"All truth passes through three stages.
First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed.
Third, it is accepted as being self-evident."

-***Arthur Schopenhauer.***

The Old Guardian Tree

When the struggle of life is heavy and severe, I remember my home, the peace and tranquility of the farm yard.

My memories of the beauty and care of the old trees surround my old body and take me back to my childhood.

I dash there and somersault beneath the shade, deep and cool; I rest in the peace of home and listen to the trees speak.
Everything is so quiet.

The wind blows through the old tree stirring the branches. It sighs gently; half in a dream, I hear its whispering.

And its speech is as a story of how generations struggled, fought and suffered, and grew up under its protection, and now lie there in the graves below.

Ivar A. Gånstam

Chapter Six
MIRROR IMAGES

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The study of biology is an ever-changing field of science. Within biology, perhaps botany is most change-driven of the branches. With the study of all things dealing with plants, botany itself has become wildly overgrown and the field has generated many sub-fields and specialties as our knowledge of plants has grown. To that end, advanced understanding of plant-life has evolved so much so, the names of plants have been changed so as to keep up with new classifications, variations, hybridizations, and evolutions of life forms studied.

The genus Acacia, with over 1,300 species, was once the second largest genus in the pea family. Currently, Acacia has had significant taxonomic revisions to better correlate its evolutionary history (phylogeny) and many species from *Acacia* have been shuffled to other genera groups.

The species *Robinia pseudoacacia*, or Black Locust, is one of several tree species discussed in this book, which have seen their botanical pedigree changed and updated. Chapter 5, *"Oak Island's Thorniest Issue"* reflects the 'weeding out' of the *Acacia* genus as just such a change. Note the species *Latin* description of "pseudo + acacia," which notates such reclassification. The Black Locust, which "IS" the Acacia Tree discussed, located, and photographed in Chapter 5, was identified not only by the chapters' author and Dr. Gordon Fader, but recently by other arborists around the country. Their professional opinions are also found in Appendix C, *"On the Record."* To be clear, the Black Locust Tree is no longer associated with the genus *Acacia*. Whether those earlier settlers to Nova Scotia believed the Black Locust to be an *Acacia* species is relevant to the story told in Chapter 5, but not to the true identification of those mystery canopied-trees photographed on the island long ago.

As we identify the true tree species of those mystery canopied-trees from Oak Island, this reclassification issue will come up again and may be the cause of why the true identification of Oak Island's mystery canopy trees has been such a long and thorny issue.

The ability to ask questions is the greatest resource in learning the truth."

-Carl Jung

To this point, you have been dragged through the taxonomic characteristics of species such as Acacia, Albizia, Aleppo Pine, Burr Oak, Butternut, Cork Oak, Maritime Pine, Northern Red Oak, Southern Live Oak, Stone Pine, and White Birch. And you have been bombarded with additional information on 28 other native Nova Scotian tree species. Are you ready for your Arborist license yet?

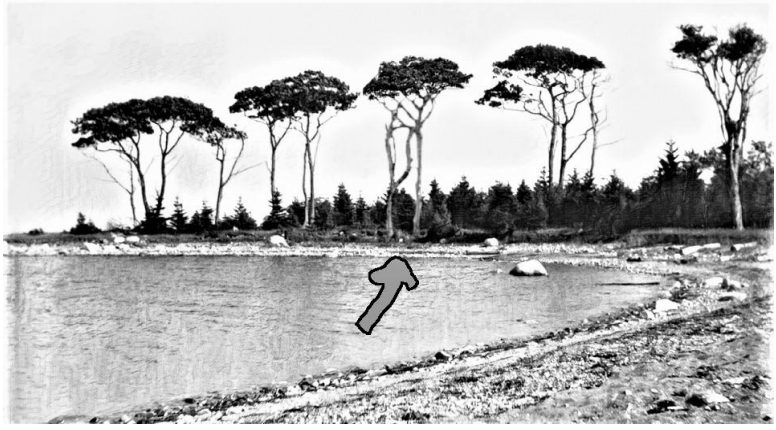
All of those tree species had some or many similarities or taxonomic characteristics to our mystery canopied trees. Several looked like them while others were purposely shown there was no way they could be them. But I think we can agree, up until now, we have not yet 'pinned the tail on the proverbial donkey.' We may agree with certainty Northern Red Oak is not our candidate. So is this all we have to work with? Can we really decide the species of those canopied-trees at this time? Look again folks.

If only we had a more recent photograph of similar-looking trees, then perhaps we could use field observations to make a clear and convincing case. I most truly believe if we look carefully at the photographs of these canopied trees below, we can see the trees for what they are. Remember this photograph?

Created of David Neisen ^

Look carefully at the below photo of those old Oak Island mystery trees once more. If you can, count them out loud please.

Courtesy W. R. Macaskill, Nova Scotia National Archives.



Courtesy: Author James A. McQuiston FSA Scot.

Wait! Count them again. Has our stand of Oak Island canopy trees multiplied? Where did those additional trees come from - those above the arrow? Well – *they came from the photo on the previous page!* The tree to the far right in the first photo is again found here. I have placed a small arrow directly below them. It appears we have found more Oak Island canopied trees, which are alive today and getting old.

I sent the photographs of the new stand of canopied trees to author James A. McQuiston FSA Scot, just in time for the release of his new book, *"Oak Island: Curses, Codes & Secret Societies."* He sent me back a rendition of an old Oak Island photograph (previous page) where he added one of the new trees, I had found, to the old photo to see how similar they looked. He said,

> *"Other than removing the background and giving the image a similar filtered look to the original image from Oak Island, the second image is from 2018 [with arrow]! Don't they look identical to the trees we've been staring at? Perhaps a look at the photograph without any altering will help you see the similarities with those canopied-trees."*

Exactly! The following photograph was sent to me by arborist, Don Pylant, in 2021 (see Appendix C, "*On The Record*") and was taken by telephoto lens in 2018 at quite a far distance.

Courtesy:
Picxy.com/Rhysl

Below, the same Photograph has been magnified.

The first image in this chapter was a photo of the current trees above, filtered to give it an old-Oak-Island photograph feel, similar to what Mr. McQuiston did more professionally. Yet in all of the images the tree on the far right is the same tree which was "planted" by James McQuiston's photo version with his arrow shown and is from the new found trees.

Why the hocus-pocus and photoshopping?

I wanted you to examine the photographs and the trees within them so you can literally SEE the comparison in the same image. This chapter was designed so you did not have to flip from page to page to try and compare imagery of these trees. This chapter will prove to you the trees, found in the photograph taken in 2018 on the previous page, are of the same species of tree, which were seen on Oak Island before 1795 and up to their extirpation by 1941-47. Not only are there more photographs of these trees from different dates, angles, seasons, and sources, but we were also fortunate enough to have a botanist, who has lived near these trees for forty years – working with us and who actually took photographs of the trees, their bark, leaves, and twigs in January of this year.

All of the photographs in this chapter can be found in Appendix G, *"Dendro Disguised,"* where the original color photographs can be viewed for true, realistic life-like comparisons. The taxonomic species record of these newly found canopied trees is explained there as well and announced in this chapter.

A Reader of this book turned to her husband and exclaimed,
"***I have read about all of these darn trees!***
I am sick of more trees!"

Her husband turns to her and says,
"*I could have told you had you asked…*
***they're Syc-a-more trees. What took you so long?*"**

Cousins of the Coast

Our Mystery Canopied Trees of Oak Island have cousins still alive and gracing the shoreline Of the village of Clachan on the Isle of Raasay (Rā-sā) part of the Inner Hebrides of Scotland. Raasay is due east of Portree on the Isle of Skye. Here they were captured In a photograph at a 2018 Wedding Reception held at Raasay House. The stand of trees on Raasay must have been planted about the same time as our Oak Island trees, circa 1750s.

Courtesy: Anne Peters, Your Adventure Wedding, 2018.

This is the remaining stand of a dozen live trees, hugging the shore of a wind-swept island. Frequently bombarded by salt spray, they were first written about by James Boswell on Friday 10th, September 1773. He said, *"There are a number of trees near the house, which grow well, some of them of a pretty good size. They are mostly Plane and Ash."* [1]

Here is another view from a different angle at the same wedding venue. This image incorporates the entire remaining stand of our tree cousins.

Courtesy: Anne Peters, Your Adventure Wedding, 2018.

Again, let's compare the 1909 photograph from Bowdin Expedition landing on Smith's Cove below, with those overlooking the rock wall on Isle of Raasay in 2018 above. *Look the same to you?*

Courtesy Bowdin Expedition, Nova Scotia National Archives.

Botanist Dr. Stephen Bungard Ph.D., Vice-county Recorder of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) took several photos of the Raasay trees in December of 2021 and captures the latest image of our Scottish cousins as both deciduous and non-evergreen. These trees are approaching over 100 ft tall.

Photographed by Dr. Stephen Bungard Ph.D. 12-2021.

It was pure luck as I queried the 161 residents of the Isle of Raasay, to discover Dr. Bungard has been working his research there for forty years and was more than willing to assist in our investigation.

Their exact location is Latitude **57.3518236**, Longitude **-6.0807551** for those of you who surf the planet with Google Earth, or other online sources, and want to see them for yourself. The latest satellite image has caught the trees with their winter wardrobe on, and their shadows give away their small grove near the ferry terminal. The 'birds eye' view is but four pages away!

These trees are Botanist-certified as being *Acer pseudoplatanus L.*, commonly known as **the European Sycamore Tree** – cousins to our Oak Island Mystery Canopied trees. *A perfect match!*

Spring has sprung and as of May 30th of 2022, we have an updated Field Observation & Survey Report from BSBI Botanist Dr. Stephen Bungard, who is the Vice-County Recorder for the Botanical Society of Britain and Island, as previously mentioned. His report Regards the *Acer pseudoplatanus* tree species alive on Raasay Island, Scotland; and thought to be parental stand of the Oak Island trees.

"I have put some current images of the trees on the below link. Please feel free to use them however you wish. There are 11 trees in a partial ring of which two are dead and a third is dead from 2 m above ground.
Details:

Tree	Grid ref [1]	Circumference (m) [2]
1	NG54593639	1.4
2	NG54593643	1.6
3 (dead)	NG54603643	1.2*
4 (dead)	NG54603642	1.3*
5	NG54613640	1.6
6	NG54613639	1.2
7	NG54613639	1.4
8	NG54613639	1.0
9	NG54603639	1.4
10	NG54603639	1.2
11 (dead +2 m)	NG54593639	1.0

Notes:

1. The 10 metre square of the British National Grid (Ordnance Survey). These can be converted to latitude and longitude here: http://www.movable-type.co.uk/scripts/latlong-os-gridref.html
2. At cut 1.5 m above ground level
3. *Bark lost so diameter reduced

There are at least four stumps within the outer ring – perhaps more if one searched thoroughly. These four are not in the centre of the ring but rather, to one side.

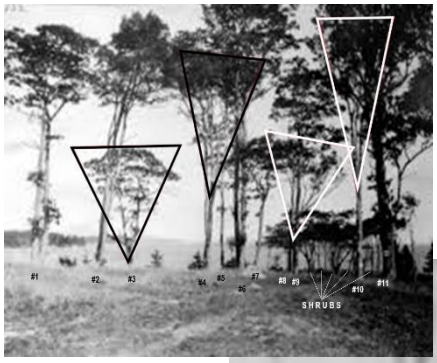
Re: specimens, I can easily obtain leaf /shoot specimens, but I need to know how you would like them preserved. It might be possible to pay someone to fell one of the dead trees and take a cross-section for dendrochronology. No promises! Best wishes."

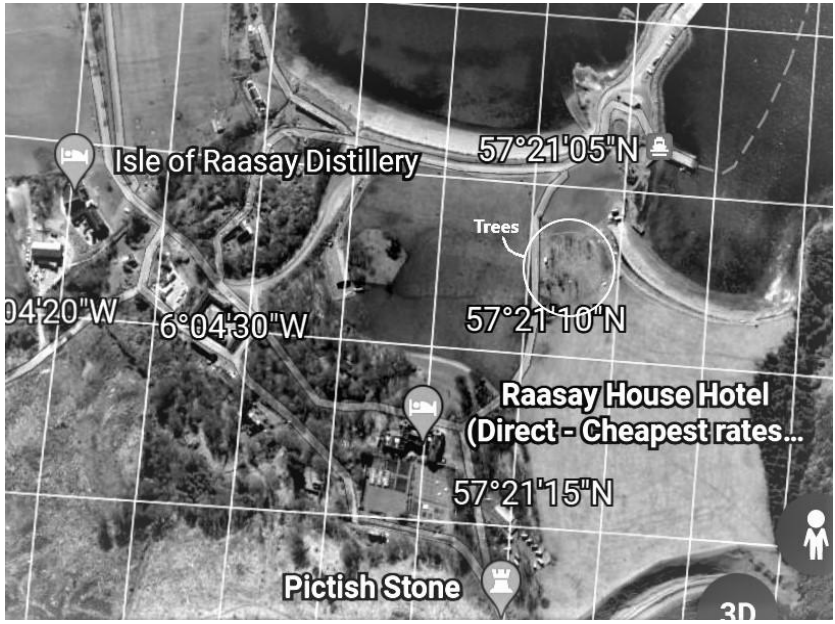
Along with this report we received several new photographs of the Raasay Island European Sycamore trees, provided by Dr. Bungard.

As you may recall, in Chapter Four, "*Barking up the Wrong Tree*" and in Subsection: *Shape Shifting Forests*, we examined the dense shrubbery of saplings growing around our mature, canopied trees. We examined their pyramidal form as saplings attempting to grow between searcher shaft operations and livestock grazing areas under those tall and wonky, mystery trees. On the following page, Botanist Bungard has provided us with another comparable image of these trees now, versus those trees then.

This photo was taken atop the crest overlooking Smith's Cove, with Frog Island seen on the left in the background. The image below is a blow-up of the "shrubs" on the right of the same photo.

Courtesy Nova Scotia Archives





Created by David Neisen

So where did these trees come from and why. And why are they the same in Nova Scotia and Scotland, but nowhere else?

There were no Sycamore trees growing in the Western Hemisphere in 1600 and definitely none within the NEAF biome as previously discussed. The native range of the *Acer pseudoplatanus* includes Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain, Southern Russia, Switzerland, and the former Yugoslavian region. [2]

Historically, they were often referred to as Plane Trees. As botanical names and the scientific classifications became refined, the myriad of other common names started to wane, such as; Sycamore Maple, Celtic Maple, Scottish Maple, Great Maple, Planetree Maple, Mount Maple, Lock-and-Key-Tree, Mock-Plane-Tree, False Plane Tree, Scottish Plane, Dool Tree, Grief Tree, Hanging Tree, Joug Tree, Purple Sycamore, Whistlewood, English Harewood, and Gray Harewood. These "were" or are the names

associated with *Acer pseudoplatanus* in the British Isles. Name-confusion stems from *Platanus occidentalis*, (a true Platanus) which has a common name of American Sycamore, American Planetree, Western Plane, Occidental Plane, Buttonwood and Water Beech. And, that *Ficus sycomorus* of the Ficus genus is referred to as Sycamore Fig, Fig-Mulberry, Sycamore and Sycomore. *Now where was I?*

Initially, *Acer pseudoplatanus* was thought to have been introduced to England during Roman occupation. Excavation at the Roman Walbrook Valley location site has found a wooden writing tablet made of its wood.

> **"410** of these were **writing tablets**; all but one were wax writing tablets, with just one ink tablet identified. Around half of these have been identified, with most made of softwood types, generally silver fir (*Abies alba*). Only two of the wax tablets were made using hardwood taxa – one each of maple (Acer pseudoplatanus) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), though the ink tablet was a piece of cleft alder wood (*Alnus glutinosa*). Barrel bungs and staves were also identified predominately as silver fir. Some softwood woodworking waste has been identified – perhaps from the conversion of barrels staves to writing tablets."[3a]

Many have considered this species to have been brought to Britain during the Tudor period around 1487 from France. This is challenged by the presence of an old Scottish Gaelic name for the same tree, '*fior chrann'* which suggests a longer presence in Scotland, at least as far back as the Gaelic settlement at Dal Riata in the late 6th and early 7th centuries. [3b] This would make it an archaeophyte (naturalized) tree introduced by humans before 1500. In Sweden, the Sycamore dates to 1770 with seeds obtained from Holland.[3b] In Ireland, its introduction is unknown.

However, a relook by researchers realize, as a naturalized species, it is more likely to have been introduced in Roman Times (Mitchell, 1974) but probably in the Middle Ages (Stern, 1982) and initially to Scotland (Jones, 1944).[3c]

Today, the Sycamore is present in 89.7% of Britain, more than any native tree species.[3b] United Kingdom botanists agree *A. pseudoplatanus*…

> *"is one of the most important trees in northern and upland Britain, forming noble broad-crowned trees of huge significance and importance in the landscape, and will be an essential replacement for Fraxinus excelsior* [European Ash] *in such areas."* [4]

The *Acer pseudoplatanus* is one of a few broadleaf species that can cope with the extreme conditions of northern Scotland; the most northerly woodland in Britain on the exposed Mey Estate in Caithness is composed of only Sycamore.[3c] Continental authors note that the European Sycamore is favored by cold, moist conditions (Jones, 1945). The E. Sycamore has evolved certain adaptations to exposed conditions and can produce a vigorous, luxuriant canopy even in areas of high wind and salt spray. However, on particularly exposed sites there is considerable bud and shoot death, although new shoots are readily produced from dormant buds (Bingelli and Blackstock, 1997). This is a successful survival strategy but precludes such sites for the growing of Sycamore as a timber three.[3c]

Due to its innate tolerance of harsh climates, E. Sycamore is often the only large broadleaf tree in some upland areas and enhances vertical and horizontal structural heterogeneity.[3c] - *Oh yeah, sure*.

In 1870, the Sycamore was officially introduced to New York and New Jersey and cultivated in New England and the Mid-Atlantic states. Yet others argue it was introduced in 1803 or 1804 by Christopher Core while he was working with Thomas Jefferson's administration where he was based in London. [4] By the early part of the 21st century it was further naturalized in additional states and Canadian provinces of British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Ontario.[3] In America and Canada the *A. pseudoplatanus* is known as the **Sycamore Maple Tree**.

Yet there are still even others, who contend the Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) was brought back to the British Isles by warriors and Christians returning from various Crusades. Others theorize the trees were mistaken for famous historical and biblical trees, which were either wrongly spelled in the Bible or mistaken in translation or looked similar enough to pass as those other species. It is a confusing tale to tell, but once you have heard it, you can see why our Oak Island Trees may have been planted for religious or presumed beneficial purposes. We will touch on this history later.

The European Sycamore is a fast-growing tree in its early years and does extremely well with seed sprouting and coppicing. The tree can grow as much as 4.5 ft in its first year as a stool sapling.[3] Furthermore, it is tolerant of a wide range of soil types and pH balances, except heavy clay.[2] Tolerant of high winds, salt spray, urban pollution, and tolerant of low summer temperatures, the roots of the *Acer pseudoplatanus* form highly specific beneficial associations with fungus promoting phosphorus uptake from the soil. [3] This tree species has much to tell us.

Once spring has returned and the island has reopened Dr. Bungard will send leaf, bud, and bark specimens so further DNA can be performed to verify species variant. As of this writing, the landowners where the trees grow have given us permission to obtain a core sample, or even a cross section should one of the above trees have died, as it seems that may have happened in the larger leafed photo. This would allow dendrological examination to also determine age of the stand. Assuming, since the trees within the stand were "a pretty good size" in 1773, the planting of the trees could be as late as 1750 or could be much earlier. This is an uncanny similarity to the original canopied trees of Oak Island. *A. pseudoplatanus* has been given an age range from 300 to 550 years of life, though historical records can account for trees over 1000 years old. [4]

Hiding in History

At this juncture in time and awaiting DNA and/or dendrological review for exact variation of the species and for the sake of historical record, our winning "World Contender" has been found. It is of the greatest irony that the living incarnation of those Oak Island trees can be found in Scotland, the ancestral home of those who settled Oak Island, Mahone Bay, and much of Nova Scotia. It can also be highly suggested the trees found alive today in Scotland, could be related to the same stand of trees once found on Oak Island.

Historical Notes

In the greater United Kingdom, the Sycamore tree has held its share of interesting positions throughout history, further complicating when in fact they were brought from the mainland. Here are some Sycamore trees compiled by the Scottish newspaper *The Herald* from their Top 25 Trees list: [5]

The Dool Tree, Blairquhan Castle, Ayrshire

Dool or dule trees were used as natural gallows for public hangings – and often displayed the corpse for some weeks afterwards. They were common on many estates until the mid-18th century. The ancient Sycamore that stands in the shadow of Blairquhan Castle is believed to be a dool tree planted in the 16th century during the reign of King James V of Scotland.

Bicycle Tree near Brig o' Turk, Trossachs

Dating from the late 19th century, the so-called "Bicycle Tree" is a Sycamore reputed to have self-seeded beside the scrap heap of the village blacksmith in Brig o' Turk. As it grew, it absorbed – or swallowed up – several metal objects, including a bicycle and, reputedly, a ship's anchor and chain. There is a fable about a young man conscripted to the First World War who left his bicycle hanging over a branch. Some say he never came back – or if he did return found that the tree had claimed the two-wheeled steed as its own. Today all that remains are the handlebars sticking out of the trunk.

Flodden Tree, The Hirsel Estate near Coldstream, Berwickshire
This Sycamore on the Hirsel Estate in the Borders is believed to have been planted in tribute to the Scottish dead at the Battle of Flodden in 1513.

Birnam Oak and Birnam Sycamore, Perthshire
The Birnam Oak and its neighbor the Birnam Sycamore are thought to be the sole surviving trees of the great forest that once straddled the banks of the River Tay. This is immortalized in Shakespeare's Macbeth as the *Birnam Wood*. Unconfirmed reports says this Sycamore may be over 1000 years old.

The "Big Tree," Kirkwall, Orkney
To be fair, the "Big Tree" is not actually that lofty. Rather, this 200-year-old Sycamore is much beloved among Orcadians due to its prominent position on Kirkwall's main street making it a popular meeting spot.

Sycamore Gap, Hadrian's Wall (Robin Hoods Tree)
A very photogenic lone Sycamore found in the saddle between hills along the Roman Leader Hadrian's walled defenses in northern England.

Tolpuddle Martyrs Tree, Dorset
Home to the remains of a Sycamore where a group of agricultural workers swore an oath as part of their formation of a union, an act which saw them sentenced to seven years of penal labor in Australia.

Mount Lothian Chapel Sycamores
Exactly five miles due south of Roslyn Chapel, there is a low hill. Crowning this hill there is a grove of thirteen trees. The thirteenth tree is set off-center and has been struck by lightning. All these trees are Sycamore. In the center of the grove is the ruin of a 14th century chapel and it was here on Mount Lothian that William Wallace was knighted.

Money Tree, Clonenagh Ireland
A monastery founded by Saint Fintan in County Laois in the 6th century had a spring beside it. It was frequently visited by pilgrims who believed it was holy. In the 19th century a land owner was annoyed with the constant coming and going of people to the site and filled in the well so they would stay away.

> Yet the water started to flow from the hollow interior of a Sycamore tree located on the other side of the road. Filled with amazement, people hung rags on the tree and pressed coins into its bark as votive offerings and it became known as the "Money Tree." Years later the tree fell down, but new shoots appeared from its base, and the water still welled up. It remains a place of veneration on St. Fintan's Day, February 17. - *Sounds similar to the "Money Pit."*

Others, such as the *A. pseudoplatanus* on the shrine of St. Frideswide in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, dating from 1289, raises questions as to how the species was known by the artist. And at Newbattle Abbey near Edinburgh, *A. pseudoplatanus* was thought planted during the Reformation, suggesting the date of introduction was around 1550.

In Scotland, the *A. pseudoplatanus* has traditionally been used for making fine boxes, sometimes in association with contrasting, dark-colored laburnum wood. These were known as *Mauchline ware*, the location where they were primarily produced.[4] And as mentioned above, it was favored for hanging because the Sycamore's lower branches rarely broke under strain. They can produce pale-colored honey and trees can be tapped to provide refreshing drink, as a source of sugar and to make syrup or beer. In Wales, Sycamore trees were used in the traditional craft of making 'love spoons', decoratively carved wooden spoons given as a romantic gesture. In Europe, *A. pseudoplatanus* was a favored wood for carving Tureens and Treens. The wood was also used to make late medieval drinking cups called Mazers. [7] In some parts of the UK, the winged seeds are known as 'helicopters' and used in flying competitions and model-making by children. This has given the Sycamore the moniker of the "Helicopter Tree." [8]

But were these trees special or venerated for any reason? Had people thought these were sacred trees, perhaps due to confusing names and descriptions? Were they taken by Scots to the New World to be 'unique-looking,' tall trees performing as an island marker… or were they just something to remind the immigrants of

their homeland - *perhaps as either the robust large, crowned tree, or the windswept wanky umbrella-shaped tree we find on Raasay?*

Knowing *A. pseudoplatanus*, the European Sycamore tree is most assuredly the same species of tree as on Oak Island, do we dare ask the question – *why was this species of tree unharmed?*

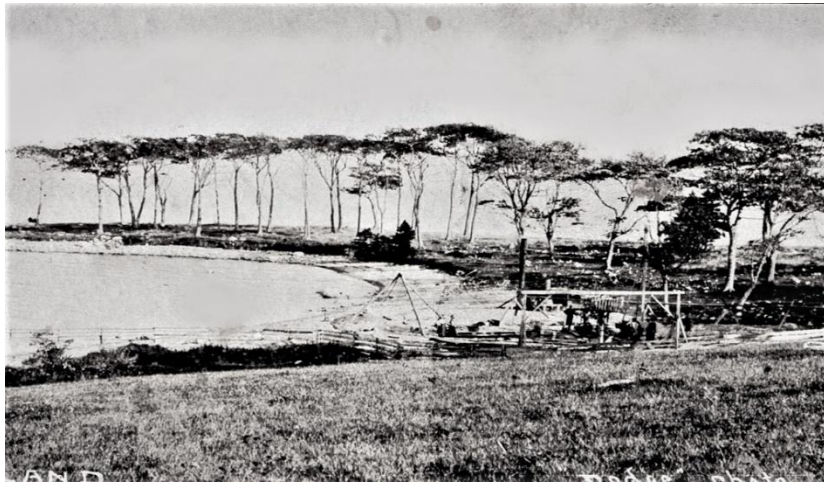
???

As summarized in Chapters 1 & 3 and detailed in Appendix B, "*The Truth in Timber and Timing*," we recall how this stand of odd-looking very tall trees on Oak Island seemed to catch no one's attention. Sure they were noted for their height and assumed to be Oaks, but is it not extremely odd nobody investigated them further? They grew only on this one island since they were first seen around the latter 1750s and eventually died off by 1945 – almost 200 years. And yet no inquiry or botanical interest?

The area was teaming with new settlers back then; each trying to scratch out an existence and each needing copious amounts of timber for building, fencing, firewood, and charcoal production. England's Admiralty was gaga over capturing every potential piece of lumber for their burgeoning shipbuilding needs and they had visited our exact area of interest. Yet seemingly, no one saw those very tall Oaks on Oak Island*. Is that even believable?*

There had to be a reason these trees were never accosted.

And the people of the area had to know and willfully acquiesce to that reason. For had they thought they were really and truly oak trees, whether native Northern Red Oak or Burr Oak, or even an exotic Oak species from elsewhere, those trees would have been harvested as fast and frequently as the rest of the entire province of Nova Scotia. Even the Spruce trees growing below the canopy of those mystery trees, were harvested several times over the period of grazing and mining operations on the island. Yet the acknowledgement of those tall, canopied trees were as though they were invisible to the crowds below.



Both Images courtesy of Nova Scotia National Archives.

Meanwhile, the crowds procured wood for charcoal, wood for cribbing, wood for construction, wood for wharfs, wood for many reasons from other islands. One is left questioning why the trees on Oak Island were ignored. Is it possible the Sycamore trees on Oak Island were never felled and left alone during the centuries of frenetic timber harvesting because they were revered or thought to have religious or historical importance. Perhaps the arriving Scottish immigrant population, who lived both on the island and the mainland, venerated them for some reason and kept them as a tribute to something from the past.

Spell that Again Please

In Chapter 5, *"Oak Islands Thorniest Issue,"* it is discussed the Acacia tree was considered a sacred tree. Freemasonry is adorned with Acacia symbology as the previous chapter highlights and it is true those Oak Island trees look very much like the Acacias of Africa and Australia. This 'look-like' opinion could have been held by many Freemasons, who ran most of the territory and were leaders within the towns and governments throughout our area of interest. If the Acacia was sacred and revered by Scottish Freemasons and the Oak Island trees looked like Acacia to them, is it such a reach these trees too, were considered off limits? Those leaders may have voiced opinions of maintaining those trees for this very reason. Did it inculcate within the Freemason community to tacitly understand Oak Island trees may in fact be Acacia trees? Could someone interpret the introduction of the Black Locust tree (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) by fellow New England colonist for ship building timber,[9] with its thorns and hard wood, further convince area Freemasons an Acacia tree could and did live amongst them in Nova Scotia climes and on Oak Island specifically. And is the confusion made complicated because Acacia is a tree mentioned more than 26 times in the Bible, but never clearly defined.

The Shittah tree, presumed to be Acacia, produced shittim wood associated with building the Ark of the Covenant and its incense alter. Acacia produces a hard, fine grained, lighter-colored wood which makes a fine finish – like *Acer pseudoplatanus*! Acacias are also tapped for various products and the wood is slow burned into a high quality charcoal – like *Acer pseudoplatanus!* Could this be a significant reason NOT to touch those trees? Therefore it may be conceivable those trees on Oak Island were assumed to need the peoples veneration and protection – *because of mistaken identity*. And if not Acacia, surely they would have reason to venerate the European Sycamore for 'its' sacred status. Or was this a ruse by them to isolate the island area where they grew, away from non-

masonic inhabitants so they could eventually control the island for perhaps, other “deeper” purposes.

Maybe those early Scottish settlers of Oak Island knew they were Sycamore trees. Some may speculate that a clan, or clans, brought the tree of their forefathers or their communities with them to the New World. For historical reasons most likely, clan members brought part of historical Scotland along for good luck. Those Scots may have come to revere the Sycamore tree species itself from having listened to a bevy of biblical stories, or told from Egyptian etchings, or gathered from Greek gossip. These enlightenments were likely relayed to them by returning Crusaders, Knights, or pious priests at the pulpit. [10] As well, the King James Bible tells a tale and the Latin translation is not clear whether we are talking of a Sycamore, Sycomore, or Sycamine tree. The Crusader brags about the battles under the numerous Plane trees and refers to them as Sycamore trees or as the Fig tree. This misidentification is due to the Platanus trees' sexual organs, which can be misidentified as fruit from a Fig tree. The priest tell a parable of ancient Egyptian lore, but confuses two distinctly different *Ficus sycomorus* species, both also noted in various religious versions of the Bible. Toss in *Acer orientalis* and its claims to fame, and you walk away convinced of the holiness of all these confusing trees - *Which tree?*

Either way, the settlers in Nova Scotia most likely knew of local Scottish lore of such trees from their own homelands, as we have just read.

James A. McQuiston FSA Scot has authored a new book, “Oak Island Curses, Codes and Secret Societies.” In his development of a very strong theory, James points to Mary Queen of Scots, who ruled Scotland before her cousin, Queen Elizabeth had her killed, promoted the European Sycamore, and perhaps, their planting on Oak Island was in respect to her. Did Sir Francis Bacon plant the trees in honor of his mother while on the island during his investigation of desalinization filtration systems at the beach? Perhaps he did so while preserving and entombing the Shakespeare

Portfolios in Quick Silver, deep within the island. Hard to tell. Sycamore trees – *and any tree associated with that name*, could be thought holy and to be protected, whether mistaken for another or not. So the special treatment ascribed to our Sycamore tree could be given due simply to the misspelling of its name and confusion with other famous trees of the time.

Remember now, our unique canopied trees are botanist-certified as **European Sycamore** (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). As the name implies, it had once been thought to be a *platanus*. Here again the Latin name "*pseudo*" (fake) + "platanus" tells us this tree is NOT a platanus as previous people and botanists had identified.

To demonstrate the confusion, I quote the main entry in Wikipedia to the definition and description of ***"Platanus."*** [11]

> … a genus consisting of 3-6 species native to the Northern Hemisphere. They are the sole living members of the Family of plants called *Platanaceae*. All mature members of *Platanus* are tall, reaching 30-50 m (98-164 ft) in height. All except for *P. kerrii* are deciduous and most are found in riparian or other wetland habitats in the wild, though proving drought-tolerant in cultivation. The hybrid London Plane [tree] (*Platanus x acerifolia*) has proven particularly tolerant of urban conditions and has been widely planted in London and elsewhere in the United Kingdom. They are often known in English as Planes or Plane trees. A formerly used name that is now rare is Plantain tree (not to be confused with other, unrelated, species with the same name). Some North American species are called Sycamores (especially *Platanus occidentalis*), although the term is also used for several unrelated species of trees. The genus name *Platanus* comes from the Greek word (X), which referred to *Platanus orientalis.*

And here is the entry in Wikipedia for the definition and description of ***"Pseudoplatanus."*** [12]

> …*Acer pseudoplatanus* was first described by Carl Linnaeus, the Swedish naturalist who described them in his 1753 book

Species Plantarum. “It is the type of species in the maple genus *Acer*.” The species specific name *pseudoplatanus* refers to superficial similarities of the leaves and bark of the Sycamore to those of Plane trees in the genus *Platanus*. However the two genera are in separate families that are only distantly related. *Acer* and *Platanus* differ in the position in which leaves are attached to the stem (alternate in *Platanus*, paired or opposite in *Acer*) and in their fruit, which are spherical clusters in *Platanus* [which look like the fig fruit of *Ficus sycomorus*] and paired winged fruit in *Acer*. The common name "Sycamore" was originally applied to the fig species *Ficus sycomorus*, the sycamore or sycomore referred to in the Bible, which is native to southwest Asia.

Other common names for the tree include False Plane-tree, Great Maple, Scottish Maple, Mount Maple, Mock-Plane, or Celtic Maple.

Holy Shamoly Alright – that is confusing!

Perhaps the confusion is best demonstrated in this homage…

***Platanus** – by Siusaidh NicNeill*
Look through your list of Holy Trees, the Tree Alphabet or the Oracle – I bet you won’t find a Sycamore there. I always considered them to be weeds. They’d grow on the Moon given half the chance and have taken extremely well to cold acid soils of the North Highlands of Scotland. What kind of tree is this?

It’s a fine tree, a tall tree, a handsome Middle Eastern type tree – the ‘Omar Sharif’ of trees. Enough. The Sycamore was introduced into this country over six hundred years ago. Theories vary, as usual. It is possible that the Romans brought it over. But why? Didn’t they realize there were trees here already? My preferred theory is that it was deliberately introduced by a group of people who travelled all the way from Scotland, England, and Wales through Europe to Palestine and back. The Crusaders. And the reason they brought back the seeds of the Sycamore, rather than

the Olive or the Palm was that the Sycamore was considered sacred. It was this beautiful, slow-growing tree which acted as the boundary marker between Upper and Lower Egypt. It was beneath the broad spreading branches of this tree that Mary and Jesus stopped for a breather on the flight into Egypt. Now the Cedars of Lebanon may well have been Solomon's wood of choice for the Temple, but I am willing to put money on the fine figuring of this pale honey hardwood making an appearance somewhere in the original building.

Today, any worker in wood would be proud to get a piece of storm blown Sycamore to work. It may be common (especially here in the Western Islands) and it may be adaptable (especially here…) but it is a slow to mature tree, even though it is able to reproduce fruitfully (ah those helicopters of our childhood) so it is quite rare to access. Woodworkers love it for many things but it is particularly popular for making musical instruments, at one end of the spectrum, and butcher's blocks, at the other. It is a singularly good wood for coppicing and it is reckoned that an average seven acre croft planted with mixed broadleaf high in Sycamore will not only be self-replenishing but will offer stock shelter and enough fuel for one family – forever.

During the great storms of the winter of 1998 a huge Sycamore in Corstophine, near Edinburgh, was split in two by lightning. It was in the middle of a park owned by the Forrester family and was said to be of great height and very old. It made the papers. This family are said to be connected, through the Knights Templar to the Sinclair family at Roslyn where there are many, many Sycamores (also of great height and very old) but exactly five miles due south of Roslyn Chapel there is a low hill. Crowning this hill there is a grove of thirteen trees. The thirteenth tree is set off-center and has been struck by lightning. All these trees are Sycamore. In the center of the grove is the ruin of a 14th century chapel and it was here on Mount Lothian that William Wallace

was knighted. That these Sycamores were planted, there is no doubt, the usual life span is about 250 to 300 years and it is my belief that this may be the second or even third planting. A little archaeology might not go amiss here. It is the planting of the Sacred Sycamore – so often thought of as an incoming weed – that flags this place up as special in the landscape.

Those people who love trees, all trees, believe that if a tree is introduced and can reproduce, then claim it as native and love it. After all the Caledonian Pine to which we all bow and scrape can only reproduce with extensive help from the very species who destroyed their very extensive forests. But for the Sycamore there would hardly be a tree to be seen on the wet, windswept western islands. The great lush dome of the Sycamore that has stood to the side of the school-house in this village, since the day it was built over 150 years ago, is a reminder of what a majestic tree it is. ***10***

Truly a convincing argument for the *platanus*… or was that the *pseudoplatanus* being described? Helicopters? Were we talking Planes or False Planes? I heard the admiring description of a European Sycamore, known as *Acer pseudoplatanus – didn't you?*

Do tell what other Historical and Biblical associations have been tangled amongst the limbs of these trees…

… "Regarding *Acer pseudoplatanus*, the Latin term Acer also means 'sharp' and *Acer pseudoplatanus* was used for spears, spikes and lances. In the "*Egyptian Book of the Dead*" twin Sycamores, a manifestation of the goddesses *Nut, Isis*, and *Hathor* (Lady of the Sycamore) stand at the eastern gate of heaven from which the sun god **Re** appeared each morning. Sycamores were often planted near tombs, and burial in a Sycamore coffin symbolized the return of the person to the Tree Goddess." ***13***

… "Trees appeared to have considerable significance in the cultures of the ancient world, and with Egypt, several types of

trees appear in Egyptian mythology and art, although the hieroglyph written to signify 'tree' appears to represent the Sycamore tree (nehet) in particular." [14]

… "The Oriental Plane tree, *Platanus orientalis*, is a very close relative of the common Sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*, of Eastern North America. In several translations of the Bible a species of fig is called Sycamore, a corruption of "Sycamine." Yet Sycamine is defined as Black Mulberry (*Morus nigra*) for fruit and (*Morus alba*) for its leaves. [15] Yet Sycamine is also known as the Sycamore Fig tree (*Ficus sycomorus*).

… "American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) which every school child knows does not grow in Palestine. The sycamore of the Bible is Sycamore Fig (*Ficus sycomorus*). It produces smaller, less sweet figs than traditional table figs (*Ficus carica*). Sycamore figs were food of the poor. Plane trees, another common name of Sycamores today, were actually flowering viburnums (*Viburnum spp.*) and Oriental Plane (*Platanus orientalis*) trees in the Middle East. Also mentioned is the Sycamine, which is Black Mulberry (*Morus nigra*)." [16]

… *"Ficus sycomorus* or Sycamore Fig. This tree has been misidentified and regionalized by many translators of the Bible. This Sycamore of the Bible is a tall fig tree, not a *Platanus spp.* (Planetree or Sycamore). Sycamore Fig trees grow to 40 feet in height, has small unlobed evergreen leaves, and a poor tasting fruit. *Platanus orientalis* or Chestnut, Plane tree. This tree is large, tall, strong, and white-wooded. In translation it is sometimes mis-labelled a Chestnut. Here, we call the American form a Sycamore, further confusing translations with Sycamore Fig and Sycamine Mulberry." [17]

… "*Platane* (**Genesis 30: 37**): A genus of *Platanaceae*, large trees with bark cracking scales (rhytidomes) letting appear cork by zones, large deciduous leaves alternate and lobed, and whose fruits are achenes, generally hairy together in hanging balls [looks like figs]. *Sycamore* (**Luke 19: 4**): A kind of fig tree very common in Egypt and the Near East in antiquity." [18]

… "The highly mottled bark of London Planes inspired the use of camouflage on clothing. All Plane trees feature distinctive

> bark that sheds in patches. Its ball-shaped seed pods and large canopy were inaccurately associated with the Egyptian Sycomore Fig (*Ficus sycomorus)*, which is why many Plane trees are inaccurately known as 'Sycamores.' Because its lobed leaves resemble Maple leaves the type species of the Maple genus is botanically named *Acer pseudoplatanus* or "False Plane;" commonly known as Sycamore Maple in the United States and Sycamore in Europe, this adds to the confusion over the plane tree's true identity." ***19***

Note for example the last entry above, and how the writer slyly maneuvers from Syc**a**more to Syc**o**more and back. I too have gotten sick of more Sycamore history.

I believe we can see why both biblical, botanical, and biographical references to this kaleidoscope of trees could confound the most astute TreeHugger. I also forensically find it is sufficient to assume those mystery canopied-trees on Oak Island were considered by the locals, to be special, sacred, and needed to be saved. Whether thought to be Acacia, Black Locust, European Sycamore or Sycomore, or even Platanus trees, those mystery trees imbued a reverence or a superstition amongst those residing near those trees and therefore, they were deemed to be untouchable. Clearly, there was a sense in and around Oak Island and the residents of Mahone Bay that those canopied trees were – *different*, and, therefore, to be left alone – *as they were.*

Perhaps, the name of 'Oak' was given to them purely as an assumption by the few, who made the moniker that those odd trees must have been *'some kind'* of Oak. Perhaps Northern Red Oak and Bur Oak being so sparse in the NEAF at the time, were even more rare within our area of interest, and what an "oak" looked like in the new continent was not altogether known. I doubt it. These were not people like today, who may roll down their car window to smell the air within a forest and try to guess what kind of trees it had, as they careen on ahead.

And for those seeking Oak wood for their mills to build ships, to satisfy the Crown's naval needs, or to supply the coopers feverishly making barrels, casks, and kegs for the ever-growing rum, pitch and molasses markets; how were they dissuaded from swinging an axe on lots #18, #19, and #20? Although claimed as the prize wood of Oak, is it possible their queer shape and appearance was enough to deter their being harvested?

And do these trees not seem like the islander people in this part of Scotland themselves? Who long ago had kin transported across the ocean, and where perhaps, they wait on their ancestral shores for those kin to return and find them as they had been left. Are these trees not mirror images on distant shores awaiting those clan kinship to return?

The links in the chain are not connected – *yet*. It appears James A. McQuiston, FSA Scot, author of his eighth book on our area of interest, may have some answers. You will have to check out his latest, "*Oak Island: Curses, Codes and Secret Societies*," to find out!

Had these trees simply been planted on this lone island for a utilitarian purpose, such as visually marking it as the "X" on a map, or to provide shelter and its other known benefits to our ancient voyagers is still unknown. If this is the case, then this would indicate our ancient voyagers would have known of what tree they were indeed planting and what it should look like when mature. Were they growing,

> *Option A)* the tree known as a robust, full-crowned, magnanimous shelter-belt tree found in Europe and the Scandinavian countries. Or, were they growing
>
> *Option B)* the tall, lanky, sinuous canopied-tree, which resembles an excellent flag marker for finding yourself in a foreign bay crowded of islands, but so rare to find.

The tree of Option A would have been new to the British Isles, but commonplace in Europe and parts of the northeastern region of

the Mediterranean basin. The tree of Option B would have the same native ranges as the tree in Option A, but it would be so unique and rare to find within those native ranges, that they must have been selected for the one thing no other tree could have provided – *their look!*

Yes, those ancient voyagers could have selected the wrong tree, or more correctly, the wrong purpose for the tree, but ended up with the rarer tree, being in fact, the right tree! Yet looking at where our existing stand of Oak Island canopied-trees come from today in Scotland and its relationship with those who inhabited Nova Scotia and Oak Island, it would be of astronomical calculations should it be a simple coincidence.

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