

Analysis of Artifacts

Item # 98

Spruce slab with a mining auger hole in it

WHO FOUND	The Oak Island Association
WHEN FOUND	1861
WHERE FOUND	In west shaft about 118' down
FIRSTHAND/ SECONDHAND	
REFERENCES	D'Arcy O'Connor's, "The Big Dig", pg. 28 Re:James McNutt's 1867 account of the Money Pit Collapse and the items that were forced out of the Money Pit into the west shaft
LOCATION TODAY	
ODDITY FACTOR	
ASSESSMENT OF AUTHENTICITY	
COMMENTS	

barely escaped being caught by the rush of mud which followed them into the West pit and filled it up 7 feet [of mud] in less than three minutes. In the meantime a stick of oak timber of considerable girth and 3½ feet in length was ejected with the mud."

Writing in the newspaper the *Nova Scotian* in September of that year, "the digger Patrick," who was at the scene of the collapse, recalled that "while the water [from the Money Pit] was hindered by this earth [in the tunnel] from coming through [to the westerly shaft] we took out part of the earth and wood. The wood was stained black with age; it was cut, hewn, chamfered, sawn and bored, according to the purpose for which it was needed. We also took out part of the bottom of a keg." An account by James McNutt in 1867 also mentions that a "piece of juniper with bark on [and] cut at each end with an edge tool" and "a spruce slab with a mining auger hole in it" were dug out of the mud that had gushed from the Money Pit into the west shaft.

These diggers would obviously have been able to tell the difference between timbers used in their own tunnel cribbing and wood that was far older. Consequently, they were presented with substantial proof that some sort of wood construction lay more than 100 feet down in the Money Pit. And the spruce slab with the auger hole through it may well have been part of one of the platforms drilled into at the 98- and 105-foot levels in 1849. Unfortunately, carbon-dating analysis hadn't yet been invented. A century would pass before this technique could be applied to original wood excavated from beneath the island. And the results date the original project to the late sixteenth century.

McCully reported that when some of the mud in the connecting tunnel between the west shaft and the Money Pit had been cleared, the west shaft again began to flood. So bailing was resumed and "continued until 3 o'clock P.M. of Saturday when, on clearing the tunnel [of mud] again, another crash was heard in the Money Pit which [we] supposed to be the upper platform [at 98 feet in the Money Pit] falling, and immediately the bottom of the Money Pit fell to about 102 feet