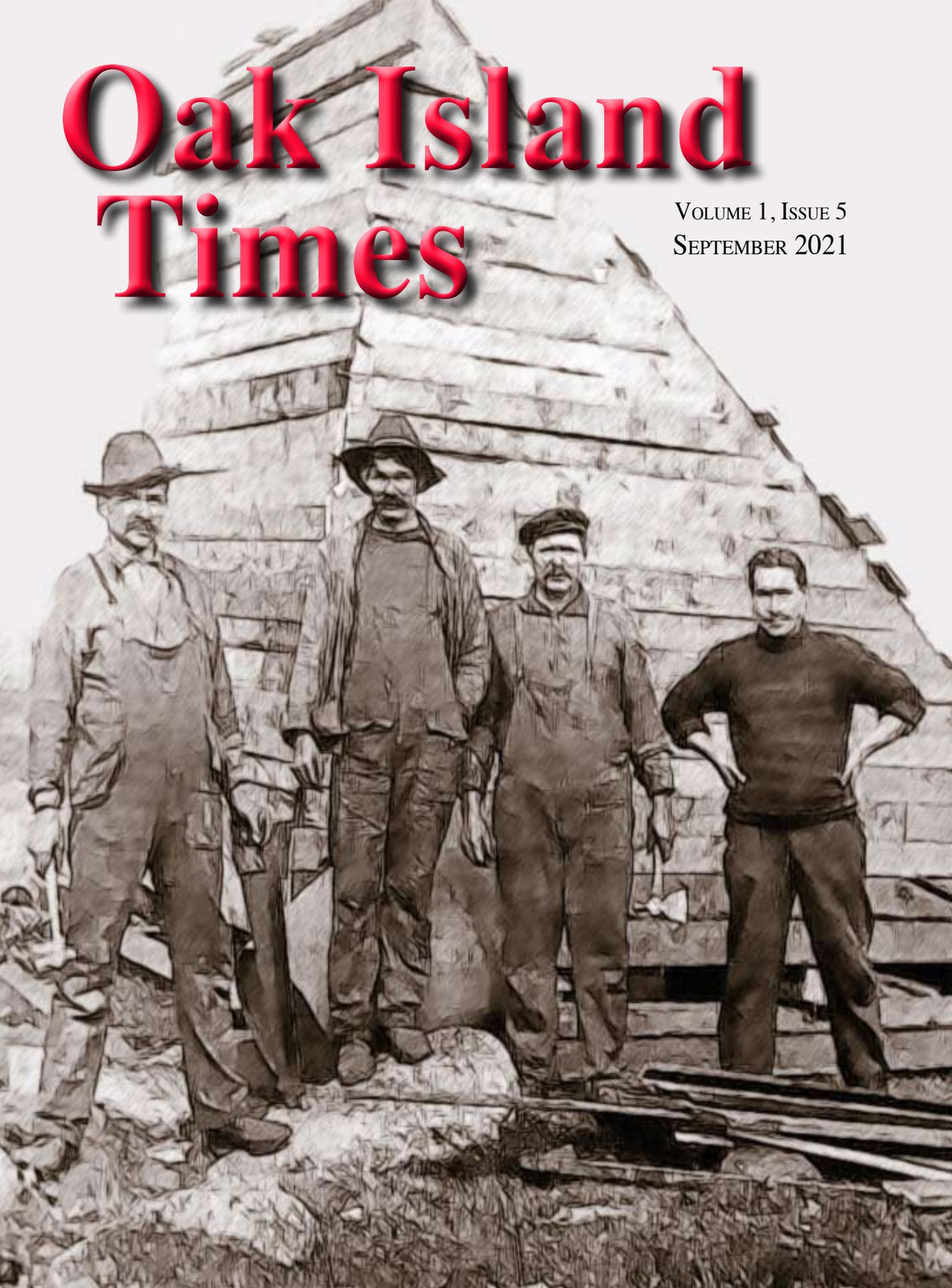


# Oak Island Times

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 5  
SEPTEMBER 2021



# From The Publisher ...



I am down to my last issue of *Oak Island Times* for this year. I want to be busy watching *The Curse of Oak Island* show, not writing these magazine articles from

October until the season ends.

I'm not sure if I'll start this magazine back up next year or not, although I have had plenty of visitors to my site to read the first four issues, with somewhere just over 5,000 hits.

The same rules apply for this issue – **This publication in no way represents or speaks for the Oak Island team, Prometheus Entertainment or the History Channel.**

It's just my ramblings after having gotten deeply involved with Oak Island and its possible theories over the last seven years, in hopes that my research won't get lost.

For this issue I look at search technology and equipment over the years.

Again, this article isn't meant to be the definitive story of Oak Island exploration, but simply some interesting research I have uncovered.

*oakislandtimes@gmail.com*

One of my main sources will be a letter written by Jotham McCully, on June 2, 1862. I purchased (from the Nova Scotia Archives) a digital copy of the October 16, 1662 issue of the *Liverpool Transcript*, in which this letter appeared. It also appeared earlier, in the July 2, 1662 issue of the *Halifax Sun*.

Before this time period there was no photography available to the common man and very few newspapers. This, along with the fact that treasure hunters seldom tell their secrets (otherwise they won't get the treasure) is the reason I believe it took until 1862 for details of the dig to get out.

Contrary to what is often said, McCully did not request that his letter be published in these newspapers. He had sent it to a man in Halifax who thought it was significant enough to print. The *Transcript* newspaper characterized the letter as "the best account we have ever seen of the diggings."

In this last issue, I also have an interview with one of the main "dig" coordinators on the island – Mr. Scott Barlow. As usual, there's a mixed bag of reading to end this little adventure with. Thanks for listening.

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# A Special Note...

Before saying good-bye for this summer season of the *Oak Island Times* I just wanted to throw in a little self-promotion.

For the most part, I finance my research with my own money, supplemented by royalty payments from my seven Oak Island books.

This includes several memberships in historical societies, along with purchases of unique, hard-to-find historical documents, plus books, trips, website subscriptions and other sources of evidence. Unlike others, I have never asked for donations and I do not sell advertisements to keep my research flowing. Instead, I do this because I love it, and because this is who I am.

Before my opportunity with Oak Island came along, in 2016, I was working on a handful of other books & research projects. Some were more successful, monetarily, than others, but all were satisfying in seeing more of the truth uncovered.

There is so much history out there to be rediscovered, while so much more is being lost every time we lose a good historian.

I view so many of these tales as stories about heroes. Life can be hard, but add in the special circumstances of days of old and it's easy to see that these people struggled very hard, and likely dodged the literal and figurative bullet many times in their lives.

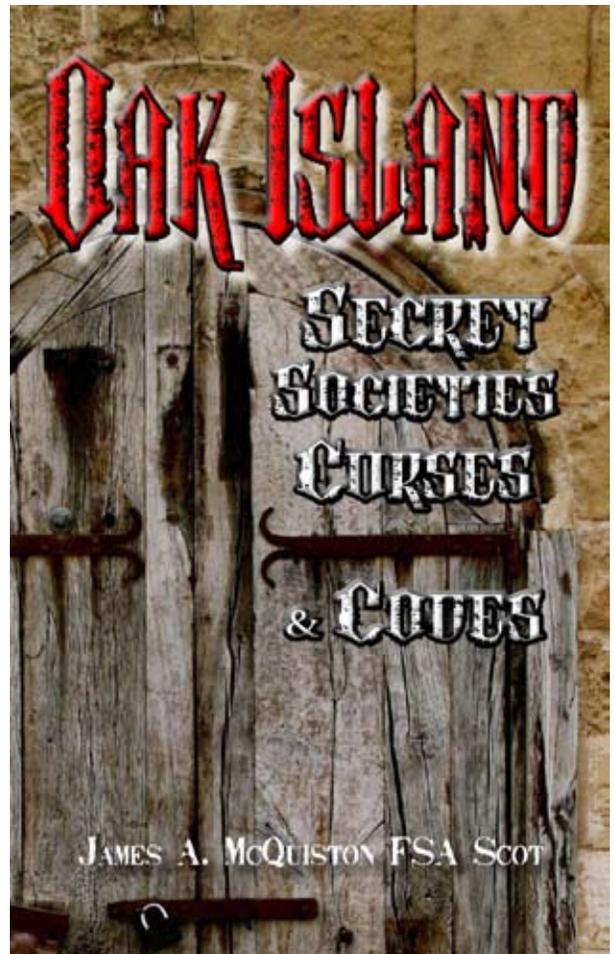
But they survived. Survival is what I've found is the motive force throughout most of history. Once a certain level of survival is achieved, many in the upper echelon added greed to their motive – the more you have, the more you want.

I'm old enough now not to want too much more. In fact, I need to start getting rid of things.

If anyone wants to support my research, I offer my books (all on Amazon) in return, as a way to do that. They are reasonably priced and deeply researched.

You can learn about them at:  
[www.oakislandgold.com](http://www.oakislandgold.com)

I do hope to have at least one more book written by the time the 2021-22 season of *The Curse of Oak Island* is over. Below is the “working” cover for this book.



I have never announced a book so far in advance but, since this is my last issue of *Oak Island Times* for awhile, I wanted to take this opportunity to let my readers know. Thank you for sticking with me for all these years. Have no fear, I'm still at it!

# Scott Barlow

– an interview –



You won't find this square-jawed, giant of a man, Scott Barlow, in Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes very often, at least not while he's on Oak Island. If his clothes don't show signs of laboring in the mud, his boots will, at least.

I met Scott for the first time in 2019, and while he smiles a lot, you can tell he takes his work on the island very seriously.

He has graciously taken time out of his very busy schedule, during this year's dig season, to answer a few questions for us.

**OIT:** Hello Scott! Of course, I want to thank you for agreeing to this interview, but also for all the answers you've provided to me and to others online in trying to help us all understand the complexities of the work on Oak Island.

My first question has to be – How did you learn of Oak Island? Was it through the *Reader's Digest* article that led most of us there, or did something else trip your trigger to lead to your interest in the search?

**Scott:** Hi James, thanks for reaching out! I'm not sure how much help I've been in understanding the complexities of Oak Island. We are still doing our best to understand them ourselves! I have read the *Reader's Digest* article, like so many others, but my first introduction to Oak Island was actually through a fictional novel that I read in my grade 8 English class, called *The Hand of Robin Squires*, written by Joan Clark. From that moment, I was hooked.

**OIT:** I'll have to look for that book. What in your background led to you becoming part of the Oak Island team?

**Scott:** I have a very broad background, spanning multiple trades. I grew up in a construction company at home, and with that environment you become well rounded in equipment operation, repair, construction techniques and many other skills. I'm also educated in several trades which led me to starting my own business.

I've always been a workaholic and, until a few years ago, the only time I ever took off for vacation was to go work for someone else in another trade to learn what I could to broaden my horizons.

As far as what led me to becoming part of the team, that's probably a bit of luck. I knew Doug Crowell through researching Oak Island, and when Doug started on the island, they were short handed. He asked if I would be interested in helping out. Of course I jumped at the chance.

That winter I received a phone call from Rick asking me to come to work full time during the season on Oak Island. I didn't want to say no, but I also had a business to run and I needed to find a way to make it work. Rick told me to take the time I needed to work it out, but he would like me to come.

It almost didn't happen.

It is a struggle to find someone capable enough, and someone you can trust, to leave your business in their hands. It all came together just weeks before the season started.

I believe Rick liked what he saw in my work ethic and my skills that allow me to fit into any role needed that may arise in the moment on the island – from working on the drill rig, digging with the excavator, to repairing a breakdown, or planning our next project and keeping everything in motion at the various work sites on the island. And I will be forever grateful for the opportunity.

**OIT:** I understand you are not native to Nova Scotia. Have you relocated, or are you just there for the dig season?

**Scott:** I'm an islander, pure to the bone. Prince Edward Island, that is.

I come to Nova Scotia for the work season on Oak Island. I usually arrive the first of May and stay until late November. I'm very fortunate to spend the summer months in Nova Scotia. It's like a working vacation.

There is beauty all around us, here in the Maritimes, and it's nice to be able to explore Nova Scotia more in depth while I'm here.

**OIT:** Did Covid cause a significant delay in your arrival on the island this year?

**Scott:** Not really. The nature of my business allows me to travel even during the strictest Covid measures that we have had here in Atlantic Canada.

I was the first one of our crew on the island this year and for a period of time after. The day after I arrived, new Covid measures came into effect preventing others from coming from away, and Nova Scotians from leaving their communities.

**OIT:** If you can answer this one, how are the Oak Island team members staying safe this year as far as Covid is concerned?

**Scott:** We have strict rules on the island to help keep everyone safe - from wearing masks, to social distancing, and performing onsite Covid testing. There is a checkpoint coming onto the island where a questionnaire is filled out and temperature taken every morning.

We have many great people who worked very hard early this year coming up with rules and regulations that made it possible for this season to happen, and we are all grateful for that.

**OIT:** How do you keep busy, off-season? Or is there an off-season as far as you are concerned?

**Scott:** There is no off season! There is no end of day! Once you get hooked on trying to solve the mystery of Oak Island, it never goes away. LOL

Just ask any of our wives how long it takes for a conversation to turn to what's going on, on Oak Island, and what we should do next. Even once we are back home conversation continues, the year is reviewed, research carries on and plans are made.

And when I get home, I have to find a way to fit regular life back into my schedule, and get back to my business and get caught up with family life and enjoy time with my wife and kids.

**OIT:** I hear you on it never ending part. I've been on the history hunt for Oak Island since 2016 and hardly a day goes by that I don't get curious about something and do some researching. It is addictive. Someone told me once that it's called "islanditis" and there is no cure!

How does your family feel about seeing you on TV all the time?

**Scott:** I don't watch the show, but my wife and kids do. The kids think it's pretty neat, and they have a great time talking about it at school with their teachers and classmates.

**OIT:** Do you get recognized when you are out and about – off the island?

**Scott:** Sometimes. More people here in Nova Scotia may say something than back home. As most anyone who is "famous" and has been to PEI will tell you, islanders treat everyone the same. They let you be. But a lot of my customers are fans of the show and they really lay it on heavy when I show up to do a job. LOL

**OIT:** I know there is a limit as to what you can say about this year's dig but, overall, how would you rate the progress of the team in uncovering this mystery over the last few years?

**Scott:** I feel the last few years have really moved the search forward. There have been some significant discoveries, in my opinion, that are helping to establish a time line of events. But in typical Oak Island fashion, the things we find always lead to more questions.

**OIT:** What's the one thing you'd like fans of Oak Island to know about you that maybe doesn't come across on the show?

**Scott:** That's a tough question, because I don't watch the show! I guess I'd want people to know that I'm just being myself in front of the camera.

There's no acting, just genuine curiosity, and a drive to get things done. And the show probably doesn't portray how hard people really work, because the episodes are so short. Every hour of show they see comes from hundreds of hours of people working long hours, in all kinds of weather, and temperatures. And not just the people in front of the cameras, but those behind the cameras as well.

**OIT:** Thank you, Scott, so much for being here for this interview. I know when I see you on the show, I always have a better sense of security that a knowledgeable person is exerting at least some control over the direction of the drilling and the digging.

You are now part of the legend of Oak Island, and will go down in history alongside many other skilled workmen.

# The Diggings

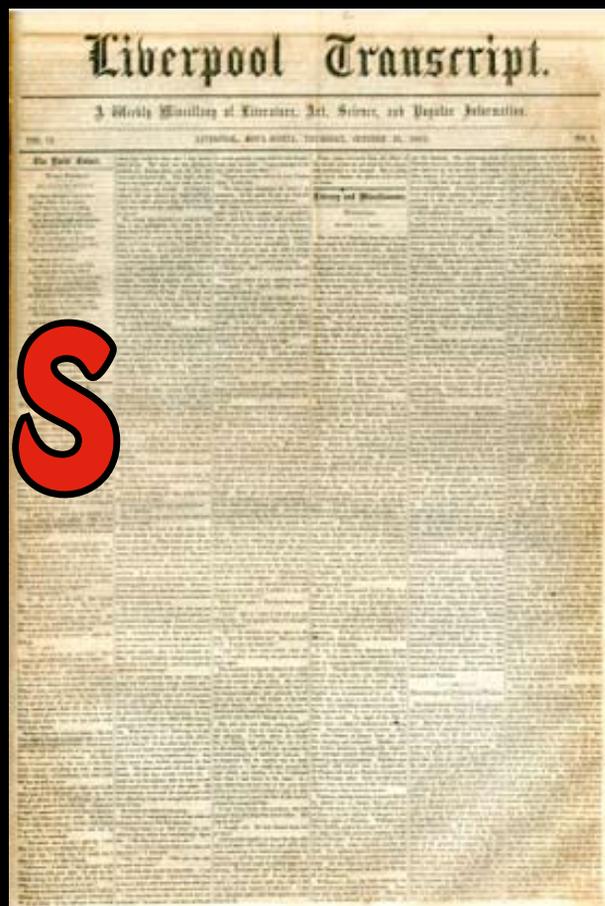
For over two and one quarter centuries searchers have used a variety of methods to get literally to the bottom of the Money Pit on Oak Island, and figuratively to the bottom of the story behind Oak Island.

In this article I will take a look at some of these methods, but please understand that I don't present this as the ultimate report on the subject – just as some of the information I have found that I would like to pass on.

It is uncanny how certain aspects of the story can get misconstrued and then passed on as gospel.

For instance, the so-called 90' Stone has been said to have been found at 80 feet, at 83 feet and at 90 feet. I suppose we never will know the true depth.

Another example is that it is often stated that Daniel McGinnis, as a young lad, was drawn to the island by strange lights and accidentally found the Money Pit depression. And yet, one of the earliest records of the "Diggings" on Oak Island states that "Mr. McGinnis went to the island to make a farm," which rings true when compared to old land deeds and surveys.



This early story of Oak Island appeared in 1862, in the above issue of the *Liverpool Transcript* newspaper, and earlier in the *Halifax Sun* newspaper. I bought a digital copy of the *Transcript* from the Nova Scotia Archives so that I could read the "Diggings" article firsthand.

It was written by J. B. or Jotham McCully although, like other misinterpretations, he did not request that the article be published in these newspapers. He actually wrote a letter to a man in Halifax who then took the letter to the *Halifax Sun*.

Even McCully's true name is confusing as he is also given as Jonathan Blanchard McCully, and often confused with another Jonathan Blanchard McCully who lived in Nova Scotia around the same time.

Some skeptics argue with the idea that if all of what McCully wrote was true, why wasn't it written about years before – when it is said to have happened? My answer is that there were no newspapers in Nova Scotia for most of the early years. There was also no photography available to the common man until 1888, although tintype photography was around by the 1860s. And there was no organized historical society.

It is said that a man named John Hunter-Duvar was somehow involved in the history of Oak Island and that he was the secretary for the Nova Scotia Historical Society. This man was born John Hunter, but because there was another John Hunter on Prince Edward Island, where this man had a farm, he chose to add Duvar to his last name.

He was born in Newburgh, Scotland, and after 1850 was based in Halifax as press agent for the Associated Press of New York. He was known to be living in Halifax, for sure, from 1863 through 1868.

Hunter-Duvar may have (and I'm only speculating) actually been the man to whom Jotham McCully originally sent the letter.

The first attempt to form a Historical Society of Nova Scotia took place in 1850 but failed due, it is thought, to "strong political feelings which at the time divided the people of the Capital," namely Halifax.

A second attempt "made by Mr. Hunter Duvar, in 1863, met with a like fate, and it is supposed, from the same cause."

Finally, on January 2, 1878, the Nova Scotia Historical Society, was fully formed and incorporated.

John Hunter-Duvar is the only recorded member of the 1863 society that I have been able to find and so a likely scenario is that he contacted McCully to get a story for the Associated Press, passing himself off as secretary of the Historical Society.

He also likely made a little money off having McCully's letter published in both the *Liverpool Transcript* and *Halifax Sun*.

Again, this is only my speculation.

Another simple reason the so-called "Diggings" on Oak Island were not widely known about might be the philosophy expressed to me by Nova Scotia sea captain and successful treasure hunter, Captain Robert MacKinnon, that "treasure hunters don't tell their secrets; otherwise they won't get the treasure."

As far as I can tell there is no reason to disbelieve what McCully wrote as his best understanding of the Money Pit dig.

I repeat his entire letter (mistakes and all) here for your enjoyment, and will pick up this story on the other end –

Truro, June 2, 1862

Having been ridiculed both by the press and the uniformed portion of the public (sic - public) embarking in so foolish an enterprise as the "Oak Island Diggings," we propose giving to the public something in the shape of a reason for our great faith in that enterprise.

When the first settlers from the United States came to Chester, they brought with them a story that an old sailor, while on his death bed, stated that he belonged to Captain Kidd's crew, and that he helped to bury on an Island, somewhere in that neighborhood, about two millions pound value of treasure, but that he had never dared to avail himself of the secret for fear of the "law" taking hold of him as a Pirate.

Sometime after the arrival of these persons a Mr. McGinnis went to Oak Island to make a farm, when he discovered the spot in question from its being sunken, and from the position of three oak trees, which stood in a triangular form round the pit.

The bark had letters cut into it with a knife on each tree facing the pit, and one of the trees being so directly over the pit, that two large branches formed a crotch, were exactly perpendicular to the centre, and had a hole bored through, and an oak tree-nail driven in, on which hung a tackle block. He was induced from the appearance to suppose that it might be the place referred to by the sailor. He then acquainted two men, Smith and Vaughn, of the circumstance, and they commenced digging.

After going down ten feet they found a layer of oak timber, at twenty the same, and thirty the same. By this time the work became too heavy for them to carry on alone, and they tried to get the inhabitants to join them; but they refused from a kind of superstitious dread.

**(MY NOTE: This is the first recorded mention of any kind of superstition associated with Oak Island).**

About seven years afterwards, Simeon Lynds, of Onslow, went down to Chester, and happening to stop with Mr. Vaughn, he was informed of what had taken place.

He then agreed to get up a company, which he did, of about 25 or 30 men, and they commenced where the first left off, and sunk the pit 93 feet, finding a mark every ten feet. Some of them were charcoal, some putty, and one at 80 feet was a stone cut square, two feet long and about a foot thick, with several characters on it.

All the way down they were confined to a diameter of 16 feet, by the softness of the ground within that limit. The pick marks could be distinctly seen all around the sides of the pit. After they got down 93 feet, they forced a crowbar down and struck wood at five which appeared to be a platform from its being level, making in all to the supposed platform 98 feet.

They then quit the work until morning, when on commencing again they found the pit filled with water, as high as the tide level. They then tried bailing, and afterwards tried pumping, which was all to no purpose. After which they sank a new pit in order to tunnel under the treasure which was unsuccessful.

Matters stood so until 1849, when a few persons in Truro, hearing Lynds tell the story, got up a company.

They got down to 86 feet, when the water drove them out. They then bored.

This part of the work I can speak of with more certainty than any previous, as I took part in it personally, and worked on the auger.

**(MY NOTE: McCully is sometimes given as the "Manager of Operations" for the Truro Company).**

We bored five holes, in the first of which we lost the only valve sludger we had. It was a long pod with a valve at the bottom to prevent the contents from dropping out.

This we always used after the chisel. It was lost by being a little too rash, and thereby twisting it off at the shank. Having lost it we had only one left, which had, instead of a valve, a ball inside with a pin across the bottom to keep the ball from dropping out. That one would not admit of coin passing into it.

It would seem strange that we should not have got another valve sludger, but people who are penny wise and pound foolish sometimes do strange things. I wanted the persons in charge to send for two or three, but could not prevail on them to do so.

The second hole we bored struck the platform which the old diggers told us about -- precisely at the depth they told us they had struck it with the crowbar, 98 feet. It proved to be spruce, six inches thick.

After the auger went through it, dropped one foot and struck wood again, which was oak, four inches thick, then twenty inches of metal in small pieces which we knew from the sound and from the fact that the auger would go through by simply turning it, then eight inches oak, then 20 inches metal, then four inches oak, six inches spruce, and then seven feet worked clay, then hard clay which had never been disturbed, another of the five holes struck the platform at the same depth, 98 feet; after going through the auger dropped a little more than it did in the first hole, and struck a cask which was evident from our bringing up a piece of an oak stave, and some pieces of birch hoops. We also brought three small links which had apparently been forced from an epulette (sic - epaulette). They were gold.

After that another gang bored, but the results were known only to the person 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. A, 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 unoccupied ground, which kept them from doing anything while our lease held good. One of the parties dying in the meantime, and Mr. A. being in Europe, they did not avail themselves of the license.

Our company worked at it for four years, during which time they found a drain, or tunnel, leading from the sea to the pit. By digging a pit about 20 feet from the old pit and 94 feet deep, also near the shores at the same level, which would make it appear that the water came into the old pit about the top of the upper platform.

Work was evidently done by hands in both pits, and also at the beach, where we found flag stones made in the form of drains and covered with a type of grass, not the growth of this country, and the outer rind of the cocoanut. When the drain was struck in the pits, in both cases, the water burst in with such force as to drive us out.

We drove piles into the one at the shore to stop the course of the water, which slackened the flow of the water in the old money pit, but did not stop it altogether, thereby inducing us to believe that there might be another drain.

We afterwards dug two other pits near the old money pit, and found that there was no difficulty from the water at 109 and 112 feet until we attempted to work into the old pit by tunnelling, when it would invariably rise to a level with the tide. That company also gave up, and last summer we formed another, and commenced digging a new pit 120 feet deep about 25 feet from the old money pit.

Our object was to intercept the water but to no purpose. We then tunnelled from one of the old pits on the west side, in order to enter the money pit, between the upper and lower platform, but from a misunderstanding about the starting point, the tunnel entered the old money pit a little below the lower platform, where we found the soft clay spoken of in the boring.

The tunnel was unwisely driven through the old pit until it nearly reached the east pipe, when the water started, apparently, coming above as on the east side.

We then bailed from the west pit, with six horses, for three days, and the horses becoming tired for want of oats, of which we ran short, we knocked off, and went home, and started again with 33 horses and over 60 men.

We then rigged gins and a bailing apparatus on the new pit, the money pit, and the west pit, and commenced bailing on Wednesday morning, continuing constantly night and day, until Friday morning, when the tunnel leading from the west pit to the money pit, which was 17 feet long, 4 feet high, and three feet wide, becoming choked with clay, we sent two men down to clear it out. After they had gone about half way through they heard a tremendous crash in the money pit, and barely escaped being caught by a rush of mud which followed them into the west pit, and filled it up seven feet in less than three minutes.

In the mean time a stick of oak timber of considerable girth and 3 1-2 feet in length, was ejected with the mud, all of which was soon cut up and made into walking canes, one of which I have the pleasure of sending you.

The bailing continued until three o'clock, p.m., of Saturday, when, on clearing the tunnel again, another crash was heard in the money pit, which we supposed to be the upper platform falling, and immediately the bottom of the money pit fell to about 102 feet, measuring from the level of the ground at the top. It had been cleared out previously down 88 feet.

Immediately after, the cribbing of the money pit, commencing at the bottom, fell in, plank after plank, until there was only about thirty feet of the upper cribbing left.

On Monday the top fell in, leaving the old money pit a complete mass of ruins. We then got a cast iron pump and steam engine from Chebucto Foundry in Halifax; but the boilers being defective we were obliged to give up, after spending considerable time &c., until the Spring of this year – not, however, until we proved that the water could be pumped out in two hours.

We now talk of letting a job of the whole work to Sutherland & Co., railway contractors, who have agreed to finish the work to our satisfaction, according to specification, for \$4000, and which will take all the risk or forfeit payment, for which purpose we are now endeavouring to raise the required amount of stock. The foregoing statement can be certified on oath of respectable persons.

Now, I leave the matter to a discerning public, to say, whether we are the fools some people take us to be, in endeavouring to set the question for ever at rest. But I suppose the public will judge of it by the success we meet with. Should we be successful in getting a large amount of treasure we will be considered a very sensible lot of fellows; and if we should fail in finishing the work we will be set down as a set of phantom-following fools, fit for nothing but to be held up to public ridicule.

But facts are stubborn things. We have proved that the old "money pit," so called, was dug, and that the water must have been let into it after it was filled up. The filling of it, leaving the ten feet marks, shows that the water did not flow into it until after it was filled; also, that the tunnel must have been made before it was filled, and that probably the last thing they did was to tear away a dam and let on the water. By the way the remains of an old dam was seen outside of the place where we found the drain and tunnel on the shore.

Yours, &c,, J.B. McCully

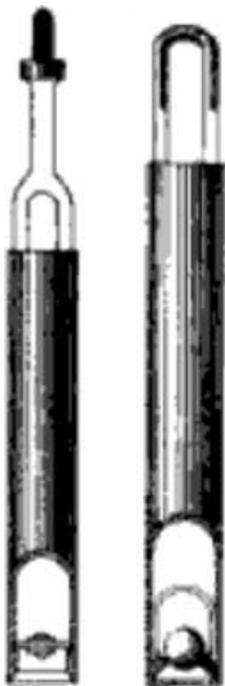
I'm not sure I can add much to McCully's description of the earliest digs. It appears, at least at face value, that all digging was done by hand. There had been many hundreds of wells and mines hand dug by this point in history.

However, it also appears that in 1849 the first boring or drilling was done.

McCully mentions a sludge valve and so I looked into this. From a book on mining dated 1888 (just 26 years after McCully's letter) I found two illustrations, one of a valve sludger (which McCully mentions breaking on them) and also a ball valve sludger (which McCully mentions as not allowing coins to enter past the ball valve).

The following is from this book:

"The sludger is worked by jerking it up and down in the bore-hole. During the descent of the tool, the valve is raised by the water in the hole. The weight of the sludger causes it to sink into the debris which is thus forced above the valve. As the sludger ascends, the material which has entered acts with the water to close the valve. By this means the escape of the sludge is prevented, though a large portion of the water passes out through the accidental interstices occasioned by small pieces of stone upon the valve seating."



At the far left is a normal valve sludger. Next to that is the ball valve sludger.

The ball valve sludger then available to McCully's team would not allow coins to bypass the ball valve and be brought up into the upper tube area to be inspected on the surface. These were much smaller versions of the famous hammer grab used by the current OI team.

The article notes: "The debris brought up from the bottom of the bore-hole by the sludger must be treated with careful attention, for it must be borne in mind that in prospecting for minerals it is to obtain this debris that the boring is undertaken."

The same would hold true for any treasure or coins that might be brought up from the Money Pit.

The gold chains from an epaulette may have looked like those on the image below. These were design elements from a military uniform and McCully states the three epaulette chains they found were "gold."



While it seems, up to this point, that the digging was done by hand, water pumps were kept running quite often to keep the inflow of water low enough to work. When digging was not an option, the searchers turned to boring holes with mine drilling equipment.

Pointed augers would cut through the dirt and debris. If sludge was encountered, the sludge valves were attached to the drill instead, to painstakingly clear the sludge and search it for any treasures. This work must have taken some real patience.

Since his letter was written in 1862, 1861 would be the year the bottom literally fell out of the Money Pit. He describes three different collapses. Most of what he is talking about, though, is the cribbing placed in the Money Pit by searchers to keep the sides from collapsing, so it was not truly the original Money Pit collapsing, except perhaps in the second collapse where the Money Pit bottom fell from the excavated 88 feet down to the 102 foot level – a drop of 14 feet indicating some type of cavity below the original floor of the pit, perhaps another searcher tunnel, perhaps a natural cavity, or perhaps a tunnel dug by the original depositors.

Water and collapsing have plagued the Money Pit searchers ever since. It seems no matter how sophisticated the equipment gets, the same two problems exist.

Dunfield's search was stopped short by muddy conditions (and lack of funds), as was one or more of the big canister digs by the current OI team.

You may remember the dramatic moments shown below when it appeared one of the big boring machines might collapse into the Money Pit. This is why the Michigan Group has turned to alternative ways to see what is below the surface, with the occasional test bore holes, and even some gigantic bore holes.

Just about every method of seeing below ground through sounding devices, LIDAR, ground penetrating radar, with ROVs, or even real life divers have been used.

Enough tantalizing items have been brought to the surface to prove that something was buried at fairly great depth in the Money Pit area.

Mapping of the Money Pit area has been and is being done to determine where all the searcher shafts and hopefully the original shafts are. One issue is that the drill borings don't always travel straight down, giving false depth readings and intersecting with other previous bore holes.

Still, the work continues.



# How Does That Work?

## - Seismic Drilling -



Back in 2019, Charles Barkhouse took me for a walk to see some sights. Part of what we viewed were some flags marking locations where seismic drilling was to take place. Seismic drilling, also known as shot hole drilling, is generally conducted as part of a survey of a geologic formation.

In such surveys, the team uses a series of controlled vibrations to generate a map of subsurface structures. This map can determine where possible voids are located and how accessible they will be to drilling or digging equipment.

Seismic surveys are an important part of oil and gas exploration, and they are also used by researchers who want to map geologic formations for scientific purposes.

On Oak Island they are used to find any underground anomalies that might exist that would prove to be worth further exploration by digging or drilling the site.

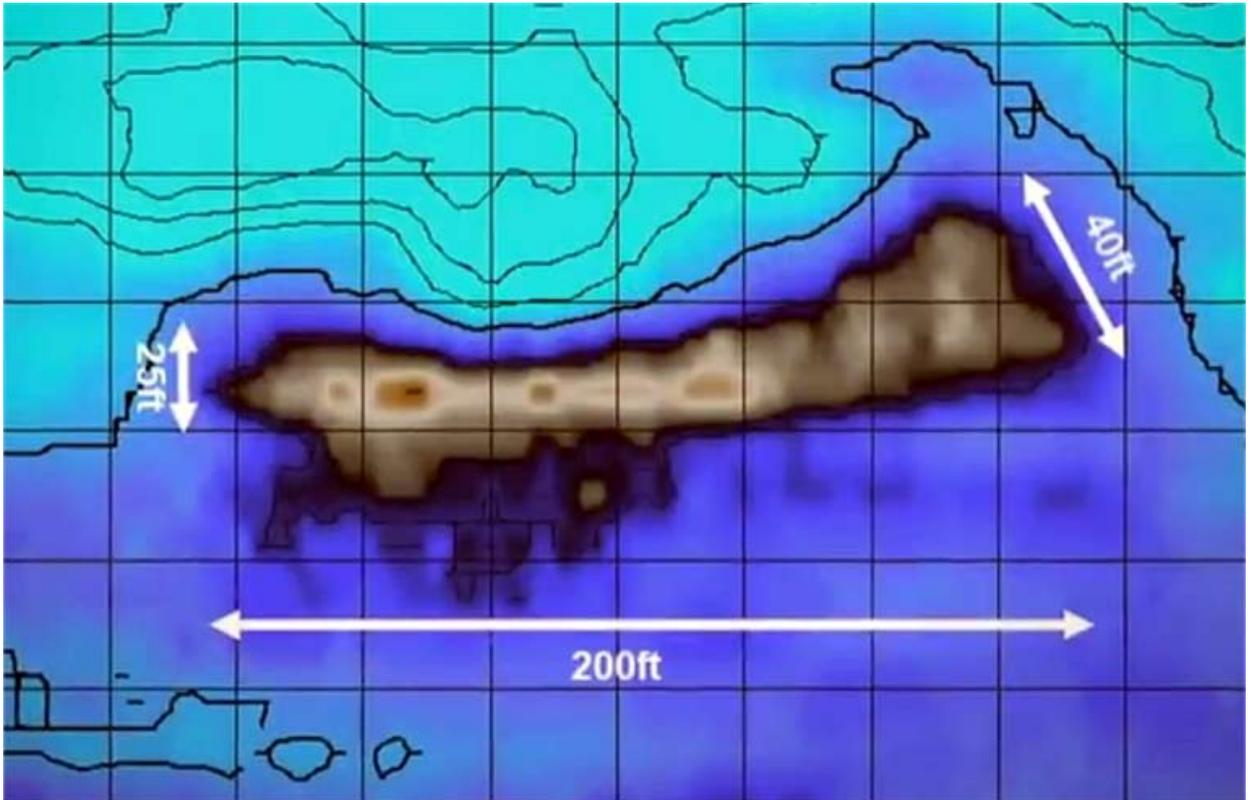
In seismic drilling, a company uses a specially designed drill to dig a hole to the desired depth.

Air and water drills are both available for this purpose, and they are often mounted on sledges or mobile platforms. This allows the team to quickly move the drill between locations, which can be critical on a large survey. The time needed to set up a drilling platform and stabilize it can add considerably to the overall time needed for the survey, and thus teams try to use mobile drills when it is possible to do so.

After sinking a hole, and marking it, the members of the team can mount small explosives inside. These explosives will cause underground vibrations when they go off. With the use of seismic equipment, the team can follow the movement and reflection of the vibrations.

This information can help them construct a map of underground features and formations. The seismic drilling team can include geologists, explosives experts, and other personnel with training in seismic surveys.

Consideration for interference from cell phones and safety for visitors is made on Oak Island for the least possible disruption with the best possible outcome in mind.



Perhaps the most stunning seismic discovery made on Oak Island is the so-called swamp ship anomaly shown above.

Although it is said to be about 200 feet long, it could be that the right side of the scan is a debris field with the more solid and straight area being the actual ship.

While drilling and digging efforts have proved inconclusive, there have been many ship parts found in the swamp both by Fred Nolan and by the current Oak Island team.

One point that can be made is that all of the 300+ Mahone Bay islands are visited every day by tides. These tides are typically 5-6 feet high.

Most other islands are far enough away from the mainland that items could pass them by. In the case of Oak Island, it butts almost up to the coastal shoreline. This means that items brought in from the tide could conceivably wash back out and be “caught” by the Oak Island swamp leading to a multitude of dates for items found.

Could a whole ship “bounce” off the mainland and float back out to be snagged by Oak Island? Well, in fact, ships moving about on the ocean floor from tides or currents is one of the reasons it is so hard to discover them or explore them.

After 1967, and the causeway build, it is likely that tide action has changed somewhat for Oak Island (since the water can no longer pass around the back of the island). This may actually cause even more items to “catch” in the swamp in coming years.

Throw in the occasional hurricane and there are lots of reasons items from many periods might be found on Oak Island. Certainly items like stone roads and burn pits didn’t come in with the tide.

It seems the more we learn about Oak Island the more fascinating and puzzling it becomes. Hopefully, the continued use of advance methods and equipment will help answer some of the endless questions.

# Who's Who? McCully

As his letter illustrates, Jotham McCully is one of the best sources we have for early information on what took place on Oak Island from 1795 until 1862. I thought I'd take a closer look at the man to see if there are any more clues to be uncovered.

A considerable amount of research has been done on the McCully family of Truro, Nova Scotia from the 1700 and 1800s. While it is not 100% proven as of yet, it appears some branches of the family came to Nova Scotia on the ship *Hopewell*, along with Andrew McNutt, a colonizer of Nova Scotia. They may also have arrived via the American Colonies, as McNutt later brought about 50 families to Truro from New Hampshire in 1761.

A Joseph McCully was "born in the barracks" in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1762.

What this refers to is that recent immigrants were often housed at the military barracks in Halifax when arriving late in the year so they would not have to face the Nova Scotia winter immediately.

Jotham McCully's full name was Jotham Blanchard McCully. A note in a book from 1873 states that:

"Col. Jotham Blanchard was born in New Hampshire in 1745. He was married to Elizabeth Tredwell [Treadwell] about the year 1766 and, in the year 1785, he removed to Truro and purchased a part of what was Capt. John Morrison's house lot in the Upper Village of Truro, lying on the north side of the Parade.

"He built a two story house on the corner of the lot, where Mr William McCully now resides."

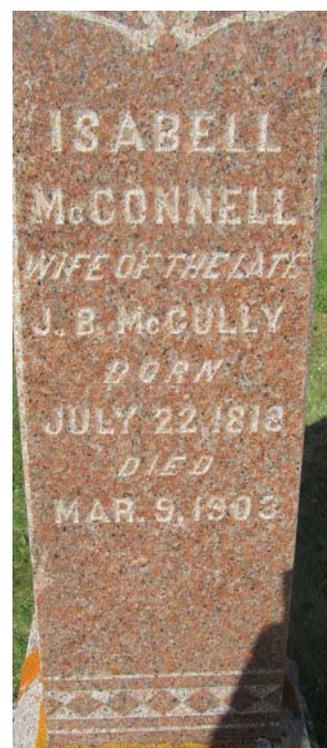
This record ties the Blanchard family to the McCully family.

Since our Oak Island Jotham McCully had Blanchard as his middle name, he almost certainly descended from Jotham Blanchard of New Hampshire.

It could be that a New Hampshire Blanchard married a Truro McCully from Northern Ireland, as McCully is most often said to be Irish or Scotch-Irish.

Regardless, we now know where the middle name of Blanchard comes from.

Jotham Blanchard McCully was born Jan. 19, 1819 at Truro, Colchester County, Nova Scotia, Canada. He died Sept. 9, 1899 (aged 80) at Truro, and he is buried at the Robie Street Cemetery, Truro, Colchester County, Nova Scotia, Canada. His wife was Isabell McConnell McCully who was buried nearby Jotham. Shown below are their actual gravestones.



Once again, we realize that these were real people chasing down the Oak Island mystery, not some characters in a play.

At the time of his daughter Jessie's marriage in 1867 to Thomas McMullen, McCully is recorded as a Station Master.

The Nova Scotia Railway (NSR) opened its line from Richmond (in present-day Halifax's North End) to Truro in December 1858. For the first decade of rail service to the town, the NSR served passengers from a small wooden structure located approximately where the present-day station is situated.

In June 1867 the NSR opened its eastern extension from Truro to the Northumberland Strait port of Pictou Landing. This was the year McCully is recorded as Station Master there. In the following month, on July 1, 1867, ownership of the NSR transferred from the Government of Nova Scotia to the Government of Canada. In 1872 the federal government merged the NSR into its new Crown corporation, the Intercolonial Railway.

The 1881 census of Salmon River, Colchester County (just outside Truro) records the McCully family living there and Jotham's occupation as "Farming." Jonathan "Jotham" McCully is recorded as being 62 years of age, born in Nova Scotia, of the Methodist religion and of Irish origin. The Scotch Irish were generally referred to as the Irish at this point in history.

His wife Isabella is recorded also as being 62 and being born in Nova Scotia of "Scotch" origin. Their son Henry Harold was 23 and a Telegraph Operator. Their son Arthur James, 20, also lived with them.

The 1891 Truro East, Colchester County census records Jonathan, age 72, living with wife Isabella and son Arthur, now an "Engine Cleaner" likely for the railroad.

The 1891 census shows Jotham with no occupation. Jotham died Sept. 9, 1899 at Truro. The 1901 Truro, Colchester County census records wife Isabella as a widow living with daughter Bessie McDowell and family.

Since McCully had daughters Bessie and Jessie it's fun to speculate if they were twins. Both married into Scotch-Irish families.

McCully is said to have worked with the Truro Company from 1849 through 1851 as Manager of Operations, yet he states in his letter that this company worked for four years at the Oak Island dig. It seems they began drilling by 1849 for sure.

At this point in history, drilling was a pretty common industry due to oil wells being discovered in Pennsylvania and in other areas as well. I know because I still own the mineral rights for 116 acres of land that my own family first acquired in this same year, in Pennsylvania.

So it appears the Truro group was using pretty much the latest technology.

McCully was the Corporate Secretary for the Oak Island Association from 1861 through 1866. In his notes, he writes of how this group approached the island in a schooner called the *Good Intent* on Saturday evening, August 30, 1862.

Before work proceeded on Oak Island, there were claims to be filed, investors to be secured, work teams to assemble, plans to be made and records to be kept.

McCully was instrumental in all of this for the mid 1860s dig and has left behind an invaluable record of the "Diggings" both in his letter of June 2, 1862 and his detailed work journal held by the Nova Scotia Archives.

Without his record keeping and story telling we would know so much less about those early days.

# SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

I realize that I had promised two more issues – September and October – however, this will be the last issue of the *Oak Island Times* for this year. The television season for *The Curse of Oak Island* will be upon us soon, and we'll all get to watch the team in their explorations. Here's hoping things are going well up there.

It has been an honor and privilege for me to be involved as much as I have been in the past, with the Oak Island team, and I can't say enough good about them and the Prometheus team as well.

It has also been an honor to have so many OI fans visit my magazine website (over 5,000). I've had fun providing a little background history and information, and hope it has been enjoyable and informative.

I will soon begin my eighth Oak Island book, *Oak Island: Secret Societies, Curses & Codes*, to be released sometime around the end of the Oak Island season for 2021-22.

If anyone steals my idea, remember you heard it here first. I don't want to interfere with the Prometheus TV presentation, plus I'm going to need some times to get this book written – a good winter project.

There is certainly a diversity of opinions about what happened on Oak Island and, just maybe, more than one thing happened. Maybe we aren't even close to figuring it all out, or maybe we are right on the verge.

Whatever the case, this show has provided so much entertainment and even hope to people especially through Covid, when there wasn't much else we could do. My thanks (and I suspect the thanks of many fans) goes out to the current search and film teams on Oak Island.

*If you haven't read any of my books yet, my new book, **Oak Island And New Ross**, has at least three major discoveries in it that no one else has ever realized. Out of my seven Oak Island books, I recommend you start with that one. Another book is underway (shown here) and tentatively scheduled for release when **The Curse of Oak Island** seasons ends next spring, if not before.*

