



**GOLD IN THEM THAR PITS** — Linda Masland, chief of the Nova Scotia buried treasure cheering squad, points to what she calls "evidence" of riches under the ground on Oak Island. A commercial drilling firm

already has spent \$1 million hunting for Captain Kidd doubloons and the island on the southern coast of Nova Scotia is full of 200-foot holes dug in search of the wealth.

## Sunken Treasure Awaits The Adventurous Folk

By JOHN PINKERMAN

OAK ISLAND, Nova Scotia—Captain Kidd was here, say the good people of Nova Scotia, and what's more, he left a buried treasure. Most important, and the local people are insistent on it, the treasure is still here—perhaps 200 feet down.

If you don't believe this, come to Oak Island, 132 acres of pines—the oaks have mysteriously disappeared—about 40 miles southeast of Halifax on Mahone Bay. For \$1 you can get a treasure hunting license good for two years. Practically all the treasure you'll find is yours to keep, says M. R. Chappel of Sydney on Cape Breton.

Chappel owns the island, reached by a 200-yard causeway from the "mainland," and all that Chappel demands is that you do \$100 worth of work during the life of your license. Work means digging, clearing the land and other chores that might be even remotely connected with treasure hunting.

Lest you laugh too robustly over what may sound like a winter "sea story," there is plenty of evidence on Oak Island that something unusual went on here centuries ago. It is not all just legend to please the imagination of the hundreds of schoolchildren brought here daily during fall and spring (it's too cold in the winter).

Whether Captain Kidd visited this specific place in Nova Scotia is uncertain but he does help embellish the story and add to the mystery.

There is claimed to be solid proof that since 1796 there was considerable activity here, including digging to depths of up to 200 feet. The evidence is good enough that a combine of about 25 wealthy Americans and Canadians going under the name of the Triton Alliance has considerable sophisticated drilling equipment here and, according to Mrs. Linda Masland, Nova Scotia Tournist Bureau supervisor and chief roofer for buried treasure, they have spent up to \$1 million and are still chasing the 17th Century treasure.

"Don't forget," she said, as I smiled the smile of disbelief, "one of the 1,500 shafts sunk on the island resulted in discovery through a lowered TV camera of three definite chests of the 17th Century—and the skeleton of a human hand. And, that was at about 200 feet.

"We know there's something here, and our evidence is 80 per cent; that leaves only 20 per cent legend or whatever you want to call it. Just wait 'til we bring up those chests!"

Mrs. Masland points to the 1796 discov-

ery—proved, she insists. Three local youngsters found a ship's block and tackle suspended over scarred earth and fastened to an oak tree. It is claimed that they dug down and at several 18 foot levels found remains of platforms. One platform included coconut wood, "and you know that had to be brought in," Mrs. Masland said during an excited island tour narrative. At 96 feet the "hole" hit water and flooded. Water has been what has stymied diggers, even those with 20th Century drills, but the Triton workers hope to overcome this problem soon.

"Don't forget, too," Mrs. Masland said, her youthful enthusiasm rising with a visit to each new discovery. "we've found old-time axes, picks and other digging equipment. And, much of what we have found has been certified by the Smithsonian Institution, your own very reliable American scientific group, as being from the period of the 17th and earlier centuries."

Legend—or history—says that Kidd and other pirates used Oak Island and the deep holes as a primitive "bank," with interconnecting tunnels between each "vault." And, says Mrs. Masland, "We definitely can place Captain Kidd here in the late 1600s. He came for help in repairing his pirate ships and then brutalized the people who helped him."

Legend has helped name some of the areas around Oak Island to fit what fact there may be in buried treasure.

What once was Smith's Cove now is, naturally, Smuggler's Cove. Even the holes in the ground have names. Mrs. Masland's favorite is the Money Pit, the one discovered in 1796. There also is Bore Hole Ten X, where the Triton Alliance men are working today. And, Tragedy Pit, where four men died mysteriously in 1965—even as one of their enemies is claimed to have been lurking nearby.

The story of Oak Island has attracted the interest of geologists involved in the Deep Drill scheme that hunts oil in the Atlantic Ocean. "They were very impressed," Mrs. Masland said. "We've had 15,000 other visitors, too. Some of them have seen and can verify that we've found old-time iron strappings that must have been used with the treasure chests."

Her story is endless and it gets more exciting the longer she goes on. Truth or fiction, Oak Island should be a treasure hunter's delight. And, it will cost you only \$1 for two years of fun—or the wealth of a sultan.

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