

Hedden

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Mr. Reginald V. Harris
Halifax, N.S.

Dear Mr. Harris:

The arrival of your manuscript caught me at a very busy moment and, while I have managed to read it all at least twice, I have been unable to take the time to make the necessary comments and answer your letter. We are in the throes of completing a new building for our branch office in Basking Ridge, which we hope to open on the fiftieth anniversary of the parent bank, or about September 28th. To accomplish this requires a tremendous amount of detail and planning, but I think now that the worst is over. I have not attempted to proof read the manuscript as it is obviously in an unfinished condition, but I have read it carefully and have a few comments and suggestions. Before I make them I must commend you on the splendid job you have done and on the tremendous task of research you have accomplished. It is most certainly a work that is badly needed on the subject and should serve as a reference both now and in the future for anyone at all concerned with Oak.

In answer to your request for further information concerning my reference to Bacon, I have examined my files but have failed to find the exact source. I was in correspondence for some time with two parties on that subject and have destroyed much of the file to conserve space. One correspondent was a Mr. B. F. Ruth of Ames, Iowa, who wrote me after the publication of the article in the Saturday Evening Post. He wrote a thirty page letter giving his arguments as to why the cache was undoubtedly that of Bacon's lost manuscripts and some of his arguments were quite plausible. He gives two references as applying to the work done at Oak, both taken from Sylva Sylvarum. The first - Page 7, Century 1, Experiment 25 (2nd edition(1628) refers to an artificial water course. The second describing the preservation of objects is Page 33, Experiment 100 which refers to preservation in mercury. He also notes that Bacon went into the preservation of documents at great length all through his writings in that book. He also makes a point of Bacon's will in which he says "As for my name and memory, I leave it to men's charitable speeches, to foreign lands, and to the next ages." He accepts the date 1669 as the probable time of origin and states that it was probably planned and executed by Bacon's chaplain Rawley, after Bacon's death.

I also corresponded with a Mrs Gladys Stewart of Rochester, the daughter of a prominent Baconian - Dr. Owen. Dr. Owen in his life had made many discoveries and interpretations of the Baconian cipher messages contained in early printings of Shakespeare and others and had found enough to induce him to lead an expedition to the river Wye in Scotland in search of a buried cache. He was successful in finding a cement vault under the river in its center but found it to be empty. It received quite a bit of publicity at the time and is a matter of record. Mrs. Stewart wrote me much along the same line as Ruth, also quoting the Sylvarum and somewhere between them I received the information I passed on to you. I paid little attention to it at the time, being more or less amused and feeling that recovery was necessary to prove anything. I met Mrs Stewart when she visited New York and was quite impressed with her knowledge and sincerity.

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No doubt your local library has or can get a copy of that edition and it might be of interest to study it with Oak in mind.

Suggestions and comments on Manuscript:

1. Page one. Suggest you elaborate on triangle a bit. It was carefully made, had a pointer line, pointed True North, and pointed directly at the site of the original money pit.
2. You state that the tunnels enter the pit at 155 feet. In our excavation of the Chappell pit and my own adjoining pit, we noted inflow of water from the Smith's Cove side at 98 feet and from the other side at about 105 feet. There was no evidence of water inflow at any lower depth. If you are so informed I believe your informer is mistaken. I was in the Pits all the time and carefully examined and recorded the data. The inflow from the Smith's Cove side was a bit the stronger
3. Page 3. Prefer Title 7. Would suggest slight change to - The Strange Mystery Of Oak Island.
4. Page 5 - Index - Change Gilbert D. Hedden to 1934 - 19³48 for my first visit to the island was 1934 and my negotiations with Blair started that year.
5. First page of preface - suggest you use truth from legend instead of truth from tradition.
6. Chpt. 1 Page 1 -There is no evidence that the original pit was 155 feet. Suggest you use 100 feet. Later collapse may have carried cache to 155 feet but early statements locate it at 100
7. Page 4 - Believe that your figure for erosion of nine inches per year is too high. That would make it 75 feet in 100 years and that is not borne out by the evidence. My conclusion, based on early photographs and several years experience on the island, is that it does not exceed two inches on an average. Evidence is given in a definite row of large boulders, possibly careening stones, well defined, about twenty feet out from the shore opposite Smith's Cove. They appear in a photograph taken in 1897 and in the air pictures I had taken in 1937 and it is easy to calculate the difference in the shore line in that period. I would say that two inches is the maximum and nine is impossible. After all even two inches a year would give 50 feet in a 300 year period.
8. Perhaps you located something about the ring-bolt that I was not able to discover, or perhaps you got the information from Hamilton. Unless you have actually seen it yourself I would be very dubious about its existence as I was very familiar with every foot of the island shore-line at high and low tide and I know of no such bolt. Suggest that you check further before making definite statement in book.
9. Page 13 - I think that the description is probably very apt. Sugar loafs at that time were roughly cone-shaped and a square shaft could very easily become a cone-shaped depression - resting on its apex - that is with its top(of the loaf) at the bottom

10. - Page 16 - In putting down my shaft, adjacent to the Chappell shaft, we passed through a vein or layer of putty-like clay, my recollection is that it was at about 60 feet. A large quantity was removed. It could be worked with the hands exactly like good putty and was somewhat oily in texture. We used some to putty the windows of the various shacks we erected and of my ~~living~~ cabin and it worked very well. As I recall it the vein was ~~about 20~~ inches deep, extended across the shaft and was about eight feet wide. It was solid and was not mixed with stones or debris.
- 11 Pages 21, 22, 22A etc. Cannot agree that your conclusion of piratical origin is correct. I believe there are manuscripts included in the cache and I cannot concieve of a pirate leaving that identity with his loot. Nor can I concieve of a pirate who would bury his loot beyond any chance of contemporary recovery or exert such engineering skill for an unselfish objective
12. You several times speak of the probable original burying period as requiring two years or more. I disagree. I believe and maintain that the original work could be duplicated in another part of the island today, using the same tools then available, and that it could be done with a force of 100 men in four months time, given favorable weather. Block and Fall, pail, tub, wheelbarrow, shovel, pick, ~~pick~~, rope, axe, hammer and saw were then in use, even as early as 1600, and there was no water interference until they made it. *No cribbing would be needed, or very little.*
13. Cannot agree with your conclusion that Kidd's men went to N.S. to hide something. More inclined to believe that in rifling his chest they found a chart or other information suggesting a valuable cache somewhere in that area and that they went in search of it. Also I believe that there is very little evidence that there was much of anything of any value on the ship Marie Galente. The usual conclusion is that Kidd's men revolted because of the poor results(to then) of his leadership.
14. I would suggest that you omit many of your references to the various individual pirates. I think you have too many. There are several books just recently published giving all that data in infinite detail. In your work very little of it has any connection with Oak and a lot of it is tiresome reading. Don't suggest that you eliminate it - rather just suggest you edit and condense it.
15. Cannot see your thought that pirates of several bands used Oak as a common depository. That thought would indicate opening and reopening of the site and prolonged occupation. There is no evidence that it was ever reopened after first construction. Long occupation would leave evidence of relics or artifacts and none have ever been found. I think my theory of a quick, four month job is more tenable.
16. In your summing up. I cannot agree that there is any evidence that the original work went to 175 feet. All real evidence points to 100 feet the other is pure conjecture and fantasy. The same applies to the thought that there was a permanent vault at the bottom or 175 feet. I know it is based on drilling reports and evidence of disturbed earth at those depths but I still contend that it is pure conjecture or wishfull thinking. If, as we have reason to believe, the original cache was in several containers, all filled with bullion or coin, it is obvious that the weight of those containers was somewhere in the neighborhood of nine or ten tons. Bear in mind that a ton of gold is only a 14 inch cube. When the bottom floor of the

? really?

cache was undermined and the vault collapsed, the nine or ten tons had to go somewhere. With the ground underneath in a very soft and puddled state it could have sunk quite a distance over the years and in fact may still be sinking. Remember that the water in the pits in that area is not in a static condition but is constantly in motion induced by the tides. The tidal motion plus the enormous suction caused by the various pumping efforts of many of the expeditions, including mine, have constantly stirred up the ground and have aided further settlement of the cache. With the countless tools lost, and drill pipes abandoned by various groups, it is not at all surprising that iron could be detected at almost any depth. In fact we found a ten foot section of drill pipe seven feet below the end of the Chappell shaft when we drove it down that far in 1936.

Cannot agree with your conclusion that there were tide gates in the tunnels. No evidence to that effect and again it is pure conjecture

Again in your summing up cannot agree that the tunnels were at those depths

Cannot agree that cache was put in place through tunnels. If so, why the shaft at all? Believe the tunnels were purely for flooding purpose and that they were small. I also believe that the shore end at Smith's cove is still in place somewhere near the center of the beach

In conclusion let me say that I think you have done a grand piece of work. I cannot judge how salable it is though I do not know that that is your primary objective. I am inclined to think that I would omit the story of the Bowdoind controversy. It adds nothing and casts an indefinable air of doubt on much of the story. It is interesting but I doubt that it should be included. In any review after publication I think it might be seized on as a bit of proof that the whole thing is a hoax. In any event I trust that you will accept my criticisms and suggestions in the way they are meant. I will look forward to an early publication of the book and again say that I will be glad to assist in any way possible if there is anything you need down here. By the way did you know that our friend Wilkins has brought out another book "Mysteries of Ancient South America" - Roy Publishers - 1950

One favor I would like to ask is that you drop me a line this Fall and let me know what, if anything, was done at Oak this season.

Sincerely



Gilbert D. Hedden

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Basking Ridge, N.J.

