



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

SASKATOON, CANADA

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY  
AND CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

15 September 1966

*no separate labels*  
Coconut Fibre

Reginald V. Harris, Q.C.,  
Freemasons' Hall,  
Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Dear Mr. Harris:

I have received your letter concerning carbon age measurements on material from Oak Island. We have the facilities for making these determinations.

I might perhaps indicate to you the type of results one might expect. There is always an error associated with the laboratory determination. These can be evaluated. For a sample approximately 200 years old the error would likely be around plus or minus 50 years. It should also be appreciated that the measurement purports to give the age in terms of the time at which the particular organic material was growing. For example, with wood, the result is the age of the particular tree ring or rings. Large trees can give different ages for the inner and outer annual growth rings. In many cases, the age of the wood would not necessarily correspond with the year in which the wood was used for some purpose. But presumably the wood would have to be later than the time of its use.

You indicate the presence of coconut fibre. I know little about this material, but I presume it is less likely that old coconut fibre would have been used.

The quantity of material we would require would depend on its percentage of carbon. For most wood samples, one ounce is quite adequate. The cost of making the measurement is \$100 per sample. If, however, a qualified archaeologist associated with a Canadian university or Government Laboratory attests to the archaeological significance of the results, we can make the measurement at no charge.

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