

Oak Island Gets 650-ft Causeway

-To Let Big Machines Join Treasure Hunt

By SCOTT BRIGLEY
Staff Writer



Bulldozer fills in the last gap of the temporary causeway at Oak Island. (Brigley photo)

Nova Scotia's famed Oak Island ceased to be an island yesterday.

But only temporarily.

On Sunday bulldozers filled the last gap of a 650-foot causeway connecting the mainland with the small South Shore island.

The temporary one-lane, earth and stone structure was designed to allow huge earth-moving machinery to be admitted to the island for the latest search in the mystery of what is buried there.

Robert Dunfield, 38, a petroleum geologist from California, is directing the largest scale assault ever placed on Oak Island in an attempt to uncover its secret.

"We built the causeway only as a means of accessibility to the island with this heavy equipment. It will come down

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and the channel deepened in three weeks."

The causeway was completed in ten days taking 7,000 yards of fill.

With the use of a large mechanical earth digger, the new search team expects to be off the island in three weeks, confident that their equipment is capable for this assignment.

The strength of this belief is based on one particular piece of equipment weighing close to 100 tons fitted with a 90-foot boom and two yard clam bucket (digging scoop). This crane-like structure is capable of digging an excavation over 200-feet deep by 100 feet in diameter, handling over 800 yards an hour under ideal conditions.

Past attempts on the 170 year-old search for hidden wealth on the island have been chiefly foiled because of seeping water filling the diggings.

The Dunfield party hopes to solve this problem in one of two approaches. Either by controlling the water believed entering the money shaft from the beach or by pumping water directly out of the excavation as work progresses.

If pumping should be required the seven-man team on the project will use a deep submersible pump capable of handling 110,000 gallons of water an hour.

Mr. Dunfield plans to set the digging crane 40 feet from the excavation to keep the vehicle in stable ground while maintaining the boom over the site.

A safety harness and nylon rope will be attached to one of the team who will stand near the open pit and direct the crane operator where the bucket would be used best.

When the 140-foot level in the pit is reached the mining venture will take on more scientific approach. Everything extracted from the hole at that time will put into a sluice, a water filtering method that screens and separates the rock and other objects from the soil.

"My basic objective is to go to the 135-foot level. We will go no further than a maximum depth of 180-feet, unless we find something of interest," the young geologist stated.

Work on the island starts today as the crane will be taken to a beach site for investigation of a drainage system that is commonly believed connected to the actual money pit.

Mr. Dunfield explained that they will spend several days to a week investigating drainage sites before moving to the actual area of the excavation.

"If all goes to plan in three days over the main excavation we will be reaching the real area of interest."

Work is scheduled to operate on a two-shift basis, with servicing taking place in the intervals.

The Dunfield search, costing in the vicinity of \$43,000, is the largest mechanical search of its type to be conducted on the island.

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