SECTION B

MYSTERY CANOPIED TREES

"Do you know that even when you look at a tree
and say, 'that is an oak tree,' or 'that is a banyan tree,'
the naming of the tree, which is botanical knowledge,
has so conditioned your mind that the word comes
between you and actually seeing the Tree?
To come in contact with the tree you have to
put your hand on it and the word
will not help you to touch it."

"**Freedom from the Known**," by **Jiddu Krishnamurti**

Chapter Three

WOODEN YOU KNOW

Wood, wood, wood! *Why all the talk about wood?*

Unlike other material, wood can tell us the story of Oak Island more clearly and from a wider variety of forensic aspects than other artefact or materials investigated. Wood can tell us the trees age and the age since death. Trees can tell us how long they were alive, and how long they took to decay. They can explain where they lived, and in the conditions which they lived in. Wood and reading the story it offers, I believe, solves the mystery of when the Money Pit was dug. We have no wood to enlighten us about those mystery canopied-trees – *or do we?*

This book is not a retelling of a telling of a story 227 years older or more. Nor is it a new theory of who buried what, why, or how. Instead, this book is written to provide you aspects of this story not sufficiently investigated until now. This in turn, gives us the answers to solve many questions and determine *when* this happened.

In these next two chapters we will provide you the forensic evidence proving the canopied-trees on Oak Island, were in fact, not oak trees. They were not any *Quercus* species. They were trees of a much different species and native to far-away lands. The conclusion is Oak Island was misnamed.

To investigate what the wood answers, we first need to know what wood, more specifically – *what tree species*, were native to Nova Scotia and on Oak Island at that time. This knowledge will guide the forensics. Since we are not able to review ancient tangible evidence, we must use history, written witness accounts, photographs, and science, to make the forensic conclusion on those canopied-trees. Those trees on Oak Island have been

described as: "*Burr Oak,*" "*Northern Red Oak,*" "*Live Oak,*" "*White Oak,*" "*Twin Oak,*" and "*Evergreen Oak.*" Witness accounts clearly show people who lived there and had been amongst these trees were not so sure what kind of trees they really were. Many *did describe* them as being nonnative, or foreign, to the area. So what were the native trees in our area of interest?

To most people a tree is a tree, a grove of trees is nice, and a forest of trees - *can be boring.* Usually, we zip around them in our cars or occasionally venture within for some contact with 'nature.' Often oblivious to the stories they can tell and uninformed of the history they have witnessed; we pass up on understanding the degree with which trees can inform us.

Recent studies of the historic forestry of the maritime province of Nova Scotia realized there were dramatic changes in the makeup of this ecosystem. Researchers studied what those changes were, when they happened, and why - *and what should be done about it*. Those scientists became interested in long-term trends and future trajectory of the composition of those forests. To build the parameters of such evaluation, researchers first needed to identify time periods best describing the phases wherein those changes most likely happened. To best understand what impacted the forest, they looked at what else was going on. In so doing, their findings were critical to helping establish what tree species were native in Nova Scotia, up to and during our period and area of interest.

Appendix B, *"The Truth in Timber and Timing,"* Explores the pathways to answers botanists and eco-scientists have uncovered from studying the *New England Acadian Forest* (NEAF) biome. This again, is our area of interest. This appendix further describes the changes of the NEAF in a chronological approach and how the makeup of old growth forests had changed by 1795. Therefore, we with scientific confidence, know what trees were native within the NEAF and their geographic ranges. This is where we begin our forensic investigation.

The Natives are All Around

As you will read, many people opined the oaks on Oak Island were 'not from there.' Well, what trees would have been – *from there? From there* - as stated, was The New England Acadian Forest, or NEAF. This eco-region covers most of the New England area, the three Maritime Provinces of Canada portions of southeastern Quebec, but with the exception of northernmost highlands of New Brunswick.

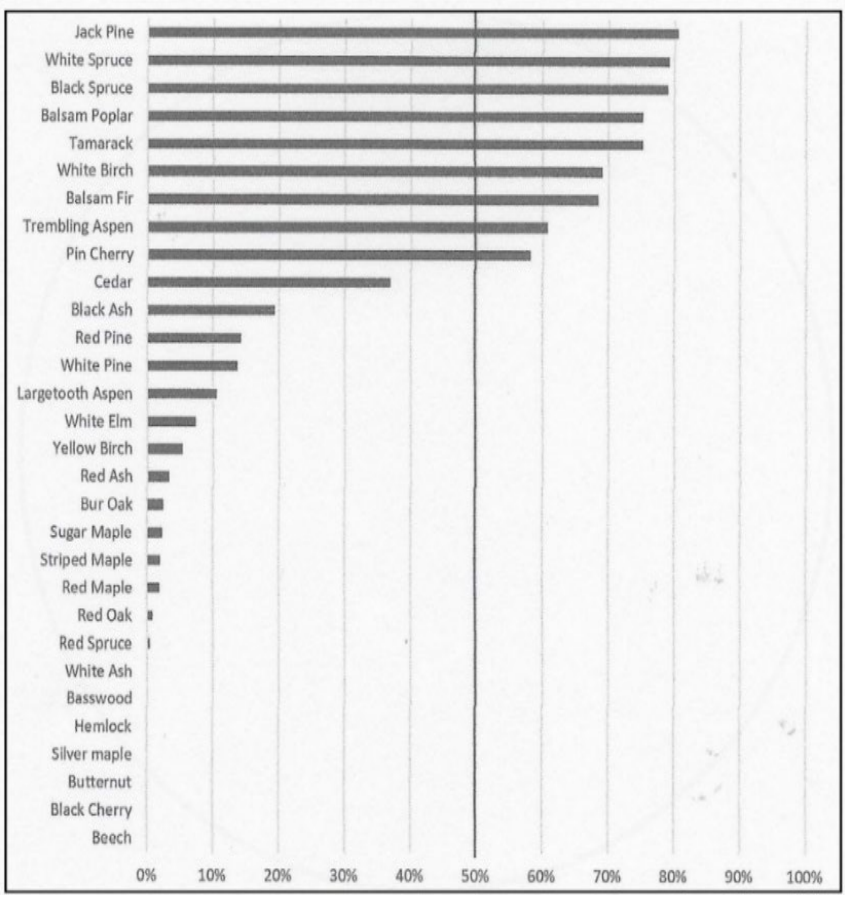
There were thirty species of trees which populated this medieval range of wilderness.[1] There were no 'nonnative' tree species noted within this biome at the time. A nonnative tree species would be a tree which does not normally grow in the area due to the variety of biological characteristics of that species. Any 'nonnative' tree species would need to have been purposefully planted or transplanted into that eco-region. These nonnative species would have a problematic chance at transitioning from planting to early-succession then to mid-succession, and to full climax-forest association; with little hope in developing a successful place within the forest canopy. There are exceptions which do not affect our area of interest.

The following chart illustrates the percentage of general overlap of range throughout the NEAF, for those thirty native tree species. This indicates the population of the species spread over the entire biome in general.

Specific concentrations or groves of a single species is expected, based on their plant characteristics. However, This chart indicates the probability of walking by the species in any single forest excursion.

Other more detailed information on these species can be found in Appendix E, *"Known NEAF Neighbors."* Furthermore, this chart identifies only two species of Oak (*Quercus*) were native in Nova

Scotia; being Burr Oak at 3%, and [Northern] Red Oak at less than 1%. Today, Burr Oak has extirpated in most of the maritime provinces and Northern Red Oak, except for ornamental plantings (not forest stock) make up less than .9% of wood products in Nova Scotia.[2] There is no Southern Live Oak, by any name, listed as a native species, then or now.



We know by this and other surveys, there would have only been two species of Oak trees in this region at the time prior to the Money Pit being found… Burr Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) and Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*). Neither species is an ***evergreen!***

To the left is a black and white copy of an artistic depiction of a similar view seen below. Courtesy of Robert W. Cook.

Below is an 1897 photograph taken on a bluff above Smith's Cove, on Oak Island, looking across to Isaac's Point. There, a stand of unknown canopied trees appear as planted parasols providing endless shade to any beachgoing treasure seekers who hunt the island.

Courtesy: Nova Scotia National Archives

What Others have Opined

The evidence presented includes comments made by those who lived and worked amongst those canopied-trees over the centuries. Comments and observations have been collected from those who have an expertise in trees, and they offered their informed opinions on the literature and photographic evidence.

Appendix C, "*On the Record*," is a compilation of all the quotes, reports, publications, conversations with owners, botanists, reporters, authors, scientists, treasure-seekers, and bureaucrats – regarding many of the forensic issues this book is investigating. Some of those who took note discussed several issues found in this book. We have extracted the related comments and have shown them here, so you are aware of what others have said. Each is given a sequential number in chronological order in the Appendix above. This is to help readers cross reference the full quote in context along with the source of the comment. Below are those comments and opinions which deal with the mystery canopied-trees on Oak Island. As I've researched for this book, my thoughts on the merit or importance of these comments are shown immediately following.

1. "Samuel de Champlain Quotation" - 1604 expedition of southeastern Nova Scotia, referring to the Islands in Chester Bay & Mahone Bay.

> *"The islands and shores are full of pines, firs, birches and other inferior timbers."*

2. "The Description and Natural History of the Coasts of North America," by Nicolas Denys, 1632-1670. Pub. 1672, under title: "Description Geographique et Historique des Costes de L'Amerique Septentrionale: arec L'Histoire Naturelle du pais."

> *In 1633, Nicolas Denys – the Governor of Cape Breton Island, Prince Edward Island, and the coastline from 'Canso to Gaspe' from 1654-1688; surveyed these maritime landscapes to report lumber opportunities to the French government. These territories included Mahone Bay and the regions along the eastern coasts of Nova*

Scotia. Denys wrote: "some Oak, Pines, Firs of 3 sorts (Spruce, Fir & Hemlock), Birches (White Birch), Black Birches (Yellow Birch), Beeches, Aspens, Maples and Ashes were the predominant species."

I have read the lengthy translation of the document written by Denys when he was in his late years, long departed from Nova Scotia. The compilation starts with 56 pages of corrections, errors, and objective reasonings for his often oblique descriptions. Many believe he "remembered" much of the country as it was written by another writer of the era. Denys is given his most accolades for describing the area in which he actually lived, unlike that of his descriptions of the Bay of Fundy, Maine, and eastern coastline of the province.

3. "The Halifax Naval Yard and Mast Contractors, 1775-1815," by Julian Gwyn. www.cnrs-scrn.org/northern_ mariner/Vol.11, In 1763, said;

"…Three years later, [1763] Philip Peake, foreman of shipwrights, went to Chester and Mahone Bay in search of black birch, oak and pine timber for capstan barrels, catheads, knees, standards, and cheeks as well as masts, spars, yards, and bowsprits. He returned with a rather discouraging report, "having found only a few black birch fit for capstan barrels between thirty and thirty-three inches in diameter, some small oak, pine and spruce from sixteen inches and smaller, but very straight and tall. There was no oak timber for ships above 150 to 200 tons, some pine fit for masts of up to 20-gun ships, yards and topmasts for 40-gun and 50-gun ships, but at a great distance from the rivers, the ground being rough and rocky."

This is a historical record that I put much veracity in. Philip Peake was performing his profession and knew what he was looking at and looking for. He specifically went to our area of interest and was not simply sailing by in the outer waters, peering in like someone driving by garage sales hoping to find a grand piano.

4. "Permit to Fell Timber at Western Shores," for Daniel & Anthony Vaughn, 1788. Blockhouse Blog.

"Having caused the aforesaid lotts of land and the pine trees standing thereon to be inspected and surveyed, I do, incomformity

to his Majesties instructions, hereby grant lycense to the aforesaid David Vaughan, Anthony Vaughan and James McLeod to cut and take away the pine trees growing thereon; save and except thirty eight trees; being from 16" and upwards in diameter and from 26' and upwards in length, which are marked (image) being fit and are to retain for his Majesty's service; and are therefore wholly excepted out of this lycense accordingly. Given under my hand at Halifax this 25th day of January 1788. (sgd) J.W. Wentworth"

We gleam some important considerations to our investigation in that, it was not just mighty oaks which were subject to crown control. We are given direct evidence of the use of the 'Broad Arrow mark' applied in our area of interest and those people of our story upheld and abided by such restrictions. It is believed Samuel Ball was an expert lumberman who had experience in this work as a slave and was said 'lumbering' to be his military service function. Whether as a friend or employee, the relationship with the Vaughan's was furthered by the help I am sure he provided with this permit and the dire need for fire wood at that time.

5. "Canadian Forestry Chronical," by Sidney Perley, 1847. Pubs-dif-ifc.org. 6-25-2020. Pgs. 72, 120, 141, 201.

In *1847,* Perley reported *"Red Pine from 70-80 feet tall, White Pine from 160 feet tall, and Butternut as much as 80 feet tall; while Red Oak and Bur Oak were the only Oak species found*."

10. "History of the Oak Island Enterprise – Chapter 1," by J.B. McCully, printed in "The Colonist" on January 2, 1864. Truro, Nova Scotia. Pgs. 1-4.

"…These men found the Island covered with a thick growth of wood, mostly oak; and very little of the mainland cleared…"

Unfortunately as you will later read, Jotham Blanchard McCully is quite the storyteller. Or so he fashioned himself to be. The only part of this statement that I believe accurate is mention of the mainland was 'little cleared.' The rest, and much of his postings in The Colonist, appear to be slathered with a hidden purpose – *later revealed!* His descriptions of the searcher operations and the findings of coconut fiber are later accepted, but also verified by others.

15. "History of the County of Lunenburg," by Mather Byles DeBrisay, Judge of County Courts and Member of the Historical Society of Nova Scotia, Second Edition 1895. Harvard College Library, April 7, 1896, Cambridge, Mass. Originally written at Bridgewater & La Have, N.S. February 1870 . Pgs. 301-306.

> *"Among the islands, none is more widely known than Oak Island, four miles from Chester, so called from the beautiful oak trees, some of which remain."*

16. "The Story of Oak Island – 1895," by Frederick L. Blair, 1893. Included in "Buried Treasure," part of Oak Island Treasure Company's Public Share Offering. "Additional" Information included.

> *"…The eastern end was originally covered with oak timber, several groves of which still remain…"*

Both the good Judge and Mr. Blair are describing what others had written about, though DeBrisay grew up in the area and his nanny was in fact a member of the John Smith household. Both renditions are over 100 years old, and the "oak" theme does become part of the lore.

18. "Oak Island Mystery: The Kempton Variant," Solicited by Reverend A.J. Kempton, Summer 1909. Written by a hired schoolteacher for preparation for a book.

> *"…and Oak Island is nicely sheltered from outside view. It is not a half mile from the mainland… has still some fine oak trees on it… and the beautiful island clothed with large oak trees soon attracted attention."*

My first comment revolves around a local resident writing a description for a book. Keep in mind that Reverend Kempton was the one who "deciphered" the 90 ft stone. But oftentimes, fiction has flecks of facts within. The admission our island is home to only a few of the remaining canopied-trees helps date their rate of demise. This helps later when we rebut the conversations of the 'forests of these oaks' dying from carpenter ant infestation. And the reference to the island having been "clothed" in those trees is a good descriptor. For it distinguishes the difference between several taller trees with those canopied crown shapes, appearing to clothe or cover the island, versus they were growing everywhere

on the island. Finally, keep in mind this is an amalgam of a larger quotation, so context is important.

19. "History of Oak Island, Nova Scotia, and of the Work Done There at Different Time to Recover Buried Treasure," by Frederick L. Blair, 1926. known as Exhibit B. Pgs. 4-5.

> *"At its Eastern extremity lies a little crescent shaped bay, "Smith's Cove," whose shores were originally bordered with large oak trees. A number of these may still be seen."*

Again as the last, our overly-promoted story of those canopy crown trees growing all over the island is appropriately pared back to what is visible in aerial photography at that time, and from his earlier experience on the island. Nothing embellished here.

21. "The Oak Island Treasure," by Charles B. Driscoll. The North American Review. June 1929 Edition.

> *"…beached their canoe on the Oak Island sands in a lonely little inlet shaded by towering evergreen oaks that stood a little back from the beach. Two or three live oaks still stand there, but in those days, there was a goodly grove of them. Book botanists will be tempted to quit my story right here, for they say live oak does not grow so far north and is seldom found north of Virginia. All I can say to that is, go to Oak Island and see, as I did. It is not difficult to get there."*

Mr. Driscoll is revered in Nova Scotia and Canada for his writings and prowess to communicate a feeling. He does an excellent job here. A "goodly grove" is a perfect metaphor as a description of what was once the healthy, but limited spread of these nonnative trees on the eastern drumlin. His back-handed comment of "book" botanist I appreciate, as getting them to commit to a determination is quite difficult. He jumps the shark identifying those canopied trees as being evergreen Live Oak, as you will read ahead.

22. "When the Last Live-Oak Dies," by Doug Crowell, Blockhouse Blog, March 13, 2016. Oak Island Mystery: Sub Section: Oak Island Mystery, by Frederick Griffin, 1934.

"*Puzzle of the Live-Oaks – Illusion of the Spanish Main and the age when piracy was in flower comes from the presence of half a dozen live-oak trees. You'd swear they were palms on the sand spit. They are without branches or foliage low down and their spreading tops have a palm tree look. These oaks are a part of the island mystery. Where did they come from? How did they grow here? These lived-oaks, it is said, are southern trees, not found north of Texas or Louisiana. Yet here they are on Oak Island. None was ever found on the other 354 islands in Mahone Bay which are, in many cases, crested with the trees of the region, including many northern conifers. Fifty years ago* [1884], *old Chester people remember, there was a regular little grove of these lived-oaks on a spit at Smith's Cove. Most of them have died. Now a mere half dozen hoary and moribund old-timers remain with a kind of struggling majesty. He referred to the presence of live-oaks, foreign oaks he called them, on Oak Island. Why were they there? His father told him when he was a boy the island had been all oaks.*"

Frederick Griffin does a fantastic job describing the images of palms on a spit in Mahone Bay that Robert Cooks artistically captured. Again we hear of a "little grove" of trees at Smith's Cove. Even though the father recalls they had been the only trees growing on Oak Island when he was a child. This commentary is dated 1934, which adds to the timeline of the canopied-trees demise. Notice how carpenter ants have still not wiped them all out! Soon the issue of Texas or Southern Live Oaks will be addressed botanically. Stay tuned.

23. "To Nova Scotia: The Sunrise Province of Canada" by T. Morris Longstreth, 1935. Personal visit to Smith's Cove & Interview with anonymous Woman from Chester, Nova Scotia. P. 26.

"The seawater had an uncanny clearness. Oak, very tall, and leafy only towards the tops like palms, were so dissimilar to any oaks I had ever seen that they lent the place an eerie air even in mid-morning."

25. "Letter to Gilbert Hedden," by R.V. Harris, August 27, 1937.

""I have a reply from the Gray Herbarium, Harvard University, about the oak leaves, which reads as follows; The specimen of oak which you sent, certainly belongs to the characteristics Red Oak of

Nova Scotia. The leaves are small and shallowly lobed, but that is because, I take it, the trees grew in a somewhat exposed habitat."

Perhaps now you understand my comment about the 'book botanists.' Harvard's description of a "Northern Red Oak" leaf is completely off. They sound identical to descriptions of a leaf from a Burr Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*). I do not know the comparison differences between a Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) leaf, a "Southern Red Oak" (*Quercus falcata*) leaf, or a "Texas Red Oak" (*Quercus texana*) leaf, but the taxonomical definition of Northern Red Oaks say: "Leaf – The leaves of NRO are deeply sinuate to lobed. The lobe ends are tapered with few irregular bristle-tipped teeth. The leaf can be 22 -25 cm (10 in) long, and 3.1 to 5.9 cm (6 in) wide. The leaf margin is smooth." Without comments from the peanut gallery – *that is larger than my foot*. As for the caveat about the leaves growing *smaller* than normal due to their exposed habitat… Really?

31. "Oak Island Connection," by Kerrin Margiano, 2016. Daughter of Jean McGinnis, and the descendants of the McGinnis Family. Story told by Grandfather George William "Bill" McGinnis, who grew up on Oak Island as a child, recants his childhood and stories told by his previous relatives, circa 1950's. Chapters 1-7 & 15.

Grandpa Bill: "Over a century ago, when there were towering oak trees on the east end as thick as ten men around, Daniel arrived on the Isle of Oaks. The strange oak trees rose majestically above the sea of evergreens… We walked along the shoreline to Smith's Cove, and he said when he was young there was a perfectly straight line of fifteen oak trees along the point. There were no evergreens along the line, only large oaks…"

"…just relay the facts as I heard them, but the oak trees are so unusual that I just cannot resist. The way the oak trees grew were so very different from all the other oaks in the area. They shot straight up, with no branches along the trunk till the tree explodes in a wide canopy. These trees remind me of the trees drawn in the cartoons by Dr. Seuss, and they look out of place in Nova Scotia."

"…There is a simpler possibility, and that is someone wanted to have Gloucester Island stand out in Mahone Bay from the 360 other islands as Oak Island. A westbound ship would see the

towering red canopy in September. I wondered how long a tree would have to grow to tower above evergreens…."

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. 'Grandpa Bill' relayed this story to his young niece as any older relative would with a healthy smattering of family yarn. The girth of those oaks as thick as "10-men around" was exactly what my grandfather once said about a fishing excursion he had off the coast of California. To me it was all true – *hook, line, and sinker.* Yet again we have the opportunity to gleam some potential facts from this story. Aerial views of Isaac's Point and Smith Cove do show an aligning of the canopied-trees from the outer spit toward the Money Pit area. The story confirms photographic evidence of conifers easily crowding the understory with no apparent harm to our mystery trees. Ironically, one of our contender species is known to be "congregatory" in they host their species to a particular habitat or biome. This is not a communal arrangement Northern Red Oaks commit to. I wholeheartedly agree the purpose of these trees were to mark this single island as a destination for those in the know. Perhaps she is right about those trees being *Quercus dr.seuss*?

32. "Nova Scotia Bureau of Information: Oak Island," article published in 1953, by the defunct Nova Scotia Bureau of Information – now known as the Public Archives of Nova Scotia (MG1 Volume 1228). Bureau's "re-statement of all locally known circumstances" pertaining to Oak Island in Mahone Bay. (Blockhouse Blog, April 29, 2016)

"General Appearance: …Incidentally, the place ought to be called Rose Island, instead of Oak Island, as it is literally covered with handsome wild roses, while live oaks are far and few between." [written in 1951]

"The hourglass bulge next to the mainland is rather low, the outer one much higher with a fill shown on marine charts as 104 above sea level. There is a handsome stand of overgrown timber (Spruce) on the outer end of the island, and this shelters a former Tea Room now unoccupied. The bare branches of three large, dead oaks tower above the evergreens east of Pirate Cove [Smith's Cove today]*, and there are a few similar large dead oaks around the corner on the southern side* [Isaac's Point]*. There are a few other oaks in leaf, but all much smaller. The people along shore refer to the bare oaks as 'original' oaks, and the others as 'new' oaks."*

Here we again find the description of the canopied-trees as "*live oaks*." His remarks of dead oaks (snags) is accurate from photo evidence. We have a link, by the collected description of mainlanders, that the dying or dead trees were those remaining from the "original" stand of canopied-trees. The "new oaks" is very interesting. Are they referring to the relatively newer Northern Red Oak trees, now about forty years old found on Lot #5? Or are they discussing any of the vase-shaped bushes seen growing under those canopied trees in much older photographs? The latter was indeed the new growth offspring of our canopied-trees. Those bushes were cleared over the course of growing habitation for grazing animals and for searcher operations.

Note the description given of the islands eastern drumlin elevation according to maritime charts of the day. At 104 feet, this is as much as fifty feet higher than most all written descriptions of the island I have read. A typo perhaps.

33. "The Oak Island Enigma," by Thomas P. Leary, 1953. Pgs. 4-36.

> *"In 1795 the island was covered with a thick stand of trees, very similar to Red Oaks in bark and foliage. The origin of the Oaks has been the subject of much conjecture; they tower to 80 or 90 feet and sometimes live more than 250 years. The trunk flares out at the top into a swaying umbrella shape, unlike other oaks on the mainland. A few stand today, like symbols of the mystery that shadows the ground on which they grew… Near the crest of the hill stood one of the Oaks..."*
>
> *"…Most of the grim oaks were bare and dead, victims of the black ants, and a new crop of spruce growing thick around them. Out of curiosity I cut one down. It had seen some strange sights, for the tree-rings showed it was born in 1793. There are two left."*

Keep in mind this is fodder for a novel. Gee, I guess I'm authoring a book too. Okay, let's note his conjecture of the bark and foliage being similar to [Northern?] Red Oaks. What led him to this discovery? Were they big leaves like my foot, or small leaves as described by the Herbarium? Again with the black ants (a.k.a. Carpenter Ants)! One can't make this up as you will later read.

Aren't we glad not every looky-loo goes about chopping down someone's tree to learn how old it was? There is more in the novel about what he finds embedded in the bark of this tree, which is neither germane nor genuine in my opinion. Did we even have dendrology beck in 1953? Perhaps we did in Arizona in 1929. But did Mr. Leary know of Mr. Douglass?

34. "Oak Island obsession: The Restall Story," by Lee Lamb, 2006. Pgs.44-45. Passages include Mother Mildred Restalls' personal journal entries entitled, "The Reluctant Treasure Hunter: Part One" 1955. Wife of treasure hunter Robert Restall, mother to Robby Restall Jr. and Ricky Restall, they lived on Oak Island from October 15, 1959, until Robert and Robby's death in a shaft, on August 17, 1965.

> *"…They claim these big black ants killed all the oak trees. How can that be? Give my regards to all. Will be seeing you soon, Bob." …lying in bed you could look thru the window and see the tops of the tall spruce trees, their edges feathered with silver, standing solid and clear against the lighter sky." Pgs. 83 & 98.*

The Restalls lived in small shacks next to the diggings down at Smith's Cove, literally under the remnants of the dead canopied-trees. Bob Restall felt those trees were Spruce. While Mildred has described those snags rising up above the conifers in their area. They were not Spruce. Annually Black Carpenter Ants don their sexiest wings and for two weeks they give their all to 'hook-up' with as many lady ants as possible. These ants bite and not just for frenzied arousal. The Restalls could not keep themselves from being misinterpreted as lady ants nor as moving smorgasbords. At more than an inch in length, they were capable of a lot of things, but eating live hardwood oaks was not one of them.

42. "Oak Island Money Pit New Expedition," by Al Masters, October 1971. SAGA Magazine, Volume 43, Number 1, pg. 2-7.

> *"…The islands name was derived from the beautiful grove of Red Oak trees on the islands Eastern end. The last fact was a curious one since the island was the only one in the Mahone group to bear oak trees."*

43. "Initial letter on 'oak trees' to Chief Botanist, James H. Soper, at National Museums of Canada, Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada," by D`Arcy O'Connor, March 26, 1975.

> *"…The oak trees for which the island was named have very distinctive umbrella-like tops to them and were identified years ago by the Grey Herbarium of Harvard University as the Red Oak, which they said is common in Nova Scotia. But I have always been puzzled by the fact that among the approximately 350 islands in Mahone Bay, only Oak Island bears these trees. (Actually, most of them are dead now, there were many hundreds of them on the island in the 19th century and their presence was first noted in 1790. In addition, I have seen no evidence of these oaks on the mainland opposite oak island, which is only about 300 yards offshore. What I'd like to know is whether it would be possible by some fluke of nature for those oaks to have sprouted only in that one location, or is it more likely that the buds or acorns were transplanted from some other part of the mainland, having been purposely brought there by man?"*

Doggedly, author D`Arcy O`Connor attempts to get answers to the same gnawing questions we have today. But alas, he is referring to misinformation from the Grey Herbarium as we have discussed in the previous item #25. More importantly, those samples were found deep underground when presented to Harvard. One would have presumed, that with a few canopied trees around or recently dead back in 1937, "oak leaves and acorns" would be everywhere on the island. Why didn't Mr. Hedden simply take those found above ground, instead of submitting leaf and nut found underground? *Answer* – he was attempting to ascertain the tree type and age so as to gauge the time of the activity below ground. Mr. O`Connor may have forgotten that in 1776 the mainlanders insisted on calling newly-named Gloucester Island – ***Oak Island***, in honor of those unusual, nonnative canopied-trees. For them to have grown to such height to be noticeably obvious, would mean those trees back in 1776 would have arrived some 60-80 years prior.

45. "Interview of Charlotte Adams." Her family were caretakers on Oak Island from 1939-1945. Interviewed on April 27, 1976.

"…I remember when I was a very little girl there was a very old man that lived down the road, Mr. George Hiltz, grandfather to younger George Hiltz. And he told us about the oak tree with a cut limb sticking out and there was a ridge around where the limb was to lower the chests… There weren't too many oak trees on the island when we lived there. They were all dried up and dying. There was on big one we used to saw up for firewood. There was lots of spruce wood, apple trees, birch wood. It's mostly spruce trees now."

48. "Interview of Mildred Restall, wife of Robert Restall, treasure seeker," by D'Arcy O'Connor, August 10, 1976.

"…There were quite a few oak trees on the island when we were there. And down on that point of land at Smith's Cove there was still the remnants first year we were there of twin oak down there with just a few branches on it. (plainly visible in my 1931 air photo)."

On the very end of Isaac's Point there lived a canopied-tree which appears to have two major stems (trunks) from the ground up. Looking closely at other canopied-trees, this branching characteristic is not an anomaly, as many of the trees grow two primary branches. Yet this particular tree gave rise to these being called "Twin Oaks." Bobby Restall drew a 'twin oak' on his maps of the Money Pit area, and I have seen them as a caricature symbol on others. Of the more than 600 species of *Quercus*, none have the name of 'Twin Oak," nor have the word *twin* in their commonly known names. The tree in question is frequently viewable in the photos on hand.

53. "Telephonic interview with Craig Lorimer, Forester with Harvard Forest, Harvard University, Mass.," by D`Arcy O'Connor, April 18, 1977.

"The Red Oak in Nova Scotia usually lives to 250 years of age… Red Oaks and other species commonly have an umbrella-shaped dome when they're grown in the open… A large oak tree would fall over within 10 or 20 years after it died. (O'Connor notation: also says there's no natural way oak buds could have gotten below ground – as Triton found below 160 feet)."

I really do not know what to say about this opinion. Neither Southern Red Oak (*Quercus falcata*) nor Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) show ANY images in all of googledom, Kew catalogs, nor other topiary image libraries to verify such a remark.

61. "The Oak Island Mystery – The World's Greatest Treasure Hunt," by Lionel & Patricia Fanthorpe, 2017. Second Edition, Chapter 1, p. 18 & 32.

> *"…Having reached Oak Island, scarcely two hundred meters offshore… and he began to wonder through the huge red oaks that gave the island its name… The current name of Oak Island seems to be based on the presence of the red oaks with their characteristic umbrella domes. At one time they were far more numerous than they are today."*

62. "The Curse of Oak Island – The Story of the World's Longest Treasure Hunt," by Randall Sullivan, 2018. Second Edition. Introduction p. 13-15.

> *"…was that the island was covered with a magnificent forest of mature oak trees, with deep roots and stout trunks that supported massive spreading limbs, leaving most of the ground in the shadow of their canopy. It may have been the only island in Mahone Bay where oak trees grew, and certainly it was the only island covered with them. Those trees were what gave the island its eventual name…*
>
> *That a single island among the dozens in Mahone Bay should be covered with oak trees was for a period of sixty years or so the principal mystery of the place… [Nicolys] Denys could conceive of no explanation for how the oaks had gotten there" …Among the many questions raised by these early accounts is this: just what kinds of oak trees were growing on Oak Island back in 1795? The original trees are long gone, mostly killed off by an infestation of black ants during the nineteenth century. R.V. Harris had noted that a number of his sources "apparently with a view to adding more mystery to their stories, have stated that this species of oak does not grow elsewhere in Nova Scotia, that they are southern trees found no farther north than Louisiana." …(Charles B. Driscoll whose Doubloons is regarded in Canada as a classic work) had written that the trees on the island were the species known as live oak (Quercus virginiana), an evergreen oak found only in southern United States. Harris, though, asserted that the trees on the island were "undoubtedly" red oaks, which do grow on the Nova Scotia mainland…"*

I won't belabor the ant issue any further, as those mighty munching menaces are covered further along. Personally, I have looked but not found this attributed statement purported by Nicolas Denys.

63. "The Oak Island Mystery, Solved: The Final Chapter," by Joy A. Steel and Gordon Fader, 2018. Second Edition. Pg. 2.

> *"According to tradition, the current name, Oak Island, likely reflects a grove of lofty red oaks that once grew on the island's eastern drumlin. …and the oaks are all gone; their sad disappearance reportedly due largely to plagues of black ants in the 1800s, with the last few trees dying about 1960. It seems to us, however, that regardless of the reasons given for the trees' disappearance, trees don't all die at once, but over time – one-by-one."*

Like so much about Oak Island there is a little bit of right and a little bit of wrong. I'll stick with the not-completely correct issues of those murderous ants and the last trees to die en mases in the 1960s. Both aerial photography and eyewitness accounts confirm their necrotic denouement much earlier.

66. "The Oak Island Encyclopedia, Vol. 1." by Hammerson Peters, 2019. From Mysteries of Canada, Part 1, "The History". p. 18-22.

> *"…So named for the tall, broad-canopied oak trees which once dotted its surface, towering as they did over the shorter spruce trees which dominate the island today."*

67. "Oak Islands Key Features and Landmarks," tab titled (Oak Trees), 2019. At www.oakislandmap.com/oak-islands-key-features-and-landmarks/oak-trees-says.

> *"…Then there is the notion that the Oak trees that once occupied the Island's eastern shore are "different" or "not native" to Nova Scotia. Certainly, their appearance is different with long branchless trunks leading up to towering canopies. Google any species of Oak tree and it is difficult to find their equivalent." Quote: "By growing up together, perhaps out of an abandoned pasture about eighty to a hundred years ago, these trees began growing upward and unfolding. They produced shade for each other, and the dominant growth direction was upward into the light-filled space. The lower branches, which never grew to great*

size, died off in the increasingly shady environment of the upward-shooting trees. In this way, the long, branchless trunk developed, and we need to imagine the seemingly meager crown of the individual trees as part of the larger, dense, green canopy of the whole forest."

This represents much of what is misunderstood about the growth of vascular plants and the tropisms and morphologies which effect plant growth, which is not represented in these canopied-trees. Photographic evidence of their juvenile form can be seen, and it can be postulated that those magnificent trees have had several successful successions of dominating the canopy in this part of the island. As you read on, examples of both the way trees grow and the ways their growth can be impacted is spelled out.

68. "The Blockhouse Blog Column," by Doug Crowell, 2019. Blockhouse Investigations, at www.oakislandcompendium.ca.

"Though dead, I noted that they were referred to as 'Live Oak' trees. Driscoll, in much earlier account, almost three decades earlier in fact, also called them Live Oaks. Here we have two publications describing the trees as Live Oaks, and they had the benefit of seeing them in person… They were almost certainly not native to the area, but it seems that we have to give serious consideration to the idea that they were brought here from further down the North American continent."

[Driscoll (1929) suggests these trees were Southern Oaks (*Quercus virginiana*) and he would have seen them. This is an evergreen Oak found throughout Southern U.S. States, although their range does not go much further north than Virginia. This oak variety has one of the smallest acorns (Aizen & Patterson, 1990). On the other hand, if they kept leaves throughout the winter, this would be readily observable and passed on by those on the Island even without botanical training.]

69. "Curse of Oak Island, Season 7, Episode #21, on the History Channel, or see The Oak Island Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, p.233." Dr. Rodger C. Evans, Dir. Of the E.C. Smith Herbarium Biology Department and Plant Developmental Morphology & Systematics Laboratory at Acadia University; examines oak leaf and acorn clusters captured on Oct. 1959, by Robert Restall, Oak Island Treasure hunter.

> …it was revealed Mr. Restall did not believe these specimens were from the mysterious canopy oak trees still remaining on the island, but rather found within the filtration system buried at Smith's Cove… Dr. Evans determines "*the oak leaf and acorns were not from a Northern Red Oak, but possibly from a different oak species, possibly brought to the island by and planted long ago.*" Dr. Evans said he "*did not believe the acorns or leaf could have floated across the Atlantic Ocean from Europe or Africa due to their poor resistance to the effects of saltwater."* Dr. Evans also "*did not believe any DNA material could be retrieved from the artefacts for further testing."*

Paraphrasing Mr. Robert Clotworthy… *"Oak leaves and acorns not from the Red Oak tree? Found underground on Oak Island? Could this mean a different species of Oak tree grows under the ground within the depth of the island, and if so, were they planted by Templars or the Chinese?"*

70. "Curse of Oak Island, Season 7, Episode #21, 'A Leaf of Faith,' on the History Channel or see The Oak Island Encyclopedia, Volume II, p. 233. 2019." Scott Barlow, COOI Project Manager, said;

> *"I believe the mysterious trees which once grew on Oak Island were intentionally planted as a marker by the original treasure depositors."*

72. "Oak Island Resident statement," by Robert S. Young, June 18, 2020. Current owner of Lot #5. On Oak Island, Nova Scotia, says:

> *"…With regard to the island's storied red oak trees many dodgy and spurious accounts keep circulating as to their current state; advanced by quasi-know-it-all's who postulate the false notion they're in a death spiral due to disease, insect infestation, deforestation or already long dead…*
>
> *Today Lot Five is home to <u>28 healthy red oaks,</u> that best that mark including over a dozen bona fide old growth specimens boasting diameters from 22" to 36"…*
>
> *…In old age they often end up resembling wonky umbrellas with a wide, flattish canopy atop a long, straightish trunk that through time tends to shed its lower branches..."*

73. "Oak Island Resident statement," by Robert S. Young, June 22, 2020. Current owner of Lot #5. On Oak Island, Nova Scotia, responds to additional inquiry says:

> *"Thank you for your comment – the red oaks trees of Oak Island, especially those seen in the old pictures of Smith's Cove are in fact the same species as found elsewhere on the Island. …The big difference that explains their umbrella appearance is that they were more openly exposed to the weather – It's their unprotected location more than anything else that determines this unusual shape and not from being a special species of oak..."*

Mr. Young is the proud owner and proprietor of the publicly accessible website "www.OakIslandLot#5.ca." He captures the rich atmosphere of natural beauty in his photographs of Lot #5 and its fauna and flora community. Perhaps due to Canadian pride or his belief he solely represents the value of the natural world without having to dig it up on the island, Mr. Young has strong opinions regarding the history and issues which swirl around the island. All I will say here, is that as I get older, I too look more like a wonky umbrella tree who has sat outside near the pool for decades. I thought it was the pool acid and bird poop, but I am open to discussion.

74. "Email correspondence," from Howard Manning, ISA certified Botanist, July 3, 2020. At [redacted]. His comments:

> *"…The tall trees in the photos don't ring a bell. None of the oaks I know grow in that pattern. Hope you solve it."*

75. "Email correspondence," from Cynthia Cohen, ISA certified Botanist, July 6, 2020. UCLA, Simi Valley, California, comments:

> *"…One small thing that may help with interpreting all that online speculation is to know that 'live oak' is a general term for any evergreen oak tree… From these photos in this document I'm not at all convinced that we're looking at oaks at all..."*

77. "Telephonic Conversation," with Mr. Robert (Bob) Brooster of RENTOKIL, August 2020. Chester, Nova Scotia. Reference: Black Carpenter Ants – Alates *(Lasius niger)* in the Mahone Bay area.

> *"Referencing Mildred Restall's book and Black flying ants: Mr. Brooster informed me that "Carpenter Ants do not attack, eat, or infest live wood, and they particularly avoid hardwood species (oak), unless they are dead and decaying. These ants cannot penetrate hardwood species and they prefer sap-producing softwoods like pines, firs, spruce, and maples."*

Mr. Brooster as well as a few myrmecologists I have been able to locate and get to open up about their creepy little worlds, confirm all of the information posted on the topic located elsewhere within this book. Though Carpenter Ants may break a jawbone on eating hardwood, they will gladly accept free housing if access is available.

81. "Conversations between arborists Michael Nentwich and Don Pylant," from David Vaughan, July 19, 2021. ISA certified Arborist.

> *"One of our earliest thoughts was the trees were Acacia because we felt the reason they would have not been harvested was they were sacred. We considered the Free Masons and their sacred tree and also that they used oak leaves and acorns on their crest. We will give it* [photos submitted] *some serious thought."*

In July of 2021, I contacted Mr. John Giedraitis, Executive Officer of the Texas Chapter of International Society of Arboriculture, seeking help in identifying Oak Islands mysterious canopied-trees. I was referred to David M. Vaughan a seasoned San Antonio arborist, who I engaged to assist in creating "field observations" for identifying trees and help in identifying the most likely species of those canopied-trees on Oak Island. Along with his colleagues, arborists Michael Nentwich and Don Pylant, I provided them a photo portfolio along with past commentary as you've read here and in Appendix C, *"On The Record,"* and included a set of questions about tree identification. These gentlemen have an impressive collective background to include San Antonio City Forester, Norfolk Manager of Parks and Urban Forestry, Norfolk City Forester, San Antonio Botanical Gardens, Kumanato En Sister City Gardens in Japan, Dallas Civic Center Garden Center, Fort Worth Botanical Gardens, and each own successful arboriculture businesses. Acacia, Black Locust, American Chestnut and Northern Red Oak and others were all considered as possible selectees.

Here are some more of their email conversations regarding candidate species which may be our mystery canopied-trees from Oak Island…

June 7th… *"Looks like a fun read. I'm surprised American Chestnut is not mentioned. Its northern range is into Maine and South Canada. It was the dominant lumber tree in its range until the blight."*

July 19th… *"As I recall, one of Don's crazy assumptions was Acacia. Guess crazy may now be genius."*

July 19th… *"One of our earliest thoughts was the trees were Acacia because we felt the reason they would have not been harvested was they were sacred. We considered the Free Masons and their sacred tree and also that they used oak leaves and acorns on their crest. Will give it some serious thought."*

July 19th… *"I'm not convinced they were true Acacia, but I could go with Black Locust (Robinia pseudoacacia). Black Locust is certainly cold hardy and has a broad growth habit."*

July 20th… *"Vines says Black Locust prefers deep, well drained, calcareous soils. Native into New York, so certainly cold hardy. An aside (humor) what is a true Acacia anyway. They are all being renamed, reclassified. Scott Ogden in his talk stated that when this DVA reclassification is finished, there will not be any species of Acacia left in Texas. The entire Legume family is under attack. Look what they have already done to Tx Mt. Laurel and Eve's Necklace. I can't remember any of their new names and continue to struggle with Oak Wilt, Ganoderma, Kretzschmaria, and Hypoxylon Canker. Making matters worse, you need to know all of the old names to find reference info."*

July 20th… *"I think cold hardy is not an issue for Oak Island as they rarely dip below freezing. I also thought we had run the Sophora haters out on a rail – maybe not."*

July 20th… *"From the Acacia doc, the only thing that caught my eye was this paragraph:* (Roof Timbers up to 12 cubits (17ft 9in/5.4m) long could be cut from the low-hanging, curved branches, and the wood was strong enough to form the main timbers of the hulls and ribs of small ships. Shorter pieces of wood were used to make the common Nile cargo barge. This boat was constructed from 2 ft (60 cm) long, fitted together like bricks. Acacia was also used for making furniture, chests, coffins and bows*). 1. Remembering the cut branch referenced, and the indication that strong timber was harvested from*

low-hanging branches. 2. Perhaps another 'reach' but the coffin was another common icon for Free Masons. The [Robert] *Cook drawing was what first made me think Acacia. While there likely were not giraffes in Nova Scotia to lift the canopy, there may have been lower trees destroyed by the water table or harvested over time. I don't see a great deal of value in many of the traits listed in the tree ID doc. And some photos contradict the data shown. Ex: branches not at 90^{o} – some photos show branches very near 90^{o}. And we still don't have an explanation of the photos that seem to show a broader leaf."*

82. "Conversations with Botanist Dr. Stephen Bungard," Vice-County Recorder for the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland. With David Neisen, December 12, 2021.

"I am afraid that you will be very disappointed to hear that the [redacted] *trees down by the shore are in fact* [redacted] *which here in the UK we call* [redacted]*. They certainly do not have the typical habit, but that is what they are. I was surprised by them when I first came here forty years ago. I now live less than a mile from them. I am the Vice- County Recorder for BSBI's area that covers* [redacted]*. BSBI is the Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland. Yes, your* [redacted] *image is the same group of trees I know. I attach some images from this morning. At the end of the day, I don't know whether their unusual growth form is down to genetic or environmental factors. They are in a very exposed position. If you want samples, I can get you some, though fresh leaves, flowers, or fruit will obviously not be available for some months. I cannot vouch for the canopied trees from Oak Island.* [redacted] *is native to central, eastern, and southern Europe. It is thought to have been introduced to the UK by the Romans. However, other reports suggest it was introduced to the UK from France in the Tudor era around the 1500s. More widespread planting occurred in the 1700s and the earliest reports of the species naturalising in the UK date from the mid-1800s. These trees were widely associated with the French connections of Mary Queen of Scots (1542-1587). A tree planted by Mary at Scone Palace stood till 1941, when it fell in a storm. I read that it was often planted to shelter and shade farmhouses as it can withstand salty winds. This group [trees] is certainly exposed to salty winds. It was 62 mph here last night from the southwest so they will have been blasted yet again.*

The seed is extremely fertile, so [redacted] *has spread quickly across the UK and colonised many woodlands to the detriment of native species.*

In 1773 Samuel Johnson and his amanuensis James Boswell came and stayed in [redacted] Boswell later published The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides in which his entry for Friday 10th September 1773 includes this: "There are a number of trees near the house, which grow well; some of them of a pretty good size. They are mostly [redacted] and ash." "[redacted]" is what [redacted] was originally called in Scotland and [redacted] is still used occasionally today.

This makes our trees likely to be in the region of 300 years old, if they were a "pretty good size" in 1773. The lifespan is said to be around 400 years and some of ours have died. Perhaps this group will all be gone after a few more decades. Coincidentally, there is a small patch of Quercus rubra (Northern Red Oak) in woodland about a kilometre away from the trees we are discussing, but these are the result of much more recent planting – probably mid-1900s.

The information "Blacked out" above is revealed in Chapter 6, *"Mirror Images,"* and is done to not prematurely identify the tree species or there locations. Elsewhere, it is to protect the personal contact information of the party in question.

My conversation with botanist Dr. Bungard was as close to having a fainting spell since witnessing my wife give birth to our first child! Had all this effort by so many over so long of a period searching actually concluded? Had I not just argued that tropisms and morphology could not explain how trees could look like those on Oak Island, yet now I had to prove just that possibility? If I cannot find this species of tree looking like they do in a different biome without the salty exposed wind, does that imply it is a weathering tropism or morphology which has so manipulated this species look? Or, does this tell me these trees may have the same lineage as those found on Oak Island – and genetically, maybe even the parents?

Courtesy: Nova Scotia National Archives

By the observations of others, the Northern Red Oak *(Quercus rubra),* seems to be the leading candidate for being those canopied-trees. Many suggest they were "Southern Live Oak" a.k.a. "Live Oak," "Lived Oak," or Southern Live Oak *(Quercus Virginiana*), and most thought they were not native to Canada. Others said they were 'evergreen.' No one talks about their acorns, pinecones, flowers, or seedpods. No one discusses having to rake up and burn their brilliant red fall foliage nor springtime turning out new leaves. Why not felled for valuable hardwood? Did those early island settlers know something about those trees which put them in a protective stance? Was it 'taboo' to touch those trees?

But for now, we need to fully vet our mystery tree and learn as much as we can from the photographic images and historical notations we have collected. Using an assortment of old, grainy photos, get out your magnifying glass and see what we can determine about those canopied-trees!

The Roots of Evidence

Like a crime scene detective, we look at photos of the departed thru the lens of history. What kind of tree were they? Were they deciduous or coniferous? Were they evergreens? Did they suffer from tropisms and morphologies? What can we learn from observing their taxonomic characteristics?

There are perhaps as many as 3 dozen known photographs which contain the mystery canopied-trees in the background. I have gathered about two dozen of those images from a wide variety of sources, including other authors and purveyors of telling the Oak Island story. I thank them. Should I have used one of their photos in this gallery without permission, I apologize, but tracking back ownership is akin to identifying Oak Island lot owners. Most photographic images have now entered the Nova Scotian National Archives. None of these photos give a clear, clean depiction of the trees themselves. Most of the known photos were taken between 1888 and 1935, with a few aerial images capturing the dying trees (snags) up through the early 1950s.

The clearer images I have shared with botanists, arborists, and other scientists for their review and input. The images they viewed are in Appendix F, "*Guardians of the Keep."* The photographs are numbered for cross referencing with the List of images discussed in the *Field Observations*, charted on the following page.

The following compilation of "Field Observations" was created by several arborists who have examined the photos of our canopied-trees. They make these *photo-field observations* to assist us as we examine them ourselves, and to understand what we are looking for, and what do we see. This will also help to explain to the reader why certain candidate species which are contending to be those canopied-trees, may or may not qualify. This is further explained in Chapter 4 and in more detail, in Appendix G, "*Dendro Disguised*."

The chart segregates observations by major plant characterization categories. Again, the photographs referenced in this listing can be found in Appendix F, "*Guardians of the Keep."*

Field Observations

Created by David Neisen

ITEM #	OBSERVATIONS	PHOTO / SOURCE
1	**Tree Shape & Dimensions**	
1a	Mature tree exhibits umbrella-shaped crown with foliage only in top 5'-15' upper canopy	1, 3, 5, 11
1b	Juvenile trees exhibit vase-shaped crown and branch formation	2, 4, 6, 7, 9
1c	Umbrella-shaped crown appears to be a species characteristic, not a tropism	1, 3, 5, 10, 11
1d	Species appear to uniformly grow to between 75'-95' in height	1, 3, 4, 5, 11
1e	No foliage or branches below the first 70% of the height of the tree	1 - 3, 5 - 7, 10, 11
1f	Canopy appears to grow 20'-35' in crown spread	1, 3, 5, 11
1g	Crown seen to consist of several tiers or foliage groups creating a multi-level canopy	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 11
2	**Trunk & Bole**	
2a	Bole is nearly vertical, sinuous and relatively thin in circumference	1 thru 11
2b	Juvenile trees exhibit smooth bole past first branches, appears to have no bark or light-colored smooth bark	7
2c	Frequently bole separates into 2 separate primary vertical branches from trunk	1, 2, 5 to 7, 9 to11
2d	Frequently no branches or only small dwarf or dead branches below lower half	1, 2, 5 to 11
2e	Trunk is similar in circumference as bole but with slight flare at very bottom	1, 7, 8
3	**Branches**	
3a	Branches do not grow perpendicular or at right angles from bole, but at >45°	1 to 3, 5 thru 11
3b	Branches do not appear to grow below lower half of tree	1 to 3, 5 thru 11
3c	Bole and live branches appear to have same bark coverage in mature trees	8 & insets
3d	Dead dwarf branches are barkless	8, 10
3e	Branches do not appear to grow in opposite positions, but in a staggered zigzag array	8 & insets, 10

4	Bark	
4a	Bark on bole and branches appears lighter color, gray or gray-brown	1, 2, 5 thru 11
4b	Bark may be scaly and cracked and does not appear to have a pattern	1, 2, 8, 9
4c	Bark appears to be of multiple colored. Appears mildly thick or flaky	8
5	**Foliage**	
5a	Appears within the crown to be small leaves or perhaps fiber clusters.	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
5b	Each picture shows a full, robust foliage and does not indicate a coniferous type foliage	1 thru 9, 11
5c	Tree foliage has never been known discussed to exhibit fall colors, nor in these images	1 thru 9, 11
6	**Fruit or Product**	
6a	No fruits, nuts, acorns, pinecones, flowers, seed pods, or drupes seen anywhere	1 thru 11
6b	No thorns are noted	1 thru 11
7	**Root System**	
7a	Slight root flare-out at base of tree, no above-grade roots seen	7, 8
7b	Trees have survived frequent extreme weather impacts, must have substantial taproot	1, thru 11
8	**Soil & Ground Cover**	
8a	Understory consisted solely of conifers or juvenile trees of same species	2, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11
8b	Distance between trees appear to be uniform and ample for overstory competition	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
8c	Grass, plants & conifer saplings seem to grow easily in understory, near trunk	1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9
9	**Other**	
9a	Photo of Skags demonstrate radiating branch structure at top of tree/bole	11
	No photos exhibit man-made clearing of stand of trees, i.e. felled trees or tree stumps	
9b	No photos exhibit dead or fallen trees or debris from past dead trees.	
9c	Smaller dead dwarf branches may be from limbshear, but uniform with all trees	8 & insets

We will refer to these observations in the next chapter as we forensically prove the determination of species for those canopied-trees. But for now, what to make of these observations?

Most basic species identification is based on you standing in front of a tree and comparing its known leaf, bark, shape, and foliage characteristics. Except – *all we have is shape!* With that elementary information you can include the location of the tree and the hardiness zone in which it was found. Except – *we believe these trees were planted and are not native!* An observer can pick up a nut, acorn, pinecone, seed pod, catkin, tassels, berry, samara, or flower from that tree; and with the other notations, determine with a greater accuracy what your tree species is. Except – *we have none of that to examine!*

Yet sometimes, what we ***do not have***, can tell us what we do have! Take for example our wondering if those mystery canopy-trees are evergreens or are deciduous? Other than the many opinions those trees were evergreen, the photographs do not show a wintered tree, minimal foliage on the tree, nor fallen leaves below the trees. Likewise, we do not see in the fifty years' worth of photos of those trees, any observation showing them dormant and with no leaves! Nor do we have a record of anyone praising their beautiful fall foliage colors, which would easily confirm them as deciduous. Not a poem, nor story, or recitation in a journal or travel brochure, has told of the brilliant oak foliage covering - *Oak Island*. Very strange for a very popular place for looky-loos, treasure hunters, and local societies marketing their environs to tourists. Not a single peep. Can we therefore assume from the anecdotal evidence alone, those were in fact, evergreen trees?

At that very early time in Canadian history, we were aware the British government was quite astute in the prohibition of felling any tree species it sought sovereignty over. Therefore, at that very early time, tall trees were tagged with the Broad Arrow mark and permits were required to harvest trees on any property. Yet we find no permit to harvest those trees, nor any indication those trees were marked with the Broad Arrow tag or ever intentionally cut down by man. Furthermore, we do not see those trees as having been identified as valuable commodities during a period when wood was voraciously harvested for boat building or desperately

needed firewood. So we find people hunting for oak trees around Oak Island, to turn oak or other hard woods into an immediately needed litany of boat parts. But still, those stand of trees were left unaccosted? What does that tell us about those canopied-trees - *at that time? Can we infer those trees were not oaks or even evergreen oaks?*

You cannot argue those canopied-trees may have been too small or immature to be harvested. Especially knowing they were visible from the mainland, which caused the islands name to be changed around 1776. You cannot argue those canopied-trees were off limits because they grew on someone else's land, as it is clear from aerial photographs, they grew at least on lots #18, #19 & #20. Does not seeing or finding proof of one condition, promote the other probable condition? Yes, to a degree it does. But there are more observations to be weighed.

There have been two incidences where the leaves and acorns found on Oak Island were submitted for identification. Many misread the results as having proven those canopied-trees were in fact, Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*). In the previous section, "*What Other have Opined*" on page 11, Item #25 shows…

> *"I have a reply from the Gray Herbarium, Harvard University, about the oak leaves, which reads as follows; "The specimen of oak which you sent, certainly belongs to the characteristics Red Oak of Nova Scotia. The leaves are small and shallowly lobed, but that is because, I take it, the trees grew in a somewhat exposed habitat."*

This was the response sent to Gilbert Hedden from R.V. Harris, which he received from Harvard University and opined to his boss. What was handwritten on the letter by R.V. in blue ink, was the comment, **"re: oak leaves found underground**."

And item #69 on page 16 reports…

> …it was revealed Mr. Restall did not believe these specimens were from the mysterious canopy oak trees still remaining on the island, but rather found within the filtration system buried at Smith's Cove… Dr. Evans determines "*the oak leaf and acorns were not from a Northern Red Oak, but possibly from a different oak species, possibly brought to the island by and planted long ago.*" Dr. Evans said he "*did not believe the acorns or leaf could have floated across the Atlantic Ocean from Europe or Africa due to their poor resistance to the effects of saltwater."* Dr. Evans also "*did not believe any DNA material could be retrieved from the artefacts for further testing."*

Again, the leaves and acorn were found underground with other branches and debris inside the filtration system, some 25 years after those canopied-trees had long died out. Even Robert Restall did not believe they were associated with those canopied-trees, and during his six years on the island, he lived and worked where they once grew.

So we know this about the Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) in relationship to being the mystery tree. It is not an evergreen tree. It was very scarce in the NEAF at the time prior of the Money Pits discovery. No one ever cut those down on Oak Island thinking they were valuable Northern Red Oak timber. No one ever commented on the canopied-trees fall foliage, even though Northern Red Oaks are famous for their brilliant robust red coloration. No poems or marketing brochures or scenic photos or stories in the news; written for a very active tourist center with many 'looky-loos' and would-be treasure seekers to read? Most early observers did not recognize them and thought they were nonnative to the area. One expert said samples found underground were not from the Northern Red Oak. The other expert did identify earlier samples found underground as being that of the Northern Red Oak, but not linked to the canopied-trees. Early explorers and timber seekers to our area of interest reported NOT seeing any worthwhile oaks in and around Oak Island.

Other authors have claimed those Oak trees were decimated by infestations of Black Carpenter Ants. They give date ranges from 1800's, 1880's to the 1930's and 1950's. Yet Black Carpenter Ants cannot be blamed for the Red Oaks demise, as "*they do not like, attack, eat, or infest live wood and particularly avoid hardwoods – like oak.*" Instead, ants munch happily on the island varieties of soft-wood conifers, oozing their favorite - *resin du jour*. Oaks are high in Tannin, which is a natural pesticide. Black Carpenter Ants cannot easily penetrate hardwood species and would require "*all canopied oak trees to have been severely injured or in advanced decay, at the same time to die off as described. Such an unlikely attack would take Black Carpenter Ants as many as 20 years to cause an oak tree to die." See item #77 on page 17.* Additionally, Blight was blamed for their death in the 1950's and 60's. Odd since there were no living canopied-trees by 1945.

Yet this is all circumstantial.

In the next chapter we finalize the investigation of specific taxonomic classifications and botanical characteristics of the Northern Red Oak and other candidate species. This time we examine various tropisms which can affect tree growth. Some suggest these shape-shifting morphologies can explain away why these native species grow like those mystery canopied-trees. However, we forensically investigate each species as they appear in open growth and how they have grown in extreme environments. This allows us to rule out the plausibility of morphology creating false identification of tree species.

And after examining other candidate trees from around the world, we summarize the pros and cons and determine the actual species of tree which lived on Oak Island as our mystery canopied-trees. You will be surprised!

"*All our wisdom is stored in the trees*" – Santosh Kalwar

Footnoted References

1. *"Borealization of the New England – Acadian Forest: a review of the evidence,"* by Josh Noseworthy and Thomas M. Beckley. University of New Brunswick. 2020.

2. *"Past and Present Distribution of New Brunswick Bur Oak Populations: A Case for Conservation."* by Donnie A. McPhee and Jude A. Loo. Published in *Northeastern Naturalist*, 16(1):85-100. 2009.

3. *"Proportion of Native Range overlapping the Boreal Region, Fig. 2."* by Thomas M. Beckley. P 286. University of New Brunswick. 2020.