

STORY OF RICHES LURES COSTA MESA

Treasure Hunter Seeks To Unravel Oak Island Riddle

By CHRIS YOUNG
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COSTA MESA—A mention of "treasure hunter" usually brings to mind a burly, bearded man, harassed by natives and nature in his obsessed search for riches secretly stowed away by pirates or exiled rulers.

Such a man is James Lee Troutman —sans the beard and natives—but not without the natural obsession of finding something no one else has.

Troutman and his British wife, Patricia, recently returned here from Oak Island, Nova Scotia, where he worked as an advisor to the Robert Dunfield party which is attempting to bring up the fabled "Treasure of Oak Island."

The Dunfield party, after battling the elements of a severe winter, had dug 150 feet into the "Money Pit" a month ago—yet, none of the much-sought-after treasure was found.

As Troutman, who has studied more than 10 years, says, "It may never be found. But, I'm sure it's there. And, I don't think setting a value at \$200 million is out of line."

But the story of Oak Island's mystery treasure doesn't begin with Costa Mesa mining and electrical expert Troutman, or even with the latest efforts headed by Dunfield.

According to legend, the tale begins with Captain Kidd—before he was hanged for piracy in 1701, Or, with the notorious pirate Blackbeard, or with Henry Morgan, another buccaneer.

Some say the long-sought booty was left buried on the island by Spaniards who stole valuable Inca holdings. Or, the French crown jewels Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette supposedly were carrying when they attempted to flee during the French Revolution.

Since one day in 1795 when 16-year-old Daniel McInnes and two of his Chester, Nova Scotia, friends hunted for game on the island of Mahone Bay and found, instead, several "clues," the hunt has been on for the multi-valued treasure.

An odd depression, 12 feet in diameter, on one end of the question mark-shaped island led young McInnes to discover a sawed-off tree limb bracing an old ship's tackleblock. He and his friends began digging around the knoll, and found a platform of aged oak logs 10 feet down, another platform at 20 feet and still a third at 30 feet.

They also uncovered marks of

pickaxes on the flinty clay walls of the shaft. But, finding their work laborious, the trio abandoned the digging.

Later, McInnes and a friend took up residency on the island and, in 1804, were joined by a wealthy Nova Scotian Simeon Lynds in formation of a treasure hunting company.

Resuming the digging, they found oak-leaf layers every 10 feet down the "Money Pit," and uncovered layers of tropical coconut fiber charcoal and ship's putty as far down as 90 feet.

The next morning, Lynds found 60 feet of water in the shaft. Despite weeks of fruitless bailing, the water level remained the same, and miners were hired to dig another pit alongside the "original."

About 110 feet down—and angling toward the "Money Pit"—tons of water burst through to block entrance to the treasure and nearly drowned the miners. Nearly broke and clearly beaten in his search for Oak Island's fortune, Lynds quit.

And, McInnes died shortly afterwards.

In about 1850, a syndicate from Truro, Nova Scotia, was formed and employed a horse-driven pod auger (which picked up a sample of anything it passed through) to assist the digging.

Success seemed close at hand when the pod cut through four inches of oak, 22 inches of metal, eight of oak, 22 inches of loose metal, four more inches of oak and another six of spruce, before burrowing into deep clay.

This suggested to workmen that a new exciting prospect was reached—that of a vault containing two chests, one above the other, laden with treasure, perhaps even gold coins or jewels.

The auger brought up three links of gold chain to spark the imaginations. Another 110-foot shaft was sunk, and it once again flooded.

While investigating it, a workman fell in and discovered it was salt water. A short while later, other workers noticed that the shaft's water level rose and fell with the tide.

Tony Vaughn, heading the new syndicate, remembered he had seen gushing water years before at Smith's Cove beach, some 520 feet from the "Money Pit."

A search of the area revealed a chain of five, rock-walled drains running from the sea toward the island's interior—all aimed directly at the "Money Pit." The beach was acting like a huge sponge, soaking up the tide and filtering it into the pit.

After building a dam to hold back the sea, which was promptly destroyed by the tide, the Truro crew dug 118 feet straight down and burrowed toward the pit. This tactic, however, was also destroyed when the pit's bottom collapsed into an apparent cavern.

After a cost of more than \$40,000, the Truro syndicate, plagued by a series of bad luck finally gave up. A succession of treasure hunters followed, some meeting death in bizarre and almost "haunting" ways.

As recent as 1965, lives have been lost in the hunt for the Oak

Island Treasure. Robert Restall, 59, his son, Bobby, 23, and two other men were overcome by gas on Aug. 19, 1965, and died.

Restall, a former Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, steelworker, poured his life, that of his son, and \$200,000 into the fruitless hunt.

Dunfield, a 40-year-old former Los Angeles oil geologist, purchased controlling interest in the treasure rights from Mrs. Restall and has continued the hunt which has netted no treasure, several deaths and some 200 holes bored into the island in about 170 years.

The latest efforts, Troutman says, may find the treasure. But, he's not overly optimistic.

"I've got several theories about Oak Island," he said. "And one is that it's (the treasure) gold. How far down it is, there's no telling."

"Dunfield has gone as deep as 210 feet, without finding the treasure. There's a problem of the water feeding into the pit that has to be solved."

While on Oak Island, Troutman discovered a two Reales (Mexican) coins dated 1800, a Carolus IV coin apparently dropped from Spanish galleons and a 1787 Stuber.

"This is proof of the treasure being there," he said. "History shows that during 1700 and 1701 lights were seen on the island, and fires burned day and night."

Troutman, who is trying to gather funds for a return visit to Oak Island and neighboring Sable Island, also has numerous coins dated anywhere from 670 to 1000, including several silver pennies (short cross coin).

Oak Island, however, isn't all the treasure Troutman's seeking. He is currently working on an agreement with the Citadel Museum in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to explore the waters around Sable Island.

"All we need is a bookkeeper, three experienced skin divers, an attorney and a photographer—and of course, money—and we're set to go with the blessing of the curator," he said.

"I know there's treasure there," he said, gingerly bouncing several silver pennies in his hand. "It's just ready to be brought up, that's all."

Stanton Hit By 3 More Resignations

STANTON—This city, recently shaken by a series of resignations of fire department employees, was hit again Friday by the resignations of three administrators of other departments. Effective Saturday were resignations of Ron Hritz, administrative assistant, and Engineer Ed Makimoto. Engineer Ericksen's resignations will be effective July 15.

Though the resignations followed upheavals in city hall—the dismissal of Fire Chief Paul Harrison, the firing of City Administrator Stan Lavery, and the reinstatement of Fire Chief Paul Harrison, city hall sources stated Hritz, Makimoto, and Ericksen are all resigning to accept other positions.

Hritz has accepted a position with the City of Garden Grove, while Makimoto is to go to work for the City of Orange, it was reported. Ericksen will return to the east where a position is awaiting him.

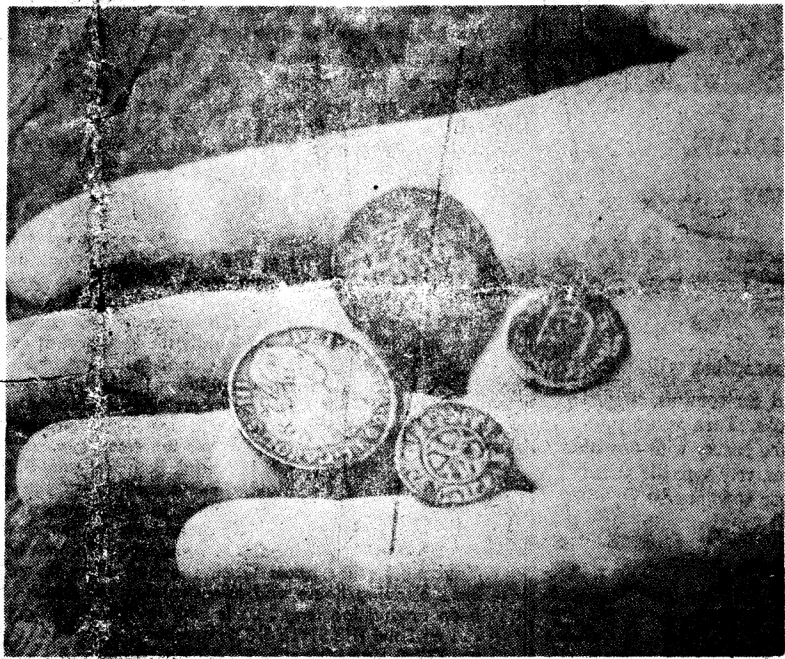
Norman Harrison, Carl Green, and Jack Dunham were those who resigned from the fire department.

Knife-Carrying Charge Filed

NEWPORT BEACH — Wagging his thumb at a passing police car got a Long Beach man a ticket all the way to jail here Friday.

Police said they charged Steven Creger, 21, with possession of a concealed weapon after taking Creger to empty a bulging pocket. Creger was carrying a nine-inch switchblade knife, officers said.

He is being held in lieu of \$166 bail.



'TREASURE OF OAK ISLAND' SEARCH YIELDS OLD COINS
A Carolus IV, Short Cross Coin, 1787 Stuber, Mexican 2 Reales Coin
(Register Photo)