

Analysis of Artifacts
Item # 113

Original cofferdam at Smith's Cove

WHO FOUND	Jotham B. McCully
WHEN FOUND	1850
WHERE FOUND	In Smith's Cove beyond the Truro Company's cofferdam.
FIRSTHAND/ SECONDHAND	
REFERENCES	D'Arcy O'Connor's, "The Big Dig", pg. 25
LOCATION TODAY	
ODDITY FACTOR	
ASSESSMENT OF AUTHENTICITY	
COMMENTS	

While this use as a filtering agent seems unique, coconut fiber was commonly used during the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries as dunnage on sailing ships. It was laid on the bottom of the cargo holds as an absorption material to prevent water damage, and was also packed between casks and crates to inhibit shifting and breakage.

To build this elaborate water trap the unknown engineer of Oak Island would first have had to erect a cofferdam around Smith's Cove. (McCully mentions that "the remains of an old dam was seen outside of the place where we found the drain and tunnel to the shore." This indicates that the Truro Company's dam, even if it had held, probably wasn't built far enough out to encompass the whole drainage system.) Once the Money Pit, tunnel, drains, and rock-covered filter system were in place, the cofferdam was destroyed, thus setting the trap.

Clearly, the Money Pit with its wooden hydraulic seals worked on the same principle as a thumb-capped drinking straw dipped into a glass of water. Remove the thumb, and the water in the straw rises to the level in the jar. Such an elaborate system would have been constructed only to hide something of great value for a considerable length of time. But the full complexity of the system had yet to be discovered.