

2016 Kellerman Lecture New Zealand **THE OAK ISLAND LEGEND: THE MASONIC ANGLE**

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Introduction

Oak Island is a small 140 acre [56 hectares] island in Mahone Bay on the Southeast Coast of Nova Scotia in Atlantic Canada. It contains the so-called Money Pit, a very deep hole from which numerous expeditions have attempted to recover an alleged treasure since the late 1700's. None has ever succeeded in recovering the supposed treasure, and as of the time of writing (April-May 2010), the current owners of most of the Island are awaiting a Treasure Trove Licence from the Nova Scotian Government to resume digging for the treasure. The Oak Island Money Pit Legend has become one of the world's most famous unsolved mysteries. Because the story has been told many times before, I will not attempt to recount it in detail, and refer the interested reader to the internet site <http://www.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/archive/>



My concern in this paper is to trace how Masonic symbolism and imagery have been incorporated in the legend. I am not the first to note a connection between the Oak Island Legend and Freemasonry:

- As far as I am aware, author Mark Finnan was the first to draw explicit attention to the links between Freemasonry and the Oak Island Legend. Finnan, in the 1997

edition of his book "Oak Island Secrets", noted that many of the treasure diggers have been Freemasons, and implied that the Masonic Fraternity possessed secret knowledge of the nature of the treasure which impelled them to seek it. While not explicitly a Masonic conspiracy theory, Finnan's work certainly implies such a conspiracy.

- Professional sceptic Joe Nickell followed with an article in the Skeptical Inquirer in the year 2000 entitled "The Secrets of Oak Island" in which he noted that symbolism from the Masonic Degree known as the Holy Royal Arch appeared to have been incorporated in the Oak Island Legend.

Although I am therefore not the first to discuss the Masonic aspects of the Oak Island Legend, I believe I am the first Freemason to write on the Masonic angle in the legend. I, therefore, have an advantage over both Finnan and Nickell, neither of whom are Masons. I have previously written two brief online papers entitled respectively "Did the Oak Island Legend Start Out as a Masonic Ritual?" and "The Oak Island Legend as an Expression of Masonic Symbolism", posted to the

internet in 2004 and 2005 respectively, but my understanding of the evolution of Masonic Ritual and of the evolution of the Oak Island Legend itself has since increased to the point where I am now able to take the very different approach of this present paper.

The Evolution of the Oak Island Legend:

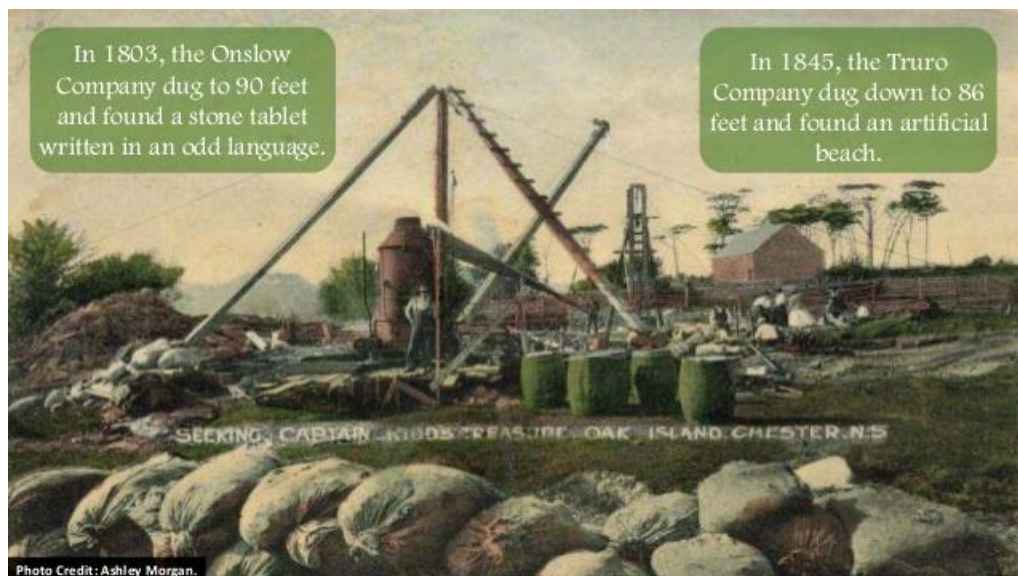
The traditional date for the discovery of the Oak Island Money Pit is 1795, being the date given in the 1890's prospectus of the Oak Island Treasure Co, which was the syndicate which attempted to locate the treasure in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Recent research by Paul Wroclawski suggests the 1795 date is too late, and the true date of discovery was probably in the 1780's. The earliest unambiguous documentary evidence of treasure hunting on Oak Island dates to the year of 1849 and takes the form of a Treasuring Hunting Licence issued to Charles Archibald and John Pitblado on 6 August 1849 by the Governor of Nova Scotia. The first published accounts of the Oak Island treasure hunt do not start appearing until 1857 and comprise the following:

First Article: An article in the Liverpool Transcript, a Nova Scotian newspaper, in its issue of 8 August 1857 by J P Forks briefly mentions digging for Captain Kidd's treasure on Oak Island.

Second Article: The 15 August 1857 issue of the Liverpool Transcript contains a longer discussion of the Oak Island Treasure Quest. The facts disclosed in this article are limited to essentially only the following:

- Oak Island is the scene of a so far fruitless search for the treasure of Captain Kidd.
- Four pits, of which three are still open, have been excavated to considerable depths in search of the treasure. The pits are all "upwards of 100 feet [30 metres]" in depth, and the three open ones are now all filled with water.
- The pits all measure approximately 12 feet [4 metres] by 8 feet [2.4 metres] and are boxed in with timber 8 inches [20 centimetres] square.
- The treasure searchers were flooded out of each pit by water, and they believe "sluices or communications with the sea" [ie flood tunnels] had been constructed to protect the treasure.
- Five horse-operated whimsies or gins are set up to elevate dirt, stones and water out of the pits.

The article mentions nothing about when the pit was discovered, who discovered it, and who has been digging for the treasure.



Third Article:

The third known article on the Oak Island Money Pit was a further brief piece in the 20 August 1861 issue of the Liverpool Transcript entitled "The Oak Island Folly", which is highly sceptical

in tone. This article discloses a few additional facts over and above those disclosed in the previous issues of the Liverpool Transcript, namely:

- The treasure search has been going on nearly every summer for the last 10 or 12 years.
- \$20,000 has already been expended, and at present 65 men and 35 horses are employed in the search, in three pits dug to 126 feet [38 metres] in depth, each measuring approximately 12 feet [4 metres] by 15 feet [5 metres] and boxed in with timber.
- The three pits are connected at the bottom by a lateral tunnel, where the dark and cold obliges the miners to carry lamps in their caps and be relieved every two hours.
- The inflow of water is very great, and the article repeats the earlier theory that sluices or communications with the sea have been constructed to protect the treasure.
- Gins and whimsies are constantly at work raising dirt, stones, and water.
- A fortnight previously it was thought the treasure was about to be retrieved and shares in the company rose dramatically in value, but all were disappointed.

This article also does not mention who is digging for the treasure and says nothing about the circumstances of the Pit's discovery. The writer does not mince words, calling the treasure seekers "deluded" and the treasure quests an act of "the most utter madness".

Fourth Article: The scathing tone of the third article inevitably called forth a defence of the treasure diggers, which was the fourth known article and was published in the Nova Scotian newspaper on 30 September 1861 under the name "Patrick". The identity of Patrick is unknown, but he includes new material not mentioned in the previous articles, albeit his article only covers parts of what is now understood by the phrase "The Oak Island Legend". I attempt only a brief summary of Patrick's new material only:

- The ground at the Money Pit comprises "compact clay mixed with round lumps of stone to the depth of 110 feet [34 metres], perfectly dry, except in one pit where the water comes in at 98 feet [30 metres] from the surface".
- Over 50 years previously (to 1861) a company from Onslow excavated the last mentioned pit and found it had been carefully refilled with earth in which they found wood, charcoal, putty, etc. When down 93 feet [28 metres], they probed beneath them with a crowbar and struck a wooden platform at 98 feet [30 metres] after which the pit was flooded out.
- About 10 years previously (to 1861) a company including Patrick bored down the said pit with mining augers and encountered the wooden platform at 98 feet, which proved to be Spruce 6 inches [15 centimetres] thick, then a void of 12 inches [30 centimetres] then 4 inches [10 centimetres] of Oak, then 20 inches [50 centimetres] of material which sounded like small pieces of metal as the auger worked through it, then 8 inches [20 centimetres] of Oak, then another 20 inches [50 centimetres] of the material which sounded like small pieces of metal, then 4 inches [10 centimetres] of Oak, then Spruce and then into the clay below. They did not succeed in bringing up any samples of the "material which sounded like small pieces of metal".
- The Money Pit itself (which Patrick calls "the old pit") is filled with water, but four shafts dug north, south, east and west of the Money Pit are dry, which supports the notion there is a flood tunnel from the sea to the Money Pit. The flood tunnel is further corroborated by the discovery of the end of it at the shore where drains "were laid most skilfully" underneath sand covered with a kind of grass not native to the area, the connection of these drains to the Money Pit being shown by the same kind of grass having been bored up from the "platforms" in the older pit. As Patrick has made no reference to the famous platforms at every 10 feet [3 metres] depth in the Money Pit, which was added to the legend later, I infer that when he refers to "platforms in the old pit" he is meaning the layers of wood mentioned in the preceding bullet point.

- This season (1861) two pits were prepared for bailing water out of the Money Pit by sinking them deeper, but before they could drain the Money Pit it collapsed further down into the earth, driving wood and clay through one of the lateral tunnels.
- The association currently seeking treasure is about to issue new shares to raise the money for a steam engine and pumps to continue the treasure dig.

Although Patrick adds many new data to the legend, he still offers nothing on the date and circumstances of the Money Pit's discovery, and still does not reveal who the treasure diggers are except for the reference to himself by only his forename.

Recapitulation of the Evolution of the Oak Island Legend to the End of 1861:

As at the end of 1861, the published accounts of the Oak Island Money Pit could not be considered to incorporate much in the way of Masonic symbolism or imagery, and I do not believe any Freemason would consider the legend as of 1861 and as set out above to be overtly Masonic in any way. As we shall see later in this paper, there is one element in the Patrick letter which could be considered unambiguously Masonic, but that element by itself would not be considered by any Freemason to be conveying any kind of Masonic message in my opinion. There are also two further elements which might be called "ambiguously Masonic", ie they could be taken to be Masonic symbolism but they also have non-Masonic meanings. It is in the next and fifth publication on the Oak Island Legend in 1862 that various Masonic elements are suddenly added to the legend, in a way that in my opinion conveys an unmistakable Masonic message to those Freemasons who are Scottish Rite Masons but that is getting ahead of us. We now need to trace the evolution of Masonic Ritual to the end of 1861.

The Evolution of Masonic Ritual

Freemasonry is a very old fraternity, dating back in some form to the Middle Ages. It assumed its modern organisational form with the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in London in 1717. It is the World's oldest and largest fraternity, with a worldwide membership of perhaps 4,000,000-6,000,000. To put that figure into perspective, the worldwide membership of Rotary is currently about 1.2m. Freemasonry or Masonry sees itself as a character development organisation, or to rephrase that in more modern terminology, a self-improvement organisation, or "making good men better". It achieves these lofty goals by putting candidates through degree ceremonies which take the form of two-act plays, where the participants take roles which they are supposed to learn by heart, as in real plays. The material which the members learn by rote is called a "ritual". Every Masonic Degree has its own ritual. The three basic degrees of Masonry are called the Craft Degrees, each of which has its own ritual, and the majority of Masons only ever do the three craft degrees. A minority of Masons go on to do various side degrees, of which hundreds exist although only about 100 are commonly available in most countries in the English-speaking world.

One of the most important of the Side Degrees is called "The Holy Royal Arch", which we will have occasion to consider further below. Another Side Degree, which we shall also consider in greater depth below, is the "Knights of the Ninth Arch", also known as "The Royal Arch of Enoch" (not to be confused with the Holy Royal Arch), and which is the Thirteenth Degree in a system of Thirty-Three Degrees called the Scottish Rite in North America and the Rose Croix in the rest of the English-speaking world. As with all Masonic Degrees, the Holy Royal Arch and the Knights of the Ninth Arch (or Royal Arch of Enoch) have their own rituals.

Contrary to popular belief, Masonic rituals change and evolve over time, and generally have been publicly available since the early 1800's and even earlier for some degrees because disaffected Masons have more or less regularly taken revenge on the Masonic Order by publishing the rituals in so-called "Masonic exposures". Many of these exposures are now available online.

The existence of Masonic exposures means we can trace with more or less absolute certainty the state of Masonic ritual for many if not most degrees in North America in 1861.

Looking at the ritual of the Masonic Degree known as the Holy Royal Arch (not to be confused with the Royal Arch of Enoch also known as the Knights of the Ninth Arch), we know what that ritual was in North America in 1861 because it had been published in two recent exposures:

- The Crafts Edition of William Morgan's "The Mysteries of Freemasonry" which was published in the 1850's. A copy of it is available online at page 87 <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18136/18136-h/18136-h.htm>
- Richardson's Monitor of Freemasonry published in 1860. A copy of this work is also available online at page 149 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/>

The theme of the ritual of the Holy Royal Arch Degree is the discovery of the lost name of God and accompanying treasure in a vault underneath the ruins of King Solomon's Temple during the construction of the second temple in Jerusalem during the year's c535BC-c516BC. The discovery is made by a group of searchers called sojourners, who discover the vault containing the name of God and treasure by striking a rock with a crowbar and realising it made a hollow sound. The discovery of the treasure by a crowbar in the Holy Royal Arch Degree is the one undoubted Masonic element hinted at in the Patrick letter, where you will recall the Onslow company when at 93 feet probed below them with a crowbar and struck a wooden platform at 98 feet which they interpreted as the roof of the treasure chest or chamber. We shall later see that there are also two ambiguous elements mentioned in the Patrick letter, but as they also have non-Masonic interpretations we will not concern ourselves with them just yet.

The existence of this single unambiguous element in the Patrick letter can, of course, be written off as coincidence, and I certainly do not suggest the Patrick letter has deliberately included any Masonic motifs. We are now in a position to consider the fifth published article on the Oak Island Money Pit, and how it appears to have deliberately included elements from the Royal Arch of Enoch Degree (not to be confused with the Holy Royal Arch).

Fifth Article on the Oak Island Legend, Published 1862:

The fifth known article on Oak Island was published in the Liverpool Transcript in October 1862, and was by JB McCully whose involvement in the Oak Island Treasure Quest dated back to 1849, and who was in 1862 secretary of the Oak Island Association, the treasure seeking syndicate then excavating the Money Pit. McCully's article is available online (19). McCully introduces important new elements into the legend including:

- For the first time, the name of the discoverer of the pit is given as McGinnis, and we are told the initial excavators of the pit were three men being McGinnis, Smith, and Vaughn.
- We are also told McGinnis discovered the Money Pit from its site being sunken, and "*from the position of three oak trees, which stood in triangular form around the pit*".
- The bark of the three trees had letters carved in them facing the pit.
- For the first time, we are informed the three men discovered oak platforms at 10 feet [3m], 20 feet [6m], and 30 feet [9m], and other marks were discovered by their subsequent treasure syndicate (Onslow) at 10 feet [3m] intervals down to and including the 90 foot [27m] level. In other words, nine levels extending vertically down into the ground.
- Also for the first time, we learn that a large stone was discovered at the depth of 80 feet [24m] with "characters" cut on it.
- McCully repeats the information in the Patrick letter (*supra*) that the diggers at 93 feet [28m] probed below with a crowbar and struck a wooden platform at 98 feet [30m].

- McCully also repeats Patrick's information that after the crowbar probing, the pit overnight flooded with water.
- McCully adds the new information that the borings described by Patrick (supra) brought up three small links apparently forced from an epaulette, which was gold.
- McCully repeats Patrick's tale of the "collapse" of the Money Pit, which he places during the preceding year (1861), and whereby the bottom of the Money Pit fell down a further 14 feet [4m] from 88 feet [27m] to 102 feet [31m] accompanied by the timber cribbing of the pit falling down into it. Patrick mentions only one collapse, but McCully adds that there were, in fact, two collapses of the Money Pit, apparently in fairly quick succession.

The foregoing list of McCully's additions to the legend is not exhaustive and is confined to the elements which as we shall see are almost certainly derived from or influenced by Masonic ritual. However, we see that with McCully's additions, the legend has in one quantum leap assumed what would generally be regarded as the classic or traditional version of the Money Pit Legend. It is now time to return to the state of Masonic ritual as it existed in 1862.

The Thirteenth Degree of the Scottish Rite, known as the Royal Arch of Enoch and also known as Knights of the Ninth Arch

The Crafts edition of the Morgan exposure (15), (16) and the Richardson exposure (17), (18) both reproduce the rituals of the Thirteenth Degree of the Masonic System known as the Scottish Rite, which degree is called by both exposures "Knights of the Ninth Arch" although it is more generally known as the Royal Arch of Enoch nowadays. As Crafts was published in the 1850's and Richardson in 1860, we, therefore, know with a high degree of certainty the Thirteenth Degree Rituals that would have been available to McCully in 1862.

For the benefit of English-speaking Masons who live **outside** of North America, it is apposite at this point to explain a potential point of confusion: For them, the Scottish Rite is generally known as the "Rose Croix", and the Fourth to Seventeenth Degrees, including the Thirteenth Degree, are not actually practiced anymore, with candidates going directly from the Third Degree to the Eighteenth Degree, and with the Fourth to Seventeenth Degrees being conferred "by name" ie simply conferred without going through the ceremonies of those degrees.

Masons from outside of North America will therefore not generally be familiar with the ritual of the Thirteenth Degree as for them the Thirteenth Degree has fallen into disuse. However, in North America, all the rituals of all the degrees in the Scottish Rite are still actually "worked" in full, and North American Scottish Rite Masons, therefore, remain fully familiar with the ritual of the Thirteenth Degree.

The theme of the ritual of the Thirteenth Degree can be briefly summarised as thus: Prior to the flood, the biblical patriarch Enoch constructed an underground temple consisting of nine chambers descending vertically into the earth, and in the ninth or lowest chamber he deposited a treasure which included the secret name of God engraved on a triangular plate of gold. This temple was inundated by Noah's flood and was lost until it was accidentally rediscovered by three searchers during the building of King Solomon's Temple, with the three searchers recovering the treasure and the secret name of God from the lowest or ninth chamber.

The essence of the Thirteenth Degree is, therefore, the same as that of the Holy Royal Arch Degree noted above: viz the discovery of the lost word or name of God, albeit the historic context of the discovery in the Thirteenth Degree (the building of King Solomon's Temple about 1000 BCE) differs from the historic time of the Holy Royal Arch Degree (the building of the second temple about 535 BC-516 BC).

If we now examine the rituals of the Thirteenth Degree given in Crafts and Richardson, available online at (16) and (18) respectively, we can tabulate their correspondences to McCully's additions to the Oak Island Legend thus:

Elements of Legend Added or Repeated by McCully	Corresponding items in Masonic Ritual (all references are to Ritual of Thirteenth Degree aka Royal Arch of Enoch aka Knights of Ninth Arch except where otherwise noted)
1. Pit discovered by three men being McGinnis, Smith, and Vaughn. <i>(Added by McCully).</i>	1. Enoch's subterranean temple is discovered by three Grand Master Architects called Gibulum, Joabert, and Stolkyn: Richardson page 149, Crafts pages 154-155.
2. Three oak trees surrounded the Money Pit in "triangular form". <i>Added by McCully.</i>	2. The triangle is a recurring motif in the Thirteenth Degree eg the triangular plate of gold on which the secret name of God is engraved: Crafts pages 155-156, Richardson pages 149-150.
3. The bark of the three trees had letters carved in them facing the Money Pit entrance. <i>Added by McCully.</i>	3. The surface entrance to Enoch's subterranean temple is marked by a cubic stone raised by a large iron ring, which stone bore an inscription: Crafts page 154. On the surface near Enoch's underground temple, he erected two pillars of brick and marble respectively bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions: Richardson page 149.
4. The Money Pit had nine levels going down vertically into the earth at 10 feet [3m] intervals, marked by oak platforms and "marks" respectively. <i>Added by McCully.</i>	4. Enoch's temple consisted of nine "arches" or levels going down vertically into the earth: Crafts pages 154-155, Richardson page 149.
5. A large stone is discovered 80 feet [24m] down in the Money Pit with "characters" engraved on it. <i>Added by McCully.</i>	5. A cubic stone with inscriptions raised by an iron ring was discovered at the entrance to Enoch's temple: Crafts page 154. The golden triangle in the ninth or lowest level of Enoch's temple is engraved with characters, which later proved to be the secret name of God: Crafts page 155, Richardson page 149. Enoch erects a marble pillar near his temple with hieroglyphics disclosing the treasure hidden nearby: Richardson page 149.

<p>6. At 93 feet [28m] down in the pit, the diggers probed below with a crowbar and strike a wooden platform at 98 feet [30m] which they interpret as a treasure chest or chamber. <i>This item is repeated by McCully, having first been disclosed by Patrick.</i></p>	<p>6. In the Holy Royal Arch Degree (related to but not to be confused with the Thirteenth Degree) the three sojourners discover a vault containing a treasure including the secret name of God when their crowbar strikes a rock which makes a hollow sound: Crafts pages 96-97, Richardson page 76.</p>
<p>7. After the crowbar probing, the Money Pit floods overnight. <i>This item is also repeated by McCully, the flooding of the pit having been discussed by previous writers.</i></p>	<p>7. After Enoch's death, the great flood of Noah occurs and destroys "most of the superb monuments of antiquity including the marble pillar of Enoch" and including by inference Enoch's Temple: Richardson page 151. Crafts does not directly refer to Noah's flood, but makes reference to another text where he uses the word "etc" on page 156, and it appears he is following the then common Masonic practice of referring to the history of the Degree as given in the semi-official Webb's Monitor of Freemasonry which does refer to Noah's flood as part of the history of the Thirteenth Degree (20).</p>
<p>8. The auger borings bring up "three small links apparently forced from an epaulette", which were gold. <i>This item is new with McCully.</i></p>	<p>8. In nearly all Masonic Degree ceremonies, including the Thirteenth Degree, the Masons wear aprons which are supposed to symbolise the aprons worn by medieval stonemasons. The aprons and other regalia worn by Freemasons are often adorned with metal epaulettes, comprising chains of small links, and which were and still are frequently of gold or a metal resembling gold, eg brass. Richardson at page 149 explains the aprons worn in the Thirteenth Degree, although he does not mention epaulettes.</p>
<p>9. The Money Pit undergoes a collapse, twice in apparently quick succession. <i>Patrick refers to a collapse of the Money Pit, but the second collapse is a new item added by McCully.</i></p>	<p>9. When one of the three Grand Master Architects enters the ninth level of Enoch's Temple, "a parcel of stone and mortar suddenly fell in": Crafts page 155. Later, several ancient masters asked King Solomon for the secrets of the 13th degree and were refused, whereupon they entered Enoch's subterranean temple to discover the secrets for themselves, but the nine arches of Enoch's Temple collapsed in upon them: Crafts page 157. Crafts thus explicitly refer to two separate collapses in Enoch's Temple.</p>

10. The Money Pit conceals a vast treasure which as yet is unrecovered. <i>McCully here repeats the earlier writers.</i>	10. Enoch's Temple contained a magnificent treasure including the secret name of God engraved on a triangular plate of gold: Crafts pages 154-156, Richardson pages 149-150.
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The parallels between McCully's additions to the Oak Island Legend and the Thirteenth Degree rituals that would have been available to him in 1862 are numerous and striking. Too numerous and too striking to be coincidental, in my opinion.

What Evidence do we have that McCully Deliberately Added Masonic Elements to the Oak Island Legend?

I would concede we have no direct evidence that McCully deliberately and knowingly added Masonic material to the Oak Island Legend, but we do have at least three items of indirect evidence he did so:

(1) **First Item:** The first item of indirect evidence is the number and striking nature of the parallels between Masonic ritual as it existed at the time and McCully's additions to the Oak Island Saga. One such parallel could justifiably be written off as coincidence, as could two parallels and possibly even three parallels at a stretch. But ten parallels goes beyond coincidence in my opinion. I would further note that nine of the ten parallels come from a single Masonic Degree, and the tenth comes from a Degree with a very similar theme to the Degree that has the other nine correspondences. Moreover, six of the ten correspondences originate with and were added by McCully and a seventh (the collapse of the Money Pit) was added to by McCully in a way that made it much more strikingly reminiscent of the Crafts ritual of the Thirteenth Degree. It is also worthy of note that McCully only borrowed three of the items in the above table from previous versions of the legend and they are:

- The probing with the crowbar, which as we previously noted was the one unambiguous masonic element appearing in the Patrick letter.
- The flooding of the Pit, and the existence of the treasure, being the two ambiguous masonic elements appearing in earlier versions of the legend, and which I call "ambiguous" because they have non-masonic as well as masonic meanings.

(2) **Second Item:** The second item of indirect evidence that McCully deliberately added Masonic symbolism to the Oak Island Story is his treatment of the three gold chain links "as if forced from an epaulette" and supposedly brought up from the pit about 1849-50 by a mining auger. McCully's reference to them appears to be an embellishment originating with him because most (but not all) other contemporary accounts either omit all mention of them or make no reference to them being gold:

- Patrick in his article of 30 September 1861 insists their auger did not recover any of "the material which sounded like small pieces of metal" (12).
- An article in the Yarmouth Herald of 19 February 1863 refers to the 1849-50 auger bringing up "three links of a chain, of a copper colour, which, however on being tested proved to be gold" (21).
- An article in the Yarmouth Herald of 12 March 1863 refers to "gold wire" being taken from the pit in 1849 but says nothing about three gold links even though it cites McCully as its source (22).

- AL Spedon's "Rambles Among the Bluenoses", a book published in 1863, does not mention the three links even though he cites McCully as his source for his account of the Oak Island Legend! (23).
- An article on Oak Island in the "Colonist" issues of 2 January, 7 January, and 14 January 1864, although one of the most comprehensive accounts of the legend to that date, makes no mention of the three metal links (24).
- More or less identical accounts of the Oak Island Legend published in the 2 September 1866 issue of the New York Herald (25) and in the 22 September 1866 issue of the Scotsman (26) respectively make no reference to the three links of chain, although such accounts are otherwise a faithful reproduction of the legend as it was understood at that time.
- Treasure digger James McNutt, writing in his diary in 1867, refers to the metal links but calls them three pieces of copper wire (27).
- The 1890's prospectus of the Oak Island Treasure Co (6) mentions the three links, but says only that they resembled an ancient watch chain, and says nothing about them being gold, even though the prospectus here is directly quoting McCully!

The inconsistencies of the various contemporary accounts of the three gold links indicate that McCully embellished his account of them, and it appears likely they never existed or if they did they were not gold. My point is that if McCully embellished or enhanced the reference to three gold links, what other parts of the legend did he embellish or exaggerate?

(3) **Third Item:** The third item of indirect evidence that McCully deliberately engrafted Masonic elements onto the Oak Island Legend arises from AL Spedon's "Rambles Among the Bluenoses" (23) mentioned above. McCully's article adding the various Masonic emblems to the legend, although only published in October 1862, is dated by him June 2, 1862. Spedon's book is subtitled "Reminiscences of a Tour Through New Brunswick and Nova Scotia During the Summer of 1862" and he cites McCully as his source for his account of the Oak Island Legend. So the McCully account in his own article, and his account given to Spedon, both date from the Northern Summer of 1862. Yet the two accounts are very different! Of the ten apparent Masonic elements, only three are mentioned by Spedon, namely: (i) "Sounding to the further depth of five feet [1.5m]" and striking an apparent money box, and (ii) the flooding of the pit, and (iii) the alleged existence of the treasure, and of course those three elements did not originate with McCully in any event. Now there is no nice way out of this one: either McCully's own article is wrong or his account given to Spedon is wrong. Because McCully's own article is so obviously based on the ritual of the Thirteenth Degree, which after all is entirely mythical, then I would argue his own article deliberately and knowingly added the Masonic motifs to the Oak Island Legend.

(4)

Who Was McCully?

In the next section we will discuss McCully's possible motives in adding the Masonic material, but before doing so it is useful to have some idea of his background, interests, and biography. Paul Wroclawski has discovered a very brief biographical sketch (28) which I take the liberty of now paraphrasing:

Jotham Blanchard McCully was born 19 January 1819, presumably in Nova Scotia, and died in Truro, Nova Scotia, 9 September 1899, at age 80. He appears to have resided in Truro, Nova Scotia, for most of his life. Married Isabelle McConnell 27 July 1844 by whom he had 10 children. He appears to have been involved in many and probably most of the treasure digging attempts which were made in the Money Pit on Oak Island from the 1840's through to the 1860's.

An engineer, in 1845 he was appointed a manager of operations of the Truro Company which conducted the Oak Island treasure hunt from the late 1840's through to the 1850's. The Truro

Company eventually ran out of funds and folded, but in 1861 McCully became secretary of the Oak Island Association of Truro which resumed the treasure hunt at that time by raising a large sum of money from the public and by employing a workforce of 63 men and 33 horses. This syndicate was also unsuccessful in locating the treasure and it folded in 1864. In 1866 McCully participated in yet a third company, the Oak Island Eldorado Company also known as the Halifax Company, which also raised funds from the public and resumed treasure digging but ceased operations in 1867.

It seems that McCully was familiar with Masonic ritual and me, therefore, infer he was a Freemason. This conclusion finds some support from the following passage posted online by Oak Island researcher GrailKnight7 (29):

"I am almost certain that Jotham Blanchard McCully, one of the key members of the Oak Island Association in the early 1860's, was himself a Freemason. One of the documents.... is an 1874 letter from a Mr. Williams.....to the members of "Peoples Lodge" in Truro. Mr. Williams refers to the members of the Lodge as "good Templars" and asks that Mr. McCully keeps the letter once it has been read to all."

What Were McCully's Motives?

What were McCully's motives in adding the Masonic symbolism to the Oak Island Legend? There are two possible motives I can think of:

- (A) McCully was perpetrating a Masonic prank or a kind of in-joke with his fellow Masons.
- (B) There is the more speculative and sinister possibility that the Oak Island Treasure Hunt in the 19th century was a deliberate fraud and McCully inserted the Masonic elements as a coded warning to his fellow Scottish Rite Masons that Oak Island was fraudulent and they shouldn't waste their money by investing in it.

I personally consider motive (A) the more likely, and for that reason and because I have no direct evidence in favour of motive (B) I have relegated the discussion on the latter motive to the Appendix to this article.

Did McCully Perpetrate a Masonic Prank?

Let me start this section by observing that Masonic pranks of nature I suggest McCully perpetrated are not as far-fetched or as uncommon as non-Masons might suppose. Being a Freemason myself, I know that Masons in the presence of non-Masons enjoy inserting Masonic allusions and bits of ritual into the conversation with a knowing nod and wink, in the certain knowledge that the Masons present will understand the significance but the non-Masons will not.

Professional sceptic Joe Nickell in his article on Oak Island (3) refers to a number of apparent Masonic pranks including the Legends of the Moving Coffins of Barbados, Swift's Lost Silver Mine in Kentucky, and the Beale Treasure all of which have become part of the canon of unsolved mysteries. Nickell also notes that author and Freemason Arthur Conan Doyle was in the habit of inserting Masonic allusions into his Sherlock Holmes stories, knowing that Masons would understand the significance but his non-Masonic readers would not. Nickell goes on to imply the Oak Island Money Pit Legend similarly started as a Masonic prank, so the idea is not original with me, albeit Nickell does not use the terminology of "prank" or "joke".

I suggest that McCully's motive in adding the Masonic symbolism to the legend was simply to have a joke which would be recognised as such by his fellow Scottish Rite Masons, but whose significance would be lost on all other people. Do I have any evidence for this hypothesis? There is, in fact, some indirect but highly suggestive evidence which takes this form: other Masons obviously recognised the joke and in the years after McCully's 1862 article they embellished the joke by adding numerous additional Masonic elements to the legend:

First, Masonic element added after McCully's 1862 article: One of the first Masonic elements added after McCully's 1862 article appeared in the 22 February 1863 issue of the Halifax Morning Sun (30), where a brief article noted that the treasure diggers on Oak Island;

"chanced to turn up two or three small oblong pieces of wrought silver, which from the indentation of the edges, and the impressions on the surface, were deemed to be antique coins of remote date. But,.....from the representations of them, roughly sketched on paper, for which we are indebted to a friend, our conclusion is, that the supposed coins are neither more nor less than Masonic jewels – small, and perhaps not very artistically wrought, but jewels withal.....the supposed Chinese 'inscription' we shrewdly suspect, could be easily deciphered by a "speculative Mason". "

Many, if not most Masonic Degrees have their own "jewel", a small piece of metal or other decoration worn by the members of that Degree as part of their regalia. The Thirteenth Degree at the time had its own jewel: Crafts page 156, Richardson page 149. I have been unable to trace any reference to the current whereabouts of the Masonic jewels dug up in 1863 and I infer they are either lost or were always mythical.

Second Masonic element added: The next Masonic element added to the legend occurred in the Colonist article of 2 January 1864 (24) which referred to the three original excavators encountering a layer of flagstones two feet [60cm] below the surface of the pit, echoing the Thirteenth Degree reference to "the ruins of an ancient edifice" found by the three Grand Master Architects when "digging for the foundation of [King Solomon's] Temple": Crafts page 154. As the flagstones were supposedly dug up about 1802/03, they have long been lost if indeed they ever truly existed at all.

Third addition of Masonic elements: At some unknown date in the 1860's, the purported inscription on the inscribed stone found at depth in the pit was supposedly translated by Professor Liechti of Dalhousie University to read "40 feet below two million pounds are buried" (31) which is strikingly reminiscent of the Thirteenth Degree referring to Enoch engraving hieroglyphics on a marble pillar disclosing the existence of his treasure nearby: Richardson page 149.

The symbols traditionally claimed to have been carved on the inscribed stone (32) have not been able to be traced back beyond the first half of the 20th century (33), but it is singular that so many of those symbols have Masonic overtones: there is a circle with a point in the middle evoking the common Masonic motif of a "point within a circle"; there are triangles both resting on their base and inverted which are the traditional emblems of both the Holy Royal Arch and Thirteenth Degrees; and there are squares and three-sided squares redolent of the Masonic pigpen cipher (34). The alleged actual inscribed stone was reportedly last seen in 1919 and is now lost (35).

Fourth Masonic element added: A further Masonic element was added to the legend with the 1890's prospectus of the Oak Island Treasure Co (6) which contains the first published reference I am aware of to "*an iron ring bolt, bedded in the rock*", and which "*can be seen only at very low tides*", corresponding to the iron ring bolt referred to in the Thirteenth Degree: Crafts page 154, Richardson, page 149. As far as I know, there is no actual iron ring bolt on the shore of Oak Island.

Fifth Masonic element added: An equilateral triangle of stones was discovered on the south shore of Oak Island in 1897 by treasure digger Captain Welling (36), and was rediscovered by the Chappell and Hedden treasure digging expeditions of the 1930's. The triangle measured about 10 feet [3 metres] on each side and was accidentally destroyed by the earthmoving operations of the Dunfield treasure hunt of mid-1960. Passing through the northern apex of the triangle was a straight line of stones pointing directly at the Money Pit to the north. We have already noted that the equilateral triangle is the symbol of both the Thirteenth and Holy Royal Arch Degrees.

The southern base of the triangle also formed a chord off which was a semi-circle of stones, so that the triangle, the line pointing to the pit, and the semi-circle together formed a design reminiscent of a sextant (37). The sextant shape is very similar to the traditional Masonic symbol of the plumb-rule. The Welling triangle definitely did exist at one time, but its discovery as late as 1897 would seem to indicate it was created as part of the evolving Masonic prank.

Sixth Masonic element added: In 1897, a small piece of parchment was allegedly drilled up from a cement vault at a depth of 153 feet in the Money Pit, bearing the letters “VI” (38). Although the parchment fragment exists, we shall see in the Appendix that there are now serious doubts as to its authenticity, and the existence of the cement vault was disproved when the Chappell, Hedden, and Hamilton treasure hunts of the 1930’s dug right through where it supposedly was without finding it (39).

However, this parchment fragment is pure Masonic symbolism: in the Holy Royal Arch Degree of Masonry, when the three sojourners enter the secret **vault** under the ruins of King Solomon’s Temple, they find among other treasures an ancient **parchment** containing passages from the Old Testament: Crafts page 97. The Masonic symbolism, in fact, goes further than this: the American Freemason Albert Pike revised the Scottish Rite rituals during 1855-1868 (40) and the revised rituals were published by McClenechan in 1884 (41) where the revised Thirteenth Degree ritual refers to the initials of the Latin phrase “in arc leonis verbum inveni”, the initials being IALVI which include the letters “VI”. While it might be superficially tempting to dismiss this as coincidence, the Latin phrase translates as “in the lion’s mouth I found the word”, so that the literal translation of the words corresponding to “VI” being “verbum inveni” is “*word found*” which of course is a good two word summary of what the Holy Royal Arch and Thirteenth Degrees are all about, being the rediscovery of the lost word or name of God. It is therefore seen that the letters “VI” on the parchment fragment are a very subtle and very clever Masonic pun which, however, would only be recognised as such by Scottish Rite Masons who knew their Thirteenth Degree ritual very well. So we now start to see that the Masonic elements being added to the legend are starting to reflect changes in Masonic rituals occurring after McCully’s 1862 article.

Seventh Masonic element added: As far as I am aware, none of the 19th-century references to the Oak Island Legend refer to the type of rock comprising the inscribed stone supposedly found at depth in the Money Pit. However, at some point in the 20th century, the inscribed stone began to be described as “porphyry” (42). “The Discrepancies of Freemasonry” by George Oliver (43) published in 1875, is the first published reference I am aware of to the ninth or lowest level of Enoch’s Temple in the Thirteenth Degree containing a pedestal of porphyry. So again we see how changes in Masonic ritual occurring after McCully’s 1862 article are reflected in later additions to the Oak Island legend.

Eighth Masonic element added: Treasure hunter Gilbert Hedden in 1936 found a stone in Joudrey’s Cove, Oak Island, bearing a number of Masonic symbols, including a point within a circle, a three-sided square (which appears in the Masonic pigpen cipher), and the letter H which is a Masonic emblem for God (44). The stone undoubtedly existed, as photographs exist (45), but its discovery as late as 1936 would seem to indicate it was manufactured in the 19th century as an element in the evolving Masonic prank.

Ninth Masonic element added: In 1967, a bulldozer overturned a rock near the so-called Cave-In Pit on Oak Island, and carved on its underside was the letter “G” (46). The rock with its “G” inscription does or did exist as there are a number of photographs (47). The letter “G” is an important Masonic symbol referring to the Grand Geometrician of the Universe or God. The rock and its “G” symbol had obviously been there for many years when discovered, and may well have

dated back to the 19th century and if so it seems plausible it may have been carved as part of the Masonic prank.

The above list of nine Masonic elements added to the Oak Island Legend since McCully's 1862 article is not exhaustive, and I could have added others, eg the great Christian Cross found by Fred Nolan, the heart-shaped stone, and the metal set square found underneath the Smiths Cove finger drains (3). While any one of them considered in isolation might by itself be ascribed to coincidence, the sheer number of them collectively points to something beyond mere chance in my opinion, and in fact points to active Masonic "buying in" to McCully's prank. I suggest that various Masons, recognising McCully's Masonic joke, bought into it and actively added to and embellished the joke by adding more and more Masonic elements, knowing that Scottish Rite Masons, in particular, would recognise the joke for what it was and derive perverse pleasure from knowing that non-Masons would not understand.

Conclusion

Those readers sufficiently patient to have read my two earlier papers on the Masonic aspects of Oak Island will appreciate my approach in this third paper is completely different and reflects my now much greater knowledge of the evolution of Masonic ritual and of the evolution of the Oak Island Legend itself. However, the essence of my earlier writings on this topic remains unchanged: I think Joe Nickell was absolutely correct when he theorised in 2000 (3) that Masonic symbolism had been added to the Oak Island Legend, although he has understandably very much underestimated how much Masonic symbolism has been added, and his theory that the added symbolism came from the Holy Royal Arch Degree is only partly correct, with most of the symbolism having come from the related Thirteenth Degree of the Scottish Rite.

APPENDIX

Speculations that various 19th Century Oak Island treasure hunts may have been fraudulent

The following material has been relegated to an Appendix because we lack **direct** evidence that any of the 19th Century treasure hunts on Oak Island were fraudulent. However, we do possess considerable **indirect** evidence that fraud was involved in the 1800's and in any event, every prosecutor knows that direct documentary evidence of fraud rarely if ever exists, and fraud is nearly always proved in the Law Courts without direct documentary evidence, usually by indirect or circumstantial evidence. The indirect evidence suggesting that fraud was involved in the 19th Century may be summarised as follows:

1. ***The Historic Context: The Prevalence of Lost Treasure Legends in 19th Century Maritime Canada and New England.*** To understand the fraud theory, we need to have some appreciation of the historic context as it existed in 19th Century Maritime Canada and New England. AL Spedon in his "Rambles Among the Bluenoses" (23) published in 1863 refers to the frequency of buried treasure legends along the coast of Nova Scotia in these words (48):

"Scarcely a nook or corner along the coast [of Nova Scotia] but has had its dreamers and diggers of 'hidden treasures'; but beyond the mere circumstance of the thing itself little else appears to have been generally preserved. Scarcely a bay or river, but is noted by the fictitious dreamers of the "golden treasure", who can still point to some particular spot, where some pirate or navy vessel has been necessarily deserted and destroyed, and the specie carried off and deposited in the adjoining banks. Again, and again have votaries of the golden god excavated and searched among the rocks for his secretitious droppings, but all appear to have vanished and evaporated into air and fictitious daydreams. These golden tales of deposited treasures are too

numerous to admit of a general description; one or two instances, however, merit a passing notice”.

2. ***The Historic Context: Treasure Digging Frauds in 19th Century Maritime Canada and New England.*** The prevalence of lost treasure legends along the coast of New England and Maritime Canada in the 19th Century gave rise to a species of swindle or fraud known as “treasure digging”. Fraudsters would convince a landowner that a fabulous treasure (often Captain Kidd’s) was buried on his land, and they possessed the means to find it, and the landowner would be hoodwinked into paying the fraudsters to locate and excavate the treasure. Of course, the treasure always slipped out of reach at the last minute.

American Folklorist Richard Joltes on his Oak Island web page includes in his chapter 3 (49) a number of eloquent and erudite sections on the treasure digging manias which periodically infected parts of the Northeast United States and Atlantic Canada in the 1800’s. Joltes mentions, among many other examples, that Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith (1805-1844) practiced treasure digging as a livelihood before embarking on his career as a prophet. He also mentions the Daniel Lambert treasure digging mania which occurred in Maine in the year 1804, when the fraudster Lambert used his supposed discovery of buried treasure to circulate forged bank notes to the enrichment of himself and to the impoverishment of his victims. Joltes recites many other examples, many of which involved fraudsters inveigling their “marks” into schemes to dig for Captain Kidd’s treasure.

It was in this context that Oak Island in the 19th Century became the scene for repeated attempts to locate Captain Kidd’s treasure at the bottom of the Money Pit. Oak Island in the 19th Century may well have been only one of many treasures digging scams then being carried on in Atlantic Canada and New England.

3. ***First Hint of Treasure Digging Mania in the Oak Island Area.***

Chester is the town nearest to Oak Island, being roughly four miles [6 km] distant. Joltes (49) mentions that a treasure digging hysteria of some kind gripped the Chester area in the early 19th Century in these words:

“.....the Mephibosheth Stepsure letters, a series of satirical letters published in Halifax newspapers in 1821-23, mentions an incident in which a man paid a sheriff’s debt by ‘pulling out the leg of an old stocking tied at both ends, he told out of it as many doubloons as satisfied the sheriff....he told us he had been turning up his fields and found it there.’ The same passage goes on to say the man ‘advised us all to do the same thing’ and ‘to follow his plan, and not do like the Chester folks; who once dug for money, and at last got so deep that they arrived in the other world; and falling in with the devil, were glad to get away with the loss of their tools’”.

It should be noted that the first reputed treasure syndicate to excavate the Oak Island Money Pit was the Onslow Syndicate which reportedly carried out its operations around 1802-1804 (50).

4. ***The Pitblado Incident.*** The Truro Syndicate was engaged in the hunt for Captain Kidd’s treasure in the Money Pit in the late 1840’s and early 1850’s (51). They drilled a number of holes in the Money Pit with a mining auger, and the syndicate foreman James Pitblado was reportedly seen to secrete some item from the drillings tailings. When challenged he said he would show the item to the next directors meeting, but left the Island that night and neither returned nor attended the directors meeting, but his associate Charles Dickson Archibald immediately attempted to buy the eastern end of the Island where the Money Pit is located (52). It has become a part of the Oak Island Legend that Pitblado found a jewel in the tailings (53).

The precise circumstances of the “Pitblado Incident” appear to have been somewhat embellished by later writers, as the first article to mention it being McCully’s 1862 essay, does not mention the name Pitblado and says only that *“....the results [of an auger boring] were known only to the*

persons [sic] who conducted the boring, which he managed to keep to himself. But a short time after he made such disclosures to Mr. Charles D Archibald, who was then concerned in the Londonderry Iron Mines, that he, Mr. Archibald, went to the Government and got a license to dig. But from our having applied for a license before, they could only get permission to dig on the unoccupied ground, which kept them from doing anything while our lease held good". (19).

However, in spite of any exaggeration by later writers, this incident is surely a classic example of "salting the mine"?

We don't know if Pitblado shortly afterwards offloaded his shares in the Truro Syndicate at a large profit, but certainly, the shares in at least one later treasure syndicate fluctuated considerably in value, as we shall see below, providing opportunities for fraudulent share price manipulation.

If the Pitblado incident was a mine salting scam, then it represents further evidence that the 19th century Money Pit excavations were fraudulent.

Why do I regard the Pitblado Incident with such scepticism? According to the legend, James Pitblado died shortly afterwards in an accident so that the secret of what he found died with him (53). However, the legend is in error here: we now know that James Pitblado lived to the ripe old age of 81, finally dying over half a century later in 1903 (54). It is inconceivable that if Pitblado had really found something, he would have lived another half century without saying anything about it. Any objective researcher must regard the Pitblado Incident with considerable suspicion.

5. ***The Three Metal Chain Links.*** It was the Truro Syndicate whose auger borings in about 1849-50 also brought up the three metal chain links discussed at some length above. We have already referred to the mutual inconsistencies of the contemporary accounts, which range from no metal at all being brought up to copper wire, to gold links being recovered. Such contradictions are in themselves suspicious, and the air of suspicion is only reinforced when we learn that there have been persistent hearsay reports over the intervening years that the three metal links were deliberately planted to encourage further investment in the Truro Syndicate which was running short of funds at the time.

For example, on 10 July 2008 Mutakawe posted on the internet forum called "Oak Island Treasure" the assertion that a Mountie friend had known a treasure digger who tossed his own watch chain in the Money Pit because "money was becoming tight and he did it to attract investors" (55). On the same day, "Tank" posted a reply on the same internet forum that he had heard the same story from five or six different people all quoting different grandfathers who had supposedly salted the pit with their own gold watch chains (56). These stories are admittedly all rank hearsay, but they are consistent with the atmosphere of suspicion which hovers over the Oak Island Legend.

6. ***The Fanny Young Pit:*** The 1890's prospectus of the Oak Island Treasure Co (6), which was the syndicate digging for the treasure in the late 1890's and early 1900's, refers to the Fanny Young Pit dug close to the Money Pit in about 1850 in these words:

7.

"....Mr Isaac Blair....states: 'you asked me to tell you what I saw when the old Pit (or what is called the treasure pit) on Oak Island caved in, while the men were tunnelling through from what was then called the 'Fanny Young Pit' (so called from a clairvoyant who had been consulted on the subject). That was in 1850 and the fact of the pit being named for her would indicate that it was dug at that time. The probability is that it was and afterwards deepened in 1861. To the believers in clairvoyants and spiritualism many interesting things as told by Miss Young and others of the same faith can be related and when they struck the old pit they said the earth there had been dug over'."

We have already noted that Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith (1805-1844) practised the type of fraud known as treasure digging when a young man. His 34th and last wife was Fanny Young (1787-1859) a sister of later Mormon Church leader Brigham Young (57). We do not at the present time have any direct evidence that the Fanny Young associated with Oak Island was the same person as Joseph Smith's 34th wife, but if they were different women, then it is a most remarkable and singular coincidence that the 34th wife of a known treasure digger and prophet had exactly the same name as a "clairvoyant" who was consulted on digging for the Oak Island treasure.

The coincidence is heightened when we note that Joseph Smith's 34th wife was still living when the Fanny Young Pit on Oak Island was dug about 1850, when Joseph Smith's 34th wife was once again a widow (Joseph Smith having been her third and final husband) and it is, therefore, plausible she would have reverted to her maiden name of Fanny Young at that time. If the Fanny Young Pit on Oak Island was named after Joseph Smith's 34th wife, then the links of Oak Island to the widow of a known treasure digger does nothing to enhance the credibility of the Oak Island Legend. It is also worthy of note that Joseph Smith was distantly related by marriage to Antony Vaughn who was reputedly one of the Money Pit's three initial excavators in the late 1700's (58).

8. **"The Oak Island Folly" Revisited:** We have already mentioned the third known article on Oak Island titled "The Oak Island Folly" published in the 20 August 1861 issue of the Liverpool Transcript (11). That article includes the following passage:

"It was thought that almost a fortnight ago they had struck upon the treasure: a day was set on which the copper bound casks were to be raised from their long resting place. Expectation grew high – shares sold at an enormous premium – hundreds of people flocked from all directions, and while each one was straining his eyes to get their first glimpse of the gold the middle hole 'caved in', and disappointment was soon pictured on the countenance of each one present."

If the Oak Island treasure hunt in the middle of the 19th Century was fraudulent, then we see here one way the fraud could have operated: the fraudsters would put about the story the treasure was about to be recovered, and would then offload their shares in their treasure digging syndicate at a profit before the treasure once again just "slipped out of reach".

9. **Written Accusations of Fraud on Oak Island in the 1860's:** The syndicate digging for the Oak Island treasure in the early 1860's was the Oak Island Association, one of whose investors was Paul Pry Junior who wrote a letter published in the Yarmouth Herald on 12 March 1863 (59) which included the following passage:

"Now Mr. Editor, it is well-known that the water in the Money Pit (so-called) has been the only obstacle in the way of clearing said pit out, and getting the treasure (if any is there), and the present and former company have been engaged since 1849 (as they say) to stop or pump the water out of said pit, and when the managers have discovered (after the large amount of money was put into their hands for this very purpose) that the pumps would keep the Money Pit dry, I say when this discovery was known, not to go into the Money Pit, but to go to the shore to dig a new pit, I say can you not see that the managers have no faith in the treasure, or at least do not intend to be in haste in clearing said pit. This movement is enough to convince any sane man that the present managers on the Island 'know which side of the bread the butter is on' – that the business will not be closed up in a hurry. This is a lucrative business to some stockholders, and those who have not taken stock will have ample time to do so for 10 years to come if the present managers are only kept in office".

In other words, Mr. Pry is making what is virtually a direct written public accusation that the Oak Island treasure hunt is fraudulent, carried on for the “lucrative” benefit of a few stockholders at the expense of the rest.

10. ***Written Accusations of Fraud on Oak Island in the 1870’s:*** After the treasure hunts of the Oak Island Association in the early 1860’s and of the Halifax Syndicate in the mid to late 1860’s, treasure hunting on Oak Island remained quiescent until the Oak Island Treasure Co resumed treasure digging in the 1890’s. During this period of inactivity an article was published in the Halifax Morning Chronicle of 5 August 1873 containing this passage (60):

“About nine miles from Chester is Oak Island, notorious as the supposed burial place of the treasures of the renowned Captain Kidd. During the last 70 or 80 years, interested speculators and gullible dupes have, at intervals of 10 or 12 years, renewed the old story of the buried wealth, estimated at millions of dollars in solid bars of gold, and aroused the over-credulous to a fever heat of excitement. Upon the flimsiest thread of circumstantial evidence – the old rope, a ship’s block, a few old, decayed planks – stock-jobbing operations that would throw some of those in the Wall Street far in the shade, have been too successfully carried on, to the heavy loss, in many instances, of confiding fortune hunters and a corresponding gain of the knowing ones of the Oak Island ring.”

So we have another contemporary account containing what is essentially a direct written accusation in a public newspaper that the Oak Island treasure hunt in the 1800’s was fraudulent, “carried on, to the heavy loss.... of confiding fortune hunters and a corresponding gain of the knowing ones of the Oak Island ring”.

11. ***Oak Island Treasure Co, Late 1890’s-early 1900’s:*** It was the Oak Island Treasure Co which supposedly recovered by drilling in 1897 the parchment fragment containing the letters “VI” from a depth of 153 feet in the Money Pit (38). As already alluded to above, there are now serious doubts about the authenticity of this parchment fragment. Oak Island researcher Paul Wroclawski has in 2010 pointed out in the internet forum on the “Friends of Oak Island” website that prior to the recovery of this fragment, the wife of the supposed parchment fragment discovered by Putnam mentioned a parchment in a letter to treasure digger Captain Welling about 6 months prior to the parchment fragment’s alleged recovery by drilling in 1897! Paul Wroclawski also mentions other inconsistencies in the accounts of the recovery of the parchment fragment (61).

If we combine these disclosures of Paul Wroclawski with the Masonic symbolism of the parchment fragment, it seems plausible to conclude it was, in fact, a plant designed to inspire investment in the Oak Island Treasure Co which appears to have struggled for funds and eventually went bankrupt (62).

12. ***The Masonic Symbolism Added to the Oak Island Legend:*** We have recorded above that McCully’s 1862 article referred to at least 10 elements of Masonic symbolism, of which nine were drawn from a single Masonic Degree (the Thirteenth Degree of the Scottish Rite) and of which six originated with McCully himself and of which he added to a seventh in a way which made it much more strikingly reminiscent of the Thirteenth Degree. We further noted that in the years after McCully’s 1862 essay, at least nine further Masonic elements and probably, even more, were added to the legend by other writers. Although, as adverted to above, I incline to the theory that the Masonic symbolism represents a Masonic prank started by McCully and continued by other Masons, nevertheless the possibility exists that the Masonic emblems were added as part of 19th Century treasure digging frauds being conducted on Oak Island.

The fact that Masonic imagery, which after all is entirely fictitious, was added to the legend could be seen as evidence of the fraud. There is also the sinister possibility the Masonic elements were added as a coded warning to Scottish Rite Masons that the 19th Century treasure syndicates on Oak Island were fraudulent and Masons shouldn't waste their money by investing in those syndicates: certainly Scottish Rite Masons would have recognised the Masonic emblems but nobody else would so that this would have been an effective way of ensuring a small and select favoured group would not be taken in by the 19th Century frauds. I concede I have no real evidence to support this “sinister possibility”, but nevertheless, it is an intriguing idea.

13. ***The revival of the Fraud Theory in the 21st Century:*** British researcher John Bartram revived the fraud theory of 19th Century Oak Island in 2005 on his Oak Island website which unfortunately no longer exists. The speculation that the 1800's treasure digging syndicates on Oak Island may have been fraudulent is therefore by no means new to me, and I credit John Bartram with first alerting me to a significant fraction of the ideas canvassed in this Appendix. I hasten to add there is no evidence of any fraud in the treasure digging which has occurred over the last century, and to avoid doubt, I expressly **do not** claim any of the treasure hunters over the last 100 years were fraudulent in any way.

Conclusion to Appendix

While I personally believe the Masonic prank theory of the Masonic symbolism in the Oak Island Legend is the preferred one, I concede there is also the possibility that the Masonic elements were added as part of the theorised treasure digging frauds carried out on Oak Island in the 1800's. Further, the two theories of Masonic symbolism are not necessarily mutually exclusive: it is possible the Masonic imagery was added as a prank while the 1800's treasure digging fraud was going on without the Masonic elements being a part of that fraud.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper would not have been possible without the diligent research efforts of many others. While I hesitate to name names for fear of unwittingly offending those who are not named, I feel I must acknowledge the research efforts of the following:

- I have already referred to British Researcher John Bartram who first alerted me to the possible fraudulent nature of the 19th-century treasure hunts on Oak Island.
- I have also already referred to American Folklorist Richard Joltes, who has carried out much of the research into the historic context in which the Oak Island Legend evolved in the 19th century. He also maintains the best sceptical website on Oak Island (33), (49).
- Paul Wroclawski has tirelessly tracked down many previously unknown early accounts and documents of the 19th-century treasure hunts on Oak Island.

I record that my paper does not necessarily reflect the views of such three researchers, and I bear full responsibility for the opinions and views herein expressed.

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- (21) An article in Yarmouth Herald of 19 February 1863, copy online at Google News at this link: <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=7yEjAAAAIBAJ&sjid=1DoDAAAAIBAJ&pg=3453,4471525&dq=oak+island&hl=en> last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (22) An article in Yarmouth Herald of 12 March 1863, by Paul Pry Junior, copy online at Paul Wroclawski's website [supra, note (8)], in forum thread "Oak Island Related Media", sub thread "Yarmouth Herald Various Articles from 1863". Last accessed 12 May 2010. You need to apply to Paul Wroclawski at his website for permission to join his forum.
- (23) Rambles Among the Bluenoses: Reminiscences of a Tour Through New Brunswick and Nova Scotia during the Summer of 1862. By Andrew Learmont Spedon. Published by John Lovell, Montreal, 1863. Copy online via Paul Wroclawski's website [supra, note (8)], in forum thread "Discovery Stories". Last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (24) "A History of the Oak Island Enterprise" by a "Member" in the Colonist Issues of 2nd, 7th, and 14th January 1864.
- (25) "The Toilers of the Isle" in the 2 September 1866 issue of the New York Herald.
- (26) "Extraordinary Story of Hidden Treasure" in the 22 September 1866 issue of the Scotsman.
- (27) Oak Island and Its Lost Treasure, by Harris & MacPhie [supra, note (1)] page 37. See also posting to Oak Island Treasure Internet Forum by n4n224ccw on July 23, 2009, titled "Pleased to Meet You All" at this link. <http://forum.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=4272&p=66797#p66797> last accessed 12 May 2010.
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- (29) Internet posting by GrailKnight7 on Oak Island Treasure Forum on November 18, 2005, in News and Press Section in a thread entitled "Extraordinary Discovery" at this link: <http://forum.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=6&t=1232&p=17564#p17564> last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (30) Same as for note (29).
- (31) Presentation by D'Arcy O'Connor to Massachusetts Institute of Technology, dated January 28, 2008, entitled "History of the Oak Island, NS, Treasure Hunt" page 4, copy online at http://www.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/imagesforforum/MIT_darcy_jan08.pdf last accessed 12 May 2010.

- (32) See note (31) and also link to the following web page of the Active Mind Website on Oak Island http://www.activemind.com/Mysterious/Topics/OakIsland/inscribed_stones.html last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (33) Richard Joltes' website entitled "History, Hoax & Hype: The Oak Island Legend", Chapter entitled "Top Ten Myths About the Money Pit", paragraph 3, at this link: http://www.criticalenquiry.org/oakisland/OI_myths.shtml last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (34) A good brief introduction to the Masonic Pig-Pen Cipher, which Freemasons traditionally used to encode messages to each other, can be found online at the Wikipedia article entitled "Pig-Pen Cipher" at this link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pigpen_cipher last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (35) See Joe Nickell's article, note (3) above.
- (36) The Oak Island Mystery by Fanthorpe at pages 92-94, the full citation is given in final bullet point in note (1) above.
- (37) "Revealed: The Secret of Oak Island", pamphlet by Laverne Johnson, Chapter entitled "Solution", copy online at: http://www.freemasonry.bcy.ca/texts/oak_island/oak_island03.html; you need to scroll down about two-thirds of the page to find the diagram of the stone triangle entitled "the triangle south of the money pit". Last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (38) Oak Island Secrets by Finnan, page 56, full citation in second to last bullet point in note (1); online copy of relevant part of Finnan available at Google Books at http://books.google.co.nz/books?id=tPk_S_bf5uUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=oak+island&cd=2#v=onepage&q&f=false last accessed 12 May 2010. See also archive at Oak Island Treasure website at this link: <http://www.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/content/view/244/176/> last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (39) Oak Island and Its Lost Treasure by Harris & MacPhie at page 76, the full citation given in fifth bullet point in note (1) above.
- (40) "World Freemasonry" by John Hamill and RA Gilbert, the Aquarian Press 1991, page 203.
- (41) The Book of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, by Charles McClenachan, New York, Masonic Publishing Co 1884. Copy available online at http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/AASR_1884_table_of_contents.htm last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (42) Harris & MacPhie page 30, full citation at fifth bullet point in note (1); Fanthorpe page 31, full citation at seventh and last bullet point in note (1).
- (43) "Discrepancies of Freemasonry" by Rev George Oliver, originally published 1875, page 72, republished by Kessinger Books (year of republication not stated), parts online at Google Books at this link: http://books.google.co.nz/books?id=UITAW3vIVScC&printsec=frontcover&dq=discrepancies+of+freemasonry+george+oliver&source=bl&ots=nG2FKzZ3NJ&sig=-m8yBvtWBtrjveb7HszHVio9HLo&hl=en&ei=R3DrS6KvK5T8tQOZ1-TJJDw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBcQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (44) Article by Joe Nickell in March/April 2000 issue of Sceptical Inquirer, the full citation given in note (3).
- (45) See for example photograph online at this link: <http://www.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/content/view/298/203/> last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (46) See note (44) above.
- (47) For example, in the plates between pages 92 and 93 in Finnan, full citation at sixth bullet point of note (1).
- (48) Page 149 of Spedon's book, full citation at note (23).

- (49) Richard Joltes' website "History, Hoax & Hype: The Oak Island Legend", Chapter 3 entitled "Early History to 1865", online at this link. :
http://www.criticalenquiry.org/oakisland/OI_chapter3.shtml last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (50) Harris & MacPhie, pages 20-34, full citation in fifth bullet point of note (1) above.
- (51) Harris & MacPhie, pages 35-43, full citation in fifth bullet point of note (1) above.
- (52) Harris & MacPhie, pages 37-39, full citation in fifth bullet point of note (1) above.
- (53) Fanthorpe, page 42, full citation in seventh and last bullet point of note (1) above.
- (54) See online extract from a now defunct web page on Pitblado Family Genealogy, the online extract currently being at this link: <http://blogs.myspace.com/thetrurosyndicate> last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (55) Posted by Mutakwe on July 10, 2008, on an internet forum of Oak Island Treasure website in a thread entitled "Excavation 2008" at this link. :
<http://forum.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=3954&st=0&sk=t&sd=a&hilit=excavation+2008&start=10> last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (56) Posted by Tank on July 10, 2008, on an internet forum of Oak Island Treasure website in a thread entitled "Excavation 2008" at this link. :
<http://forum.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=3954&st=0&sk=t&sd=a&hilit=excavation+2008&start=10> last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (57) Internet biography of Fanny Young at this link: <http://www.wivesofjosephsmith.org/34-FannyYoung.htm> last accessed 12 May 2010. Also internet record of dates of Fanny Young's birth, marriages, and death at.
http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/af/individual_record.asp?recid=1095476&lds=0&frompage=0 last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (58) Private communication to the writer from British researcher John Bartram. The prophet Joseph Smith (1805-1844) was a second cousin once removed to Sophia Mack (1822-1901) who in turn was sister-in-law to Joseph Crandall who was the great-grandnephew of pit excavator Antony Vaughn (1751-1835). To put this in another way, the prophet Joseph Smith was the second cousin-in-law (once removed) of Joseph Crandall, a great-grandnephew of Antony Vaughn who was one of the three initial excavators of the Money Pit.
- (59) See note (22).
- (60) Halifax Morning Chronicle issue of 5 August 1873, copy online at Friends of Oak Island website in Oak Island Theories Section at this link. :
http://www.friendsofoakisland.com/forum/index.php?f=26&t=110&rb_v=viewtopic last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (61) Forum on the website of Friends of Oak Island, in Section, entitled "Features", thread: "Letters from the Pit Series", series of postings by Paul Wroclawski on February 24, 2010; the website is at this link: <http://www.friendsofoakisland.com/>; you need to join the forum to access the features section. Last accessed 12 May 2010.
- (62) Finnan, page 57, full citation in sixth bullet point of note (1) above.