

KIDD'S TREASURE KEY FOUND?

Searchers Discover Old Man-Made Tunnel

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The first major discovery in a century on Oak Island, where legend has it that much of Captain Kidd's booty is buried, has been made by treasure hunter Robert Dunfield.

And the discovery — of a man-made flood-tunnel — may mean that

access will soon be gained to the "money pit."

Mr. Dunfield, at least, is confident that the new-found tunnel is the key to the long-sought, long-hidden money pit where the treasure is believed to be.

"As far as I'm concerned," said the 39-year-old Los Angeles geologist, "the water problem is solved."

ably, but not enough to allow access. Since then, searchers have combed the Smith's Cove area in vain, looking for a second tunnel.

Mr. Dunfield and his crew, however, went off at a different angle after considering attempts made by a much earlier expedition.

And he feels confident that the new-found tunnel is the key. "We located and excavated the shaft to a depth of 60 feet, at which point water rushed in, giving us the evidence of a new flood system leading into the money pit."

He explained that they were digging a 22-foot deep trench running 200 feet along the south beach, when suddenly the heavy digging bucket of the crane sank in three feet of soft material. Before that point digging was hard and the going slow.

"It was obviously refill. Where we first recognized the shaft, it was apparent it was eight feet square. The material it comprised of was beach rock, beach sand, eel grass, other vegetation, unlike the normal ground conditions previous."

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Dwarfed at Oak Island's newly-found shaft are two men and a large digging bucket. Robert Dunfield believes the new find is part used to flood the treasure site. (Brigley Photo)

LONG-TIME PROBLEM

The flooding of the money pit has been a problem to plague searchers since the hunt began in 1735.

The location and excavation of what appears to be a man-made tunnel, which the searchers believe connects the beach with the pit, only 210 feet away, is the first important discovery in 165 years.

In 1850, a drainage tunnel connecting the beach at Smith's Cove—a good distance away from the latest find—to the money pit was located. Searchers hoped then that blocking the tunnel would stop the flooding of the pit.

But all past attempts to even get into the money pit, let alone discover what lies buried on the small South Shore island, were foiled by seeping sea water that kept the secret safe out of sight.

COMBED IN VAIN

When the finders of the first tunnel blocked the flow of water, the amount getting into the pit was reduced consider-

There was no timber in the shaft.

Mr. Dunfield said the reason they chose the south beach to search for a possible tunnel drainage system was based on a much earlier expedition by William Chappell, father of the present owner of the island.

Mr. Chappell conducted dye tests in the money pit and, it was reported at the time that dye had been seen coming up on the south shore in three widely separated areas.

The Dunfields are the only party to have investigated the south shore area.

An interesting part of the discovery is that directly in front of the new shaft, is a partly-buried, stone-constructed triangle.

The base of the triangle faced the new find, and the apex pointed right at the money pit over 200 feet away.

The structure consisted of stones, unevenly spaced one foot or more apart, and lined up in the three-sided design. Another line of rock divided the triangle, marking the base at six- and four-foot marks.

When the triangle was built and by whom is a mystery. It was noticed on the island in past expeditions, but no one connected it with another tunnel or the money pit.

During the next few days the new tunnel, now filled with 20 or more feet of water, will be left alone.

Mr. Dunfield, assisted by his father, hopes to investigate the area where the treasure is believed buried before making any attempts to seal off the beach shaft.

Already in position over the site of the money pit is the 90-foot digging crane, which has dug about 25 feet down. Using a submersible pump capable of handling 1,100 gallons of water a minute, the searchers hope to be able to deal with the water that has caused failure in past attempts.

If problems arise, the Dunfields feel they can proceed to block off the water in the new-found shaft.

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