industries, Washington, DC, to which a sample was sent in 1937, failed to identify it, other than by stating that 'unquestionably it is the fibro-vascular tissue of some plant'. In the

Furneaux's "The Money Pit Mystery"

B40



# The Oak Island Treasure Company 1893-1900

As far as we can learn, no active operations were undertaken between the years 1867 and 1893 to solve the mystery of Oak Island. While each of the several previous efforts had failed in its immediate objective, each had added something to the store of knowledge that was slowly and surely accumulating; each had built upon the work of all its predecessors, whether positive or negative in its results, and each had passed on to its successors some new facts, discoveries and theories.

While there was a lack of reliable records and trustworthy and detailed accounts of the work previously done, there were some substantial links. The three discoverers of 1795, namely Smith, McGinnis and Vaughan, later lived and worked with Simeon Lynds and his friends in 1804-1805; Vaughan and Smith were living in 1849-1850 and passed on to the Truro or Colchester Company all they knew of previous operations; Jotham McCully, Robert Greelman and Adams A. Tupper linked their work at the half-century mark with that of 1863-1866; as did James McNutt and S. C. Fraser the work of this last effort to the new enterprise in 1893.

Frederick L. Blair, a most cautious and conscientious worker in the period 1893 to 1951, interviewed in that period

many persons who had actually worked at various times prior to 1893, including Adams A. Tupper, Jefferson W. McDonald, Mrs. Henry Sellers (Chester Basin), John McGinnis and Arthur McGinnis (Oak Island) and George Vaughan (Western Shore). The last three were direct descendants of two of the original discoverers, and had themselves been actively interested as employees of various companies in their operations. Blair obtained full and accurate records of their knowledge of the facts. No sacrifice of time or money seemed too great to these pioneers to demonstrate their unshaken faith in the existence of the treasure and its ultimate recovery.

## Other Events

In 1887 Anthony Graves died and by his will bequeathed the property to his daughters, Sophia, wife of Henry Sellers of Chester Basin, and Rachael, wife of Abraham Ernst of Mahone. During Anthony Graves' life-time, the Sellers family had lived with him in his Oak Island home and had helped him in his very meagre cultivation of the cleared land near the Money Pit.

In 1878 Mrs. Sophia Sellers was plowing with oxen about 350 feet from the Money Pit, when over the line of the supposed tunnel one of the oxen suddenly fell into a well-like hole, ten to twelve feet in depth, and six to eight feet in diameter, caused apparently by a "cave-in"; the animal was rescued with difficulty. As the hole was directly over the supposed tunnel, it was believed to have some connection with it. It was not, however, until 1894 that further investigation was made. Mrs. Sellers herself related these facts to Mr. Blair about 1894.

About 1885 a boatswain's stone whistle was also found on the Island, made of bone or ivory, of a very ancient pattern and peculiar design. It was last known to be in the possession of a Miss Mary B. Stewart of New York (now deceased), who in previous years was one of the searchers for the treasure. It was found in the soil of the shore between the



ago, and at that time the Pit had been opened only to eighty-six feet, hence these tools may have fallen as much as thirty-five feet or more.

At about 150 feet we commenced to uncover broken up pieces of stone, the nature of which no person here can identify. They have the appearance of the so-called cement which was drilled through in previous years, and yet it does not resemble it in all respects. These stones first appeared in the disturbed portion of the Pit, a chunk or two, and gradually spread over the whole area. As the men worked deeper, the bottom became largely covered with this stuff in broken pieces, and Mr. Stevenson, the miner in charge of the actual work, says they appear just as if they had been dumped or dropped there from a higher point. At the present level, the bottom of the Pit is covered with this stuff, and it seems as if we are in a bed of it that may extend considerably deeper. The water comes through under the shoe at the bottom on one side, and a few feet up the wall as well as at the bottom on the opposite side.

The question now is, where is the wood and treasure—metal in pieces—which dropped from 100 feet, the iron struck at 126 feet by drillers, the cement and wood drilled into between 153 and 157 feet, and the iron at 171 feet? It appears as if we had gone past them. They certainly must be somewhere in the near vicinity of our Pit.

It has been the theory of many connected with previous expeditions, that there was an open chamber below the deposit at 100 feet, and that this deposit fell into this chamber when the Money Pit collapsed years ago. There was certainly an open space of some description under that deposit, otherwise the result of the collapse would never have been so great a drop, if any collapse had occurred.

I am convinced that down to 150 feet at least, one end of your pit was over the edge of what was once an open chamber. Due to collapse of supports, etc., above, this chamber has been filled with broken ground or clay, through which the water being pumped has passed. Tons and tons of clay have passed out with the water this summer, and the gravel and other solids keep settling down to solid bottom as the work progresses. The wall of this chamber, undermined possibly by



Boatswain's whistle, found on Oak Island  
about 1885.