

TREASURE STORIES AND  
BELIEFS IN ATLANTIC CANADA

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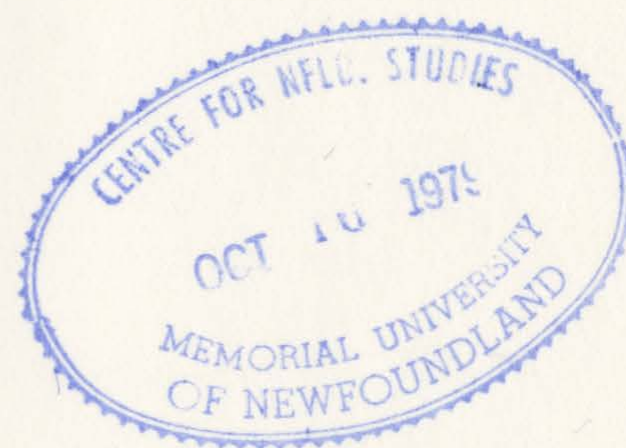
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TREASURE STORIES AND BELIEFS IN ATLANTIC CANADA

by



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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

This study of treasure stories and beliefs from Atlantic Canada is based on over 450 unpublished oral texts, mainly from the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive, and on published collections of material gathered by folklorists from oral traditions in the other Atlantic Provinces. Stories from the print tradition were also examined. In all, nearly a thousand texts concerned with treasure in Atlantic Canada were consulted.

The major patterns of concepts and interests found in the narratives were examined for themselves and in an attempt to discover the ways in which the treasure traditions of Atlantic Canada resemble those of the United Kingdom, Ireland, Western Europe and the eastern United States. No attempt has been made to provide comprehensive citations, but sample parallels, when available, have been given.

What treasure is believed to be, who buried it, where it is buried, and what phenomena will indicate the presence of a hidden hoard have all been considered. The methods for finding and claiming a treasure have been discussed in both magical and practical manifestations.

The dream of treasure was found to be far more important than most folklore collections would indicate. It had many variations in addition to the normally cited one of the



treasure found through a dream.

The stories concerned with the treasure guardian were found to be very popular, especially the narrative which tells of the sacrificing of a man to watch the treasure. Even when the story of the killing was not given in detail, it was expected to be understood, as was the presence of the sentinel with every pirate hoard.

The tradition of cursed treasure, although known elsewhere, is little evidenced in published material. It was found to be very strong in the oral tradition from Newfoundland, and is frequently to be understood in stories from other parts of Atlantic Canada, and elsewhere.

One treasure tradition found in Atlantic Canada has rarely been noted from other areas, although it is known in Maine, Ireland and Scotland: the conscious election not to dig for a treasure. This decision not to look for the buried gold was noted from Nova Scotia by Dr. Helen Creighton, and was found to be very strong in the oral tradition. It is frequently associated with the dream of treasure, with the fear of the treasure guardian, and with a belief in cursed treasure. This active non-action of refusing to dig for a known treasure would not have been noticed without the large corpus of oral material available for the study.

Stories of treasure found and presumed found and their function in a static economy have been discussed, as has the function of fantasy in a basically realistic tradition of



treasure.

In the process of this study, the researcher attempted to cover all available published material concerned with treasure from North America, whether in journals, folklore books or books for the popular market. Similarly, an attempt was made to do the same for the United Kingdom and Ireland. Here, however, in the absence of a comprehensive bibliography, the researcher can only hope she has found the bulk of the material readily available.

Hints in the published literature of treasure stories and beliefs suggest that the patterns found in Atlantic Canada would also be found in the oral traditions of the eastern United States, of the United Kingdom, and of Ireland.



## PROLOGUE

### LOOKING FOR A TREASURE

Looking for a treasure ... (Draw circles on the person's back)

X marks the spot ... (With forefinger draw a line across the back from left shoulder to right waist and from right shoulder to left waist)

Uphill and downhill ... (Finger goes up spine from waist to neck and back down again)

Dot .. Dot .. Dot ... (Three jabs up spine between waist and neck)

Boulder here ... (Grab shoulder with hand, and squeeze)

And boulder here ... (Grab and squeeze second shoulder)

And boulder here ... (Grab one side of waist and squeeze)

And boulder here ... (Squeeze other side of waist)

Bright streams of blood running down your back ...  
(Using all five fingers of one hand held apart, make spiraling motion down back, crossing spine area)

Children's game. Played at  
Cape John, Nova Scotia,  
circa 1969 variant from  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
(Card 74-110/) circa 1962-1965.



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I feel especially indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Herbert Halpert, without whose sustained interest and years of encouragement this study would never have been completed. I am also grateful to the members of my doctoral committee, Dr. Neil Rosenberg and Mr. Thomas Nemec, for their comments and suggestions.

Without the facilities and staff of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive [MUNFLA] this study could not have been made. I wish to thank both the past Director, Dr. Herbert Halpert, and the present Director, Dr. Neil Rosenberg, for their kindness and cooperation. The generosity of my colleagues George J. Casey, Gerald Pocius, Lawrence Small, Gerald Thomas and Wilfred Wareham in opening their private collections to me and in releasing restricted Archive material for my use has contributed to the scope of this work.

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## EXPLANATION OF ARCHIVE REFERENCES

Material from Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive [MUNFLA] occurs in four forms: Survey Cards, long Manuscripts, Tapes, and answers to Questionnaires.

References to cards, manuscripts and tapes show first the form in which the material is found: Card, MS, Tape. This is followed by the Archive Accession Number for the collection, which precedes the oblique [/]. Following the oblique is the Archive number for the item:

Card 34-72/54                      MS 34-72/pp. 3-4                      Tape 34-72/C77777.

The Archive number of a card indicates its place in the card sequence of a collection. The page numbers for a manuscript are the Archive's numbering not that of the collector. The Archive number for a tape indicates its sequence in the tape holdings of the Archive rather than its place in an individual collection.

References to cards and manuscripts which end after the oblique indicate that the Archive has accessioned the collection but has not yet assigned official numberings. Where a tape has the prefix "F" rather than "C" it indicates a collector's tape from which copies for the Archive have not yet been made.

Questionnaire answers bear the prefix "Q". This is followed by an Accession Number, a dash [-], and the number of the item. The last number is the item number:

Q70D-700-3.

In the Questionnaire answers items rather than pages are numbered. Where the last figure is a zero, it means that only one item appears in answer to the questionnaire.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*                      \*

Memorial University promises all informants who contribute material for the Archive complete anonymity. Consequently, the names of all persons appearing in the Newfoundland stories have been changed. Where place names have also been changed, those which have been substituted are italicized. In stories collected from informants outside Newfoundland, the names of people have been changed, but not the names of places.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Atlantic Canada would seem, on the basis of historical evidence, to be one of the least likely areas of North America in which to find a vital and continuing tradition of buried and hidden treasures. The native peoples were nomadic tribes. Their culture had none of the previous metals and jewels found among the Indians of Central and South America and some of the tribes of the southwestern United States. The initial attractions of the territory were fish and furs, neither of which improves by being buried, rather than a search for an El Dorado.

The Spanish Plate Fleets took a route well to the south of Atlantic Canada. The pirates who did frequent the area were interested in recruiting crews and replenishing material. Privateering was a respectable occupation and the basis of many family fortunes; it was so respectable there was little need to hide the rewards.

While some individuals made their fortunes, the wealth of Atlantic Canada has never been pecuniary.<sup>1</sup> There is

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<sup>1</sup>An expression often heard in parts of the Maritimes is that a person or family is "land-poor"; as in many farming



nevertheless, a lively tradition among the inhabitants of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, the Magdalen Islands and the eastern portion of Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula of treasures presumed buried or hidden at hundreds of locations throughout the region. Stories of these treasures are found both in oral circulation and in print.

This collection of narratives of buried treasure does not include stories of sunken treasures. These too exist, of course, as one might expect since Atlantic Canada is a maritime region. The folklore of buried treasure, however, is an independent corpus of stories, beliefs and comments.

The strength of the buried treasure tradition in Atlantic Canada is derived in part from its long history of occupancy as compared with other areas of Canada, especially the Prairie Provinces. Fishermen from Europe frequented the shores of Atlantic Canada long before permanent settlement of Acadia was attempted by the French in the early 1600s. Newfoundland<sup>2</sup> had part-time settlers in the form of the summer

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and lumbering areas the wealth is in the land. Credit may be good but cash is scarce. In fishing communities a man's wealth is frequently his boat and gear; actual cash money is not plentiful.

<sup>2</sup>For the history of Newfoundland to the 1890s see: D. W. Prowse, A History of Newfoundland (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895).

Keith Matthews, Lectures on the History of Newfoundland 1500-1830 (St. John's, Nfld.: Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1973).

C. Grant Head, Eighteenth Century Newfoundland: A



fisheries for many years before any form of permanent settlement was allowed. Two English colonies were attempted in the early seventeenth century, but both failed; permanent settlements were not fully established until the eighteenth century.

In the rest of Atlantic Canada,<sup>3</sup> the French-speaking Acadians were the first settlers. They were harassed by

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Geographer's Perspective (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976).

R. G. Moyles, "Complaints is many and various, but the odd Divil likes it": Nineteenth Century Views of Newfoundland (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, c. 1975).

No comparable works exist for the history of twentieth century Newfoundland.

<sup>3</sup>No single work exists for the history of Atlantic Canada, nor for the Maritime Provinces as a whole.

Mr. Hugh Tuck of Memorial University's History Department has suggested that John B. Brebner, Canada, A Modern History (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, 1960) might prove useful in giving an overview of the history of this region.

Histories of the individual provinces are available such as:

Beamish Murdoch, A History of Nova Scotia, or Acadie, 3 vols. (Halifax, N.S.: J. Barnes, 1865-1867).

James Hannay, History of Acadia (Saint John, N.B.: printed by J. & A. McMillan, 1879).

W. S. MacNutt, New Brunswick, a History: 1784-1867 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1963).

Lorne Clayton Callbeck, The Cradle of Confederation: a Brief History of Prince Edward Island from its Discovery in 1534 to the Present Time (Fredericton, N.B.: Brunswick Press, 1964).

Andrew H. Clark, Three Centuries and the Island: A Historical Geography of Settlements and Agriculture in Prince Edward Island, Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959).

Many local histories provide detailed insights for smaller areas. For a selection of these see: William F. E. Morley, Canadian Local Histories to 1950: A Bibliography, Vol. I: The Atlantic Provinces: Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967).

Naomi Griffiths, The Acadians: Creation of a People (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, c. 1973) is a short but comprehensive study of these people.



raiders from New England until 1713 when most of Acadia was ceded by France to England. English settlement of Nova Scotia began in earnest with the founding of Halifax in 1749. Cornwallis, who was in charge of the settlement, requested that he be sent "Foreign Protestants" since they were better citizens for this new land.<sup>4</sup> These "Foreign Protestants" were from the Germanic states and were the ancestors of the people of Nova Scotia's Lunenburg County,

After 1713, French garrisons were still present at Louisbourg (Cape Breton Island) and in the Placentia area of Newfoundland. There were many skirmishes between the French and the English before the Treaty of Paris, 1763, limited the French presence to the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon and to fishing rights on certain stretches of the Newfoundland coast. These tensions between the two European powers were often the occasion for the concealing of valuables when the enemy were feared to be too near.

The Expulsion of the Acadians from Nova Scotia (which still included New Brunswick) and from St. John's Island (later Prince Edward Island) in 1755 is used to explain the presence of small caches of valuables found in lands previously occupied by these people. Both the Yankee Planters who came from New England to the Annapolis Valley and the

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<sup>4</sup>Winthrop Bell, The Foreign Protestants and the Settlement of Nova Scotia: the history of a piece of arrested British colonial policy in the eighteenth century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961).



Yorkshire settlers who came to the Chignecto area to work the old Acadian farms unearthed some of these buried treasures, and began the still believed tradition of Acadian riches waiting to be found.

The populace of Newfoundland is basically descended from settlers from the west of England and from southern Ireland, together with some Scots and French. The people of the rest of Atlantic Canada, however, are descended from settlers of many origins. In addition to the Acadians, New Englanders, "Foreign Protestants", and the Yorkshire settlers, there were Scots, Irish, English, Channel Islanders and Pennsylvania Dutch who arrived to settle in the Maritimes and the Gaspé before the great influx of United Empire Loyalists arrived following the American Revolution. Although one tends to think of the Gaspé as part of the French 'fact' of Quebec, it has areas which were settled by Channel Islanders and Loyalists, and which have traditionally been English-speaking. Later, survivors of Irish emigrant ships wrecked along the shores married into the French Gaspesian communities. The Magdalen Islands are still both English and French although they form part of the province of Quebec.

During the American Revolution and the War of 1812, the coasts of the Maritimes and the Gaspé were frequented by American privateers who sometimes attacked settlements, and caused a hurried burial of valuables by the residents. Stories from Newfoundland do not usually tell of attacks by privateers,



only by pirates. In contrast to the rest of Atlantic Canada, 'Americans as enemy' seems to be missing from the folk awareness of history in Newfoundland.

Traditions from nearly four hundred years of occupation of territories fought over by opposing powers--coupled with long coastlines frequented by ships and sailors of many nations and occupations--have contributed to the belief of the people of Atlantic Canada that treasure is buried almost everywhere. The folk use the historical facts to explain the presence of such treasure, and when occasionally some is found, it reinforces the belief.

Stories of buried treasure are found in every area of Atlantic Canada. Some regions seem to have more than others. This disparity, however, may be the result of scattered collecting rather than of actual fact. Over nine hundred fifty stories, beliefs and comments formed the basis for this study of buried treasure. About half the material is from the unpublished oral tradition, and that mostly from Newfoundland.

The word Beliefs in the title of this study does not mean there is a wide scattering of beliefs concerned with treasure. In Atlantic Canada treasure beliefs are usually contained in the narratives of buried treasure. They may be enunciated during the course of the story, or they may only be made manifest by the reported behaviour of individuals.

Sometimes such beliefs must be deduced. Often whole patterns of behaviour cannot be understood until one realizes



there are underlying beliefs which lead to this behaviour. No storyteller expects to have to recite to his listeners what he considers as area's basic creed of treasure. Fortunately, once the possibility of such an underlying belief is realized, one can check with informants, most of whom are then only too glad to explain what they had presumed the listener knew. These veiled beliefs are often connected with the treasure guardian or with the concept of cursed treasure (see below Chapters VIII and IX). Any belief underlying an action or attitude may, however, be expected to be known to the storyteller's audience.

When collecting of the oral material from Newfoundland began for this study, fifty stories were anticipated as a maximum. Over four hundred and forty were found, mostly in the Folklore and Language Archive of Memorial University of Newfoundland. Most of the narratives were collected by students.<sup>5</sup> Since the university is the only one in the

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<sup>5</sup>Questionnaires were used in 1968 and 1970. These were given to first-year students to complete during the Christmas vacations when they returned to their home communities. Some English courses assigned these as exercises in recording actual speech patterns for later comparison with dialogue found in novels.

Other stories were contributed to the Archive by the students in Folklore courses as part of their field collecting requirements. These Folklore students were encouraged to turn in all material in the exact language that they heard or recalled. Often this appears to be authentic. Some students, influenced by composition classes in school, ignored the instructions and submitted rewritten texts. It must be noted, however, that some informants can become very formal when recounting a story. It is recognized that all texts are not of equal validity.



province, it draws a fairly representative cross-section of the population.

The results obtained by the students working in their own communities and among people who knew them<sup>6</sup> emphasized a factor which should be stressed: most people in Atlantic Canada will not talk to strangers about treasure supposedly buried in the immediate locale. Those who believe in a treasure and might look for it some day fear the collector is after the gold; those who are sceptical of the existence of any such treasure are afraid of being laughed at. The first attitude is underlined by stories told of strangers who came and asked about a treasure and later left the community with signs of wealth.

Anyone from outside a community who looks as if he or she were capable of digging for gold and who asks questions about buried treasure is unlikely to be told any stories. It is possible that Dr. Creighton's success in recording a large collection of treasure material from Nova Scotia might be explained by both these factors. She is petite and looks fragile. Although she collected stories, most people knew her because of her interest in folksongs. Neither physically

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<sup>6</sup>Questioning of a confrere whose family said he could tell treasure stories of a certain local area was met with the advice that the collector should seek out certain knowledgeable persons--all living at least a hundred miles away--and ask them about buried treasures in their home communities. Some possible informants simply do not want to talk about buried treasure, even when they are assured no one is going to look for it.



nor by reputation did she represent a threat to a local treasure and, as a result, could be told about it.

Strangers to a community who are looking for treasure stories will probably not get any while they are there. They may, however, get a number if they can talk to members of the village away from home. Newfoundlanders living in the Maritimes or met on the boats leaving Newfoundland were very willing to tell treasure stories of their own homes and of neighbouring settlements. Apparently, away from the pertinent area the entertainment aspect of the stories replaces the informational nature such narratives have when told in situ.

The existence of a treasure tradition within a settlement does not axiomatically mean that it is known to all inhabitants of the community. It may be known only within a single family or within a group of families. These facts are obvious for any researcher; they are so obvious that they are nearly always forgotten or, at least, overlooked.

Sometimes knowledge on the part of a newcomer is presumed where none exists. In a small village in Nova Scotia the information that there was supposed to be a treasure down back of Dr. Mack's house was told to a "stranger" who asked because she was the sister-in-law of a summer resident who had come to the village every year for over thirty years and was related to year-round inhabitants. The woman who provided the information did not know the story, merely that a treasure was said to be buried there. She suggested asking Dr. Mack,



a friend of the summer resident. When Dr. Mack was asked he made a joke of the idea. His reply was first felt to be a rather rude refusal to talk about the treasure; later it was realized that he probably did not know the story the villagers presumed he knew, and, being a man who feels he must always seem knowledgeable, he made a joke-answer rather than admit ignorance. The story of the treasure buried on the sand-bar behind his house was never learned.

The performance of the storyteller is of interest to folklorists today.<sup>7</sup> It is not, however, an emphasis of this study. The various styles of performance found in the telling of treasure stories are worth a full study in themselves. The one aspect connected with performance which will be mentioned here is the pattern of narration noted while collecting stories of buried treasure and while studying those in the

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<sup>7</sup> Some of the studies done in this field since the 1950s are:

Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context", Journal of American Folklore, LXXXIV (1971), 3-15.

Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth S. Goldstein, Folklore: Communication and Performance (The Hague: Mouton, 1975).

Richard M. Dorson, Negro Tales in Michigan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956).

Richard M. Dorson, "Oral Styles of American Folk Narrators", Folklore in Action: Essays for Discussion in Honor of MacEdward Leach, ed. Horace P. Beck (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1962), pp. 77-100.

Kenneth S. Goldstein, A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore (Hatboro, Penn.: Folklore Associates, 1964).

William Hugh Jansen, "Classifying Performance in the Study of Verbal Folklore", Studies in Folklore in Honor of Distinguished Service Professor Stith Thompson, ed. W. E. Richmond (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1957), pp. 110-118.



Archive of the Department of Folklore of Memorial University of Newfoundland. It is associated not so much with performance as with the imparting of information. This informational pattern of narration is noticed among those who tell stories casually rather than among the skilled storytellers.

In this pattern of narration, a basic story is told of a treasure said to be buried at a certain location. The narrative seems relatively complete; the teller, however, waits for the listeners, or the collector, to ask questions before elaborating on the basic details.<sup>8</sup> This pattern of narration permits the informant to comment on the facts of the story or the characters in it without feeling that they must be part of the core narrative. More importantly, it permits the storyteller to stop the questioning at any point: when he either feels that a question is not pertinent or is simply none of the listener's business.

The collector who comes from within the culture or from a similar one will recognize this manner of narration as one he or she would himself employ. He is also sensitive to the signals to stop asking questions and will not pursue a point which an outsider might press. The continued questioning by such an outsider might be answered as a matter of politeness in the face of rudeness, because of a feeling that the questioner knew no better; it might also be answered to

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<sup>8</sup>This pattern of narration can be seen on Tape 72-95/C1281, in the story of the woman whose brother and his sons dug up the chest of which a woman had dreamt and got the gold for themselves. The collector's manuscript submission of this story is given below in Chapter VII.



get rid of him. The collector in his own culture has advantages but also disadvantages when doing work in the field. Ironically, the outsider will occasionally get information the insider did not because, in his ignorance, the former is not paralyzed by the code of behaviour.

Although the collector did fieldwork in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, it was soon recognized that even a long period of collecting could not equal the amount available from oral sources in the Newfoundland Archive. It was decided, therefore, for purposes of this study to treat certain published collections from Nova Scotia and the Magdalen Islands as oral material, especially since they were secured by recognized folklorists: Helen Creighton, Anselme Chiasson, Arthur Huff Fauset, and Richard S. Tallman. The style and contents of these collections parallel the materials found during actual fieldwork. Contributions to local newspapers have been considered as often being close to the oral tradition both from internal evidence and because the readers of these publications would resent any doctoring of a familiar story.

The alleged folklore collections from Prince Edward Island do not truly reflect the folk pattern. Except for some few newspaper reports, the treasure stories published from that island show neither the mark of the instinctively sensitive amateur nor of the trained folklorist. There are, therefore, few references from that province in this study.



New Brunswick has stories of buried treasure but few of those published have been collected by folklorists. Those which have been published appear mainly in books of travel and have been told and retold. Such stories have been gathered from some few sections of the province several times while other areas have been ignored. A few full narratives were obtained by personal collection, as well as hints of many others. These hints suggest that a large number of treasure stories is waiting to be collected, such as that of the man who went to dig for treasure (apparently somewhere between the Nashwaak and the Miramichi) and was chased away by snowballs--in July! The two books of New Brunswick newspaperman Stuart Trueman cited in this study seem to have stories derived from oral sources and are presented in a manner reasonably close to the oral tradition.

Because of the availability of reliable material from Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, these two areas are emphasized in this study of treasure stories. The narratives from the Magdalen Islands are equally reliable but fewer in number. The stories from the Gaspé were obtained by non-folklorists a half-century ago; they have the marks of the oral tradition. More recent collections from the Gulf of St. Lawrence area of the Gaspé could not be located.

As noted above, over nine hundred and fifty texts of treasure stories and beliefs from Atlantic Canada were examined for this study; they came both from oral traditions and



from print. In attempting to organize them into coherent patterns, it soon became evident that ordering the material under such headings as legend, memorate,<sup>9</sup> and dite<sup>10</sup> would not serve for this study. Concern with form rather than content would obscure other and more pertinent relationships.

It was also realized that legend, memorate and dite would not serve as descriptive terms for the collected texts. There were too many in-between categories, not only because the sources of this collection were so mixed, but because the very nature of treasure stories as a whole does not lend itself to the use of arbitrary classifications. One began to fully appreciate Gerard T. Hurley's decision to use tale and tale fragment in his study "Buried Treasure Tales in America".<sup>11</sup> Since, in most of Atlantic Canada, the term tale means a long and highly structured narrative, it was decided to use the term the people themselves used: story. These stories may be very brief, long, or in-between, but each is still called a story.

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<sup>9</sup>Carl Von Sydow, "Kategorien der Prosa Volksdichtung", Selected Papers on Folklore (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1948), pp. 73-74, 87.

<sup>10</sup>Carl von Sydow, "Popular Dite Tradition A Terminological Outline", Selected Papers on Folklore (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1948), pp. 106-126.

<sup>11</sup>Gerard T. Hurley, "Buried Treasure Tales in America", Western Folklore, X (1951), 197-216.



Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature<sup>12</sup> (hereafter cited as Thompson) and Ernest W. Baughman's Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America<sup>13</sup> (henceforth cited as Baughman) can be extremely useful tools in helping one recognize the traditional elements in folk stories. They can alert a student or researcher to the known existence of certain motifs and prevent him from thinking they are merely local. Unfortunately, many collections of folktales seem to feel that simply providing a list of the motifs found in a story (either in a headnote or in a footnote) is sufficient comment on the tale.

Where such a practice has been followed, not only do the collections, as a rule, fail to note patterns which do recur but which are not covered by a motif number. Even the collections which provide a list of the texts in which a particular motif can be found fail to note the importance of the motif to the story as a whole, to note whether it is a passing reference or of central concern. Moreover, the immediate relationship of one story with another is never fully realized. Consequently, the provision of a body of texts with no more than appended lists of motifs was rejected as a method of

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<sup>12</sup>Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, new and rev. ed., 6 vols. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1955-1958).

<sup>13</sup>Ernest W. Baughman, Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966).



ordering the treasure material from Atlantic Canada. Such a presentation would assume that any discussion of treasure stories and their underlying beliefs would make sense when divorced from the texts themselves.

Motifs from both Thompson and Baughman have been used in analyzing the major patterns of interest in these treasure stories from Atlantic Canada. Certain ones have been selected for discussion of their applicability to the treasure traditions of this region. When it is desired to use a story to illustrate a point made in the text, the story has, normally, been given in full.

The dialect in the Newfoundland narratives is that given by the collector, in manuscript form,<sup>14</sup> or by the transcriber of the tape whether a student collector or a Folklore Department typist. While it is recognized that from the viewpoint of a linguist or a phonetician such transcriptions are not reliable, those tapes which were personally audited seemed to indicate that while there might be a question over individual words, the basic story did not suffer. Since the speech of many Newfoundlanders from the remote areas or from the older age groups is almost completely unintelligible, not merely to the ear of the outsider but even to younger people from Newfoundland, transcription of such tapes is a difficult task. The broadness of the dialect is often complicated by age and lack of teeth.

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<sup>14</sup>See above note 5.



In citing the students' manuscripts and cards, minor errors in spelling and punctuation have been quietly corrected. In the tapes, hesitations, extraneous noises and interruptions have been removed to give a straightforward text. Where a collector's question is needed to understand what follows, it has been included in square brackets. There has been no attempt to reorganize any text.

In addition to the oral material from Atlantic Canada, the printed sources were also examined. Some of these were found to be very close to the folk pattern. Others were found to be fanciful tales in which a glimmer of the local treasure traditions might or might not appear; many of these preferred to utilize only international motifs and beliefs.

It had been thought, at one point, that the treasure stories in Atlantic Canada might well be survivals of European traditions, as are many of the folksongs and märchen found here. Because of the largely Germanic culture of Nova Scotia's Lunenburg County and because of Germanic settlement elsewhere in the Maritimes, Grimm's Teutonic Mythology,<sup>15</sup> "Schatz" in the Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Jacob Grimm, Teutonic Mythology, trans. from the 4th ed. [of Deutsche Mythologie] James Steven Stallybrass, 4 vols. 1883-1888; rpt. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966).

<sup>16</sup>S. Hirschberg, "Schatz", Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens, eds. E. von Hoffmann-Krayer and Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli (Berlin & Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1935/1936), VII, cols 1002-1015.



and, of course, Leo Winter's Die deutsche Schatzsage<sup>17</sup> were checked to see if there were any beliefs or practices connected with treasure in Atlantic Canada which might be ascribed solely to Germanic origins. Some from Lunenburg County might well be such survivals, but were not noted from other areas settled by Germans. The beliefs which seemed derived specifically from the Germanic tradition were found only in this one area and added to the basic treasure traditions of Atlantic Canada rather than forming a separate sub-tradition.<sup>18</sup>

Since French settlement occurred in all areas of Atlantic Canada, Sébillot's Le Folk-Lore de France<sup>19</sup> was examined for possible parallels, for beliefs and practices found only among those of French descent in the region. Although references to treasure were found in all four volumes of this work, no belief or practice was sufficiently identified with French tradition to ascribe it solely to that source. In fact, treasure stories from the Acadian areas of Atlantic Canada cannot easily be separated from those of the English-speaking areas; the only difference is the language.

Published materials from Ireland and from the United Kingdom were also examined in an attempt to discover the

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<sup>17</sup>Leo Winter, Die deutsche Schatzsage (Wattenscheid: 1925).

<sup>18</sup>A separate study might be made of survivals of the Germanic treasure traditions in the Maritime Provinces.

<sup>19</sup>Paul Sébillot, Le Folk-Lore de France, 4 vols. (Paris: G. P. Maisonneuve et LaRose, c. 1968).



relationships between these traditions and that of Atlantic Canada. In the British material the treasure stories which have appealed to the folklore scholars in the past would suggest that there is practically no relationship between them and the treasure stories told in Atlantic Canada. It may well be that the parallels between these two traditions are more numerous than they appear to be from the major British collections, which have largely been compiled from earlier published sources.

The narratives cited from field collection by R. L. Tongue in her Somerset Folklore<sup>20</sup> are very close to the patterns of stories found in the treasure tradition of Atlantic Canada. Parallels were also found in minor articles in Folklore where the contributor reported what was found and did not appear to have been influenced by the nineteenth century need to have his material fit into some scheme of Teutonic or Scandinavian mythology.<sup>21</sup> Lady Gregory's Irish material, and local publications of reminiscences and tales from both Scotland and England also had parallels.

Published treasure stories from western Canada and the whole of the United States were examined. The North

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<sup>20</sup>R. L. Tongue, Somerset Folklore (London: The Folk-Lore Society, 1965).

<sup>21</sup>See Barbara Allen Woods, "Review of Legend Collections", The Devil in Dog Form (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 3-8 for an excellent commentary on the way this school of thinking influenced the collection of stories from the folk.



American materials were checked to see how the patterns found in Atlantic Canada fitted the treasure traditions of the continent as a whole. The great interest in lost mines found both in western Canada and in the western United States is a very minor pattern in the stories of treasure from Atlantic Canada. There is, however, a distinct relationship between the materials of the eastern seaboard of the United States and those of Atlantic Canada. Some similarities were expected because of the early relationship of these areas to one another and because of trade patterns between Atlantic Canada and the Caribbean which involved contacts throughout the length of the eastern seaboard.

The apparent disappearance of certain patterns from the stories published from the northeastern United States, such as the dream of treasure, was surprising. These patterns may not, of course, have vanished. It may be merely that collectors have ceased to record them for publication, and that a dual tradition<sup>22</sup> is in the process of developing such as appears to have happened in Great Britain.

One pattern collected from a resident of Maine who was visiting Prince Edward Island is found in none of the American collections: the election of the people not to dig for a treasure. This conscious decision not to act is

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<sup>22</sup>By dual tradition is meant the dichotomy between the traditions which folklorists deem worthy of preservation by publication and those which are kept--alive and well--by the folk themselves. It arises from the difference between a preconceived concept of what treasure stories should be and what they actually are.



frequently found in Atlantic Canada, and may well occur elsewhere in North America. Lady Gregory noted the reluctance to dig in her collection from Ireland, but most folklorists and others have ignored it.

The treasure stories and beliefs of Atlantic Canada share the element of realism with most of the North American tradition. The buried or hidden treasure belongs to an historic personage: earlier settlers, besieged garrisons or pirates. The lost mines are of mineral wealth likely to be found in the region. Stories of the treasures of mythological and legendary beings as found in the European traditions do not occur.<sup>23</sup> Although areas of Newfoundland have a tradition of fairies, the treasure is not said to belong to them. In Ireland and the United Kingdom it often does. The fairies may have come to Newfoundland with the settlers from these countries but they do not appear to have brought any fairy gold with them.

The supernatural does form a part of the treasure traditions of Atlantic Canada, but it sometimes seems to be merely an extension of the natural for the people who tell of it. There is, throughout the region, an acceptance by the folk of extraordinary happenings as natural which might be

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<sup>23</sup>Dwarfs, dragons, trolls, white ladies, fairies, elves, et al. do not figure in the traditions of eastern North America as owners of treasure. Ghosts do appear, but they are usually the guardian of someone else's wealth.



regarded as supernatural in other cultures. The degree of acceptance varies, of course, from community to community, but on the whole the uncanny is part of an extended everyday world. Ghosts and inexplicable "natural" phenomena are the supernatural forms most often encountered in Atlantic Canada's treasure stories and beliefs.

The sites designated in treasure stories for the burial of wealth do not always seem logical. There is either a scarcity of soil, a difficulty of easy access, or the spot is observable from a settlement. Some of the supposed sites of buried treasure were personally checked, not with the idea of digging for the gold but to see why such spots should be chosen. Most of the areas visited were in Nova Scotia where friends who owned boats could take one around the bays during the summer. Locations in Prince Edward Island were also observed, and many of those mentioned in stories from New Brunswick were already known. Factual data was sought from residents of areas which could not be visited in person.

This study concentrates on a distinctive region: Atlantic Canada. Although provincial and ecological differences exist as well as differences between local cultures, the region as a whole shares a heritage based on the sea, a relatively static economy, and shared historical experiences. All parts of Atlantic Canada have seen occupation by both French and English. Pockets of settlement, some large, some small, by these two nationalities occur throughout Atlantic



Canada. So too, in the Maritimes, areas of Scottish, Irish and Germanic settlement are to be found, frequently as small enclaves in the larger expanse of a differing culture. In consequence, no ascription of treasure beliefs or stories has been made to a specific national source. Many of the traditions are shared by neighbouring communities without a common country of origin. Inter-marriage between the cultures has also helped to blur the exactness of derivation of any treasure practice or belief.

The topics discussed in the study that follows were found to be of common interest in treasure stories from the whole of Atlantic Canada. They reflect the broad patterns<sup>24</sup> of treasure stories and beliefs found by analyzing a very large body of texts from one region. Theoretical generalizations, although not labelled as such, have been offered. It is believed from the materials read for this study that many of these generalizations would also apply to treasure stories from other areas. These generalizations would, of course, need testing by other students elsewhere in North America.

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<sup>24</sup> Although the broad patterns of this study were arrived at from analysis of the material, it should be noted that such an approach was anticipated by both Winter in Die deutsche Schatzsage and Hirschberg in "Schatz".



## CHAPTER II

### WHAT TREASURE IS

Treasure is three things: what the law says it is; what stories of unfound treasures presume it is; and what reports of found treasure know it to have been. The legal definition of treasure is of little interest per se to the people who tell treasure stories, or to their listeners. The Law of Treasure-Trove, however, has influenced these stories and the practices of those who search for treasure. Although laws of treasure-trove existed in other European countries, it is the English Law of Treasure-Trove that has had the greatest influence on North American tradition, and especially in Atlantic Canada.<sup>1</sup>

In Atlantic Canada, probably not one person in a hundred who hears or tells a treasure story today is consciously aware that there may be or ever was a Law of Treasure-Trove. References in the narratives to any government interest in the treasure are rare. Such treasure-hunting practices as digging after dark usually connected

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<sup>1</sup>For an outline of the history of the law of treasure-trove see Cecil S. Emden, "The Law of Treasure-Trove, Past and Present", The Law Quarterly Review, ed. A. L. Goodhart (London: Stevens & Sons Ltd., 1926), XLII, 368-381.



with magical methods for raising treasure may, however, have their roots in avoiding one's neighbours and their intrusion and in a desire to avoid the law. The necessity for secrecy regarding the finding of a treasure and for avoiding any sudden change in one's manner of living certainly is connected with a sense, if not a knowledge, that possession of a treasure probably is not legal.

Tradition in the British colonies of the New World seems to still have memories of the medieval English law: treasure which was found belonged to the king and not to the finder, and dire punishment awaited anyone who possessed or concealed a find of treasure.

Bracton (circa 1250) writing on the laws and customs of England defined treasure as "any ancient store of money or other metal which has been forgotten so that it no longer has an owner."<sup>2</sup> He further explained that while treasure "belonged in times past to the finder by the law of nature, it is now the property of the lord king by the jus gentium."<sup>3</sup> Bracton saw the concealment of the discovery of treasure as a form of theft, and argued that anyone who showed greater prosperity than usual should be brought before the justices and forced to prove his innocence; such action should be

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<sup>2</sup>Bracton on the Laws and Customs of England, trans. Samuel E. Thorne (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), II, 338.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 339.



undertaken on the basis of rumour and "reasonable presumptions". At this time the gold, silver or other metal was treasure no matter where found.

By 1765 the place of concealment became important to the definition of treasure-trove. William Blackstone, in his Commentaries on the Laws of England, wrote:

[treasure-trove] is where any money or coin, gold, silver, plate, or bullion, is found hidden in the earth, or other private place, the owner thereof being unknown; in which case the treasure belongs to the king.<sup>4</sup>

He excepted treasure scattered into the sea or upon the public surface of the earth from a claim by the crown; such was not treasure-trove but abandoned or lost property.

Blackstone's final comment:

In England ... the punishment of such as concealed from the king the finding of hidden treasure was formerly no less than death; but now it is only fine and imprisonment<sup>5</sup>

may help to explain why even today finders of buried or hidden treasure do not talk about it.

In the United States, those states which recognize the doctrine of treasure-trove and where it forms part of the common law have extended the definition of treasure to include the paper representatives of the gold and silver.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>William Blackstone, Commentaries on the Laws of England. Book the First, Oxford: 1765 (rept. London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1966), p. 285.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>6</sup>American Jurisprudence, 2nd ed. (Rochester, N.Y.: The Lawyers Co-Operative Publishing Co., 1962), I, 6-7.



The finding of treasure, however, is not subject to a claim by the government but is treated as lost property. The find must be reported to the pertinent State authority and income tax must be paid on it; so there are still penalties if one attempts to conceal a find.

Australia, frequently referred to as Canada's sister Dominion, was settled later than the North American colonies, but apparently continued the English Law of Treasure-Trove without the modifications which the British Government introduced: "The finder of treasure trove in this country [Australia] must deliver it up and can only hope that the Government will be generous to him".<sup>7</sup>

The Provinces of Atlantic Canada would, presumably,<sup>8</sup> have come under the English law while they were still colonies, and it is this law which affects the people's concept of treasure-trove. Where there is an awareness that the government might be interested in a treasure-find, the belief seems to be that the men who dug it up could lose it all if the government found out about it.<sup>9</sup> In Newfoundland, the

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<sup>7</sup>Kenneth W. Byron, Lost Treasure in Australia and New Zealand (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1964), pp. 212-215.

<sup>8</sup>The Law of Treasure-Trove falls under Common Law. It is still a moot point whether English Common Law would axiomatically apply in English colonies which also had their own Common Laws.

<sup>9</sup>Tape 68-16/C498. See the story of boxes and boxes of money which mysteriously disappeared.



English law applied until Confederation with Canada in 1949, but the memory of it continues to linger.

The Canadian Government has had little interest in treasure-trove. There is no entry for the term in The Encyclopedia of Words and Phrases: Legal Maxims, Canada 1825-1962 which is a work containing all the terms on which legal rulings as to the meaning have been made in Canada. The Provincial Government of Nova Scotia, however, has a Treasure Trove Act. This Act defines treasures as "precious stones or metals in a state other than their natural state".<sup>10</sup> It also requires any person who discovers or recovers such to report the find to the Provincial Secretary.

By adding precious stones to the definition of treasure, the Nova Scotian law approaches the traditional concept of treasure held by the people. Moreover, by the words "in other than their natural state" the seemingly shortened definition becomes more comprehensive than the lists of other legal definitions. The Act does retain the adjective any which has been present in discussions of the law of treasure-trove from earliest times, giving precision to the quantity as well as to the quality of the treasure.

It is this very precision of definition which is missing from the descriptions of treasure found in the many

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<sup>10</sup>Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia 1967, c.314.s.1.



stories on the subject told in Atlantic Canada. In the narratives which are of treasures waiting to be found there is most frequently no description other than the word treasure. No specifics of quality or quantity are given. The elaboration, if any, comes in terms of the burier: pirate, Frenchman or Acadian.

Where the treasure is described, money is the form which seems most popular. Throughout Atlantic Canada the term would be understood to mean coin not bills. Closely following money as a description of the waiting treasure are gold, and gold coins. Throughout Nova Scotia the money, gold or coin is presumed to be doubloons.

The popularity of doubloons as a description of the treasure lies not only in their association with stories of pirate loot but also in the fact that in the middle 1800s they circulated throughout the Maritime Provinces as legal tender ranging from a rate of three pounds four shillings Sterling to four pounds sixteen shillings Prince Edward Island. The Spanish or Mexican dollar (the pieces of eight of pirate tales) had a value of four shillings twopence Sterling to a value of six shilling threepence in the coinage of Prince Edward Island.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Alexander Monro, New Brunswick; with a Brief Outline of Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, Halifax: 1855 (rept. Belleville, Ont.: Mika Studio, 1972), p. 48.



Silver as a description of the waiting treasure is occasionally encountered but is more often found in the phrase gold and silver. Jewels is sometimes added to the gold and silver, but only one narrative tells of a treasure composed completely of gems: diamonds and rubies.<sup>12</sup>

Gold and silver are also presumed waiting to be found in the form of bars as well as of coin. Images made of the precious metals are also considered to be treasure. In the areas affected by the Expulsion of the Acadians in 1755, church plate, presumably made of precious metal, and even chapel bells are said to have been hidden and are still waiting to be found.

Guns, a less standard form of treasure, are occasionally given as the valuables to be found. These are sometimes brass cannon but are more often merely guns or cannon. They may be regarded as desirable in themselves, or the barrels may be described as containers of more valuable treasure.<sup>13</sup>

In stories of treasure still to be found the amount is usually suggested by describing the container in which it was buried. Chests, boxes, pots and kettles, some iron some not, are favoured as holders of treasure. But the size of these is never specified in exact terms; big and large are the

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<sup>12</sup>Q68-11-2.

<sup>13</sup>Margaret Grant MacWhirter, Treasure Trove in Gaspé and the Baie des Chaleurs, 3rd ed. (Quebec: The Telegraph Printing Co., 1919), pp. 95-96, 201-202.



inexact exact description which do occur. One story gives the value of the treasure as eight to ten million dollars but does not give the form in which it is to be found.<sup>14</sup>

The lack of preciseness in the description of the treasure may well contribute to the popular appeal of stories of hidden hoards. The listener may envision the chest of gold to be the size of a trunk capable of holding ten cubic feet of goods which is so often found in illustrations of tales of treasure in magazines and children's books. In contrast to the proportions suggested by stories, actual treasure chests were rather small boxes usually holding two cubic feet or less. A box of treasure which was found, and contained gold coins to the value of \$8,000, was fifteen inches long.<sup>15</sup>

The great expectations raised by the vague details of unfound treasures are replaced in the stories of treasures which have been found by specific facts; "a jug containing five hundred sovereigns"<sup>16</sup> would be a nice find but would not equal the feeling that treasure is hundreds of thousands of dollars. Visions of the wealth of India and the Iranian

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<sup>14</sup>Tape 70-38/C747.

<sup>15</sup>Stuart Trueman, Ghosts, Pirates and Treasure Trove (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, c. 1975), p. 130, from a story in The Saint John Telegraph of 26 October, 1894.

<sup>16</sup>Clara Dennis, Cape Breton Over (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1942), p. 340. Also reported in Edward Rowe Snow, Secrets of the North Atlantic Islands (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1950), p. 101.



Crown Jewels are replaced by a can of rusty half-dollars worth \$1,300.<sup>17</sup> Even clay pipes<sup>18</sup> and a grindstone<sup>19</sup> become finds worth telling about. The treasure is defined by what was found rather than by what one would expect to find.

The gap between expectation and fact is illustrated in the Maritime provinces where stories of Acadian gold left behind at the time of the Expulsion are told. It is known that the Acadians did not allow the gold they received to circulate, and many narratives are based on the idea that it was buried before the Acadians left their original settlements. Some caches of coins have been found,<sup>20</sup> but most of the treasure finds have been of household valuables not easily replaced in the New World and too bulky to take with

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<sup>17</sup>MS 68-11/pp. 76-77.

<sup>18</sup>Tape 64-10/C26.

<sup>19</sup>Tape 68-9/C466.

<sup>20</sup>These caches appear to have been family savings which could not be reclaimed from their hiding places before the families were deported. One find of Acadian gold was hidden behind a loose brick and was enough to pay passage from Europe to Lunenburg for the girl's lover: Will R. Bird, These Are the Maritimes (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1959, 1967), p. 58.

Despite various reports of entire villages burying their wealth in a common place at the time of the Expulsion, the finds have suggested individual holdings: a sock full of gold, a small chest, a collection of coins hidden in an iron pot (but no suggestion that the pot was filled with them).



one, such as a set of blacksmith's tools,<sup>21</sup> pewter plates,<sup>22</sup> or a silver goblet.<sup>23</sup> That the Acadians buried their possessions rather than gold is not simply deduced from the finds which have been made:

A number of years ago Charles McGee, of Merigomish, coming from the Strait of Canso, as he passed Big Tracadie, lodged at the house of a Mr. Petitpas; during the evening, finding that he was from Merigomish, the conversation turned on the original French settlement, when he learned that Mr. P's father had been one of the settlers there, and his mother, who was then very old and infirm said, that if able to go to the place, she could yet show them where she had buried a large brass kettle, containing a number of household articles.<sup>24</sup>

What people consider valuable and, therefore, worth calling treasure does not always fall within the terms of the legal definition. One treasure story is of a keg of brandy. Other stories are told of hidden rum: whether of a bottle or of two hundred oak casks.<sup>25</sup> Gold as a mineral is considered

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<sup>21</sup>Arthur W. H. Eaton, The History of Kings County Nova Scotia (Salem, Mass.: The Salem Press Company, 1910), p. 30.

<sup>22</sup>Seven pewter plates according to Bird, Maritimes, p. 182. Twenty-five "ancient French plates of silver and pewter" according to Trueman, Ghosts, p. 131.

<sup>23</sup>Will R. Bird, A Century at Chignecto (Toronto: Ryerson Press, c. 1928), pp. 239-240. Trueman, Ghosts, p. 131.

<sup>24</sup>George Patterson, A History of the County of Pictou Nova Scotia, Montreal, 1877 (rept. Belleville, Ont.: Mika Studio, 1972), p. 41.

<sup>25</sup>W.C. Borrett, "Buried Treasure in Nova Scotia", More Tales Told Under the Old Town Clock (Halifax: Imperial Publishing Company Limited, 1943), p. 60.



treasure, and there are a few stories of lost mines or outcroppings of gold. Just over a half-dozen of these have been noted, more of them from Newfoundland which is not known as a gold-bearing area<sup>26</sup> than from Nova Scotia which did have a gold-rush in the 1880s.<sup>27</sup>

Stories of lost mines and lodes of rich ore are found in most areas of North America where gold-rushes took place in the nineteenth century. Such stories are frequently told in the southwestern United States and in British Columbia. The paucity of material from Nova Scotia may rest in a general awareness throughout the area that though gold can be found almost anywhere on the mainland of Nova Scotia, it is not worth the cost of recovery because the ratio of gold to the rock in which it occurs is so low.

The Motif Rich mine discovered. Finder is unable to find location again (Baughman N596.3\*) occurs in this small

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<sup>26</sup>Gold has occurred in conjunction with copper and lead deposits in the mines of northern and central Newfoundland but not in independent deposits. Things, however, may be changing; see "We've got our first gold mine ... almost", The Daily News, St. John's (July 26, 1977), p. 1 & p. 10.

<sup>27</sup>The meguma series covers nearly half of mainland Nova Scotia, lying south and west of a fault running along the northern shore of Minas Basin eastward to Chedabucto Bay. The first gold strikes were made in the 1860s but it was not until the 1880s that the real rush began. It ended with the call of the Klondike, although gold mining in some areas continued until the Second World War. Some rich pockets of nuggets and dust were found, but most of the gold occurs in very thin veins which require over a ton of rock to yield an ounce of gold.



group of stories of lost mines and veins of gold as does the Motif Rich mine discovered by accidental breaking off of rock (N596.2). The majority of the stories, however, concern a mine said or presumed to have been found by an Indian or an old man, a mine which no one else has managed to discover. It was an Indian who found the lost silver mine featured in a story from southern Newfoundland (Card 69-6/162).

Elsewhere in Atlantic Canada most forms of mineral wealth do not seem to form part of the folk concept of treasure. Treasure must be gold, silver or precious stones. Sieur Denys, in the seventeenth century, reported an occurrence of lapis lazuli in New Brunswick:

About three-fourths of a league further out to sea than the Island of Menane [Manan], there is a rock which is only uncovered every six or seven years, and it is, according to report of the Indians of lapis Lazuli. I have seen a fragment of it which they presented to the late Commandeur de Razilly, who sent it to France to be examined. It was reported to him that it was genuinely lapis Lazuli, of which azure could be made, having a value of ten écus an ounce. All that was possible was afterwards done to learn from the Indians the place where the rock was, but this they would never point out no matter what they were promised.<sup>28</sup>

Informants from Grand Manan know nothing of this missing treasure, nor has it been found elsewhere in the oral tradition. Mineral wealth of any type does not appear to form part of the treasure tradition in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island,

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<sup>28</sup>Nicholas Denys, The Description and Natural History of the Coasts of North America (Acadia) (1672). trans. & ed. William F. Ganong (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1908), I, 34.



the Magdalen Islands or the eastern Gaspé Peninsula.



### CHAPTER III

#### WHO BURIED THE TREASURE

When treasure occurs in other than mineral form, the people of Atlantic Canada most frequently describe it in terms of the person(s) who buried it, hid, or concealed the cache. The term buried is used loosely to describe all these actions. The Motif N511.1 Treasure buried by men applies, therefore, to all treasure narratives not concerned with natural wealth, with the goods washed ashore from wrecks, or with unclaimed family fortunes.

Thompson's elaborations and sub-divisions of the Motif Treasure buried by men (N511.1) are, however, extremely illogical. They indiscriminately mix persons, topographical and other locations, and containers. For example, the Motif Treasure hidden by retreating army (N511.1.7) is concerned with the classification of the buriers of the treasure. It falls between Treasure in cellar of ruined house (N511.1.6), a location, and Treasure buried in chest, cask, kettle or cannon barrel (N511.1.8), containers. Many of the motifs developed from the basic Treasure buried by men (N511.1) would seem to be more logical extensions of the Motif Treasure in ground (N511).



Many of the Index motifs based on N511.1 apply to treasure stories from Atlantic Canada, and in that way the Index is useful for the student. The Index has not been found satisfactory in ordering the patterns of narrative elements assembled here. The who's, where's and in-what's of the treasure tradition from this area will, therefore, be discussed according to the groupings which suggest themselves from the materials collected.

Treasure in Atlantic Canada was buried, so the folk believe, by pirates of various nationalities and centuries, by Acadians at the time of the Expulsion, by the French of France and of New France, by the Spanish, by the Vikings, by certain historical personages, by the captains of pay ships and officers in charge of payrolls, by early settlers and garrisons in time of attack, by "old men", by ancestors, and by a variety of named individuals.

Who buried the treasure is not always of concern to the narrators of treasure stories. Other factors connected with the treasure tradition may be of more importance. The designation of the burier, by name, occupation or nationality, is, however, frequently used to qualify the word treasure where no other description of the trove is given.

In the Newfoundland material from oral tradition only about half the narratives specify the burier of the treasure, and some of these describe both the hider and the hoard. The same basic balance is found in the stories in collections



published by folklorists: five from Nova Scotia and one from the Magdalen Islands. A small sampling of oral material from elsewhere in the Maritimes also shows the same pattern: a willingness to accept vagueness both in the description of the treasure and in how it got where it is supposed to be.

The treasure stories from printed sources are not, in this area, primarily literary fabrications. Most show a relationship with the oral tradition and are found in newspaper columns, travel books and local histories. Such stories, however, nearly always specify the burier of the treasure either by name, occupation or nationality. The journalists and travel-writers who report these stories are well aware that their readers, unlike the folk, will not be content with the vagueness of the genuine tradition. Within the context of local culture and tradition the burier of a treasure may be implied even where not explicitly named. One feels that in the stories in the print tradition the informant has been badgered until he supplied the name of whatever burier of treasure would be presumed in his area.

Each area of Atlantic Canada has its own favourite (implied) burier of treasure. Pirates, the Acadians and the French are those most often named. The choice seems to be based on the past history of the area, although the folk sense of history, especially of chronology, is not always reliable as when a Spanish galleon is reported as off Torbay,



Newfoundland in 1837.<sup>1</sup> Who buried the treasure is often deduced from peoples known to have lived in or frequented the area before the history of the present settlers.

In the Newfoundland material from oral tradition, pirates are favoured three to one as the persons who buried treasure over all other buriers of valuables. The ratio is not so high in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island or the Magdalens, but if there is any doubt as to the origin of a treasure, pirates are named. In New Brunswick, especially in the Chignecto area, Acadians are seen as the most likely hidiers of any wealth; pirates are more popular in the Bay of Fundy area and up the Saint John River. At the other end of that province, in the Bay Chaleur and in Gaspé, the origin of the hidden treasures is ascribed almost equally to pirates and to the French, including the Acadians.

It is an historical fact that the Acadians did bury household goods at the time of the Expulsion in 1755, and the finds made of family and church treasures in the old Acadian lands has led to the conclusion that it was the Acadians who buried them. The French of France and of New France are also credited with burying valuables throughout the Maritime Provinces. The difference between the Acadians as buriers of treasures and the French as the hidiers of hoards throughout the Maritimes is the size of the expected treasure. The Acadian caches would be family savings which

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<sup>1</sup>MS 72-118/pp. 8-9.



were not recovered in the haste of departure. The French treasures are those of army payrolls such as that lost at Irishtown near Moncton, New Brunswick;<sup>2</sup> of the wealth of garrisons when the English arrived in the early 1760s; and of the wealth of Louisbourg at the time of its capture in 1758:

Over that knoll, where you have the fort ground road to the right, above that to the left looks like a hump or bump. They say that is where it [the treasure] was put. They took the treasure over in a row boat because the English attacked to sea and wall. My father told me and his father told him. They were both miners. Miners are notorious for treasure legends. When they were hired to work at Louisbourg [on the restoration] figure if anything to be picked up, they've picked it up....

The knoll - [they] know, tell it's there - but won't go dig. Father told us while we were having a picnic. So we asked why not go dig? Nope. After "Do you realize ...." got pick. No. Nobody has dug.<sup>3</sup>

The refusal to dig where treasure is "known" to be is often encountered.

Another story from the same informant suggests that the treasure is under the old hospital:

That's where the old hospital was and that's where they buried it, under the hospital. That was the last point they left in the fort. Louisbourg treasure's not supposed to be money. Supposed to be plate, things. What makes the legends reasonable is that nothing's ever been found. With all

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<sup>2</sup>Stuart Trueman, Ghosts, Pirates and Treasure Trove The Phantoms that Haunt New Brunswick (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975), pp. 149-150.

<sup>3</sup>L. F. Balisch, St. John's, Newfoundland. Originally from Glace Bay, N.S.



the restoration - no finds. Either the English got it all or it never existed. But we know it was a rich fort and no artifacts have ever been found.

They buried it with a tombstone - in the graveyard inside the fort grounds - just below the hospital. It was taken and buried in a grave. Father didn't tell me that. I don't know who did.<sup>4</sup>

In the Gaspé also, the French buried treasure during the period before the Conquest of Quebec:

Of course tales of buried treasure surround Fort Ramsay. As related to me, the story tells that before the Conquest, two French ships carrying plate for the governor [of Quebec], being pursued by British ships, took refuge in Gaspé Bay, where they succeeded in hiding the treasure.

The location, according to the chart, said to have been recovered from the captured ship, was between two brooks, but, as these are a mile apart, there is considerable ground to cover. French ships are credited with having aided in the unavailing search.<sup>5</sup>

At the site of one of the old French batteries on the Restigouche River in northern New Brunswick, one of the early pioneers dreamed of a cannon filled with layers of gold and silver separated by layers of birch-bark:

But skeptical of fortune, she paid no heed to the cannon of gold.

Years passed away, and the nephew of the early pioneer travelling by stage in northern New Brunswick, met among other passengers an old squaw. She asked him where he had been. When she heard, she surprised him by saying she knew the place well, and was a little girl when in 1760 the English came. She described how the French, having filled a brass cannon with much gold and jewellery had buried it.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Margaret Grant MacWhirter, Treasure Trove in Gaspé and the Baie des Chaleurs, 3rd ed. (Quebec: The Telegraph Printing Co., 1919), p. 7.



The place was identical with that of the dream....  
However business pressed, and he hurried to his  
distant home across the wide Atlantic, instead of  
going to seek the treasure-filled cannon.<sup>6</sup>

There do not appear to be any stories of French treasures buried at the time of the War of the Spanish Succession when Acadia was ceded to the English. Some reports of the findings from the area of Annapolis Royal suggest, however, that valuables were hidden then as well as at the time of later hostilities. Tales of the hiding of riches of the Fort at Louisbourg are also missing from the period of its capture in the 1740s by the New Englanders, although many stories are told of treasures supposedly hidden during the seige of 1758 before it yielded to General Wolfe.

In Newfoundland, the French who buried treasure were always the French of France. Some stories appear connected with the fort at Placentia during English-French skirmishes in the early 1760s, but these burials are overshadowed by those supposedly made by the fishermen who came to work on the French Shore. "Those old Frenchmen had lots of money" is a comment frequently heard among Newfoundland informants. Why Frenchmen working the summer fishery should be better off than their English counterparts is never explained. One explanation may be that comments on the value of the French fishery in Newfoundland have been conceived by the people in

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 201-202.



terms of actual coin.<sup>7</sup>

While there is some historical evidence that the Acadians and French did hide valuables, there is no concrete support for the supposition that pirates buried treasure in Atlantic Canada. Yet there is hardly a secluded cove or off-shore island where pirate treasure is not presumed to be buried. Some of the pirates are said to have been French, some Spanish; most are given no nationality, although those remembered by name are either English or Irish.

There were pirates operating in the waters of Atlantic Canada. The island of Newfoundland and the fishing banks off its coast were a popular area for pirate attacks from the early 1600s to the time of the American Revolution. Many of the pirates who sailed Newfoundland waters were the English sea-dogs of the Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods. The Sallee Rovers,<sup>8</sup> the Turks, the Moorish pirates were a threat to the Newfoundland fishery; they would wait near the English Channel to capture the Newfoundland fishing fleet on its way home after the summer fishery. There appear to be no records of actual operations by Sallee Rovers off Newfoundland itself despite some Newfoundlanders' designation of pirates by this

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<sup>7</sup>D. W. Prowse, A History of Newfoundland (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895) provides tables and discussions of French catches in Newfoundland for various periods in the Island's history.

<sup>8</sup>Pirates who sailed from the Moroccan port of Sallee in the Mediterranean. They were of many nationalities and flew the flag of Sallee as a flag of convenience.



title. The term Turk meaning pirate does occur in Newfoundland place names.

It was the fishery and the men who operated it which attracted the pirates of the early seventeenth century to Newfoundland. Sir Edward Mainwaring, the pirate who became Admiral Mainwaring of the English Navy, remarked on the desirability of a stop in Newfoundland in his "Discourse on Piracy".<sup>9</sup> It was an ideal place to pick up or replenish a crew from among the disenchanted fishermen (who were also trained seamen); it was also a good spot to refurbish ship's supplies and get water.

A contemporary of Mainwaring was Peter Easton. This pirate made his headquarters in Newfoundland and, at one time was in command of forty ships. Easton cost the shipping and settlements of the area a great deal, but little of his loot appears to have been monetary wealth. While awaiting a pardon from James I he made a foray south to intercept the Spanish Plate ships. He then retired with his fortune to the south of France where he became an honoured citizen of Villefranche.

Despite these known facts, Easton is credited by many Newfoundlanders with having buried his treasure at various spots around the island. Some believe that he is still in

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<sup>9</sup>Sir Henry Mainwaring, "Of the Beginnings, Practices, and Suppression of Pirates" known as "Discourse on Pirates", The Life and Works of Sir Henry Mainwaring, eds. G. E. Manwaring and W. G. Perrin (n.p.: Navy Records Society, 1922), II, 9-49.



Harbour Grace protecting his treasure of diamonds and rubies. Easton is Newfoundland's own Captain Kidd. As the activities of many pirates along the eastern seaboard of North America are now generally ascribed to Kidd,<sup>10</sup> so in Newfoundland they are credited to Easton. The popular awareness of Easton and his daring activities in the period around 1610 may be caused by printed reminders in school history books, books of travel, and the Newfoundland press.

Another famous pirate in the Conception Bay area of Newfoundland was Kelly. Folk tradition says that Kelly's Island was named after him:

Captain Kelly, a red bearded Irishman, had his headquarters on the island and when ships would sail in the Bay after him, he would sail his ship back of the smaller islands and around Bell Island and out to sea.

Kelly and his men spent many years in and around Conception Bay and it was believed that he buried his treasure somewhere on Kelly's Island....

In telling this story, grandfather told how his grandmother, while spreading fish by the sea shore one day met Captain Kelly who with one of his men came ashore in search of water. She showed him to a cool spring and filling their casks, off they went.

(Card 73-182/20)

This chronology would place Kelly alive in the early nineteenth century negating the idea that he was connected with Kidd's associate Gillam, alias Kelly, also hung in 1701. The Newfoundland tourist booklet Historic Newfoundland by

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<sup>10</sup>For a discussion of this phenomenon see William Hallam Bonner, Pirate Laureate: The Life & Legends of Captain Kidd (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1947).



L. E. F. English (reprinted many times since 1955 with few changes), puts Kelly's activities in the seventeenth century. One must remember that tourist booklets are designed to be colourful rather than historically accurate. It is also possible that the exploits of Kelly the Pirate of ballad fame<sup>11</sup> were associated with the island because of its name.

Other pirates frequented the coasts of Newfoundland, but none are so well remembered as Easton and Kelly, and none of the others whose historical presence is known are said to have buried treasure on the island. In June of 1720, Bartholemew Roberts made a daring raid on Trepassey. He burned all the ships in the harbour and then took off after a ship supposed to be carrying a valuable cargo. The raid was reported in the Boston papers. The people of the area now ascribe the raid to Avery,<sup>12</sup> a pirate who was never near Newfoundland.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Printed in The Forget Me Not Songster, various editions. In the edition published by Nafis & Cornish of New York, n.d., the ballad is given on p. 75 and a portrait of Kelly appears as the frontispiece.

<sup>12</sup>Tape 68-43/C528.

For an account of Roberts' raid see Daniel Defoe, A General History of the Pyrates, ed. Manuel Schonhorn (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1972) pp. 216-217. This is a modern edition of the work sometimes known as Captain Charles Johnson's A General History of the Pyrates, first published 1724.

<sup>13</sup>M. A. Courtney, Cornish Feasts and Folk-Lore [Penzance: Beare and Son, 1890] (East Ardsley, Wakefield, Yorkshire: EP Publishing Limited, 1973), pp. 94-95.



Mainwaring's activities in Newfoundland are not remembered by the people. Captain Kidd has begun to appear, and so have Black Death the Pirate and Barnacle Bill, possibly from one of the entertainment media. The true pirates-- John Philips, Captain George Lowther, Captain Edward Low, Captain Lewis, Captain Bellamy of the Whidaw<sup>14</sup>--have sunk to anonymity. Michel de Sance, who in 1596 captured all the fishing captains in St. John's Harbour and held them for nine days while their ships were robbed,<sup>15</sup> does not seem to be remembered; he may be one of the French pirates, all unnamed, who are believed to have buried treasure in Newfoundland.

Pirate stories which have nothing to do with the burying of treasure are also told in Newfoundland. These reports of sea raiders who harassed the Island are always told of pirates rather than of privateers. Narratives of attacks by privateers are found in the Maritimes, but the men who buried the treasure were pirates.

While there were some pirates who operated in the Maritimes, there were none so well-known to the area as Easton

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<sup>14</sup>Defoe, Pirates, includes accounts of these men's activities in the waters around Newfoundland. See pp. 341-342 (Phillips); p. 315 (Lowther); p. 334 (Low); pp. 595-597 (Lewis); p. 591 (Bellamy).

<sup>15</sup>Frances B. Briffett, The Story of Newfoundland and Labrador, ed. Phyllis R. Blakeley and Myra C. Vernon (Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons (Canada) Ltd., 1954), p. 53.



was in Newfoundland.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, Kidd and Blackbeard are those most often named as responsible for the hiding of their treasures along the coasts and navigable rivers of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, the Magdalens and the Gaspé.

Edward Low was a pirate who did operate in the waters off Newfoundland and around the Maritime Provinces. Part of the treasure he buried on Isle Haute in the Bay of Fundy was found in the early 1950s.<sup>17</sup> Local traditions, however, still credit the treasure waiting to be found on the island to Captain Kidd.<sup>18</sup> Captain Kidd will probably be named as the burier of a treasure if anyone insists that a story teller name the pirate who hid the hoard and will not accept the vagueness of a pirate treasure as sufficient description.

Blackbeard as a burier of treasure has undoubtedly replaced the activities of some other sea-rover. His place in the folk tradition of Nova Scotia is, however, easier to understand than the insistence on Captain Kidd. Many of the

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<sup>16</sup>A Captain Edward Swede is sometimes mentioned. His name appeared on the legend which accompanied the display on Oak Island and buried treasure at the Nova Scotia Museum's Cavalier Block at the Citadel, Halifax, N.S. So little is known of him that a theory has been advanced that Swede is actually a corruption of Kidd.

<sup>17</sup>Edward Rowe Snow, True Tales of Pirates and Their Gold (New York: Dodd, Mead, c. 1953), pp. 107-122.

<sup>18</sup>Brochure issued by Tourist Bureau, Parrsboro, N.S., [circa 1970] unpagued.

Charles B. Driscoll, DOUBLIONS The Story of Buried Treasure (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd., 1931), p. 306.



United Empire Loyalists who came to Nova Scotia came from the Carolinas, from Blackbeard's actual area of pirate operations. There may well have been a transference of a tradition with the Loyalist move northward.<sup>19</sup> The association of Blackbeard with Pirate's Cove does not, however, appear to have been part of such a shift:

The old folks always said it was called Pirate's Cove because the high-seas pirate, Blackbeard used to winter here. They said he hung bushes on the masts of his vessel to prevent it being seen by ships in the Strait [of Canso]; and he buried his treasure somewhere here in Pirate's Cove.<sup>20</sup>

Why a pirate who normally sailed in southern waters should winter in Nova Scotia is not considered. Most of the pirates who operated in Atlantic Canada went to the Caribbean or the Azores for the winter.

The belief that pirates buried their treasures is so widespread in the New World that one has the feeling that it might be expected to be one of the traditions brought from the Old Country by the early immigrants. Certainly piracy was no more frequent in the western Atlantic and the Caribbean than in the waters around Europe and northern Africa from Guinea to Madagascar. England, France and other European

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<sup>19</sup> Although many of the Loyalists sailed from New York, the centre of the Kidd tradition, most of the exiles were from other areas of the United States. New York was a collection point for embarkation for these Loyalists on their way to new homes in Canada and the Maritimes.

<sup>20</sup> Clara Dennis, More About Nova Scotia (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937), pp. 237-238.



countries have stories of pirates and they have stories of buried treasures. They do not, with the very rare exception, have stories of buried pirate treasure as part of their folklore.<sup>21</sup> Narratives of sea rovers who buried their booty have, however, been reported from the Isle of Skye and from the west coast of Ireland, but not in large numbers.<sup>22</sup>

It seems unlikely that a minor tradition from two remote areas in the Old World could be the source of such a widespread belief in the New. It must, therefore, be concluded that the tradition which associates pirates with buried treasure did arise in North America. The pirates, moreover, especially in Atlantic Canada, appear to function as more than merely historical buccaneers insofar as buried treasure is concerned.

In the United Kingdom or Ireland when people in an area think of old burials of treasure, they are likely to envision the actions of the Romans (who hid all the gold that

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<sup>21</sup>The total absence of a motif for treasure buried by pirates from both the Thompson and Baughman Motif-Indexes is startling to anyone raised in the North American treasure tradition with its strong linking of pirates and treasure. However, an examination of the major folklore collections published for various European cultures could uncover no linking of pirates with buried treasures.

<sup>22</sup>William MacKenzie, Skye: Iochdar-Trotternish and District: Traditions, Reflections and Memories (Glasgow: Alex. MacLaren & Sons, 1930), pp. 3-4.

T. J. Westropp, "A Study in the Legends of the Connacht Coast, Ireland, Part II", Folk-Lore XXVIII (1917), 437-438.



was in Britain before they left in 418 A.D.),<sup>23</sup> the Celts, the Saxons or the Danes. In those islands as well as on the Continent treasures were hidden by groups from older civilizations in and by ancient invaders of the country. The pirates of the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a comparatively modern group. What is only a fairly recent tradition for Europe is ancient history for Atlantic Canada.

In the New World the early settlers were the indigenous population of eastern North America. The Indians who were the first arrivals are seldom thought of as treasure buriers.<sup>24</sup> They were seen by the early immigrants from Europe not to possess the metallic wealth associated by the people with the older civilizations in the Old Country. Pirates, however, were operating in the western Atlantic long before permanent settlement of the eastern seaboard of North America began. For Atlantic Canada these pirates are the equivalent of the ancient European civilization which buried its treasures.

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<sup>23</sup> Charles Plummer, Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892 rep. 1952), I, 10 & 11.

<sup>24</sup> The association of Indians with buried treasure is so unusual in Atlantic Canada that when the two are connected the story is likely to be remembered. Most of the stories of Indians and of treasure are of Micmacs of Maliseet who searched for buried riches. Some tell of Indians as discoverers of mines now lost.

The appearance of the Indian as treasure guardian, and, therefore, presumably one of the group who hid the treasure occurs only in Fauset's collection of Nova Scotian folklore. The statement that Indians buried the treasure has not been recorded from any area of Atlantic Canada.



They are especially so for Newfoundland which had no Acadian culture preceding and contemporaneous with early settlement by the English.

The exploits of Sir Francis Drake, a privateer to the English and a pirate to the Spanish, may well have helped to shape the folk concept of a pirate treasure. From his famous voyage with the Golden Hind he brought back gold, silver and jewels worth a million pounds. So much treasure had been captured that he and his men had to abandon much of the silver because it was too bulky and heavy for the safety of the ship. This silver is still waiting to be found. His capture of the San Felip, an East Indiaman, in 1587 brought in general cargo worth one hundred eight thousand forty-nine pounds, thirteen shillings, eleven pence. The treasure and jewels were worth an additional thirty-nine hundred pounds.<sup>25</sup>

Sir Francis's adventures are usually taught as a part of English history in the schools. Moreover, he was one of the Elizabethan sea dogs, many of whom later harassed the coasts of eastern North America. It is not surprising, therefore, that the folk concept of a pirate treasure is in terms of those captured by Drake. The idea that all pirates were wealthy and buried their excess booty is implicit in most references to pirate treasure.

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<sup>25</sup>E. T. Clifford, "Drake's Treasure", Transactions of the Devonshire Association, XLIV (1912), 519-529.



The anonymity of the pirate who buried the treasure is essential to his function as a richly endowed being of an earlier culture. Historical data would hamper such a concept. The naming of the pirate would restrict belief in his wealth and in his burial of that wealth at some local landmark. The specific identification of a pirate means the limiting of his area of operation and of the value of his booty to reported facts.

Since the people attribute the activities of the many to the few, pirates such as Kidd, Blackbeard, Easton and Kelly have not only acquired super-stature but can be believed to have operated as these super-beings outside the terms and areas imposed by the facts of their individual lives. They are frequently credited with burying treasure where they were never known to be. Some pirates probably did bury treasure in Atlantic Canada, but the idea that a pirate was the hider of a hoard frequently is a deduction. A find of valuables which has no known owner if made in an area not settled by earlier arrivals is presumed to be treasure buried by pirates.

Stories of pirates actually burying the treasure are rarely told in Atlantic Canada. Those that are, are more concerned with the manner of providing a guardian for the treasure than with the treasure itself. Helen Creighton, however, does record one narrative that involves the interring of casks of money on an island along the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia. It includes the information as part of the deathbed confession

of one of the



of one of the pirates involved. The story involved the fight with the man-o'-war which caused the deaths of the rest of the crew, and has no mention of a treasure guardian.<sup>26</sup>

Dr. Creighton also tells of a tradition handed down by a family of Micmac Indians concerning the burial of a chest of gold on Nova Scotia's Southern Shore. The story, however, is focused more on the providing of a watcher of the gold than on the pirates' other activities or on the Indian's digging up of the cache when the pirates had gone.<sup>27</sup>

Other narratives of pirate burials of treasure come as stories of chance encounters in foreign ports--usually in the United States or in the West Indies--with old men who had sailed as cabin boys with pirates, usually unnamed. On hearing the visitors mention the name of their home community, the old man tells them how the pirates once buried loot in that very area. When such an informant appears in the narratives in the oral tradition, he may not specify that the ship in which he sailed was a pirate ship. His occupation, however, is always implied.<sup>28</sup>

With so much booty supposedly buried by pirates one might expect to find far more patterns of stories about the

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<sup>26</sup>Helen Creighton, Bluenose Magic (Toronto: Ryerson Press, c. 1968), pp. 75-77.

<sup>27</sup>Helen Creighton, "Folklore of Victoria Beach, Nova Scotia", Journal of American Folklore, LXIII (1950), 136.

<sup>28</sup>Helen Creighton, Folklore of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia (Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1950), pp. 10-11.



hiding of the hoard than one does. The almost total concern with how to provide someone to watch the treasure causes a repetitiveness in the stories of pirates as buriers of treasure that can become boring (see Chapter VIII below).

The most interesting narratives of persons who bury treasure are found in the homey stories of individuals in small communities. In contrast with the anonymity of most of the pirate buriers, these people are named, and their relationships with the settlement or its inhabitants explained. The reasons for the hiding of the treasure are often known as well as the reasons for failures to find it.

From Newfoundland comes the story of old Uncle Hec who kept his money in a shot bag in the old fireplace:

And this day she [his wife] said to him to take it out of there, was something, 'twas in her way, and he said when he was goin' through the door, he said, "When I bury it this time," he said, "you won't see it." Begar, she was watchin' through the seam of the door and see him goin' up the road. And he went out here, between here and the church. Somewhere there, out of her sight. And that's where the money is yet. Because no one ever found it, no idea where to go look for it....

She thought she was cute, but she wasn't cute enough.... And if she had to dodge, dodge behind him, not let him see her, she might get information about it then because she'd see where he - .... But it was no good at lookin' because they don't know what way he went. He went out of her sight, see. And she was watchin' up this way, and he went out, out over the - out be the church where it 'twas to down to the meadow there.

(Tape 68-43/C525)

Many of the older Newfoundlanders did keep their savings hidden at home. Banks were found only in the cities, and these were often several days' journey away. Moreover,



many of these older people still remembered the effects of the bank failure of 1894 which sent the whole colony into bankruptcy.

People in the other parts of Atlantic Canada also buried their savings for safekeeping. Sometimes the person died before the location of the hiding place could be told to his heirs. One Nova Scotian was lucky; he found the money secreted by his father in an iron pot which lay two feet underground.<sup>29</sup>

On the Southern Shore of Newfoundland, it was not the death of the burier which prevented the revelation of the location of the treasure:

Roddy Garrick was married to my great-aunt you know and is supposed to have buried a lot of money in gold pieces in a kettle. I heard my father talk of that too and it is supposed to be buried on a cliff by spruce trees. Old Garrick lost his mind and was doting, shortly after he buried it and that's all he remembered. No one here has bothered looking for it as we were always told never to disturb anything that belonged to the dead. However a saying here is anyone buys anything new is 'you must have found Roddy Garrick's money.'

(MS 74-201)

Some of the most detailed stories concern the burying of liquor. While alcohol is technically not treasure, the people regard it as a valuable and treat it as such in many of the stories of buried treasure. The treasure may be a single bottle of rum:

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<sup>29</sup>Helen Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1957), p. 43.



It seems that in the 1930s and 40s there were quite a few ship wrecks around Hemp Harbour area, among them several liquor wrecks. Apparently, from what I've learned, what was taken from these wrecks had to be turned over to a Customs Officer and only a small part was allowed to be kept. However, it seems that people learned ways to trick the law and one incident was told to me by my mother. At one liquor wreck quite a few bottles were salvaged and in order not to have the liquor found on them or their property, many people buried their salvaged bottles. Mom and Dad were courting at the time and her father gave them one of the bottles of rum he had gotten. So they buried it in a field near the woods. A year or two later they tried to find it to dig up but they couldn't find the place. So most likely it is still buried, well-aged by now.  
(Card 68-11/82)

a keg of brandy:

Me and Marcus Dee was in to a place in Mackerel Run. There was an old man there, a real old man. He found out where we come from. Marcus and they knew his son, that's how we come to go there. They found out where we come from and we were talkin' to him after a spell. The girl got tea for us, and we were all sot in and he was talkin' about.... And he said, "I lived in Shell Cove," he said. He was an old Englishman. I forgets that man's name. Pistol, I think. He was here with some old fella sealing or seal huntin' for the winter, say. They used to come down, the sailors used to come down workin' nets in the winter, say, and in the spring, and go home in the fall to Mackerel Run and ... and all around - different places.

That was in Mackerel Run we were talkin' about. But they used to come from around the country, lots of places. They used to come down here in the winter [as] sealers. Come down and work nets in the fall. Same as the French Shore people, say. And stop here all the winter and have a chance at white-coats in the spring. They used to do well too some years.

And he told us that. He asked us did we know where Leo's Hill was. Leo was here then. We said, "Yes." I didn't know much about it. Marc knew all about it. "Well," he said, "there's a keg of brandy buried there." So he up and told us about it.

They stole the keg of brandy from Mrs. Queen. She was sellin' it I suppose, puncheons of it. And in the fall say, late in the fall, and they brought it up on Leo's Hill and they buried it. Now they couldn't find it when the snow come. They got lookin'



for it. They dug in a, in a dozen places and never found it. And they were gone before the snow went and they never come back after. And he said, "It's just as good today," he said, "if you could get it as it was the day we buried it."

And we were in bed here [Shell Cove]. Luke was with John and they a couple of summers - only a couple a year before he died. And we were in bed and the window was out. You could hear Luke up. It was calm you know and he tellin' story after story. You'd hear him all over the harbour. And he struck up this yarn tellin' it.

And I knowed that I wasn't after tellin' it around or anything. Now we were wondering, say - knowed it was the same story. So the next day I asked him. I said, "Luke," I said, "I heard you tellin' last night about the brandy being up on Leo's Hill." He said, "Yes." He heard his mother tellin' it twenty times.

They never went looking for it, but he told us the kind of a place it was.<sup>30</sup>

or a good supply of rum which Sam Hackett and Dick Jetter ran into southern Newfoundland from St. Pierre<sup>31</sup> and hastily hid under the moss among some trees when they thought the law was after them:

They said 'twas never got afterwards. 'Tis still there. Still there in the same place, and there's no one never got it..... They went back to look fer it but they could never find it, and they're sure that nobody never got it.

(Tape 68-25/C514)

In the rest of Atlantic Canada rumrunners and smugglers also hid their goods. They are not, however, usually

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<sup>30</sup>G. J. Casey Collection Folklore Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland, from his informant #12.

<sup>31</sup>A resident of the Burin Peninsula of Newfoundland says that alcohol from the French Islands which lie off the coast was brought in in five gallon containers. He estimated that two men would smuggle at least two and probably four containers.



identified by name. One can appreciate this omission when the story appears in print, since the use of an actual name might be felt to be grounds for libel. Rumrunning and smuggling, although profitable, have never been considered as respectable as privateering, even with the old saying, "Peace makes pirates". That shipments of liquor were hidden is known since some have been found--and drunk by the finders and their friends.<sup>32</sup>

The identification of the burier of a treasure by name not only adds immediacy and verisimilitude to a story but appears associated with a feeling on the part of the listeners and the story teller that should the treasure be found the burier's claim on it would be recognized. The treasure would not automatically belong to the finder; he would have to recognize the rights of the burier's heirs. The finders-keepers attitude appears when the burier switches from grand-father to an old man.

Historical personages, such as Samuel de Champlain, the Father of New France, who is said to have hidden his treasure at Mill Cove in New Brunswick when the English attacked Quebec in 1627,<sup>33</sup> are not, however, felt to have any claim on the goods they buried. They no longer function in the stories as

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<sup>32</sup> Heard at parties in St. Margaret's Bay area of Nova Scotia.

See also Trueman, Ghosts, Pirates, p. 134.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Charroux, Trésors du Monde enterrés, emmurés, engloutis (Paris: Éditions J'ai Lu, c. 1962), pp. 190-191.



individuals but rather as named abstractions, as do Easton and Kelly, Kidd and Blackbeard in the pirate tales.

The failure of the original burier of a treasure to return and recover his wealth is construed by the people of Atlantic Canada as a renunciation by him of any title to it. Consequently, monies and goods buried by earlier frequenters of an area--Indians, French, Acadians, English, Americans, pirates or privateers--are felt to no longer have any claim upon them by individuals other than the finders. The move of a treasure to the public domain is usually signalled by the change in the designation of the burier from the particular to the general, from the named inhabitant to description by nationality or occupation.



## CHAPTER IV

### WHERE TREASURE IS BURIED

Throughout Atlantic Canada people did bury money and hide their valuables. Many of these caches were the small savings which had been painfully accumulated in an economy which was never noted for private possession of large amounts of cash. Favoured hiding places were under a corner of the hearthstone, behind loose stones or bricks in a chimney or cellar. Wells which had ledges on which foods could be placed for refrigeration might also have arrangements for a safety deposit area. One New Brunswick man had hinged a tread on the stairs and used the space under it to hide his valuables: deeds, legal papers, some money.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout Atlantic Canada, especially in rural areas, doors have traditionally been left unlocked, but "Don't tempt your neighbours too far." In some areas of Newfoundland, goods of any kind, including money, are regarded almost as communal property, available to all members of the family and often to relatives and friends. Any individual who objected to this attitude felt obliged to secrete his hoard:

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<sup>1</sup>E. F. Harrington, formerly of Hampton, N.B., concerning his grandfather's hiding place for valuables.



With lots of brothers and sisters they were always looking for money when they wanted to go out, and I always had money. You know where I used to put it? They'd look under your mattress everywhere, but I took up a piece of the canvas [floor covering] and put it in there as far as I could reach. They never thought of looking there.

And my brother when he started to work he used to hide his money. No bank for him. One day he wanted to get me some money, and he said, "Polly", he always called me Polly, "this is my bank." And you know where he had it? In the old houses you know, where the chimney goes up, there was a gap around the chimney, almost like a shelf around it, and that's where he had his money. You wouldn't think to reach into a crack like that, but that's where he had it, like on a shelf around the chimney. He trusted me because I'd told him what I used to do.<sup>2</sup>

The amount hidden was around a thousand dollars. The informant said that most people in the community hid their money in cans in the garden: "They wouldn't put it in the bank, afraid something would happen to it. I wouldn't doubt there are some still have stuff out around."

The same type of burial is reported from a more northerly Newfoundland community:

When I taught in Deanstown I heard of old people burying their money rather than putting it in a bank. One old man had apparently buried a kettle of money, and when he died he did not say where and no one could find it. Many people searched his land, but no one was successful in finding the kettle. Many of the old people believed this story was true. In fact, I knew of one man who did do that. He had a can buried in his garden. [circa 1962]

(Card 74-94/)

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<sup>2</sup>M. Tucker, St. Phillips, Newfoundland.



These burials of small private holdings are found throughout Atlantic Canada. As a result one finds from Cape Breton the belief that any abandoned house in the hills is a supposed site for buried treasure, and reports that some has been found.<sup>3</sup>

The early settlers in Lunenburg County, N.S., also hid valuables against the threat of enemy attack:

Down near the Ovens, Dr. Barrs took me round to get the best view. An old French house. The legend is that when the Indians came the French buried gold in the old French house. It was white. Stone to begin with. They found the treasure about two weeks before. They [the French] had hollowed out a stone and buried treasure when Indians came. It had been whitewashed for years. This was around 1940 [that she saw the house].<sup>4</sup>

Another report from Lunenburg County tells of Sylvia, a coloured servant of Colonel Creighton, hiding the family's valuables when the house was fired on during an attack by American privateers in 1782:

A number of valuable coins and quantity of plate were put in a bag, which Sylvia placed in the well, and which was taken out when the enemy had retired.<sup>5</sup>

In Newfoundland, in the early days, it was the practice to fortify small islands lying off the major fishing stations. When enemy attacks threatened, the mainland

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<sup>3</sup>L. F. Balisch, St. John's, Newfoundland, formerly of Glace Bay, Nova Scotia.

<sup>4</sup>A Mrs. Vernon met at the dentist's office, Halifax, summer 1968.

<sup>5</sup>Mather Byles DesBrisay, History of the County of Lunenburg, 2nd ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1895), p. 67.



settlement was abandoned and the people went to the island. Little Bell Island, Carbonear Island, and Harbour Grace Island were strongholds for Conception Bay, and all of them are supposed to have treasure on them. These islands were also winter quarters for the men who did not go home to England in the fall at the end of the fishing season.

Fox Island, in Trinity Bay, was fortified to guard the entrance to Trinity Harbour:

The story is told that when the garrison was forced to leave by the French forces they buried all their valuables in a pond nearby. The people claim that although several efforts have been made to recover the treasure, no bottom could be found in the pond.

(Card 71-33/51)

Informants from Bonavista North tell of their ancestors fleeing to Flowers Island when threatened by Indian attacks, but they do not speak of any treasure being buried there.

Throughout Atlantic Canada treasure is known to have been buried in areas of early settlement both for general safekeeping and protection when under attack by an enemy. It is presumed to be buried in many other places. Treasure locations do, however, reflect either patterns of settlement or of frequentation.

There are more treasures supposedly buried on the eastern coasts of Newfoundland than on the Island's west coast most of which was not settled until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In the rest of Atlantic Canada, the areas which were settled before the arrival of the Loyalists,



whether by Acadians, English, "Foreign Protestants", Yankees, or people from the Channel Islands, seem to have a higher incidence of buried treasure reports than do those settled later. The relative lack of treasure stories from New Brunswick may well be a recognition of the practical fact that the province was formed by the arrival of two exiled peoples: the Acadians returning from the Expulsion and the Loyalists after the American Revolution. Since it is generally known that neither of these peoples arrived with great wealth, stories of hoards of buried treasure can only be told of areas where pre-Loyalist settlements existed.

Most of the treasure sites in Atlantic Canada are within a mile of navigable waters, or along the portages which joined the old water routes. In Newfoundland burials are confined to coastal areas,<sup>6</sup> but in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick the systems of lakes and rivers allow such sites to be located fairly far inland. Pirates are said to have buried treasure in the lands along many of the tributaries of the Saint John River in New Brunswick<sup>7</sup> although entry to the river involves going through the Reversing Falls, a

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<sup>6</sup>The pattern of settlement in Newfoundland is around the shores of the Island and of Labrador. The building of the railway opened a few inland settlements, but it was not until mines were opened in the late nineteenth century and in the middle years of the twentieth that any settlement of note was made away from the coastal areas.

<sup>7</sup>Stuart Trueman, Ghosts, Pirates and Treasure Trove The Phantoms that Haunt New Brunswick (Toronto: McClelland Stewart, 1975), passim.



tricky manoeuvre with motor vessels and very risky in the days of sail.

The small ships used by the fishermen of Atlantic Canada, and the limited size of vessels in the coastal trade, permit the people of the area to envision treasure as being buried near waters which could not be entered by large liners or by men-of-war. In some of the Newfoundland stories the treasure is brought ashore, or recovered, by a ship's boat. Elsewhere in Atlantic Canada the stories suggest that the vessel was a canoe. No story, however, places a large treasure chest in a canoe.

Although the treasure may be said to be buried in a variety of land formations, the association of treasure with water transportation is almost an axiom. Sometimes the water route is one used by loggers to get wood to the mill rather than one historically used by ships.

Dad always said there was treasure at the head of the Lake [Lake Charlotte, earlier Ship Harbour Lake, N.S.]. They, pirates, brought it up from Ship Harbour through the lakes.

Colonel Logan found gold up there.<sup>8</sup>

(Colonel Logan's find was a vein of gold, not buried treasure). The head of this lake is very close to the Tangier gold fields in Nova Scotia, well inland, but the foot of the lake connects with the sea through two smaller lakes. Why pirates would elect to undertake such a long journey as the

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<sup>8</sup>F. W. Harrington, Halifax, N.S.



one to the head of this lake, or up the Nashwaak River in New Brunswick,<sup>9</sup> to bury treasure when there are still many uninhabited areas along the coasts of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick is not explained by the storytellers.

"The Head-of-the-Lake" does have one element in common with many of the places where treasure is said to be buried. The islands, coves, beaches and headlands which are frequently named as sites where treasure was buried are often part of a community's known territory. They are not, however, areas which are well-known to most people in the settlement, usually because they have no reason to go there. This remoteness of that which is close by, the paradox of the unfamiliar familiar, is a common element in many of the topographical features selected by treasure stories as locations to hide a hoard.

Islands are a popular spot, in stories, for treasure to be buried. Most of the islands selected as ones on which treasure is said to be found are those easily observed from fishing stations or from settlements. Most are within a mile of the mainland, or of an occupied larger island. Many islands close to shore can be reached on foot at low tide. Such islands are rarely selected as supposed treasure sites. To qualify, a boat must be employed to reach them.

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<sup>9</sup>See below, Chapter IX, for the full story.



The island named by the narrator must, of course, be more than a rock. It must be large enough to have held a digging party. While there are exceptions most of the chosen islands are no more than fifty acres. Clam Island, in St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia, the location of several stories collected by Dr. Creighton, is a good example. It has less than fifty acres and is within a quarter-mile of the old highway. Such islands are usually not at the mouths of bays but, somewhat unexpectedly, many are well into the bays, close to the settled areas; settlements seem to favour sites at the heads of bays.<sup>10</sup> Oak Island, probably the most famous treasure island in Atlantic Canada, is closer to the head of Mahone Bay than to the mouth and is so close to the mainland that a causeway has now been made to make access easier. In Newfoundland's Conception Bay one treasure is on "a little island off the beach at the foot of our garden."<sup>11</sup>

When treasure is said to be buried on larger islands, such as Baccalieu Island off Newfoundland's east coast, the island is usually observable from the mainland and frequently has only one or two possible landing sites. Baccalieu Island, the islands in St. John's Bay on Newfoundland's west

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<sup>10</sup>In some areas of Newfoundland the head of a bay or inlet is the bottom; the use of the word head may indicate a headland. In the rest of Atlantic Canada the term head normally means the most inland part of the bay.

<sup>11</sup>Roy and Gwen Andrews, St. John's, Newfoundland.



coast, and Egg Island off the eastern shore of Nova Scotia are not inshore but they are landmarks for the fishermen on these coasts. People know of them; they may even have seen them, but relatively few have ever been ashore on them.

One would assume that the ability to land on an island would be one of the requisites for believing treasure had been buried there, but ease of access does not seem to be a consideration. In the Bay of Fundy there are a group of islands, called Five Islands. Treasure is said to have been buried on two of them. One American tourist commented: "They look like they should have treasure buried on them." One is so close that it is a temptation to attempt to walk to it when the tide is out. The local people, however, will not make such an attempt and will only try to take a boat in when the tide is full. These islands have a least a thirty-foot tide rise and fall and a nine-knot rip tide to add to the difficulty of managing a boat in the waters which surround them. Moreover, to reach the top of one of these two islands on which there is supposed to be treasure, one would have to use extremely long ladders or other climbing devices to scale the vertical cliffs. The other island has a possible landing site.

Where a pirate, or anyone else would find enough soil to bury even a small treasure chest is difficult to determine. Although the islands are wooded the soil depth is only about eighteen inches. These islands do have treasures in the soil, but they are agates and other semi-precious



stones, not the pirate gold of the treasure stories. These, however, are disregarded by treasure storytellers.

Shallowness of soil is a characteristic of many coastal islands in Atlantic Canada, but this factor seldom enters the narratives of treasure buried on them. One realistic Newfoundland informant from the South Coast did comment:

He used to tell me that there was gold buried on this big island and that was Frenchmen, yeah. But he said at that day there was people here used to dig to see if they could find it, but there was never none found.... But see, boy, you know as well as I can tell ya, that there's not very much to dig on that island because it's a rock, but I know it's covered over, but it's very shoal you know wit earth.

(Tape 68-7/C488)

Any uninhabited island, especially one which has had settlers on it at one time, seems to be considered as a probable site for buried treasure. Stories from the island settlements in the bays of Newfoundland select smaller islands in the areas as sites at which to find treasure. The location of buried treasure at places which can be observed but which are seldom visited is also reflected in the choice of headlands as cache sites, since a settlement is usually located within a cove or harbour and the headlands are outside the usual area of land travel.

Islands in lakes and rivers are also thought to be locations where treasure is buried. Many of the river islands have soil depth to permit such interments, but in their visual relationship with a community or path of travel



they reflect many of the characteristics of coastal islands selected as probable burial sites. Islands in lakes seem to be favoured sites only when there is one island in the lake, and both lake and island must be relatively small. The soil depth on such islands varies according to the geological nature of the area.

The element which stands out in Dr. Creighton's story of the pirates who buried their treasure on an island in Ship Harbour<sup>12</sup> is that the crew put the kegs and coin into a little gully and then covered them over. This is one of the very few narratives that reflect the actual physical conditions likely to be encountered on the islands of Nova Scotia's eastern shore.

Beaches are sometimes mentioned as locations where one may find buried treasure. There the soil depth would permit a burial four to six feet deep, which seems to be the favoured concept. One good North Atlantic storm, however, can change a beach completely, washing away that which was there or adding to it. Hurricanes and tidal waves, such as that caused by the Saxby Gale which struck Nova Scotia in 1869, can wash away whole portions of islands as well as merely change the contours of a beach. A person knowledgeable in the ways of the sea would think twice about hiding anything of value in the sands of a beach.

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<sup>12</sup>Helen Creighton, Bluenose Magic (Toronto: Ryerson Press, c. 1968), pp. 75-77.



With shallow soil on most of the coastal islands, with the shifting of beach sands, with the erosion of the sandstone cliffs in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, stories which speak of treasures hidden in ponds and lagoons seem reasonable rather than ridiculous. The tellers of treasure stories speak of such concealments as burials; treasure is buried in a pond or a well and is not considered underwater treasure although in practical fact it is. Ponds and wells function as containers which, it is presumed, will stay put and which can be drained to recover the wealth consigned to their care.

The failure to recover treasure hidden in ponds is usually explained by claiming the pond was found to be bottomless. Bottomless ponds are, of course, common in folk tradition.<sup>13</sup> There is, apparently, little recognition of the rapidity with which heavy objects work their way down into any soil when it is loosened by water. The weight of a treasure buried in a pond might well make recovery difficult. Occasionally the lagoons, or beach ponds, which lie behind many of the beaches of Atlantic Canada are mentioned as places of concealment, but they are subject to tidal raisings of the water table and to the whims of storms which may break through the beach which protects them.

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<sup>13</sup>Herbert Halpert, "Place Name Stories of Kentucky Waterways and Ponds, with a Note on Bottomless Pools", Kentucky Folklore Record VII (1961), 94-96 and notes 6 and 7.



Oderin, an island in Placentia Bay, has a very famous beach pond. The bottom is supposed to be planked over with oak boards. There are many stories of the French burying treasure in this pond and then covering it with the boards. An informant from a nearby community was torn between the romance of buried treasure and the possibility of a realistic explanation for the wooden bottom in the pond:

It could be money buried there and some plank over it there to keep the earth off of it or anything like that, I don't know.

And perhaps it wasn't. Some says 'tis where the French was usin' it and had a place there fer comin' in in their boats. When there's a, after there's a big sea sometimes in the winter seas, there do be little shore stuck up through the gravel so far apart like there was a gut in through there one time....

Into the pond. It might be that.

(Tape 70-8/C646)

Caves and fissures in the rocky cliffs along the sea-shore are often mentioned as places where treasure is buried. Caves in the hills behind a coastal settlement have also been mentioned. One cave on the west coast of Newfoundland contains an enchanted mine. The disappearing cave of Nova Scotia's North Mountain is supposed to hold the gold hidden by the French when the English came:

The most likely time to see this cave is in the summer at early evening. There is often a light to be seen at the front of it. The cave is situated on the North Mountain. Once, not more than eight years ago, a man near home discovered this cave. He decided he would enter it, but when he took one step inside it started to thunder and lightning inside the cave. He decided he would go to get someone else to investigate the cave with him. He tied a red shirt on a tree outside the cave's entrance. When he and



this other man returned the shirt was still there but the cave was gone. Legend has it that the French once lived in this part of the country and when the English invaded they (the French) hid their gold in the cave and left men there to guard it -- dead men. It has been told that one man entered the cave but was never seen again. (Miss Marie Crouse, Woodside; collected by Marion Rafuse, Woodside)<sup>14</sup>

No matter what location stories favour as a treasure site, one fact is almost axiomatic: any unusual geological or topographical feature is seen as an indicator of buried treasure. While many treasures are said to be buried in meadows, in gardens, in groves of trees, in small coves which are nearby, they are also said to be buried under waterfalls. The waterfalls should have a tunnel behind them, such as the one at St. George's New Brunswick, or form a pool where they hit a beach. Rock formations which give the appearance of stairs cut in the rock, or small flat areas in hilly ground are also seen as sites for hidden wealth.

Strangely shaped hills, apparent wells in solid rock, and distinctive rock formations all have stories of treasures buried in or near them. Large rocks are frequently said to have treasure hidden under them. In what is basically rocky land there must be something special about such large rocks to make them notable. Sometimes it is ~~the~~ colour; at other times, some aspect of ~~the~~ location. The rock may be isolated in the middle of a marsh which was said to have been

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<sup>14</sup> [Richard S. Tallman], Belief and Legend from Northern Kings County, Nova Scotia [Canning, N.S.: Cornwallis District High School, circa 1969], pp. 28-29.



a pond. Large rocks in the middle of ponds have been blown up with dynamite in order to get at the treasure assumed to be under them, and scuba divers have gone down to further the search. No treasure was found. No one seems to have questioned how the pirates who are presumed to have hidden their hoards under these rocks managed to move them when they cannot be moved by modern earth-moving equipment. Nor do searchers see anything unusual in blasting through solid rock to find a treasure buried by persons who presumably had only picks, shovels and crowbars to dig with when hiding it.

Graves are not really major topographical features in the North American landscape of Atlantic Canada as are the burial mounds of England and Ireland. Yet, in the Newfoundland oral traditions of treasure, graves are the location most often mentioned as the site to search for hidden gold and wealth. Mounds which are shaped like graves are associated with the same belief. A single grave may be indicated, or a group of graves. The motif of the grave is frequently combined with one of the other locations mentioned above in naming a place where treasure is felt to be buried. There seems to be a folk-memory of the centuries old tradition of searching the barrows of southwestern England and of Ireland for treasures. The ancestors of most Newfoundlanders did come from those areas.

Yet graves as a location for buried treasure are almost unknown in the rest of northeastern North America.



An occasional grave may be opened to check an unknown burial, but less than a half-dozen have been opened in the rest of Atlantic Canada and the New England States specifically to search for treasure.

One story from Nova Scotia as told by a journalist has recently introduced the motif of the three graves with treasure hidden in one of them.<sup>15</sup> This pattern seems to be a borrowing from Newfoundland stories since it is not indigenous to the other provinces of Atlantic Canada.

The three graves is a feature of stories told about both Baccalieu Island and Kelly's Island in Conception Bay. Both these islands have several stories of treasure buried on them, but the usual story does not locate the treasure in the graves. The other locations have been emphasized by various re-tellings in magazines and newspapers. The stories of the graves are found only in the oral tradition.

On Baccalieu Island the treasure was in the centre grave:

About fifty years ago they said there were three graves out on Baccalieu Island, just where Conception and Trinity Bays meet. Always said to dig in the centre grave, that's where the treasure was. So they did and found it. That was about fifty years ago.<sup>16</sup>

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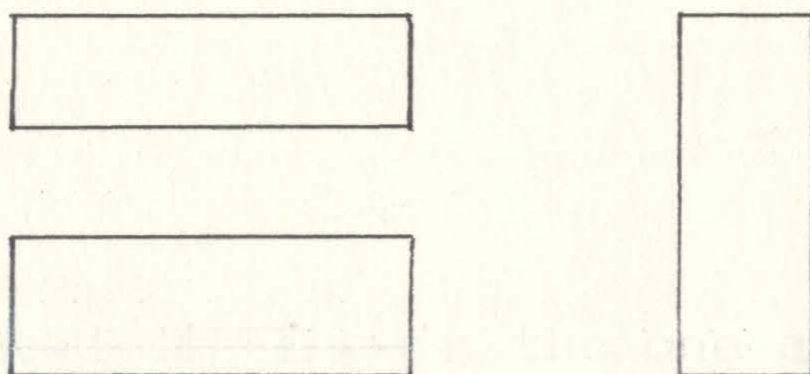
<sup>15</sup>Roland H. Sherwood, Atlantic Harbours (Windsor, N.S.: Lancelot Press, 1972), pp. 29-33.

<sup>16</sup>G. Johnson, Stephenville, Newfoundland. He learned the story from Northern Bay, Newfoundland.



The Kelly's Island treasure involved a more intricate arrangement:

This story is apparently called "the one about the treasure on Kelly's Island". It was supposed to have happened around the middle of the eighteen hundreds. A Captain Ashaustin and another Captain were both deep-sea men, fishermen. They were in Naples with a load of fish. They were up in their room one night when they heard a knock. A sailor came in and asked them where they were from. So they said "Newfoundland." He said "Then I got something you might be interested in." It was a map. So he offered to sell it for a sum, say about five pounds. They said, "Nothing done [sic]. Let's see it first." So he let them see it. It was a map of Kelly's Island. On the map of Kelly's Island there were three graves, and the treasure was supposed to be buried there. So they bought the map and when they got back to Newfoundland they went to Kelly's Island on the South Shore. Now Ashaustin had an uncle who lived in Long Pond or Kelligrews or somewhere handy. So they hired a boat from his uncle and said they were going to shoot rabbits. On the island they found the three graves situated like this.



They started digging in the one across the foot of the other two but pretty soon they realized that this wasn't a grave because the ground wasn't touched, after they got so far down. So they tried another grave (number 3) and pretty soon they struck a coffin or casket, the one with the money. Anyway they got back to Kelligrew's that night. The man knocked at his uncle's door, and gave him the money for the boat. So the next morning the uncle looked out by the wharf. Sure enough there was his boat. In the bottom of the boat he found a Spanish doubloon, and another one on the beach. All the time after that Captain Ashaustin was known to be and apparently gave evidence of being quite rich.

(MS 68-25/pp. 176-189)



The three-graves treasure site is also found in print, but for Bell Island and for one of the islands in Conception Bay.<sup>17</sup>

The pattern of the three graves indicating where treasure is to be found appears only in the Conception Bay area, but the grave as a place where treasure was buried is found in stories from all areas of the island of Newfoundland and along the southern coast of Labrador. The graves are normally said to be those of pirates or of Frenchmen, and they are dug up to see what is there. Strange boxes have been found but no gold. There appears to be little feeling of taboo about disturbing graves. Some stories do mention priests attempting to stop such digging. Others imply surprise that a grave has not been opened.

The lack of concern over opening a grave contrasts with the care many Newfoundlanders take to tend graves:

And in this cove where the ship is sunk is supposed to be buried eh, a chest buried there and eh, years ago somebody went there to eh, to dig it up and eh, the ground start to shake and they heard all kinds of queer noises so they left it and years and years nobody attempted to eh, do anything at all about it cause pirates' trove and eh, they were there guarding it and of course nobody wouldn't interfere with it. And that story happened down there. I know the place 'tis, but a few years ago, couple years ago, man ... went down, didn't know exactly where to dig but he did eh, dig up a place was always called a grave of one of the pirates. And when they dug down there was

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<sup>17</sup>William Howe Greene, The Wooden Walls Among the Ice Floes (London: Hutchison, 1933), p. 188.

Isaac C. Morris, Sketches of Our Western Sea Coast (St. John's: Printed by G.S. Milligan, Jr., 1894), p. 48.



nutting under it only a flat rock. Whether they dug deep enough to find anything else I don't know, but 'twas always people, even people live there after, tended it for a grave. They dug it up. There was nutting at all there. Unless somebody had taken something out of it before.

(Tape 64-10/C31)

Probably the most famous grave in eastern Newfoundland is that at Renews which many stories say is supposed to hold a coffin filled with gold:

There is a story told in Renews about a coffin filled with gold that's buried in the old graveyard. It is said that when boats from other places used to come into Renews Harbour this was brought from one of them. As they were bringing the coffin from the vessel to the graveyard, the coffin broke the cart axle. Some people say it was a casket of gold not a body. Others say the body was salted down to preserve it and that was why it was so heavy.

I don't think anyone from Renews has ever tried digging for this gold. However, once about 1954 or '55 a family from either New Brunswick or Nova Scotia were in Renews for a few months. One day someone told the man the story of the buried gold, so that night he went up in the graveyard and started digging. I don't know how far he dug but he didn't find anything.

I don't know when this coffin was buried. But it is more than 20 years ago (before 1947).

(Card 68-11/83)

Other versions of this story, and there are many, emphasize that the coffin was filled with gold. None of them mentions the possibility that the body had been salted although it was the practice of many of the fishermen who went on the Labrador to pack a body in salt and bring it out with them rather than bury the corpse there. Damp salt is a heavy weight.

A coffin filled with gold would weigh about five tons. Not only could six pall-bearers not lift it off the ship, but



the sheer weight of the metal would probably take the bottom out of the wooden container. A printed version of this story which appeared in a popular weekly newspaper set the time of the happening in September 1848.<sup>18</sup> Retellings of the story which have been collected since the appearance of the one in print seem to be conscious of it and have made reference to the newspaper version.

One problem in deciding where treasures are buried in Atlantic Canada arises from the confusion caused by the similarity of place names. Even when a specific location is given by a storyteller, a listener may unconsciously transfer the narrative to the locale which he knows by the same name. A narrative of treasure in the grave of Old Man Croucher on the island where he lived caused this collector while noting the story to think "Yes, I know where Croucher's Island is"; it was not until some time later that it occurred to her that the story was being told of the Labrador coast while the island she knew was in St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia. There are twenty official Salmon Rivers in the place names of Nova Scotia. The Creighton collections report treasure from one of them: but which one? Further, the designation of places by the official Gazetteers often differs from the local names for places. This fact can cause treasures to

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<sup>18</sup>Randy Devine, "Coffin Buried at Renews Has 'Mysterious' Background", The Newfoundland Herald, St. Johns, Nfld. (5 October, 1969), p. 3.



shift location between tellings. Such transfers of local stories to another locale are most apt to happen when stories are being told at gatherings away from the actual presumed treasure site, such as groups of fishermen swapping yarns while on the fishing stations during the summer months. This transfer element might explain why all of the four Copper Islands in northeastern Newfoundland have treasure stories connected with them.

Stories of pirates derived from material in Johnson's A General History of the Pyrates<sup>19</sup> could cause problems for Newfoundlanders. He speaks of 'Bonavista' and 'Fuogo' in the 'Cape de Verd Islands'. Newfoundland has a Bonavista, a Fogo, and a Bay de Verde. Moreover, mention of the St. Mary's Men would not bring to mind the island of Madagascar to people who know of the several bays and settlements named St. Mary's located in Atlantic Canada.

The characteristics of locations where treasure is said to have been buried provide what is almost a formula for recognizing places about which treasure narratives will probably be told. In stories from Atlantic Canada, treasure is always buried close to home rather than in remote locations. The site, however, must not be too familiar to most members of a community even when it can easily be observed

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<sup>19</sup>Daniel Defoe, A General History of the Pyrates, ed. Manuel Schonhorn (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1972). This is a modern, well-documented edition of Captain Charles Johnson's A General History of the Pyrates, first published 1724.



by them. Odd and unusual geological formations are favoured as indicators of the presence of hidden wealth. Treasure is supposed to be buried in places which everybody knows about but where very few persons actually go. If the area is known to have been frequented in earlier times by other than the ancestors of the present settlers then the belief that a locale possesses buried treasure is intensified.



## CHAPTER V

### TREASURE INDICATORS

The best way to discover the exact location of a treasure is with a map and detailed instructions from the person who buried it. Such aids are seldom provided for the people of Atlantic Canada who would like to find buried gold. An American who came to work in the Magdalen Islands as manager of Portland Packing did receive a sketch made by the cook of the crew who buried the money, but could not decide on the hill from which he should take the required sighting.<sup>1</sup>

Because such practical aids to determining precisely where the treasure lies are not available to the average seeker of hidden gold, other means must be employed to find the cache. Some searchers use the divining rod<sup>2</sup> or other

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<sup>1</sup>Anselme Chiasson, Les Légendes des Îles de la Madeleine (Moncton, N.B.: Éditions des Aboiteaux, 1969), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup>The use of this rod varies from culture to culture throughout Atlantic Canada. It appears to be more frequently employed by those of Acadian or of Germanic descent, but this frequency may merely reflect collected as opposed to actual patterns.

For references see Wayland D. Hand, ed., The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, Vol. VII: Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from North Carolina (Durham, N.S.: Duke University Press, 1964), Nos. 5892 - 5898.



form of treasure detector. These, however, seem only to be employed after other information concerning the place of concealment has been obtained. The stories of the older people, a dream of treasure, or the occurrence of some phenomenon believed to indicate the presence of treasure in the area become the bases of a close search with the rod or detector. It is frequently mentioned in treasure stories from Atlantic Canada but as a secondary aid rather than as a primary locator of hidden wealth.

The most popular way to find out exactly where a treasure is hidden is to dream about it. The dream of treasure, discussed in a separate chapter, is not only featured in many treasure stories from Atlantic Canada, it is felt to be a fairly reliable guide to the locating of the precise spot where the wealth is hidden. It may serve to confirm some phenomenon believed to indicate the presence of treasure, or it may not.

The variety of phenomena which are felt to be manifestations of the presence of a treasure is great. Yet they hold one element in common: each treasure indicator is something which is felt to be out of place in the normal pattern of living. As one informant said: "There was something queer about the places where the gold was hidden."<sup>3</sup> The queerness might stem from what science recognized as

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<sup>3</sup>MS 69-45/p. 31.



natural, but the people of the area did not:

My father was walking to church one Sunday morning in the early spring when the snow has melted from the bare ground but can still be found in the forest. As they passed the face of a cliff on the inward side of the road one of the older men remarked that a spot on the face of the cliff that was already green concealed treasure. This spot stood out because around it all the rest of the low bushes and grass were still brown and yellow. However, no one ever dug for the treasure. In later years and having studied plants my father found upon examination when he returned home for a visit that the spot was green because the plant that formed it was Labrador Tea and it remained green all winter. He remarked that when he was passing that way not too many years ago he looked up at the cliff as he passed it to find that the green spot had been dug up, presumably by a treasure hunter who had heard the old tale of buried treasure.

(Q68-238-3)

Unusual botanical occurrences such as flowers blooming late in the year, a perfect circle of trees, grass which is supposed to be eternally green, spots where nothing will grow are considered to indicate the presence of treasure. The lone tree in the field which is so often felt to cover a pot of gold in the European tradition has lost its popularity on this side of the Atlantic.<sup>4</sup>

Hollow ground, however, is definitely linked with the idea of treasure:

Brian said, "When I was diggin' holes fer da shores (pillars) fer me new house, in one place only two feet down, I felt hollow ground and wouldn't dig no more."

I asked him why and he answered, "Cause if dere was pirate treasure dere and I dug it up, da ghost

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<sup>4</sup>Cf., however, Hand, Brown, No. 5885.



of da pirate da 'odders killed and buried wid da  
treasure would haunt me da rest of me life."

(Card 69-6/156)

The connection between the hollow ground and treasure may contain some Newfoundland folk memory of the traditions of the fairy forts of Ireland and the west of England which were supposed to be hollow and in which the fairies hid their treasures.<sup>5</sup>

Ground which rattles as an indicator of hidden money may be connected with the tradition of hollow ground, or it may be a separate belief based on sound:

My father tells me that over in the Back Cove ... there is a chest of money buried. I have been to the spot myself and if you jump up and down on the area, you can hear something like money rattling.

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<sup>5</sup> Ruth L. Tongue, Somerset Folklore (London: The Folk-Lore Society, 1965), p. 111.

From Sussex, England, come two instances of the association of hollow ground with buried treasure:

It is a popular belief that immense wealth lies buried under ground in various localities, and that it is mysteriously guarded from all interference. In a neighbouring parish the spot adjoins a road that sounds "awful hollow" as you walk over it, and in this instance the buried treasure has a very watchful guard, which instantly starts out of a ditch if it hears anyone approaching.... In our own parish [Fittleworth] we have a nightly watcher over some hidden treasures in a wood through which a public foot-path passes, that certainly sounds hollow to the tread from the interlacement of the masses of roots below it.

Charlotte Latham, "Some West Sussex Superstitions Linger-  
ing in 1868", Folk-Lore Record, I (1878), 16.



My father also said that people have tried to dig this up but without success. He says that a man and his brother tried to dig it up. One stood above and read the bible while the other dug but as he took out a shovel of dirt it appeared as if another went back.

(Card 67-5/151)

A spot of land where the snow will not stay in winter and where if rocks are put they will not stay either is an indicator of gold buried there,<sup>6</sup> on an island off the south coast of Newfoundland. Saddle Island in Nova Scotia's Mahone Bay is supposed to have the same pattern of rocks refusing to stay on it but has not been said to conceal treasure. A site in Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, is marked by three identical piles of rock piled to a cone shape:

My father has seen the place and the three piles of rocks are still there. He said it is remarkable how they can stay put. The rocks are so fine that they would probably fall if you touched them and they would never be in a pile anymore.

(Card 73-117/)

Carvings on rocks, and presumed carvings on rocks are also seen as indicating treasure is buried in the immediate area. This belief is based on the premise that ships and arrows were carved in the rocks for a purpose and not for the amusement of someone's idle hours.<sup>7</sup> Presumed carvings on

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<sup>6</sup>MS 69-45/p. 31.

<sup>7</sup>Helen Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1957), p. 43, gives a series of instances of rocks bearing the name Kidd found at several locations in Nova Scotia. These have done a great deal to strengthen the belief that Captain Kidd buried his treasure somewhere in the province.



rocks are often spoken of as being in a strange language or code.<sup>8</sup> Such carvings may well be simply the weathering of the rock; the wearing away of the softer minerals more quickly than the harder ones in granite formations can cause the appearance of deliberate carvings.

Landmarks such as the big anchor at St. Shotts, Newfoundland, and Ryan's Castle at Lakeside in New Brunswick<sup>9</sup> develop a tradition of being treasure markers as new generations arise. The older people know them for what they were; the younger ones, who do not know the stories connected with them, see them as something which does not belong there. The out-of-place factor turns them into treasure indicators. A large anchor does not belong on shore, and a burnt-out French chateau should not be found in New Brunswick.

Mysterious lights are favoured indicators of treasure in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, especially in Nova Scotia.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-54 regarding the markings of the rocks on Goose Island, Jeddore.

<sup>9</sup> Stuart Trueman, Ghosts, Pirates and Treasure Trove: The Phantoms that Haunt New Brunswick (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975), p. 148.

The big anchor at St. Shotts was, according to the older tradition, cast ashore and later used for the discharge of cargo. An eighty-five year old informant thought the idea of treasure being buried with it rather ridiculous. (Tape 68-43/C525).

A study of the folklore concerning the anchor can be found in MS 72-43/pp. 1-16.

To those of us who played around the house as children and whose families knew Dr. Ryan the "castle" was merely the burnt shell of a man's dream. Dr. Ryan spent his money building the house and the fire is supposed to have bankrupted him. This information from first-cousins who were Dr. Ryan's neighbours. (J. H. C.)



In these provinces there is the belief that the light is associated with the treasure itself.<sup>10</sup> In Lunenburg County, N.S., the Germanic belief that treasure burns like fire continues; the treasure fire is perceived in the glowing of clam shells and piles of these have been searched for treasure.<sup>11</sup>

Newfoundland has a number of stories of mysterious lights, but few of them are linked to treasure sites. The Newfoundlanders normally associate glowing lights with ghosts so that if a light is seen it comes from the guardian of the treasure not from the treasure itself. Lights are regarded as weather indicators and as the presence of phantom ships; they are not relied upon to guide people to buried gold.

Lights which should not be seen in an area are something out-of-place. The importance of the occurrence of the unusual increases when it is linked to a belief in treasure lights. When the belief is present, it can account for strange lights for which some other explanation might otherwise be sought. During World War II many of the sightings of mysterious lights made on the New Brunswick Shore of the Bay of Fundy were found to be caused by car lights and other normal lights originating on the Nova Scotian shore; they were made uncanny by low clouds, fog patches and the effects

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. Hand, Brown, Nos. 5887-5891.

<sup>11</sup>Helen Creighton, Folklore of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia (Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1950), p. 13.



of topographical locations.<sup>12</sup>

Everyday tools or pieces of equipment seen in odd places can be construed as marking a treasure site.<sup>13</sup> These take on importance if they cannot easily be found again. They are believed to have disappeared by magic rather than by a failure of the sighter to carefully note the location. Lids, tops of casks, which are seen and then cannot be found again are popular in the Magdalen Islands.<sup>14</sup> Since these are noted on the ground and in passing, one feels that their disappearance is based on an insufficient care by the sighter in mentally marking the spot at which they were seen.

People who are not accustomed to looking for objects on the ground do not realize how easily they can be lost to sight. Rockhounds who hunt the beaches of the Maritime Provinces know that if they spot a stone in which they are interested they must not take their eyes off it until they touch it, otherwise it vanishes. They do not blame the seeming disappearance on magic but hold mock learned discussions on whether agates burrow into the ground or don camouflage

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<sup>12</sup>Information from a Canadian Army Intelligence Officer who worked with the coast watchers along the New Brunswick shore of the Bay of Fundy. The coast watchers were checking mysterious lights for possible enemy submarines.

<sup>13</sup>On the west coast of Newfoundland a hoe in the ground was the indicator for a barrel of iron containing money which was buried on an island. (MS 73-107/pp. 62-63).

<sup>14</sup>Chiasson, Îles de la Madeleine, p. 120.



while the searcher's eyes are lifted; they have learned how minutely a location must be noted to relocate an object seen lying on the ground. It is easy to understand how those who do not know how particular one must be in one's observations would blame the seeming disappearance of an object from the ground on the forces of magic.

Supernatural beings are also felt to indicate the presence of treasure. Unlike the treasure lights, which are also perceived as supernatural, the ghosts and phantom ships do not have treasure as a primary explanation for their appearance, except when the sighting is that of a ghostly treasure chest.<sup>15</sup> Dr. Creighton records a number of these supernatural occurrences.<sup>16</sup> The stories are first and foremost narratives of strange beings and ships which have been sighted in the communities of Nova Scotia. When no other explanation will account for the presence of such visitors and sights, they are explained by being indicators of buried treasure.

These ghosts should not be equated with those specifically said to be guarding a treasure:<sup>17</sup>

There is a headless horseman in Etching Harbour who guards a patch of grass which is supposed to be eternally green. This patch of grass is said to be

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<sup>15</sup>Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, p. 89.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., passim.

<sup>17</sup>For which see Chapter VIII, The Treasure Guardian.



brighter than the grass around it. According to local legend, the headless horseman is guarding a treasure hidden in this green spot. He is usually seen around midnight and you'll never find a resident walking near there late at night.

(MS 71-16/p. 8)

Ghosts primarily associated with treasure usually occur in locations where other treasure indicators are also found. Ghostly men, women and ships for whose appearance treasure is offered as an explanation do not appear with or near other effects recognized as pointing to the presence of treasure in the immediate area.

Although the areas and places where treasure is believed to have been buried, discussed in the preceding chapter, were decided on the basis of historical rationale or of probability, the precise indicators of treasure burial are objects and events seen by the people as unnatural. Although they are frequently merely something which stands out from its surroundings for which there may be a scientific explanation or local knowledge which has been forgotten, the folk who do not possess the facts which would account for such manifestations endow them with magical qualities. Where the desire to find wealth is strong, anything abnormal can be seen as indicating the presence of treasure.



## CHAPTER VI

### TO FIND AND CLAIM A TREASURE

The surest way to find a treasure is to know that there is one to be discovered. Since the hidden wealth of most treasure tales is derived from speculation and hope, the certainty of recovery is not assured. Samuel Pepys could be certain of finding the money his wife and father had buried for him for safekeeping;<sup>1</sup> the treasure for which he searched in the Tower of London was based on conjecture rather than on known fact.<sup>2</sup>

Should one accidentally find a treasure, however, it is important that one recognize what has been found. To fail to recover the valuables because one did not recognize their worth is to lose a treasure, not through supernatural forces but through lack of knowledge, as in this southern Newfoundland report:

Mr. How Houle told me the following story when we were discussing pirates and hidden treasure. He said

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, eds., Robert Latham and William Matthews (Berkley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), VIII (1667), 262-264, 280, 472-475.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, eds., Robert Latham and William Matthews (Berkley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), III (1662), 240-256.



that when he was a young boy he would often go over on the beaches during the spring throwing rocks at fillies [small sea birds that come around every evening]. One evening he was over on Crest Point and himself and a friend noticed the handles of a boiler [a pot with the handle over the top rather than coming from the side] sticking up out of the sand. They pulled it up and there was an old boiler attached to it. After poking around in the sand which covered the top of the boiler, they found that the boiler was almost full of small round objects. They quickly decided that these objects were ideal for throwing at gillies, and so they threw all of them away. When it got too dark to continue this sport each went home.

On arriving home his parents questioned him as to where he had been. How told him including the incident of finding the boiler. "What did you do with the things that were in the boiler?" his father asked. "I threw them at gillies," How replied, "but I still have one left in my pocket." He took it out and showed it to his father who quickly identified it as a gold sovereign.<sup>3</sup>  
(Card 68-16/108)

One wonders how many treasures that might have been found were not taken home because they were not recognized for what they were. The mental vision of treasure which arises from treasure narratives is of shining piles of gleaming gold coins. Yet the pieces-of-eight popularly connected with pirates were silver. Silver tarnishes a heavy black in contact with acidic soil, and the soil in most areas of Atlantic Canada is basically acidic; the soil of Newfoundland is all acid soil, "without exception".<sup>4</sup> Dirty black

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<sup>3</sup> Many stories speak of gold sovereigns which were not minted from the time of Henry VII until 1816. In this story the coin might well have been a sovereign, but the gold coin of the pirate era was the guinea.

<sup>4</sup> Newfoundland Department of Agriculture, telephone conversation.



shapes do not suggest treasure.

Professional treasure hunters know that coins and other items become caked with soil during the years of a land burial even as goods from a shipwreck can become encased by corals or changed by corrosion. They hunt by sound, by careful check of soil when they feel they have struck something, and by feeling through the soil with their fingers.<sup>5</sup> They have an awareness of the effects of frost, of dampness, of time itself on the containers in which coins may have been buried and do not always expect to find an intact chest filled to the brim with gleaming gold.

Many of the rituals employed by amateur treasure seekers appear to be relics of the practices of the medieval and Renaissance searchers after hidden wealth in the old burial mounds of western Europe.<sup>6</sup> Many of the charms and rites employed by these searchers were continued in the popular books of magic, such as The Sixth Book of Moses, which were available in parts of the northeastern United States in the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Miss Theo Brown has pointed out that "by

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<sup>5</sup>An example is Edward Rowe Snow's description of his recovery of Edward Low's treasure from Isle Haute, Nova Scotia. Edward Rowe Snow, True Tales of Pirates and Their Gold (New York: Dodd, Mead, c. 1953), p. 119.

<sup>6</sup>Some of these are given in Reginald Scot, The Discoverie of Witchcraft, originally published 1584. See also Katharine M. Briggs, "Some Seventeenth-Century Books of Magic", Folklore, LXIV (1953), 445-462.

<sup>7</sup>See for example Arthur H. Lewis, Hex (New York: Pocket Books, 1970).



the eighteenth century the available grave-goods must have become exhausted, for the 'scryers' and their masters are no more heard of."<sup>8</sup> What she has not noted, however, is that the disappearance of elaborate treasure searchers on one side of the Atlantic Ocean was replaced by the interest in pirate gold to be found on the other side.

North American interest in buried treasure began in earnest in the later years of the seventeenth century. It has never completely died out. What has waned is the use of charm and ritual once used to ensure the raising and keeping of the treasure. Newfoundland, with its possible folk memories of barrow treasures seen in the popularity of graves as treasure sites, might have been an area expected to continue the practices of the magicians and their scryers. Instead, Newfoundlanders seem to employ fewer precautions than residents of the rest of Atlantic Canada when they dig for treasure.

The virtual disappearance of the charms to raise treasure from those traditions associated with the digging up of the gold might be expected. Observers of a search, or those not fully party to the details of one, might see the movements of any ritual involved but not know that any special incantations were also needed. The requirements that treasure

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<sup>8</sup>Theo Brown, "Tales of a Dartmoor Village: Some Preliminary Notes on the Folklore of Postbridge", Transactions of the Devonshire Association, XCIII (1961), 206.



seekers work after dark, in silence, within a circle and make sacrifices to placate the treasure guardian are found in most areas of Atlantic Canada. Outside Newfoundland spoken formulae are seldom mentioned.

Stories from Newfoundland, however, which may not mention any other requirement to assure the success of a treasure search will tell of the necessity of reading from the Bible:

There used ta be a place ... were (where) people used ta go out and dig oles (holes) cause they always eered (heard) there was some treasure buried there. I don't know where 'twas spoze (supposed) ta come from but anyway they used ta dig and dig. They eered (heard) that if they read the Bible or certain parts of it as they dug, they'd find it. But if they read the wrong parts or stopped reading at the wrong time, the dirt would go back in the ole (hole). They diddin (didn't) know why but anyway, nobody ever found anything there. But ya think if they read all the Bible, they's ave (have) ta find it sometime, wouldn (wouldn't) ya?  
(MS 72-160/p. 16)<sup>9</sup>

The elaborate ceremony followed by the Acadians as reported by Fraser in Folklore of Nova Scotia<sup>10</sup> is not part of the cultural traditions of the other peoples of Atlantic Canada. The blessed iron rod to hold the treasure fast is mentioned nowhere else. The circle inside which the dig must be made is mentioned only once in Newfoundland narratives and is not especially popular elsewhere. None of the stories

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<sup>9</sup>In Labrador two searchers took the required Bible and bayonet in their search for a treasure. They are not said to have found the treasure, but their factory burned the same night (MS 72-273/p. 19)

<sup>10</sup>Mary L. Fraser, Folklore of Nova Scotia, n.p., n.d. [Toronto: Catholic Truth Society, 1932], pp. 78-79.



which do tell of the circumscribing of a circle as a precaution against interference from the treasure guardian mention the difficulty of drawing a perfect circle, of any size, over rough ground.

The escape of some of the dirt from the digging or of a piece of equipment from within the circle is considered enough to assure the failure of the search. The Acadians join the necessity of conducting the digging after nightfall<sup>11</sup> with the other requirements of the ceremony. The difficulty of knowing the exact limits of the circle in the surrounding dark is almost enough to guarantee failure to find the treasure. Stories from other peoples which tell of the use of the circle also tell of seeking the treasure after dark.

Many of the precautions prescribed to assure the finding and keeping of the treasure are, realistically, either so difficult that they will be breached, or are self-defeating. The night search is a most impractical way to look for anything. But it is so common throughout Atlantic Canada as to be presumed when stories of treasure searches are told.

One Newfoundland informant explained the necessity of not only looking after nightfall but of searching in the dark of the moon:

It seems that people got used to go going looking for treasure and always selected a time they called

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 79.



the dark o' the moon. Because of it, if they were seen then the ghost would know that there was somebody going and would come up and deal hard with them because they said a ghost does not carry a shadow, so these people made no shadows and it made them invisible to the ghost. So, several stories have been told about somebody that went out to look for treasure and they went out by moonlight because they could see better but every time something happened to drive them away. What happened I cannot remember details but enough details were given to assure that they were skeptical of going then and so they gave up their treasure hunt. Whether they made any treasure findings in the dark o' the moon, I don't know, I have no proof of it, I question it very much because these stories are such a type to me that I don't have any eh, belief in them and nothing but doubt of all of them but they're told in such a crude way they deserve the telling. But in any case, this dark o' the moon was the ruling pattern, the ruling judgement against indiscriminate finding of treasure.

(Tape 68-9/C483)

The informant's scepticism did not extend to noting that the only time there might be enough light in the dark of the moon to see what one was doing would be on a clear, starlit, winter's night with snow on the ground. Such conditions are not encountered in narratives of treasure searches where the soil is never frozen and snow is seldom mentioned.

Another Newfoundland informant explains the reason for the night search:

This pertains to the ghost as well, and [as?] fairies and what have you. This was part of the idea why they wouldn't go down there in the day-time you know. They figure well, if uh, if they go down there night time and take two or three men with them, and take the lanterns and what have you, this would help to scare the pirate away.

(Tape 72-97/C1286)

The usual reason given for the search taking place after dark is that it will preserve secrecy. This explanation occurs



throughout Atlantic Canada, sometimes with the proviso that the government must not know of the treasure which will be found.

Most searches at night are spoken of as taking place by lantern light. Since one cannot see clearly through the light of a lantern to the ground, inadequate illumination might explain the failure of the digging party to find the treasure. The visibility of even a small light over a long distance in darkened areas is not mentioned by any stories. To go treasure seeking after nightfall to avoid detection might work if the use of lights did not call attention to what might otherwise be little noticed. The failure to use some source of light when digging after dark simply means that one cannot see what is happening.

The necessity of working in absolute silence is also found as a prerequisite for successful treasure retrieval in all areas of Atlantic Canada. Absolute silence is, of course, impossible since there is sound from the digging itself. The taboo is actually against speech, or other human noise. If the digging is done by a group the probability of the injunction against speech being maintained is very slight. Since talking is too much a part of most group activities not to be resorted to automatically, under the tensions of a treasure search with its expectations of an encounter with the unusual, the taboo against speech is more apt to be breached than kept. The inadvertently uttered word serves as one of the most



frequently offered excuses for failure to claim a treasure.

The taboo against speaking while digging for treasure is a ~~practical~~ logical one, in the magical as well as the scientific sense. All who believe in the magic of its observance feel that human silence gives the diggers control over the treasure. This power is believed to work against the supernatural forces which would keep the buried gold from possession by men. In a scientific explanation one could note that the absence of chatter would enable the excavators to hear the slight clink which could denote the striking of a coin; such a sound is much softer than the clank which most treasure seekers seem to expect when they hit the treasure chest.

Many of the stories from Newfoundland are of daylight searches made with normal conversation among the diggers. These are also found, although not as frequently, in Dr. Creighton's later collections: Bluenose Ghosts and Bluenose Magic. It may well be that the large oral collection from Newfoundland does represent a normal pattern which has been ignored by many recorders because it is less romantic and colourful than the dig which takes place after dark with all due ritual and solemnity.

The Acadians were reported to have sprinkled the ground with Holy Water. The one report of this practice so far recorded from Newfoundland combines it with a night excavation:



About sixty or seventy years ago, three men went out from St. John's to dig for the [Shoal Bay] Treasure. As they didn't want to be seen by the residents of Shoal Bay, they decided to dig at night. They prepared the place by sprinkling Holy Water around to prevent the Negro ghost from harming them. Then they began to dig. They were doing fine for a while, until they noticed that it seemed as if someone else was throwing dirt back into the hole, as they dug it out. Two of the fellows got frightened and ran away, but one brave fellow stayed and kept on digging, but he couldn't keep ahead of the ghost who was shovelling as fast as he was. He finally gave up. The general opinion is that if the other two men had remained they would have been able to keep ahead of the ghost.

(MS 71-16/pp. 9-10)<sup>12</sup>

The treasure guardian (discussed in more detail in Chapter VIII) is expected to be present at all attempts to excavate buried treasure, especially if the wealth were that hidden by pirates. Some stories tell of the means to keep him away, as with the Holy Water, but others are concerned with propitiatory offerings:

Piers, F.B. has no inhabitants, but does have a sandy beach. There are reports of a treasure being buried there about 1850 by French pirates. No one ever goes there however, to find the treasure.

When the treasure was buried a man's head was put in the treasure chest. Now when anyone goes to look for the treasure they see a man with no head guarding it. The headless man holds a sword in his hand.

However you can get the treasure if you give the ghost some bread and a bottle of wine.

(Card 69-16/123)

Lest the guardian not believe in transubstantiation, most sacrifices are spoken of in terms of actual flesh and

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<sup>12</sup>Other stories of the Negro ghost of Shoal Bay will be found in the chapter on the Treasure Guardian.



blood. Dr. Creighton comments: "Because blood was shed in the burial of a treasure, there are those who believe that it must also be shed to get the treasure out."<sup>13</sup> For some this blood must be that of a man:

And the old saying when, when they bury man, bury the treasure you know, then pirates at that time, when they buried the treasure they had to kill a man and bury him wit the treasure see. And he had to look after it, till they come back fer it er the man was dead. He couldn do much looking after it. Now when they went to go to get it, dig it up agin, they had to kill another man to git it.... That's ole pirate stories.... I've heared, I heard that so long as I'm -

(Tape 68-9/C466)

Sometimes the man must have special characteristics:

There's treasure on the North Mountain. Hall's Harbour, Baxter's Harbour, pirate hangouts. The treasure is there somewhere. They believe they'll never find it till a red-headed man is killed in the digging. John Coldwell, Gaspereau Mountain, had red hair. He was always asked to go - he's by way of being a cousin of yours. Always went. He figured he was safe.<sup>14</sup>

More often, however, it is felt that the required blood need be only that of a small animal or of domestic fowl.

Lambs, dogs, cats and hens--preferably black ones--have all been mentioned as required sacrifices for the guardian ghost. Usually it is enough to sprinkle the ground around the area where the treasure seeker proposes to dig with the blood from the slaughtered offering. Sometimes the

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<sup>13</sup>Helen Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1957), p. 49.

<sup>14</sup>Lewis H. Coldwell, Hantsport, N.S., father-in-law.



blood must be used in other ways, as in this belief from Bonavista Bay:

Day say dat one morning a man wes comin off the 'ead after birdin and stumped upon a gold coin. Dey say dat someting 'appened to 'im cause when 'e got 'ome 'e wouldn't tell his family where it was, cause there was supposed to be a curse over it.

Dey say dat if you're goin diggin fer treasure you got to keel a cat and wash yer arms in its blood. If ya don't, denn the ghost dat's guarding the treasure will 'aunt ya fer life. 'owever, me boy, these are only rumours.

(Q68-56-4)

There are relatively few stories from the whole of Atlantic Canada which mention the need for the blood offering. Most of them come from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, but the number which state belief far outnumber those which tell of any actual practice. Part of the reluctance to employ such means to raise a treasure may rest with a cultural dislike of killing except to provide food; moreover, to waste a lamb or a chicken of known value on the chance of getting a treasure of unknown worth is impractical in any economy where life provides no extras. Dislike of being spattered by the sacrificial blood, even where the belief does not call for the searcher to smear it on himself, may stop some from digging. The knowledge of a belief which is concerned with the completing of an action may actually prevent the action being undertaken.

No particular dates are favoured as ideal for the raising of a treasure in Atlantic Canada. Times are occasionally mentioned. Midnight is a favoured one: it may be



the time to start, the time to end, or the only time the treasure is available:

One story circulating when I was about ten years old was that in order to get the gold you had to go down to Trinity Bay and see an old woman who was supposed to be a witch. She would give you a map of the gold, but you could only get it at midnight.

(MS 74-39/pp. 31-32)

A Newfoundlander who was digging where gold was said to be buried met the guardian ghost, who asked him what he was doing:

[He] told the pirate that he was digging for the treasure that was supposed to be buried there. The pirate then told him that if he wanted the treasure he would return to this very spot in two weeks time at exactly midnight. The pirate told the guy to leave and come back in two weeks. Then, he said, the ghost walked away and disappeared into the darkness. Well, the guy got away as fast as he could. He left his shovel and ran down to his boat and went as fast as he could back to ... his home. He was really frightened, scared to death. He was too scared to go back in two weeks or at all. He wouldn't go over to the island today. He guessed if he had gone back in two weeks something would have happened to him.

(MS 74-121/)

The waiting period is not often encountered, but instructions may specify the time to begin digging. Frequently these come through a dream of treasure, as they did to the Newfoundlander from the West Coast who was told to start digging just as the sun hit the water.<sup>15</sup>

Should one actually locate a treasure, it must be claimed. If the taboo against speech is being observed for

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<sup>15</sup>Tape 74-195/F1785.



the excavation of the gold, it may need to be continued until the treasure is brought home. Stories from both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland tell of men who lost their find because they spoke too soon and the treasure disappeared.

Where people believe that treasure must not only be found but must be claimed the details may vary but the general rule is "that in order to get treasure you must put something in the hole or take something out."<sup>16</sup> Those storytellers who express such belief may speak of offering some of the find to the supernatural forces nearby; how one would do so is not explained.<sup>17</sup> Some explain that to claim the treasure, to keep it as one's own, some personal article must be thrown upon the treasure as soon as it is sighted. Caps, gloves and other articles of outer clothing are suggested. Dr. Creighton tells of a Nova Scotian who tried to throw his coat over a chest he saw crossing the road at the top of a hill. When he was suddenly surrounded by a guard of soldiers he closed his eyes and ran. The next morning he found his coat but no chest.<sup>18</sup>

From the area around Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, come reports of the belief that "you must put a quarter [twenty-five-cent piece] in or take something out before a treasure

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<sup>16</sup>Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, p. 57.

<sup>17</sup>MS 70-20/p. 45.

<sup>18</sup>Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, p. 67.



could be yours."<sup>19</sup> This claim was recorded in the days when a quarter was made of silver. One wonders if the charm will work today with the new metallic coinage. With the traditional use of silver for disenchantment, the metal rather than the value of the coin would probably be the operative element in claiming the treasure.

Sometimes a treasure can neither be found nor claimed because the person who seeks it is not the one destined to find it. The Motif Treasure to be found by a man who plows with cock and harrows with hen (N543.2),<sup>20</sup> although not yet reported from Newfoundland, has been recorded from four Nova Scotian communities,<sup>21</sup> from the Magdalen Islands<sup>22</sup> and from the Belleisle in southern New Brunswick.<sup>23</sup> The New Brunswick

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<sup>19</sup>Helen Creighton, Bluenose Magic: Popular Beliefs and Superstitions in Nova Scotia (Toronto: Ryerson Press, c. 1968), p. 78.

<sup>20</sup>Thompson notes this motif from North Carolina, and from the Finnish, Lithuanian and Estonian. Baughman does not include the motif in his Index.

Professor Halpert informs me that he has collected this motif in New Jersey and has other North American references in the book he is editing.

<sup>21</sup>Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, p. 50. See also Helen Creighton, Folklore of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia (Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1950), p. 11.

<sup>22</sup>Anselme Chiasson, Les Légendes des Îles de la Madeleine (Moncton, N.B.: Éditions des Aboiteaux, 1969), pp. 115-116.

<sup>23</sup>Stuart Trueman, Ghosts, Pirates and Treasure Trove The Phantoms that Haunt New Brunswick (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975), pp. 119-120.



story, however, requires a new motif: Treasure not found by man who plows with cock and harrows with hen. All the other narratives tell of the success of the treasure seeker. The story from the Magdalen Islands does suggest that the teller might have had some knowledge of the version in Bluenose Ghosts.

A man of Somerset, England, discussing the Dolbury treasure commented:

But nobody hasn't found the treasure yet. And for why? Well, to start with it don't belong to they and so they won't never meet up with it. 'Twill go on sinking down below never mind how deep they do dig.<sup>24</sup>

The idea of the ownership of the treasure being a factor in its discovery and recovery is mentioned several times in stories from Atlantic Canada. The ownership is not the title of the original owner but is the right of the person or family for whom the treasure is destined:

Supposedly General Wolfe (maybe Montcalm, I'm not sure but I believe it was the British General) buried a chest of gold on the family property near Dalhousie before he went up the St. Lawrence to fight his big battle. It is buried under a tree and only someone in the family can dig it up and only while someone bearing the family name (which I don't know, it starts with G) is alive. When the grandmother dies I think the name then dies for she is the last.

Two of Jane's uncles tried to dig up the treasure. You aren't allowed to speak while doing it, and when they got to the chest one of them said something and a couple of hours later they woke up and the hole was all covered in and they never tried again.

Jane's mother believes the treasure, if it ever existed, has been long washed out to sea because

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<sup>24</sup>Ruth L. Tongue, Somerset Folklore (London: The Folk-Lore Society, 1965), p. 111.



there has been a lot of erosion where the ledge with the tree is located.

Jane's grandmother died last year so I think that means no one can dig up the treasure now.<sup>25</sup>

Finding and claiming a treasure is not a simple matter of finding the correct spot and digging up the wealth. All the beliefs known by the would-be excavator must be observed whether they would actually help or hinder the search. One aid to finding and claiming a buried treasure is to dream of it. Many people, especially in Newfoundland, feel that this must occur before any other methods are used.

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<sup>25</sup>From Karen Crandall, Moncton, N.B. at St. John's, Newfoundland, October 1974.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE DREAM OF TREASURE

The belief that a dream of treasure will lead to the discovery of treasure is both ancient and well-known; it is found throughout the civilized world, and its popularity in folk literature is reflected in Motif N531 in Thompson's Motif-Index as well as in Baughman's. Stories of dreams which led to the finding of jewelry or riches are found in Atlantic Canada, although not listed in either Thompson or Baughman. The more usual story, however, is the narrative of the dream which did not lead to the finding of the treasure: either the searchers were driven off or the dreamer elected not to search for the gold.

Analysis of the stories of the dream of treasure told throughout Atlantic Canada reveals five major patterns of action: (1) the treasure is discovered and recovered by the dreamer as the result of the dream; (2) the dreamer discovers the treasure but loses it; (3) the treasure is found by others because of the knowledge of the dreamer; (4) the treasure is not found despite a dream of treasure; and (5) the person who dreams of a treasure decides not to search for it.

Consideration of the dream of treasure as evidenced in the stories from Atlantic Canada has been in terms of patterns



of concern and narrative techniques. No attempt has been made to investigate the rich literature on dreams developed by modern anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists.

The occurrence of motif N531 Treasure discovered through dream in a story, does not, of itself, indicate the core interest of the narrative in which the motif is found; the dream may be dismissed by a short comment or it may be the feature which is of primary importance in the story. Generally, the importance of the dream as the main feature of the story lessens as the intrinsic value of the discovered treasure increases. The first-person point of view has less influence on the essential concern of the narrative than one might expect; although the content of a dream is highly personal, the detailing of the dream portion of the story is governed by the narrator's perception of the dream's importance in the narrative as a whole rather than by intimate experience with the dream itself. When the dream of treasure is of primary importance, the story may be somewhat lengthier than the usual pattern of treasure-found stories, most of which are extremely short, factual reports.<sup>1</sup>

None of these stories of the dream of treasure, no matter where the emphasis falls, would have any credibility for either narrator or listener if there were not a firm belief in dreams as treasure indicators. This ancient belief

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter X, Treasure Found.



is so integral a part of treasure tradition in Atlantic Canada that no explanation of the importance of the dream to a story of treasure is ever offered; the statement " \_\_\_\_\_ dreamed of treasure" is frequently the whole of the motif, but the baldness of the statement is a paradox for it serves to disguise an abundance of belief, belief which frequently leads to action. Some of the narratives specify that there is no point to beginning a search until one has had a dream of the treasure which will indicate where to look.

One may search for treasure after only one dream, but a surer indication of the actual finding of it is better if one dreams of the hidden riches three times.<sup>2</sup> A frequent comment is that the dreamer dreamed "three nights running", and the occurrence of the dream three nights in succession is believed to be the strongest indicator of all that treasure will actually be present. When two people are said to have had the same dream, on the same night, there does not appear to be any increase in the degree of belief, merely a feeling that there is an added chance of the belief being put into practice.

The combination of belief and of stories of actual finds of treasure through dreams permitted one Newfoundland

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<sup>2</sup>On the importance of "three times" in folklore see Wayland D. Hand, ed., The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, Vol. VII: Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from North Carolina (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1964), Index, p. 666.



area to accept the explanation of the sudden wealth of one of its residents to be that he dreamt of a treasure and went and dug it up. As a student's report explained:

Mr. Trawl also told me a story about a man who was told in a dream where to find treasure. The story was told to me by several different people and it is interesting in that it reflects the closeness of the community and the willingness of its members to believe the best about one of their own.

Mr. Trawl first told me about Canucy on January 19. He said Canucy dreamt that there was money buried about half-way between Girdle Gut and Oldwood, a cove about a mile below Girdle Gut. The dream told him not to say anything about it but he had to wait a certain number of days (Mr. Trawl couldn't remember how many) before he dug in the proper spot. Mr. Trawl said, "All of a sudden, he had lots of money, lots of it and when people used to ask where he got it, he'd say he dug it up. People often borrowed money from him and he never cared whether you paid it back. He certainly had money and had to get it this way. Everyone certainly believed him. Me and he used to fish together and we kept our dory at Oldwood. After he had the money, he used to say to me as we were passing along, 'I knew that money was there but I couldn't say.' Before that I've seen him go and ask his mother for money to buy a stick of tobacco; he didn't have enough to even buy a stick of tobacco."

Canucy was about 25-30 years old at the time (about 1930s).

A few weeks after Mr. Trawl told me about that I was talking to my Mother about stories. Also present were a woman of about 40 years who originally lived at Queensprings and who grew up with my Mother, and my brother-in-law. I asked if they had heard about Canucy. Mother said that she did and her friend said she was in a house at Girdle Gut one time and she overheard Canucy telling someone about the dream and that he was very frightened when he had to go at night and dig up the treasure. He never told exactly where he dug, however. My brother-in-law, who is a minister, just couldn't believe that he actually dreamt all this. Both Mother and the woman said he had lots of money and he had to get it this way. Next day I was talking to my brother-in-law and he said he managed to get out of Mother that there was more to the story than the dream. Some people thought that he stole the money. I called



Mother and she reluctantly told me about it. She didn't know much about it except that Canucy was on a ship one time which was supposed to be carrying gold nuggets. The ship is supposed to have sunk and they say that after that Canucy had money. Another man, whose name Mother didn't know, is also said to have suddenly had money. This man went to the United States and allegedly changed his name. She emphasized, though, that this was only rumour and completely unfounded.

I asked Mr. Trawl's nephew about this when I was talking to him this afternoon and he said Canucy really dreamt about where to find the money.

I asked Mother why she thought the people in Girdle Gut so readily believed his story. She said, 'the people in Girdle Gut were always pretty devoted to one another and no one would say anything against him.' Also, of course, it may be that everyone liked him. Mr. Trawl said he willingly lent money without demanding payment. So the people may have had no reason to believe other than that he found it.

(MS 68-26/pp. 267-271)

Scepticism concerning the belief in the dream which leads to the recovery of treasure is not widely found; only in the reports and comments concerning this particular dream have doubts been more or less openly expressed to the collector, and these doubts were only acknowledged when the informants were aware that he was privy to the fact that such doubts existed:

He was the mystery man. He had the money.... Never done a day's work in he's life ... money.... Oh I know where the money come from but I can't say it. I mustn't. Can't tell that, that 'ill be on that record if I do, but I knows where it come from.

(Tape 68-26/C513)

The later knowledge gleaned by the collector also adds new depth to a second interview with Mr. Trawl; this interview was made shortly after he first told the story and before the collector was made aware of a second tradition concerning



## Canucy's treasure:

Canucy was supposed to dig up money, but I don't know.... I've heard it said, dat he dug up money, ya know. Dug up something.... As far as I know I was supposed to believe it, and everybody else.... He dreamt about it.... He dreamt da money was buried between home and Girdle Gut see or Oldwood, and he was supposed to go. And he dreamt about it three times see, three nights runnin', one after de other, or das his story. And, ah, there was a certain date he had to go and dig up da money, and dey says das what happened, but I don't know. I do know he had plenty of money after a certain time. Well, in fact, after he got married, because I can remember right well as if it was yesterday when he had to go and ask his mother for twenty-five cents to buy a stick of tobacco. He never had a cent to his name. But whether 'tis true or not, I couldn't say, I don't know.

(Tape 68-26/C503)

Mr. Trawl's qualifications suggest now not merely the scrupulosity of a man who has not personally witnessed the events he describes but the dilemma of an honest man torn between two sets of facts, between what the community professes to believe and what Canucy's contemporaries suspected to be the truth, suspicions which they have kept even from the younger members of the settlements as well as from outsiders.

One other story from another Newfoundland community of treasure found through a dream expresses some doubts, but they appear to be of the narrative as a whole rather than of the belief per se:

Another time they, a man, he had a, dere was a pile a money buried in he's garden longside of 'es 'ouse. He had that, he had to shed blood fer dat you know. Dey had dreams. Now we had er 'ere two, tree years teachin' school, Miss Dyal, belong to Pancake Islands. Dey said dat was a real story. But her uncle had a house and he had dis dream in



de night, dat de pirate money was buried, you know, jest there now from the house, you know. And he had, he had to shed blood, and de blood had to be shed from a black hen, and he had to take anudder man long wid en and he had to go and dig fer dis money. But neither one of em didn't 'ave to speak before de trunk a money was really there and he had to be so many feet away from de hole fore anyone 'id speak. Well anyway, he got de black hen and chopped de head off of en, and be God, he start to dig fer de money, de two of em. And 'twas a pretty damn hard thing to dig down a hole two er tree feet and not spake, two hands, but in dat, and had to git it. Twelve o'clock in de night dey had to start de racket. Well, anyway, dey started in and dey dug. By and by, be God, dey got de trunk, dere chest a money, er de chest a jewel, whatever in de devil it was. I don't know. But anyway dey got it on and got it up on de surface. And she tole me it all because she boarded wit us. And all dat ever de two of em could muddle out a de hole, you know. And when dey got it up and got it on de ground, on de edge, one feller said, "Boy," he said, "we got it den." And dey said it went back in de hole agin jest so quick as a flash a lightnin', and every bit a dirt went back, and dey lost it. Well now, if das a true story I don't know. I couldn't say any more. Now 'tis true for me, but whether 'tis a lie fer she I don't know. But she wuddn't [wasn't] a girl fer tellin' lies. She was a pretty reliable girl. She said dat happened right longside of her 'ome.

(Tape 66-25/C313)

The dream of treasure may lead to its discovery but not necessarily to its recovery.

Where N531 Treasure discovered through dream represents both discovery and recovery, the narrative interest in the dream, as noted above, lessens as the value of the goods found or presumed found increases. In stories of lost wedding rings which were found, the dream is the main element; the search and the recovery are subordinate.

...about 40 years ago. An elderly lady had several dreams about her neighbour who had been dead for some time. During the dream her neighbour appeared to her



telling her to go down the road; in a field nearby and near a certain tree she would find a big rock. Under this rock she would find hidden her wedding ring. After many such dreams the old lady told her friends about it, but they just laughed at her. However, it played on her mind so much that to overcome her curiosity, she did go to this certain spot as directed in the dream. There underneath the rock in the very spot related in the dream she found the wedding ring. She immediately returned it to her neighbour's husband who identified it as belonging to his deceased wife. The person who told this story to my informant knew the people involved and actually saw the ring as proof that it was true.

(Card 71-44/27)

Even when the item found through the dream has no monetary value, such as a human heart,<sup>3</sup> or when the value is more sentimental than real,<sup>4</sup> the narratives, whether short or long, exhibit concern with three matters: the dream, the search, and the recovery and its results. One element may be emphasized more than another; there may be only rudimentary traces of one phase, but the basic pattern remains:

At Clam Harbour [Nova Scotia] a woman dreamed of buried treasure and a man went with her and found it with a mineral rod. They unearthed a copper bake pan full of English sovereigns. It must have been a sizable amount for they divided it and the man was able to buy horses and also to send his sons to college.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Q68-487-5. Informant's mother dreamed of treasure. She insisted that he go and dig for it. Found the place she described but when he dug he found a human heart. He went back and told his mother. She came and ordered it reburied: "I don't know to this day what it was all about."

<sup>4</sup>Card 74-131/). Narrator's mother finds her own wedding ring through a dream.

<sup>5</sup>Helen Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1957), p. 44.



It may be found in a one-sentence comment:

Mr. Washington Harnish of Hubbards told of people from New York who hired a schooner [the search] many years ago as the result of a dream and took away a treasure from Shut In Island in St. Margaret's Bay.<sup>6</sup>

or in a story from Newfoundland which gives rich details of situation and setting:

The story which follows was first of all told to me by my grandfather a number of years ago. My grandfather ... was a resident of Bay Antique, a little fishing village ... where this particular incident took place.

According to my grandfather the story took place during his youth. My grandfather also says that the story is true as there is a certain degree of evidence to support this happening, as you will later see in the story.

I first heard the story when I was about ten years old. It was during one cold winter's evening in February while the wind howled through the trees and the snow beat wildly against the house. Also, during this particular evening the lights were out and it was certainly an excellent situation to tell stories. My grandfather sat in the big rocking chair while all the family sat around the house listening with interest to his story.

...It was during the summer of the middle nineteenth century when a relatively poor fisherman in the little fishing community of Bay Antique became a very rich man as the result of discovering a fortune. Although it is not certain what type of treasure Hosea Worker ... found, there is reason to believe that he did find treasure of some sort.

According to my grandfather the finding of treasure by Hosea did not come about merely by accident; neither was he searching for treasure and then by chance stumbled upon a buried treasure.

The man, Hosea, was first of all supposed to have had a dream about buried treasure located in Island Pond. (This is a very large pond near the community with a small island in the centre of it). At first he thought nothing of this dream. However, after having the same dream three nights in succession he

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 65.



decided to do something about it. According to the story he was supposed to have had the dream at midnight on the three nights.

The next day after giving some thought to his dreams he decided to go to the pond and look for the treasure. That night around eleven o'clock, he awakened one of his servants, had him tackle a horse, and put a boat on the cart. The boat was needed to row to the island, since that was the only way by which Hosea could get to the island and search for his treasure. After having reached the pond he launched his small boat and rowed to the island and then found his treasure.

My grandfather goes on and supports his story. He says that after this discovery was made Hosea took a month long trip to Great Britain. This was indeed a surprising venture for a resident of a small fishing village and a supposedly poor man. After his return home from England, Hosea set up a store, and met the needs of the fishermen in that small community. This store still stands today, and is owned and operated by his son.

There is also evidence which I have discovered by myself which helps support the fact that there was someone digging on the island. During the summer this pond is a favourite swimming hole and many people have gone out to the island, and many have given eye-witness reports of having seen the hole in the island.

(Q68-380-0)

Another story of the same event, but from a community about twelve miles away by water, has a less formal structure; the tripartite pattern is still present:

Two men found some hidden treasure. One of the men dreamed about a treasure which was buried in the hills near his home. These were two brothers so they decided to take a chance and look for it. The man dreamt that it was buried on an island which was out in the middle of a lake. They really found treasure and brought it home. These people became very wealthy as a result. The families' ancestors [sic] still have a little money.

(Q68-327-11)

It will be noticed that the first-person point of view is lacking in all of the above samples. Its almost



total absence as a narrative approach is unexpected.<sup>7</sup> Of all the stories examined for this study which tell of a dreamer's discovery and recovery of treasure through a dream only Fauset's informant, Old Man Bowdrow<sup>8</sup> reports a personal experience, and he is not typical of informants who tell treasure stories in Atlantic Canada.<sup>9</sup> His story, moreover, concentrates on the search for the \$2,200.00 he and his friend obtained through Bowdrow's dream.

The search is the focal point of narratives which tell of the dream leading to the discovery of the treasure by the dreamer, but the wealth is lost because of a failure to observe taboos, usually that against speaking while digging for treasure (Motif C401.3 Tabu: speaking while searching for treasure). The loss of discovered treasure happened not only to Miss Dyal's uncle in Pancake Island,<sup>10</sup> but also to

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<sup>7</sup> Since only the dreamer can know what he dreamt, the story must originate in the first-person narrative. Only 6.6% of the stories examined for this discussion were told by the dreamer; the majority of these were older men.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur Huff Fauset, Folklore from Nova Scotia (New York: The American Folk-Lore Society, 1931), p. 90.

<sup>9</sup> Fauset described Bowdrow as one who "believes in and investigates gold myths". It is Bowdrow's preoccupation with the investigation of these myths which makes him an untypical informant. Most of these semi-professional treasure hunters in Atlantic Canada do not tell treasure stories. Stories are told about these men and their activities, but they themselves do not seem anxious to talk of their beliefs or experiences.

<sup>10</sup> See above, this chapter.



two parties of searchers who went to dig on the west coast of Newfoundland. The mother and daughter, both of whom dreamt three nights in a row of the treasure, found "some kind of jug". When the old woman saw it she said, "It's ours." It then disappeared.<sup>11</sup> These women in their dig at Hagar Harbour are not said to have encountered the treasure guardian, nor are they said to have taken any precautions to appease it as did the diggers in the Pancake Islands.<sup>12</sup>

Uncle Byrd and Uncle Pidge did encounter guardian(s) when they dug at Harvest Harbour (on the West Coast) after Uncle Byrd had had the dream for three nights: "an' did they see lots of everything too, I'm tellin you, all kinds o' ... and heard, oh my! enough to frighten you to death ...

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<sup>11</sup>Tape 74-195/F1755.

<sup>12</sup>The diggers for the chest of gold at Rose's Hole on Berkhamsted Common, Herefordshire, also lost the prize when the dreamer spoke when they reached the top of the chest. No treasure guardian is reported, nor were any precautions taken to avoid it. "Notes", Folk-Lore Record, I (1878), 236-237.

In New England, the Ipswich resident who unearthed an iron bar while digging for Kidd's treasure on Plum Island spoke when he was surrounded by a circle of black cats. "The iron bar sank into the sand, and the hole filled with water." George G. Carey, "Folklore from the Printed Sources of Essex County, Massachusetts", Southern Folklore Quarterly, XXXII (1968), 30.

The man from Blue Rocks, Nova Scotia and his friends had to fire three eggs at a board overhead before they began to dig. They did so, but still lost the treasure when one of the men spoke. Helen Creighton, Folklore of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia (Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1950), p. 8.



people complaining and yelling." Ignoring the attempts of the murdered pirate to drive them away, they dug, and Uncle Byrd found a bone; "it was bones but [he] only took one." The treasure was lost, however, not through the eerie sights and sounds heard while the men were digging but through Uncle Pidge's saying, "Byrd, I've got it". The guardian manifestations did prevent the men from making another attempt; the narrator's final comment was that they didn't dig again, because, he presumed they were too frightened.<sup>13</sup>

Even a sotto voce comment to oneself will serve to break the taboo and cause the dreamer-discoverer to lose the treasure:

[On Newfoundland's East Coast] there was an old man, Cec Greg, who lived at Fiddler's Cove about 40 years ago. He had the same dream three successive nights. This dream revealed to him where a treasure was buried. It was supposed to be buried up on the Big Hill. Well, one night Uncle Cec took his Bible and a lantern and a pick and shovel and went up to look for the treasure. He didn't tell a soul that he had dreamt about it or that he was going to look for it. Well he dug down and saw the "big iron pot full of silver money" and he took his Bible which he had open all the time and went to reach for the pot to haul it out of the hole. Well, as he was doing this he spoke to himself under his breath, and when he tried to haul the pot out, it wouldn't budge. He tried everything to get it out, but no sir, it couldn't be moved. He covered in the hole again, and afterwards he told other people about it, and they asked him to tell them where it was buried, but he refused saying: "If youse wants to know where it is, find out the way I found out and youse is welcome to it."

(Uncle Mark Greg told me this as a true story.)

(Card 66-10/130)

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<sup>13</sup>Tape 74-195/F1685.



Uncle Cec's choice of the Bible as part of his equipment for raising buried treasure suggests some acquaintance, not necessarily at first hand, with the instructions provided by Reginald Scot concerning "The art and order to be used in digging for monie, revealed by dreames":

There must be made upon a hazell wand three crosses, and certaine words both blasphemous and impious must be said over it, and hereunto must be added certaine chacters, & barbarous names. And whilst the treasure is a digging, there must be read the psalmes, De profundis, Missa, Miseratur nostri, Requiem, Pater noster, Ave Maria, Et ne nos inducas in tetationem, sed libera nos à malo, Amen. A porta inferi credo videre bona, &c. Expectate Dominum Requiem aeternam. And then a certeine praier. And if the time of digging be neglected, the divell will carie all the treasure awaie.<sup>14</sup>

In stories where the dreamer both discovers and recovers the hidden treasure, the element of the supernatural, apart from the dream itself, is almost unknown. The supernatural does appear in those narratives where the discovered wealth is lost to the dreamer by the breaking of taboo.

Stories which are more concerned with the search than with the dream or the recovery are filled with awareness of the supernatural forces which have traditionally been associated with the burying of and the raising of treasure. The correct time for digging, charms, spells, sacrifices to appease the treasure guardian and the manifestations of the guardian itself are the elements which intrigue both the teller and the listeners. The mechanics of removal are of

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<sup>14</sup>Reginald Scot, The Discoverie of Witchcraft, 1584; rept., n.p.: John Rodker, 1930, p. 104.



little interest unless there appears to be supernatural interference with them.

Treasure indicators such as lights may also serve to set the scene for the search where the dream is the motivation for it rather than the occurrence of the indicators alone. Fairy money, however, does not appear in stories where the dream of treasure is found except, possibly, in one from Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia:

There was a man near Blandford who dreamed of money under a big stone, and he went and turned the stone and here were a lot of leaves so he turned the stone back again. Someone told him that the leaves were bills. He hadn't thought about that, so he turned the stone back again and the leaves were all gone.<sup>15</sup>

Although Dr. Creighton feels that this disappearance of the dreamer's find is linked to Motif D475.1.3 Transformation of dead leaves to gold, there is also an echo of the third pattern of stories connected with the dream of treasures.

In this third pattern, the treasure is found by someone other than the dreamer and recovered by that person. While Atlantic Canada does not have a great number of these narratives, they do occur both in the English and in the French cultures. The supernatural plays as small a part in such stories as it did in the stories of the dreamers who recovered the riches of which they dreamt.

Most of the narratives which tell of the finding of the treasure by other than the dreamer come from Nova Scotia;

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<sup>15</sup>Creighton, Lunenburg County, p. 9.



but there is one from the Magdalen Islands, and another from Newfoundland. At Indian Cove, N.S., two searchers lost the treasure to a ship's boat carrying ten men which arrived at the same time and left only the hole and the skids when it departed.<sup>16</sup> In the Magdalens, a youth lost his treasure when his cousin would not take him to the island where it was buried until the next day; the delay allowed the Americans to get it. The money had been in a metal container placed in a barrel of flour. There are people still living who have seen the hole of the treasure of l'île Rouge.<sup>17</sup> The loss of the hidden hoard becomes more likely when the dreamer assigns the search to agents. The captain from Chester Basin, N.S., whose girl friend in Boston dreamed of treasure on an island in Chester Bay had to go on a trip, so he told the narrator's grandfather and his brother about it:

By the time they got to the flat rock they were supposed to find, they had to stop, but they cleared the ground above it for when they could come back. It was a little while before they returned. This time they put a crowbar down and they couldn't believe their eyes when there was nothing there. The rock had gone and there was nothing but an empty hole. But about that time a man named Cleveland at Blanford got rich and he seemed to have everything he wanted. They never asked him, but they thought

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<sup>16</sup>Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, p. 44. It must be presumed that the two searchers hid since the story does not mention any confrontation with the boat's crew.

<sup>17</sup>Anselme Chiasson, Les Légendes des Îles de la Madeleine (Moncton, N.B.: Éditions des Aboiteaux, 1969), pp. 117-118.



he must have rowed out to the island, found the hole, and discovered the treasure just below where they'd finished off. That island answered the girl's description exactly.<sup>18</sup>

At Louisburg, N.S., a treasure was lost because the searchers stopped too soon:

An old man had a dream of treasure buried at Louisburg by the railway crossing. He was after Angus McIntyre and his Uncle John to get it. One day they came to look and found the spot and dug. They removed the stone that was in his dream and then came to a barrel of clam and oyster shells. They supposed this was all and covered the hole up again.

Later when men were building the road here the treasure was found under the barrel of shells in an old iron pot.<sup>19</sup>

These narratives tell of a dream of treasure and of the discovery of treasure, or the presumed discovery of it. Since, however, the finder is not the person who had the dream nor one of his agents, they should, perhaps, be considered with the stories where the dream does not lead to the discovery of treasure rather than with those clearly embodying Motif N531 Treasure discovered through dream.

Only in the story from Newfoundland is it made quite clear that the dream does lead to a discovery of treasure and that the dreamer loses the find because another uses the information to gain it first:

It happened years back. This woman had a dream one night. She saw a pirate standing over a place in

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<sup>18</sup> Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, p. 65.

<sup>19</sup> Helen Creighton, Bluenose Magic (Toronto: Ryerson Press, c. 1968), pp. 114-115.



Javelin Gut. He was showing her a treasure. So she dreamt three nights and she told her husband. Her husband and her brother decided one night to go and dig in this place. They done a lot of digging and were down a long ways when her brother decided there was nothing there. They all left and went home. When she went to bed that night she had the same dream except that the dream showed her brother went back to the hole they dug and he was pulling up a chest. The night before the brother was after striking something and decided not to say anything about it. So he and his sons went back again and dug up the chest. The next day she told her husband and he went and sure enough the hole was down farther and there was nothing in it. They never let on but a few years later her brother had lots of money. He made two or three trips to the States. People figured he went to the United States to sell the things he found in the chest. Anyway there was always lots of money between himself and his sons.

(MS 72-95/pp. 18-19)

The misplaced trust reminds one of the legend of the treasure of Berry Pomeroy Castle,<sup>20</sup> a treasure which Jan Nokes lost when he confided in the local doctor and took the doctor's advice to wait until morning. In the morning only the hole was to be found, and the doctor was suddenly wealthy. This Devonian story has its counterpart in Cornwall where the dreamer lost Chainy Hunt's treasure when he talked too freely in the local tavern; another man, one who had been present

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<sup>20</sup>Katharine Briggs, A Dictionary of British Folk-Tales, Part B Folk Legends (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), II, 378-390.

J. R. W. Coxhead, The Devil in Devon (Bracknell, Berks.: West Country Handbooks, 1967), pp. 46-47.

S. M. Ellis, Ghost Stories and Legends of Berry Pomeroy Castle ([Totnes, Devon]: n.d.).

Paul Q. Karkeek, "Collectanea Curiosa Devoniansia", Transactions of the Devonshire Association, XI (1879), 346-347.



when the dream was told, was suddenly wealthy and emigrated.<sup>21</sup>  
 In Jura, a woman dreamed of treasure and told a neighbour;  
 the woman found the place digged up, but the family to whom  
 she had revealed her dream showed signs of a prosperity which  
 had not been evident before she told them her dream.<sup>22</sup>

These stories of treasure which are associated with  
 Motif N531 Treasure discovered through dreams are outnumbered  
 in Atlantic Canada by those narratives in which the dream  
 does not lead to the discovery of a treasure. It has been  
 suggested that the last group of stories discussed might be  
 considered a modification of Motif N531, but there are no  
 motifs in the standard indexes by which one may classify the  
 non-productive dream; nor do any appear to have been proposed.  
 Yet these stories differ from other stories of treasures not  
 found because of the importance of the dream to the nar-  
 rative as a whole. At the turn of the century W. A. Craigie  
 in "Some Highland Folklore" noted that the story of Gold  
 Dorothy was "perhaps noticeable among dream-stories, from  
 the fact that it led to nothing, notwithstanding the recur-  
 rence of the dream at regular intervals."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>William North, "At the Sign of the Green Dolphin",  
Old Cornwall, V (1952), 53-54.

<sup>22</sup>Donald Budge, Jura, An Island of Argyll (Glasgow:  
 John Smith & Son (Glasgow) Ltd., 1960), p. 161.

<sup>23</sup>W. A. Craigie, "Some Highland Folklore" in Miscel-  
 lanea, Folk-Lore, IX (1898), 377.



The narrative of the dream that came to nothing would not be noticeable in Atlantic Canada since over sixty per-cent of the texts which deal with the dream of treasure and with the dream of treasure end with nothing except a good story:

There was this man living in Greensleeves [Trinity Bay] who used to live by the sea and he use to keep dreaming (or he said he used to see them) about Frenchmen's spirits in the night-time. So he moved his house up by the side of the Anglican Church and he started digging up everything in his garden but never found anything. You see he was searching for some kind of treasure that he thought the Frenchmen buried.

After he shifted his house by the church he still saw the ghosts. This time they had flashlights, but he must have seen lights from the people's houses around the place. Next thing he moved everything into the garden by the church and started digging again. Once when I went over there he told me that he figured on the young boys were tormenting him by going into the church vestry and putting on the choir gowns, pretending they were ghosts. He always kept seeing them spirits of the French and he always dug looking for gold that he figured was buried somewhere around him.

One time he got kind of out of his head and ran away somewhere. His sister who was living with him, got kind of worried so they rang the church bell for everyone to start searching for him. They searched all night and found him in a friend's garden in the hen's-pen. He died after that and was dead ever since.

(Q68-445-2)

The collector's comment on the above was "When I asked my step-grandfather if this man had anything wrong with him, he said, 'Well, you might say he was kind of crazy.'"

This is the only report of anyone questioning the competency of the dreamer. One Newfoundlander, in his mid-eighties, did feel that his grandfather might have been



overly preoccupied with dreaming of and searching for treasure:

This Abbey Cove now is just, this is a neck now about half a mile across that separate Whiskey from Roast Nose, dya understand. This runs about three miles out in the ocean and on the other side, there's a cove there and up on the top of the bank there was about half an acre of cleared land there. It was always there. They don't know how it happened, and, ah, there was ring bolts, iron ring bolts, in the cliff down below ... so dey taught, dey taught there was money buried there on account of the place being woods all cut away and the place being cleared off, ya see.....

And dya know, I was in there twice with me grandfather diggin', lookin' for that gold. Now that's God's truth. Yes. An old friend of his, old Robin, and my grandfather, they'd dream about this gold in Abbey Cove. And they'd come and get a kettle, kettle with lunch, and bring, and go in with pick and shovel. The two hardest bosses ever I had. They said, "Now dig here," and I'd dig a hole down there, and I was a young fellow then, about fifteen, I suppose. "Dig a hole. Dig down there.... Dig there, will ya." Hardest work ever I was to ... diggin' for that gold for these two old, old, old men and their ravin', old, old men. That's the God Almighty's fact now. And there was another. We had a meadow out on Pot Island, a hay meadow, hay garden, ya know. And there was letters on the rock there. They were cut on this rock and even I had to go down there with me grandfather.<sup>24</sup>

A comment by another Newfoundlander suggests that a number of those who dreamt and searched for treasure but found nothing were indulging in wishful thinking--or dreaming--and knew it but felt there was nothing lost in checking out the dream, just in case something might be there:

Yes, people used to dream about money being in such a place, you know, and they, and they used to go

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<sup>24</sup>Received from Gerald Pocius, Folklore Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1974-75.



on the hunt of it, but they, they never used to get it.... I often dreamed meself, I often dreamed meself that I, I oftern dreamed meself that there was, there was money in such a place, you know. Yeah, I'd say, I must go there. The next day I must have a cruise there, see. I never got anything there.... I went there, I went there, but I never seen anything, I never seen anything....

I often dreamed look about money. I'd be ashore in the place and I'd go - and I'd get the I get the, the chest you know. I get the chest, right full. Oh thousands of dollars. And I had a bag on me back. There you are, I'd say, I'm all right now, I've got the bag, and I get all the money is in the bag, and I'd come for home. I go down to St. John's, and I, I put it in the bank. Wouldn't you know but I had a fortune, had a fortune. I'd be dreamin' this you know, often dreamin' this. Got this big, old big chest, the money you know, and I, I got it into a bag - I had a bag with me - a bag I used to spell, goin' around the country. Got into it and I lugged it home and I....

Got this big, got this big lot of money and put it in, put it in the bank. I gave the wife what she need of it, and I, I had the rest of it. Oh we had a, we had a wonderful time over it....

We often went in, when I - when I was havin' quite a dream, I often went to the place where, where I be dreamin' it was, you know, to see if it would be there. Yes. Sometimes I used to be thinkin' it would be there, you know. I often dreamed a couple or three nights runnin' about it, you know. Yeah, I'd say, I must go on the huntin' of it....

I wouldn't tell, no - I'd tell nobody. I'd tell nobody until I, if I get it I would, I'd tell then.

(Tape 68-43/C530)

Most dreamers were not as reticent as this eighty-five year old informant; had they been so most of the stories of the dream of treasure would not have entered public knowledge.

Those narratives which have become part of a community's tradition, seldom suggest that the treasure never existed as an explanation for the failure to find it. The variety of excuses offered for such failure is almost as great as the number of stories; they range from bad weather, through lack of awareness of signs and meanings, to



encounters with the supernatural during the search for the treasure.

The interest in the dream itself and in the actions resulting from the dream (which may or may not involve a search) is reflected in the basic two-part structure of these stories. The emphasis may be either on the dream or on the action resulting from it. Where the details of the dream are known as in this story from northern Newfoundland they are given and used to explain subsequent events:

[Aunt Et] dreamed that there was a sailor used to be dressed up with brass buttons on, you know. He used to come to her in her dream and he told her there was so much money down in Dane's Bight, enough for she and all her family, you know, keep them as long as they live, but she had to come twelve o'clock in the night. And uh, he told her not to get scared or anything like that because she see a man killed, but he told that she see a lot of fighten and men with swords, but he told her she wouldn't be hurted. But she have to go alone twelve o'clock in the night. Her husband could come to the beach but he could come no further. So Aunt Et dreamed that four or five times following. So this night she got ready to go down, twelve o'clock in the night, she and Uncle Joe. So she got down along side the beach and Uncle Joe wasn't able to go no further so she get scared.

And another time, I think, she tried to go down, she and Uncle Joe went down, and Uncle Joe was going to go in long with her, but when he got inside the beach, she heard, she heard all kinds of fighten and everything, so Uncle Joe and she turned around and come back again. She never went down afterwards. But the money was down there she said, you know. I don't know if there's anything to it or no, but that's what she always said.

(MS 73-32/pp. 77-79)

The final sentence or two in these stories is frequently an editorial comment on the part of the narrator and serves as an epilogue to the story as a whole.



The editorial comment at the end is present even in the tales which are told by the dreamer himself, whether in simple reports:

When people would be sitting around talking about money, i.e. how much money so and so has in the community, or how much money so and so makes a day or year, this man would tell the story about his dream and the buried treasure. The story-teller was about 45 or 50 years old (of my father's generation) at the time of the telling and claimed that he had the dream "a few years ago". The story would usually be told during the conversation of adults ranging in age from 18 years to grandparents. Although the children would not be especially interested in the adults' discussion of money, they would all stop, or come around to hear the man's story about his dream and the buried treasure.

The teller would relate the story something in this fashion:

"A few years ago, I went to bed one night during the winter and I had this dream. I dreamt that I had discovered some treasure and that it was marked with a puncheon stave. The next morning I got up and I went in the woods and never thought any more about it and I cut a load of wood. After I came home and ate, I remembered about the dream and I remembered that during the day I took a puncheon stave that was stuck up somewhere and threw it away. I could not remember where it was and as it was snowing that day it was no use to try and retrace my footprints. But I remembered about the dream the night before, and boy if I could only remember where I saw that stave sticking up."<sup>25</sup>

or in more complex ones:

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<sup>25</sup>G. J. Casey Collection, Folklore Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Another story, from Casey's Informant #24, has much the same pattern. It concerns a man who dreamt three nights running of treasure buried in a meadow where he was cutting grass. One day his scythe hit an iron peg which he hauled up and threw away: "After, he thought about it, and he thought this is where the treasure was, after dreaming about it for three nights, and he didn't know where it was then - what part of the meadow it was in."



I dream, I dream stuff like dat. I dream like dat. People, 'bout people like dat. I dream about people like dat. I dreamed one time I was, I was here in, I was livin' up here you see in Wreckage [on the east coast of Newfoundland]. I bought dis place o'er dere from school master Driver see, when he leaved, Driver leaved. I was twenty, twenty-one year old I suppose, twenty-two year old something den, twenty-two. And I was here a little while. I, one night I, I was home you know, [not at sea].... And dere was one night I dreamed I was down in Wreckage and I was in around de hills down dere, you know, and I see a, I was walkin', I was walkin' - we used to have a garden right in around a hill, into a boggy place, go into a bog like, go on in a bog - and when I was walkin' in dis bog, walkin' in so far in dis place, I was goin' into our garden, we used to have a garden dere I seen a man comin'. I seen a man comin' towards me, and he had a coat on one arm. He only had one arm. He had a coat on that arm and that arm was off. I dreamed dat. And he come and he passed me. I stood up, I stood up and he passed me. De man stopped and he passed me. And I didn't stop very long 'fore he turned comin' towards me again, comin' towards me again. And I was goin' to say, "In de name o' God, trouble thee?" I woke and I told John George about did. I told John George Yeoman up dere. John George is dead now. And he dreamed de same dream de same night. He dreamed de same dream de same night only he was in Bar Harbour. John George was in Bar Harbour and I was here, I was down here in Wreckage. "Well," I said, "Boy, 'tis money buried down dere. Dere's money money buried ere for sure as you can mark it, somewhere or 'nother. Das de man," I said, "is lookin' after de two lots. He's lookin' after what's in Bar Harbour and he's lookin' after dat down dere too." "De same man, in de same," he said, "de same man, de same story. His hand was gone, and he had dis jacket on his, hung 'cross de udder one, de udder arm was gone." Anyhow he went down, John went down and, searched down dere, see where he could find any trace o' de money down dere. Dere's money down dere. It's dere somewhere. It must be, and 'twas in Bar Harbour. Now, in Bar Harbour dey told him where 'twas to. He told John in his sleep where de money was to, and told him how dey carried it in dere, and told him de course dey carried in. Told him de course dey carried in de money outta dis, dis pirate ship you know. When dey got de pirate ship dat was lost down here in Bar Harbour, de guns



is down dere now in Bar Harbour. And he told de course he went in. He went in tru, got on a bank, and he said de money is dere, down dere, de money buried down dere, he said, in dere. Told him de course he come in. Told him de course. Das where de money is put, dere, he said. And de sticks was dere dey carried in on, bars, de bar dey carried de money in and put down in de hole, put down in de hole.hole. But he didn't see who was dere. 'Twas a man dere to mind it. And he said he was dere till he didn't know how long talkin' to him and he told 'un everyting. He told him everyting about de money and told him where 'twas to and he told him de course he had to come in Bar Harbour to get it.

Whether anybody got it or whether dey haven't, tis dere, de money is dere for sure. Money is buried dere in Bar Harbour.

(Tape 64-10/C35. A second version by the same informant may be found on Tape 64-10/C31)

Where no treasure is found, where there are no memorable or exciting incidents connected with the search, the dream itself is the focus of the narrative. Yet none of the dreams told as treasure stories concentrate on the treasure itself; the specifics of the riches waiting to be found seem to be of little concern within the oral tradition.<sup>26</sup>

Tellers and listeners alike are not as interested in the what as in the how-to-get it. If the how is tested then the audience is as interested in why treasure is not found as in why it is. In the reports of the dream which came to naught the failure frequently is blamed on encounters with the supernatural in some form. The fear of one Newfoundland digger was not fully defined:

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<sup>26</sup>The print tradition is apt to include some specifics, such as "a string of pearls as big as hen's eggs". William Howe Greene, The Wooden Walls Among the Ice Floes (London: Hutchison, 1933), pp. 188-189.



There is an old man who once lived in our community that has a dream about hidden treasure once possessed by pirates years before. This man dreamt how the treasure was hidden in a certain corner of a garden. The story goes [that] he was given specific directions as to the location of the treasure and what he would have to do in order to find it. The dream ended and it was morning. The man gets up and with his pick and shovel on his back follows the directions given in his dream. He began to dig and continued in for quite a while but finally gave up all of a sudden without really knowing why. He went into a state of fear and filled in most of the hole again, although the hole is still there to this very day. The only reason he could ever give for stopping his search was that he was afraid to dig any further.

(Q68-478-1)

Other diggers encounter unexpected manifestations of the unusual:

There's more buried treasure here in Newfoundland than you can shake a stick at, but the trouble is getting your hands on it.

I remember one time in particular in Trinity [Bay] where a real good buddy of mine went on a treasure hunt. He had had the same dream for over a week now; it told him of a buried treasure and warned him that if he decided to try to collect the treasure he was to go alone.

Finally he fell victim of temptation and curiosity of the dream and of his lust for gold. He figured he was a "big boy" now and thought the ghost and goblin warning was all bull and anyway how could a dream come true?

After much internal conflict he decided "just for a laugh" he'd check the co-ordinates of his dream and bring his son along to help him bring out the treasure if it just did happen to be true. They got to the lonely deserted island near midnight and went to a particular spot and started digging. They had only gotten about two feet down when they heard a noise behind them. They wheeled around in panic to be confronted by two giant boars. They had been cut off from their boat and the only possible road to escape was the harbour. The two ended up swimming a mile to safety. There was never any pigs on the island before and none after.



Sure, there's treasure in Newfoundland, but you have to fight the devil for it.

(Q70D-10-3)

Most searchers are prepared to meet the treasure guardian which they expect to see in the form of a ghost or a headless man. Sometimes there is an actual tussle with the spirit and his companions who beg the diggers to leave the money alone and convince them to do so.<sup>27</sup> Another searcher, in the Magdalen Islands, was driven off by an overpowering odour of sulphur and a little headless man riding a log and waving his arms in protest.<sup>28</sup> In Jacquet River, New Brunswick, two brothers were stopped before they discovered the treasure when a strange boat appeared and sailed over the sandbar and beached itself near them; the six men who came ashore from it and stayed in the community for a few days and then disappeared, convinced the brothers not to proceed further.<sup>29</sup>

Even when the dream tells the method of overcoming the guardian, problems still arise. The widow from Champobello who had the guardian of Captain Kidd's treasure at Money Cove on Grand Manan, N.B., come to her in a dream and tell her that he wanted to get rid of his task and carefully

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<sup>27</sup> Creighton, Lunenburg County, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Chiasson, Îles de la Madeleine, p. 119.

<sup>29</sup> Stuart Trueman, Ghosts, Pirates and Treasure Trove (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, c. 1975), pp. 126-127.



explain what she must do to get the treasure, lost the hogshead of treasure when she became so frightened at the activities she saw before her that she dropped the chisel which was to break the spell; the fishermen who had rowed her to Grand Manan found her almost insane.<sup>30</sup>

At Blue Rocks, N.S., Uncle Josh forgot the Doxology which he was to sing to get the treasure of which he had dreamed. He encountered a dog with eyes as big as a kettle which kept following him until they reached the place where the treasure was. Uncle Josh got frightened and left.<sup>31</sup>

One family lost a treasure because of a confusion of islands:

Dad told me that his grandfather knew for a fact that a treasure was buried on one of the islands off [Northern Newfoundland's] Cape Shallot. But he didn't know exactly which one because there were so many. Nobody ever dug for the treasure because they didn't know on which island to dig. Several years later Dad said he saw his grandfather coming towards the house all excited. He said he had had a dream the night before and knew exactly where the treasure was buried and knew how to get it.

He said Dad and his brothers were to go out on the particular island the treasure was buried on at midnight with lanterns, picks and shovels and go to a big dead tree. There the ghost of the dead man who was to be killed by the pirates so that he would guard the treasure, was supposed to appear. They were supposed to say a certain verse so the ghost would disappear and let them dig.

When they arrived at the island it was 12 o'clock. Dad said they went to an old dead tree but no ghost

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<sup>30</sup>Laura M. Suplee, The Legend of Money Cove, "Notes and Queries", Journal of American Folklore, XXXI (1918), 272-273.

<sup>31</sup>Creighton, Lunenburg County, p. 8.



appeared so they started to dig. They dug around that old tree for about four hours and didn't find any treasure. They gave up their hunt and went home very disgusted.

About a year after Dad and his brothers went after the treasure, a motor-schooner crept into the bay at dusk and went towards a different island from the one they were on. People from Cape Shallot saw lights on the island which was about two miles from the community.

The next day, Dad said, he and his brothers went to the island to see what was going on. The boat was gone so they went ashore on the island. Near an old dead tree there was a deep hole dug containing several planks. Dad said the shape of the hole resembled that of a box and it looked as if one had been taken out.

When Dad told his grandfather this, his grandfather believed it was the Spanish ship come back for the treasure that their ancestors had buried there hundreds of years ago.

(MS 74-101/)

There was here apparently no taboo against speech.

Frequently, however, dreamers who search do fail to discover the treasure. This failure may be because they speak while digging, because the hole keeps filling in faster than they can dig, or because the wind suddenly rises and they have to get back to shore. The problems of searching for treasure plague many of the searchers who dream as well as those who locate their treasure through other methods.

Public knowledge that a person has dreamt of a buried treasure and plans to look for it may prompt friends and neighbours to play pranks. Accounts of such practical jokes are treated as treasure stories by those who tell them.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>See Chapter VIII The Treasure Guardian for other jests connected with treasure digging. A whole study could be made of pranks associated with treasure beliefs.



The improbable happenings which occur in many stories of attempts to raise buried treasure seem to invite the inclusion of one in a treasure story if none is present in the dream or in the search itself:

Two men who dreamt a buried treasure at a place ... about two miles or a mile possibly above Poquelin [on the South Coast of Newfoundland], and they decided to go up in the night to dig for this treasure. And they pulled the dory in the, into the beach, and they took a killick [an anchor made from a stone encased in strips of wood] ... and they dug it down as far as they could into the beach so's the dory wouldn't drift off while they were digging. And as the, they started to dig it was after dark, they thought they heard something. And they being very superstitious, they thought 'twas, 'twas a ghost of the people who buried this treasure. Of course, according to, ah, as the stories go, buried treasure, ah, the pirates would usually kill a man and bury him with the treasure. And anyway this is what they thought it was and they went down and they pushed the dory off as fast as they could, and away to go. They rowed for home, and when they went, went to land at the beach, in the place of destination, they, they couldn't get ashore. They discovered that they had dragged the killick all the way.

(Tape 65-16/C431)

The joke is explained in the teller's comment about the killick: "It would be very heavy.... I'd say ah, a thirty pound grapnel would be as effective for holding purposes as a hundred pound killick."

One woman in Nova Scotia lost the treasure of which she had dreamed not through the intervention of the supernatural nor through any improbable happening. She lost it through a happening which is very probable in Atlantic Canada: bad weather. As the man who was to take her to the island to get the pot of gold of which she had dreamt explained:



It was late in the fall and the cold weather came then and the night we were going there came a gale of wind. It blew heavy snow and hail.... It came so rainy it wasn't fit for womankind to cross the water, so I wouldn't go. It would have been nice if she'd went. In her dream she was to get a man to fire three shots over the spot.<sup>33</sup>

Whatever the reason, the success of those who search for treasure as the result of a dream is not high.<sup>34</sup>

A large group of treasure dreamers have avoided any possibility of disappointment. They decided not to look for

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<sup>33</sup>Creighton, Lunenburg County, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup>Examples of the unsuccessful search following a dream of a treasure are also to be found in Ireland and in the United Kingdom. For some of the Irish stories of this type see:

Horace Beck, Folklore and the Sea (Middletown, Conn.: Marine Historical Association Incorporated, c. 1973), p. 343.

T. C. Croker, Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland (London: William Tegg, [1862], p. 414. Also given in John Aubrey, Miscellanies, 5th ed. (London: Reeves and Turner, 1890), p. 67. Entry dated Jan. 1774.

Lady [Isabella Augusta] Gregory, Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland, Coole Edition (Gerrards Cross [Bucks.]: Colin Smythe, 1970), pp. 165-168. Five stories.

G. H. Kinahan, "Donegal Folk-Lore", Folk-Lore Journal, III (1885), 276.

Maurice McCarthy O'Leary, 'Certain Irish Superstitions', "Notes and Queries", Journal of American Folklore, XI (1898), 234-235.

W. G. Wood-Martin, Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1902), I, 790-791.

Examples from the United Kingdom, in addition to those given above will be found in:

Craigie, "Some Highland Folklore", p. 373.

[Eliza] Gutch, Examples of Printed Folk-Lore Concerning the North Riding of Yorkshire, York and the Ainsty. County Folk-Lore II. (London: The Folk-Lore Society, 1901), p. 17.

C. T. Oxley, Ghost Tales of the North Country (Harrogate: Dobson & Co., Ltd., n.d.), p. 40.



the treasure. Over twenty percent of the stories of dreams of treasure involve the election not to act. There is no motif in the Indexes to classify such conscious non-action. Such stories are rare in published collections of folk tales. They are easily found in the oral tradition, especially in Newfoundland. Dr. Helen Creighton appears to be the only folklorist to comment on this type of treasure story:

I had a woman who dreamed of treasure at the bottom of her garden. Dreamed about it for years. The family were after her to do something about it. Finally she got a coloured man to dig. They found a drain. In her dream there was running water. It fitted in. But she got him to fill everything in. Didn't want to go any further. I finally figured it out - she didn't want to spoil her dream.<sup>35</sup>

This idea was echoed by Joan, the wife of a lobster fisherman from Deer Island, Maine. When asked if any of the natives of Deer Island dug for its treasure, she answered no, but there were people from away who did. "What's the point of diggin? As long as we don't know it's not there we can think it is. There'd be no fun if we knew for sure."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Telephone conversation, 23 September, 1974. In Bluenose Ghosts she had written:

In ... cases of "not bothering," and there are many, I have wondered if the thought of the treasure did not in itself bring joy to the person. It would be a profound disappointment to dig and find nothing. Why not enjoy the illusion and drift along, knowing that if the need for money became too great, the experiment could then be made and the risks encountered. Why chance the spoiling of a pleasant dream? (pp. 49-50)

<sup>36</sup>Personal collection. Secured at a Provincial Park near Campbell's Cove, P.E.I., summer 1970.



An examination of the large number of stories of this type suggests that although the desire not to spoil the dream may account for a decision not-to-act in some cases, in many other the motives are more complex. Moreover, the degree of "not bothering" varies: it may have reduced the story to a bare account of a dream;<sup>37</sup> it may involve a decision not to look at all, it may be that the dreamer will visit the area before deciding not to do anything further; or it may involve a search so unenthusiastic that nothing is ever found.<sup>38</sup>

The decision on the part of the dreamer not to look seems to have affected others in the community. Only one story is recorded of an attempt by someone else to obtain the treasure after the dreamer decided not to bother. This narrative is different from the usual pattern for such stories which give a fairly detailed account of the dream and the decision with a reason for it; to the basic form is appended what might be told as a separate story felt to be complete in itself :

About fifty-five years ago [in Conception Bay] Aunt Hager Greg dreamed tree nights in succession dat dere was money buried by de side a Ship Cove Pond in a garden owned by George Moses an' Mitchell Moses. For her to get dis money she had to take her oldest son, tree rings an' a Bible wid her. She told her husband of de dream each time she dreamed it and' dey decided it was too risky for dem to take dere son den a baby of about two. In her dream she saw a spot of bushes

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<sup>37</sup> Creighton, Lunenburg County, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, pp. 64-65.



an' dis spot of bush would always be green, winter an' summer while de rest of de bush would turn dark red. Dose green bush marked de spot where de money was to be found. De story got to de ears of de people who owned de garden. Dey had a brudder-in-law, a minister of de Anglican Church at a parish in de Straits of Belle Isle. Dey sent for him to come so as dey could dig for de treasure. He came an' robed himself in his clerical garments an' him an' de two brudders went to de garden an' dug for de treasure. It's not known if dey found anything but de hole is still dere today and a part of de bush dat never widdered.

(Q68-99-6)

The decision that it was too risky to take the baby was not occasioned by thoughts of the child's physical health. The fear of the supernatural, implied in both parts of the above story, has kept many dreamers from the actual search.

The dreaming of the same dream by two dreamers seems to result in a single decision:

My grandmother is still convinced that she knows where there is a treasure buried in the Harbour. One night, she dreamed that a man came into her room three times, and told her each time where to find a treasure. He said it was across from a house on the point, between two rocks. The next day, while talking to a man of the Harbour, he described laughingly the very same dream. He had dreamed it on the same night, while asleep in his boat. However, neither bothered to visit the place because of duties at home [in Placentia Bay].

(Q70D-19-3)

Even when both dreamers know explicit instructions to avoid uncanny encounters, they may decide not to act:

Most of Mr. Aisle's stories were personal experiences, but there was one which he shared with another man in the [Conception Bay] community. He said that when he was younger, about forty or fifty years old (i.e. 1930-1940, approximately) he used to have dreams about places where crocks of gold were hidden.



Not only that, but he would be given explicit directions in the dream for both acquiring and keeping the money. For example, it was important that he should take a crackie dog, preferably black, with him because "blood would have to be spilt". At the site of the treasure he was supposed to draw out a circle within which he would remain secure from malevolent spirits, fairies and anyone else who might try to take the treasure away from him. He would be lured outside the circle, but the dog would go instead and thus the required blood would be shed. At approximately the same time, another man in the River was supposed to be having the same dream and so they collaborated about digging for the treasure. Although they often visited the location, they never tried to get the money. He wouldn't say why. The treasure apparently, still lies hidden in the same place and both of them know this for a fact.

(MS 70-20/p. 45)<sup>39</sup>

In many cases of non-action the belief in the supernatural beings associated with the buried treasure seems to be stronger than the belief in the counter-charms provided by the dream:

They says there's spirits in ... [a] garden in Bitter Bight.... I've heard feller's say they've seen 'em there. They says there was two fellers passin' along outside the fence there one night - that's about ten er fifteen years ago now - and they heard a rush of wind in the garden and when they looked they saw a big white goat jump up on a big rock in the middle of the garden. (They only saw it for a moment or two and then it disappeared without a sound.) They says there's treasure buried there, see. I've heard Uncle Edward Edsel speak about it and poor Uncle Cab Lumen.

Uncle Cab dreamed about diggin' it up one night. According to his dream he was supposed to kill a chicken and let the blood run on the ground in a particular spot in the garden and then he could dig up the treasure and have it all for himself. But Uncle Cab never did try it.

(Card 68-10/125)

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<sup>39</sup> See Tape 67-31/C418 for a recounting of the dream as known to some members of the area.



Some narrators, speaking of another person's dream will frankly say that the dreamer did not act because he, or she, was afraid of what might be waiting for the digger at the treasure site:

We don't know but there's pirate money, lots of it, buried here now around if you could find it, but, ah, dats a job to find dat money.... Dey say dey buried money. Dere was a man here had a dream. He's dead now. He lived in Grand Falls [Newfoundland] for 25 or 30 years, and before he left here he had a dream over here in Polar Point. He dreamt all about it, and was told how to go get it. He had to go alone in the night, alone, he have to be alone and dig the money up, buried in a steel chest. Gold. Doubbloons or whatever they used to call them or gold coins, gold coins. And - he - he, he wouldn't go. He didn't have the, he didn't have the nerve to go at it.... Well, you don't know ~~what~~, what was goin' to happen to you, you know. Dat ghost was watching dat money, he, he, he was - ghost watching dat money, he might - you don't know what he was goin' to do.

(Tape 64-13/C55)

Distrust of the treasure is great enough to keep many from even going to the area where they have dreamt the treasure was buried: "[Jim] said when he finished da dream he went down to see it. I said, 'No, ya wudden, Jim, cos you wudden have da nerve.'"<sup>40</sup>

Dreamers who had enough nerve to go and check the particulars of their dreams have failed to continue the search because they were afraid. In Nova Scotia, Billy Coll got as

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<sup>40</sup>Tape 64-8/C20. This interview includes a second example concerning a woman who had a dream of treasure "and she didn't have nerve enough to go see."

The informant on Tape 67-31/C418 explained the result of the dream: "Well, nobody did go [to dig].... They were too frightened to go."



far as the stone under which the treasure was supposed to be hidden,

but he covered it up and never went back. He was afraid if he went any further with the directions and the [headless] man appeared again he would be frightened to death.<sup>41</sup>

The man from Apple River, N.S., waited two years before he decided to check the facts of his dream of treasure. He found everything as described but also found the most awful looking snake he ever saw: "He said there was no such snake in Canada like it, so he got his team and never went back."<sup>42</sup> A treasure remained unclaimed at St. John's Island, Newfoundland, because the man would not return to the site alone at night:

I heard my father ... tell the following story when I was about 14-15 years old (1956-57)..... They had been talking about pirates and treasures at St. John's Island, where the story took place.... A man by the name of Nick Abel had told him the story around 1915. I think Abel lived at Bonne Bay. Anyway he got the story from a man named Childs at St. John's Island around 1850-60 approximately. That was the time the "thing" happened to Childs.

St. John's Island was supposed to have pirate's treasure buried on it. Around 1850, as I said, Childs had a dream that he would get a treasure (pirates') if he went to a certain place around midnight. (Dad didn't know the place.) But he had to go alone. He would see a bull there, but it wouldn't hurt him, so he was not to be afraid of it.

The next day, Childs walked to the place described to him in his dream, and it was exactly as he had dreamed it. (But the bull wasn't there then.) However, he was afraid to go back there in the night, alone. Therefore he never got the gold (or money).

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<sup>41</sup>Creighton, Bluenose Magic, p. 114.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 79.



I asked Dad if the story is true, and he said he didn't know, because it was before his time, but it was told seriously and believed, according to Nick Abel.

(MS 68-1/pp. 110-112)

None of the dreamers in Atlantic Canada are reported to have decided not to search because they recognized the figure in the dream as the Enemy of Mankind; a man from the Isle of Skye did and refused to be tempted: "Satan having been baulked in his desire, which was to get the man into his power, desisted from his efforts."<sup>43</sup>

Not the devil but common sense kept others from searching for their treasure. One Newfoundlander dreamt treasure was buried on the shoreline at Clumsy Cove, out on the point. He went down to check it out. The point was all rock, so he could not see how it could have been buried there.<sup>44</sup> A woman who has had three dreams of a treasure located in a small New Brunswick village has no intention of doing anything about it since the site has been covered by the pavement of a provincial highway during the whole of her lifetime; she doubts that the provincial government would feel a dream sufficient reason to dig up a major roadway.<sup>45</sup>

There may be other stories of dreams of treasure where the dreamer feels that practical physical considerations

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<sup>43</sup>Mary Julia MacCulloch, "Folk-Lore of the Isle of Skye. II", Collectanea, Folk-Lore, XXXIII (1922), 317.

<sup>44</sup>Tape 74-195/F1721.

<sup>45</sup>Personal.



preclude a search but they have not been published. They are probably still confined to families or to small communities.

The fear of a curse on the treasure,<sup>46</sup> as well as the fear of the supernatural may serve to deter the dreamers from searching. One story which includes the need for a dream of treasure before beginning a search is also concerned with the curse:

It is reported that around 1800 several Frenchmen buried treasure in [a] garden. In the garden there are little humps where the Frenchmen buried their treasure; however, no one had dared to dig it up. The only way you can really be sure where it is is to dream about the exact location. You can only dig for it at midnight. My mother says, "If you ever found the treasure you'd be rich. There's thousands of it there but no one dares to dig it up. Those Frenchmen had lots of money."

Mom says if you dig it up you'll have bad luck for the rest of your life.

(MS 69-16/pp. 9-10)

That one must dream of a treasure before one can find it has not been included here as a separate pattern among the dreams of treasure because so few references have been noted. One suspects that more examples are to be found in the oral tradition and among unpublished collections of folklore. The need for such a dream is implied in other stories.<sup>47</sup> If more dreams of this type are found there will be a need

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<sup>46</sup> See Chapter IX on Cursed Treasure for further examples and discussion.

<sup>47</sup> In the story from Cape Shallot, the grandfather was not certain where to dig until he had a dream about it. See above, this chapter.



for another new motif to classify dreams of treasure.

It has been noted that in Atlantic Canada most of the stories of the dream of treasure have been concerned with how to get the treasure rather than what the treasure was. Personal experience and stories of the dreams of others suggest that this somewhat paradoxical situation is not as strange as it might seem. What makes the dream a story worth repeating is the element of the unexpected or of the unknown. If one dreams of finding coins in a place which is known and recognizes landmarks which will pinpoint the exact location of the find within a foot or two, but suddenly realizes that a field never known to have houses in it has two, it is the unknown buildings which fascinate rather than the coins although their size and colour are known.<sup>48</sup>

A young man from the west coast of Newfoundland dreamt of a treasure of chests or crocks of gold by the side of the house to be built in a new area. The dream's instructions included how to deal with the white dog, a ship which would arrive, and a woman who would have to take the gold in her apron; the narrator gave the details of the dream but kept emphasizing that the dreamer had never been to the area. The

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<sup>48</sup>My father who was raised in the village did not know of buildings on the site. Questioning of an older resident (born ca. 1880) indicated that buildings had been there; she could remember the remains of them, traces of where they had stood. (J. H. C.)

It is not proposed that this dream nor any of the others should be used to open a discussion on the nature of dreams.



young man could not fulfill all the conditions for recovery detailed in the dream so found only blue grass.<sup>49</sup> The story is, basically, the same as those discussed above in the first group concerned with the dream of treasure, but there is added interest because the dream was of a place to which the young man had never been.

One woman's dream is remembered because it was about a treasure hunt which eventually took place but in which she was not involved; everything was said to have happened as she dreamed it would.<sup>50</sup> The story of another Newfoundland dream finds the interest in the cross-cultural element:

About twelve miles from Beaumont a chap, half Indian, dreamed a Beothuk funeral. They were burying a princess. He recognized where they were burying her. It was the cove. The next day he went out and dug her up. Then he notified the R.C.M.P. They took the remains away. She was wearing a necklace. There are a lot of Beothuk remains in the area. It was strange he should have dreamt of a Beothuk funeral. He's Micmac and English.<sup>51</sup>

The finding of Beothuk remains was accepted by the narrators; the recitation of the facts was given in fairly flat tones; the comment on the strangeness that a Micmac should dream of another tribal culture was tinged with awe.

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<sup>49</sup>Tape 74-195/F1785.

<sup>50</sup>Tape 72-112/C1130. The element of foretelling in this dream was not of a treasure recovered but of an unsuccessful treasure hunt where the diggers were frightened away by the Negro guardian.

<sup>51</sup>Harold Paddock, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 24 June 1977.



These examples of the subconscious editing of the contents of the dream of treasure by dreamer and by subsequent narrators are given to suggest a reason for the lack of interest of many of the stories in the treasure itself. Cycles of dreams about any specific treasure such as those studied by Ruth L. Tongue for the Maple Durham treasure<sup>52</sup> do not appear to have been reported in Atlantic Canada.

Tale Type 1645 The Treasure at Home is also unknown in Atlantic Canada, nor does it appear to be well known elsewhere in Canada or the United States, although it is known in the United Kingdom and in Ireland<sup>53</sup> and might reasonably have been expected to immigrate with settlers from these areas and become localized in the New World. The story of the pot with the strange inscription which leads to other, richer pots filled with treasure and which is sometimes appended to the tale of the treasure at home or associated with Motif N531.1 Dream of Treasure on the Bridge,<sup>54</sup> and

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<sup>52</sup>Ruth L. Tongue, Forgotten Folk-tales of the English Counties (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 136-142.

<sup>53</sup>Briggs, British Folk-Tales, Part B, II, 234-235, 298-303.

Gregory, Visions and Beliefs, p. 166.

For European parallels see Leo Winter, Die deutsche Schatzsage (Wattenscheid: 1925), pp. 28-30.

<sup>54</sup>Briggs, British Folk-Tales, Part B, II, 364-365, 385-386.

Kevin Danaher, Gentle Places and Simple Things (Cork: Mercier Press, 1964), pp. 43-44.

Gregory, Visions and Beliefs, pp. 165-166.

Gutch, County Folk-Lore II, pp. 408-409.



which sometimes appears separately as part of Motif N531 Treasure Discovered Through Dream,<sup>55</sup> is also unknown.

Throughout this chapter little has been said about parallels from the Northeastern United States or from the states along the Atlantic seaboard although there has been constant contact between these areas and Atlantic Canada. The reason is simple: the story of the dream of treasure is rarely found in the printed materials which deal with treasure tales. It was difficult to find even a dozen such stories, and most of these were from sources originally printed before 1900.

That such stories did exist and that they were plentiful at one time may be deduced from the fact that "In the crude notebook kept by Silas Hamilton of Whitingham, Vermont, recording nearly fifty rumours and reports of hid treasure or lost mines, seventeen begin in dreams."<sup>56</sup> This is a higher ratio of dream stories to all stories of treasure than that found in Atlantic Canada.

Why this type of treasure story should seemingly disappear is not known. It may well be that it has only disappeared from printed collections and is still to be found

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<sup>55</sup> Robert Chambers, Popular Rhymes of Scotland, New Edition (London and Edinburgh: W & R Chambers [1870]), pp. 240-241.

<sup>56</sup> Richard M. Dorson, Jonathan Draws the Long Bow (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1946), p. 184 from Clark Jillson, Green Leaves from Whitingham, Vt. (Worcester, Mass.: 1894), pp. 115-119.



in the stories people tell each other. One possible explanation for its omission from printed collection is that with the rise of the practice of motifing stories modern collectors either failed to enquire for such narratives or omitted them because there were no motifs which would fit. Motif N531 specifically points to the discovery of treasure by means of a dream although some have used it merely to indicate an awareness of the location of treasure sites while in a state of other than full consciousness.<sup>57</sup> One would not like to feel that the tradition has disappeared as completely as the printed collections would seem to suggest.

Study of the patterns of stories about dreams of treasure as found in Atlantic Canada indicate that two new motifs are needed to supplement N531. One is needed for the occasions when the dream of treasure does not lead to its discovery. The second is for those stories where the person who dreams of treasure decides not to search for it. A need could be argued for a third motif to be added for those reports of the treasure found by persons other than the one who dreamt of it. If the permanent recording of tales of the folk is to be governed by classifications, then let the classifications be governed by the facts and not the facts by the classification.

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<sup>57</sup>Carey, "Folklore from ... Essex County", p. 30.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TREASURE GUARDIAN

The idea of a guardian for buried treasure is not new, nor is it confined to Atlantic Canada. The absence of the concept, as among the Australian stories of treasure, is more unusual than its occurrence. What Atlantic Canada has is belief in a treasure guardian so widespread as to be nearly universal in the area.

The presence of the guardian is not always mentioned in the narratives of treasure, because the storyteller can assume that his listeners will know that such is implied in any story of a search for buried treasure:

They went out there, out to the Islands to dig for it. And they built a canvas camp long side of where they thought it was. And he was goin' round the camp all night just like a, just like you'd be drawin' your breath, blowin' like that. Said he was anyway. <sup>1</sup>Anyway, they got up the next morning and left it.

The treasure guardian most often believed to be present is the ghost of the man, or men, killed especially to watch the hoard:

...Oh this is it. You see, when they goes to bury the money say, perhaps they' be on the ocean

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<sup>1</sup>G. J. Casey Collection, Folklore Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland. From his Informant #8.



for days, for weeks until they get the good harvest of money. And then they put in some lonely place and bury it. Got it into a trunk, say, and when he puts the money down, they'll ask then who'll volunteer to stop to watch that money. Well now, perhaps you'll think to yourself well it'll be all right, you'd get out of misery and you won't watch it very long once she'd gone because they'll soon take the money and quit. You say, "I will." Soon as you says "I will", [he] takes a gun and shoots you, and buries you down long side of the money.<sup>2</sup>

This ghost is usually associated with pirate treasure, but he has also been found guarding French and Acadian gold.

The unenunciated understanding of his presence, once recognized as a factor in many of the narratives and comments concerning treasure, becomes extremely obvious the more one knows of treasure stories told in Atlantic Canada. One does not read a belief into the stories. One begins to understand comments and attitudes which are not comprehensible without knowledge of the strength of this belief.

Although the idea of a ghost of someone killed to watch the treasure is known in stories from areas of eastern North America outside Atlantic Canada, nowhere else does it seem to be so commonly encountered. The sacrificial aspects of the provision of such a guardian are not found in the treasure traditions of the European countries from which the settlers of the area came. There the ghosts which guard treasure are those of the owners of the treasure.

Why there should be such a strong and widespread belief in the guardian ghost in Atlantic Canada cannot be

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



explained. One can only note that the interest in the treasure guardian is frequently greater than the interest in the treasure. Moreover, while the victim was to guard the goods from those who would attempt to acquire them, the stories of the ghostly guardian are more concerned with how the watcher was provided than with his subsequent actions.

The pattern of the narrative explaining the selection and execution of the treasure guardian is so similar in the stories that one suspects an origin in some printed source. None has been found. The rote-like element is so strong that it suggests a well-learned lesson. Variations do exist in the story of the provision of a guardian for the treasure. The volunteer may be beheaded or he may be shot. He may be set to guard the treasure indefinitely, or for a period of time which can range from a year-and-a-day to a hundred or a hundred and fifty years. Sometimes the volunteer was selected by drawing lots; sometimes he was merely selected to be the sacrifice.

In Nova Scotia, the Germanic tradition provides that the victim be made drunk before being killed.<sup>3</sup> The Acadian versions tell of a party, which would not be without alcohol,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Helen Creighton, Folklore of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia (Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1950), pp. 4-5.

<sup>4</sup>Anselme Chiasson, Chéticamp. Histoire et Traditions Acadiennes, 2nd ed. (Moncton: Editions des Aboiteaux, 1962), p. 267.

In the Gaspé the guardian was simply selected by a call for volunteers. Carmen Roy, Litterature Orale en Gaspésie (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), p. 134.



before the call for volunteers and the subsequent beheading. Dr. Creighton, in Bluenose Ghosts, tells of two men who did not become victims. A man from East Petpeswick was saved from volunteering when another offered first. Port Hastings has the story of the Negro who escaped before the pirates had a chance to carry out their plan to kill him and bury him with the treasure.<sup>5</sup> The Negro killed to guard the treasure is also known in northeastern Newfoundland:

Some time during the latter 18th century a pirate boat landed on ... a rocky island in the bay, and treasure was buried there. According to legend, a Negro was murdered and his body buried above the treasure (i.e. between the treasure and the ground). This measure was taken so that if anybody attempted to unearth the loot, the Negro's spirit would intervene.

(Card 70-34/98)

Occasionally a story is told of the volunteer being left alive to guard the treasure.<sup>6</sup> Since this usually is done when the loot is buried on an island, the death of the guard is the result of starvation rather than of beheading or of shooting. A report from Riverport, N.S. says that a live person is buried with the treasure to guard it.<sup>7</sup> This idea does not occur elsewhere in Atlantic Canada.

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<sup>5</sup>Helen Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1957), p. 47.

<sup>6</sup>Alice Bardsley, "Buried Treasure in Nova Scotia", The Mail-Star, Halifax, N.S. (21 May, 1968), p. 16 & p. 39.

<sup>7</sup>Creighton, Lunenburg County, p. 5.



Although the function of the treasure guardian was to frighten away those who would search for the buried gold, the interest in the stories of such encounters is balanced, in large part, by the narratives of the provision of the guard. Frequently the two elements of the guardian story are fused in the one story. Both elements must be understood to know the full meaning of such a simple comment as "You generally see a person when you dig for gold."<sup>8</sup>

Some stories note the belief that the guard need only operate during his assigned term for watching the treasure:

In dey old time ya know dey used to be pirate ships out and dey'd go around sinkin merchant ships til dey'd git money enough, what dey taught was enough, and den dey'd go out and bury it in some place see. Carry it to ... anyplace at tall. Dey'd go and bury dis money. Well it could be forty or fifty men aboard, aboard da pirate ships see, I don't know how many would be. Well anyhow, when dey got enough dat dey'd go and bury it, da, da captain would call all hands along. Well now who was goin to look after dere, dis money. Well probably you might say you would, or me, or somebody ud look after da money, das a very good job. Well, dey take da money ashore and dey go and bury it and dey'd kill you or me or whoever was goin to look after da money and bury ya on da money.

Well dey'd bury ya now to look after dis money for fifty year, perhaps a hundred year. Well den, if you was to go and dig dat money before dat time was up well you'd see dis person, he'd come to ya. Dat used to be done.

(Tape 66-24/C287)

The two pirates dressed like soldiers, who were the guardians of a treasure on an island in one of the bays of

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<sup>8</sup> Arthur Huff Fauset, Folklore from Nova Scotia (New York: The American Folk-Lore Society, 1931), p. 194.



eastern Newfoundland, explained the situation very gently to the two boys who intruded upon their vigil:

But now this Michael's Island treasure, I don't know it's there in on the uppermost tip out on, where the lighthouse, it's out by the lighthouse ... [now whether] the lighthouse is a light just a flickering light or whether there's a foghorn in the lighthouse just ah most of the lighthouses were, I couldn't tell you because I don't know Michael's Island.... But it's out on the furthestmost tip of the, of Michael's Island.

Now this treasure is buried there, I don't know, this was buried by pirates, I don't think they were shipwrecked or anything, they just was pirates who had plundered the treasure and they brought it into Michael's Island and buried it. And the legend goes there that when it was buried there was two men, they was asked, well I don't think in those days they picked ya, they just ah, to a point, they would say such as this, now who will guard this treasure, after the treasure would be buried, and if you, someone would step forward and say, "I will sir, I will sir," dey would, and these men always had the, they were murdered or their heads cut off or something and they were left to bury the treasure [sic]....

Now Michael's Island treasure they say, it's two men, and they are dressed like soldiers, like old time .... Soldiers. And there's a little path for about half a mile long, no one has ever lived in that vicinity, nothing was there but the lighthouse. And the light, the way that people went to the lighthouse was not in the vicinity of where the treasure was, the treasure was more ya know out around the rocky edge of the shore.... But this beaten path is beaten there and ah Michael's Island people say it's beaten by the treasure guards and ah all the people that've gone to look for the treasure.

The one ah one night a couple of boys or I don't know whether they were boys or men or very brave buckoos who thought that they were goin to play a good trick on someone whom they thought were masquerading there and they were goin to go out and, and make a show of them and show them to the people that there was nothing there other than somebody trying to pull a fast one on the residents of Michael's Island. So they went out and they hid until twelve o'clock at night, of course when all the ghosts are out and they went out to the edge of the shore and they saw the two men walkin up and down, up and down, and they



would meet in the centre of the walk and salute each other and go to the end of the path and back again the same thing over again, back and forth, so these boys watched this thing for a while then they decided that they would take off their rubber boots, long boots, or leather boots, could be a leather boot they were in them days, I don't know, and they threw it at the sentry guard the men that was walking back and forth and hit one of those men so ah the man from one, the men from the sentry stopped and called to them to come because he had something to say to them.

So they came out and he told them, he said, "Now," he said, "we've been here for nigh on a hundred years guarding this treasure. We were left to do so and have promised to do so. We have never harmed or we have never hurt anyone we have no intention of doing it, but don't you ever try a thing like this again or some harm will come to you." They said, "The treasure is here and we are to guard it for a hundred years, and when the hundred years are up we'll rest, and you may have this treasure or anyone else as far as we are concerned, if you can find it."

But now I don't know if ever anyone has gone to look for this treasure in Michael's Island or not.... But as far as I know, up until a few years ago that my best friend Mrs. Mann died, I don't think anybody ever had.... She was from Michael's Island and lived very near to where this, she told me had, they gone out there on the afternoon she said she was never there in the night because everyone was always too scared, 'twas supposed to be a haunted grounds.... And everybody was far too scared night time, the girls or women to go there, but they have often been out there in a h'afternoon of a Sunday more especially see 'twas a nice walk in the afternoon. But she said this path was unmistakable, beaten by someone, whether they were dead or alive, she did not know but the path was unmistakeably trod at all times and ah she said in the vicinity there around there was a lot of partridge berries and blueberries and this kind of thing because there was no trees, there was mostly brush. But she said they were always too scared to pick the berries livin' there because they always expected to see the, the two soldiers cos she said they always called them soldiers....

But they wasn't soldiers they were pirates, but they could have been dressed in, because in them days they dressed in those soldiers' rigs, pirates or whatever they were.... And they could have been officers.... The officers of the pirate ships dressed



very much like, like.... Like soldiers and 'twas possible they could have been some of the officers of the pirate ship.... But in them days, according to what we see of them, most of the pirate ships, the sailors was dressed in everything and anything that they could muster up because ya know.... But the officers of the pirate ships ... , it was generally the officers were dressed in some kind of a uniform.... Well now whether this was the uniform, whether they were officers of the ship.

And ah I did ask her if she knew what origin this treasure supposed to be, is it a money or gold or jewels or ... ? but she doesn't, it's a treasure .... She don't know whether it's money or gold or rich jewels or, she had never heard, she said, anyone specifically say what the treasure consists of.

(Tape 69-15/C603)

Clam Island in St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia, which has a treasure guarded by soldiers dressed in the uniforms of pirates,<sup>9</sup> also had a guardian who attempted to hitch a ride with a man rowing home to French Village. When the rower would not pick him up he protested. "You're not going to take me off this island? Do you mean to say I've got to stay here for another hundred years?"<sup>10</sup> Guardians who have completed their term of watching over the treasure seem to be most anxious to be off and away.

The most popular way for the ghost to be rid of his duties is to have someone recover the treasure. He may arrange for this to happen by meeting a person and telling him about it. Since this guardian is, normally, a corporeal ghost, the human will merely think that he has met a stranger.

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<sup>9</sup>Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, p. 67.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 48-49.



If, however, the ghost is of a man who was beheaded, the seeming normalcy of corporeal revelation is lost. The more common pattern is for the guardian to appear in a dream and tell the dreamer how to discover and how to recover the buried gold. A young woman from southern Newfoundland had such a dream:

Supposed to be Mann, dat was the girl's name. What was the father's name? ... Well ... they said when pirates, when pirates buries money dey calls de crowd together and asks, ya know for someone to watch the money, someone to volunteer to watch the money and ah day kills dat fella, dey cut off his head see. So when she had the dream she dreamt about the man that come told her, told her that he was the man that was supposed to watch the money, and he even told her about da head, his head was goin to be off, if she'd see a man wit, tell her not to be afraid, but ah, he would have his head off. And she dreamt it t'ree nights and told her father about it you know, and den dey went, one night dey went to dig it up and ah, I don't know if da man come dere or no, she was supposed to come round and dig en up, this man with no head. Anyhow dey got da money didn't dey....

Dey went to da States somewhere and never come back after.... Went to the States....

See dis man wit no head, he told em not to be afraid if he'd be there, and he told em, told em in da dream not to be afraid, it was her money, and told her not to be afraid.

(Tape 70-10/C740)

This young lady was luckier than the woman from Grand Manan, New Brunswick, who panicked before she could recover the treasure.

Father Chiasson has pointed out that the purpose of the treasure guardian is not to harm anyone, but to frighten the searchers away.<sup>11</sup> The degree of fright experienced by the

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<sup>11</sup>Chiasson, Chéticamp, p. 267.



treasure seekers seems to depend on how far the supernatural is perceived as part of their natural world, and on whether or not the ghost is headless. Stories from Newfoundland suggest that the normal world is an extended one in which many uncanny happenings are regarded as natural, happenings which would be outside the limits of accepted normalcy in many parts of Atlantic Canada.

The happenings on Bracelet Island might well have driven some searchers into fits of terror.<sup>12</sup> The reported reactions of the Newfoundlanders suggest that the failure to pursue the search for the treasures was the result of good judgement rather than fear of the supernatural guardians:

Well ah I've heard of a treasure on Bracelet Island in Bonavista Bay and ah I've also heard of a legend of treasure ... in Trinity Bay.... I, I couldn't tell ya as much about that treasure as I can the Bracelet Island treasure because I heard this so, so many times from various people of Bonavista Bay that ah, some of them have gone and tried for the treasure and others have 'eard of people going to look for the treasure, and there've been people from practically all over the world I s'pose has come from time to time to look for the Bracelet Island treasure because it is, ya know, for sure the treasure is there regardless if anyone if find it or not. It is a Spanish treasure.... I thinks it's supposed to be consists of ah crown jewels and gold and all this thing.... I think as far as I can understand that ah this old ship wrecked and treasure was.... On, or, off Bracelet Island, on some of those islands.

And the treasure was brought ashore and buried on Bracelet Island and they say there was a map of it but ah, ya know, it, was like everything else ah 'twas one pace this way, two paces some other way

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<sup>12</sup>A digger on Clam Island in St. Margaret's Bay, N.S. "saw something and he was struck paralyzed." Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, p. 49.



and you didn't think, you wasn't sure on what cove or on what side of the island that they landed from.

You see this island is an island in the Bay and you could come in from the north, east, west and south direction. And then if ah there is a little dribble of water such as a little river or a little something or a tree that could have been cut long, long ago, or the stream of time have turned the little rivers to a different vicinity. So tis very, very hard to follow ... a map.

But ah, I know when I was a girl there was ah, a steamer came there ah they said that she was from Spain but I don't know her origin or I don't know her name but they were there for months one summer, lookin.... For this treasure that was supposed to be buried on Bracelet Island.... They didn't find it no, no.

And ah a lot of people say that you will you couldn't have ah time because you wasn't allowed to have it.... Those that was left to guard it would not give it up. And ah there was a certain amount of things that ah I think on several occasions there was a little bit difference in what they were to do and how they were to act or, to get this treasure. Because, ah, my grandfather told me one day that there was six men diggin for the treasure and they thought they had, or they had found something that they thought could be a treasure. But they had not got down to clearly identify what was there before they saw this boat with a load of soldiers of a very, very ancient time. The boat was built with the two, you know, the ah, the stern of the boat and the head of the boat was very much alike with the big high ah, front and back.... Ornamental thing.... And ah those men were rowing.

They didn't have no hoarlocks and the things that we had in later years on boats; they rowed more like the Indians did only they didn't turn from side to side they rowed one side. You see there were two men sitting opposite each, you know, on the same thwart or whatever they called it Seat, and one rowed from one side and the other from the other, they didn't turn this paddle, it wasn't a two end paddle, just a one end thing.

And they came to the island and land and came and told him to stop diggin', or something serious would ah happen to them because the time was not right for the treasure to be found and that they were left to guard it and ah they were going to guard it regardless, but they didn't want to cause them any 'arm or ah have any violence unless they insisted that they were going



to dig there. And they gave up diggin, now I've heard that legend.....

And I also heard at one time, there was another party who had come to the island to look for the treasure and ah two men was in the vicinity in this vicinity where they started to dig and they told em that the treasure was there and they may have the treasure providin they follow the rules which they would set down for them. And there was a large basin or bucket or, I couldn't tell ya now what the shape of the thing was or if it was stone or wood or tin or what have you.... I couldn't tell you what the basin or bucket, what material.

Well it was filled with water at the time and they said now if you can dig this treasure up in the time that it will take this water to turn into blood you may have the treasure but if you go over the time you can't have the treasure.... They started digging at the time they placed the water ... placed the water there. And ah that was the time they started to dig. Well now if they could dig and uncover the treasure and remove it before the water turned red to blood then they had it, so they started to dig with all haste and speed they could conjure up. But, and they say they saw the treasure. There was a very huge chest with an anchor, like anchor chain tied around it and large locks, now whether this is true or not but they say they had the thing uncovered; it was a huge metal box tied together, chained together with, like anchor chain. And, a big huge lock on the front of it as well. But before they could rise it or get enough strength or get enough leverage under it to get it from the ground the water had already turned into blood.

And the treasure had to be left, and ah they didn't cover the treasure, the pirates themselves covered the treasure and told em to leave because the treasure was not there. And they told em that they may also come back at a later date and if the time was, was right and they did according to what they were told, it may not be the same. They may have the treasure. But I was never told that ever they went back to get the treasure.

Now I was also told that there was a large well in the vicinity of where the treasure was or a round hole or pond or you know. But it was the shape of a well it was round and ah I was told that a man and his son that land there one day to get water, they were out in the fishing boat and they forgot to take water for their kettles and they went ashore on Bracelet Island to get water and the boy went up to the well. And ah, bend down to fill his kettle and he saw the big chest ... in the well. And he filled the kettle and went back and



told his father what he had seen in the well and then his father took, come out of the boat to come up and 'ave a look and his father came up and was lookin at the treasure with his son, and a man stood right behind them, when they looked up, and he said, "Yes, it is there, but it is not yours, so on your way".... And they went on their way. But if they hadn't gone the man said that they couldn't do anything about it because they had nothing. The well was very, very deep and they had no, nothing to dig or, or, and 'twas too deep, wasn't something you could get down in. It was far too deep for that but they saw the big.

Well now whether there is more than one treasure on Bracelet Island, whether there is one in this well and also a buried one besides, I don't know but I've heard it.... I don't know if the men that went there and dug ever was to the well.... It's just the legends I've heard from people that has been there to date.

But now, ah, this well probably the treasure could be in it and you'd go fifty times and get a bucket of water out and never look on da bottom or the sun may never be playing just that way that you could see it or probably you wasn't supposed to see it. But whether now there is, this is a part of the treasure that is buried or whether .... there is another treasure on Bracelet Island.

But I mean it is a known fact that there is a treasure on Bracelet Island.... Bracelet Island would be I suppose about, of course you could see on the map. But as far as I know it's three miles off, and Bracelet Island is outside of Bouquet Island so t'would be anywhere from three to five miles off.... Well out in the bay, right out, it would be. To say that it is a Spanish treasure and it was lost would be a good legend because it was so far out in the ah Atlantic Ocean that it would be in the run, it would be in a shipping run, because all ships got to pass there going back and forth to England. And staying at those places you must pass them. Ah, and ah, everything got to pass that way, so it's possible that it is a Spanish treasure. But we were always told that it is a Spanish treasure and it consisted of, of crown jewels and gold and all this kind of a thing, but ah, as I say, ya know, as legends go there's a lot of things gets h'added to it. That ah, may not be.... Startlin'. I mean it is something that ah ya know is talked about freely and it is something that is considered to be a known fact that the treasure is there regardless whether it's ever found or not....



It's widely known all over, Bracelet Island treasure. Something, I daresay you will find something on it here if you poked around, around the Bracelet Island treasure. It's a known thing ya know.  
(Tape 69-15/C603)

The daylight encounter with the guardian ghost is less upsetting than a meeting at night. This attitude is true for Atlantic Canada as a whole. The person who sees the guardian may still be upset by the sighting, especially if the figure tells him that he is looking in the wrong place and then disappears down the hole where the man had been digging.<sup>13</sup> The degree of fright which occurs at such a meeting is relative, and can be influenced both by culture and by individual reaction to the abnormal.

When Newfoundland informants tell of encounters with Negro guardians they appear to have found such more upsetting than other sightings of ghosts. Since in Newfoundland tradition "the Black Man" is a euphemism for the Devil, the terror is not in the ghost but in the darkness of the man.<sup>14</sup> Negroes, moreover, were known in Newfoundland by hearsay and by pictures; little was known of them as real people, except for a very few in St. John's.<sup>15</sup> In the Maritime Provinces

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>14</sup>There is a growing ethnographic literature on the symbolic significance of colours. See for example James C. Faris, Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1966), passim.

<sup>15</sup>The advent of television has changed this situation somewhat, but a dark skin is still not a common sight in Newfoundland.



Negroes had come north after the American Revolution with the Loyalists, both as slaves and as free men; some arrived as escapees in the days before the American Civil War. For the Newfoundlanders the normal world of reality for many areas of Atlantic Canada has aspects of the supernatural, even when the supernatural is not present.

Nighttime encounters with corporeal Negro ghosts are among the most terrifying of Newfoundlanders' experiences with the treasure guardian, as an informant from the south-east coast explained:

I had a schooner and he, he asked me to take the poles to [at] Frenchmen's for him, and he wanted some of them to Oldfourth and more to Hemp Harbour and da rest to Roast Nose. So I had them landed in Oldfourth and Hemp Harbour. We had one load left. We were bringing them to Roast Nose. It was late in the day when we got to the cove and, we decided to stay dere all night ... we had fifty poles left on da beach we hadn't got aboard a nightfall, so we stayed, we said we'd stay until daybreak in the morning ... so we put a line ashore from the stern of the schooner to keep her steady for the night, and they said we would stand watch for the night, afraid the schooner would go adrift. One hour a man we decided on, would take us until daylight and den we'd all get at the sticks.

About twelve o'clock in the night one of the men came to me and said there was a man coming aboard on da line, and I said, "Das not true." He said, "Yes, he is halfway out now." So I went up and he was coming hand over hand on da line out, out towards the schooner, and I said, "Where are you going?" and he made no answer, and I hollered to him again and said, "What are you at here?" and I got no answer. And I said this will be the last call, so I called again. He made a scream dat would terrify ya and everyone in the boat was frightened to death. And dere was a man wit us with a foxy whisker was wit us that night and he got such a fright that his whiskers turned white.

And the man [coming aboard] was a nigger about six or seven foot tall. I said it must be some of



the fellows who was watching the gold. The pirates used to bury solid gold and when dey'd bury the gold day say "Who's going to look after this gold here now?" And the first man it would be ya'd shoot em and bury him wit da gold. So I was t'inking dat was da man dat was dere waitin' for the gold, he taught we were goin' to go in to take it. So that's my first and last trip to Frenchmen's. I don't want to see it again.

(Tape 72-270/C1375)

The treasure at Shoal Bay, south of St. John's, Newfoundland, is supposedly guarded by a Negro who was either a member of a pirate ship whose crew was composed entirely of Negroes, or a member of Captain Kidd's crew. Stories of the Shoal Bay treasure are found in the oral tradition, in materials submitted by readers to weekly newspapers, and in a more literary print tradition. All agree on the Negro guardian. He also appears in the song originally composed about this treasure:

It was in Gerald Doyle's book, ya know.... But actually, it was the Shoal Bay Treasure, but I put Church Cove to it, ya see. Supposed to land gold, pirate ship landed her gold in location in Shoal Bay. That Shoal Bay is between Bay Bulls and St. John's, but I put Church Cove to make it look happened near home, ya see?.... But it's only a short thing. But I put the word to it myself.

Oh come boys while I'll tell you a place you know well,  
They buried a fortune, a very long spell,  
A place called Church Cove, on the Southern Shore,  
Where gold it was buried, they say, in galore.

They say twas a pirate they call Captain Kidd,  
In Church Cove his wonderful fortune had hid,  
And for years they were digging the fortune raise  
Till the boys of the village got near in the craze.



Where this money was buried, a great many went,  
 With pick axes and shovels to put up a tent,  
 And just as they stuck the first pick in the ground,  
 The ghost of a darkie did hover around.

Oh they rushed from the spot on the terrible night,  
 And the crackie got turned inside out from the fright,  
 And a man from Cape Broyle had watched the quar sight,  
 His whiskers turned foxy that always were white....<sup>16</sup>

Sometimes the treasure guardian becomes more important than the treasure he guards. Silver Buttons, the custodian of a pirate hoard in Bonavista Bay, seems to be taking this course. In the older form of the story, the treasure is the main point and Silver Buttons' patrolling of the area forms part of the details of attempted recovery of the gold:

... repeatin' a story I was told when I was twelve years of age [circa 1904], and today I'm seventy-five, concerning pirates and the gold and Silver Buttons. There was two ships, pirates, anchored and they scuttled their ship ... and they buried the gold about quarter of a mile from where the ships sunk, into a field. And there've been several attempts up to that time to dig it up, discover it. They find it every time, lots a times they find it. Sometimes they didn't. Them that did find it first, ... jest as they was getting down to the chests and tries to get en open, Silver Buttons, the man they left in charge to look after it, come along, and they had to fly out of it. And several attempts after that been made, but Silver Buttons turn up every time. And why he was named Silver Buttons, he had buttons on his coat about the size of small saucers, silver.<sup>17</sup> And ah, the latest time I think

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<sup>16</sup>Received from Gerald Pocius who recorded both song and commentary from Victor Ledwell of Calvert, March 1974. Mr. Pocius reported that no one else sings this song and that it is not in any of the Gerald S. Doyle books of Newfoundland songs.

<sup>17</sup>"It is said that Dutch navigators wore massive silver buttons as a cash reserve." Jane Ford Adams, "Buttons", antiques international (London: Spring Books, 1973), p. 43.



they been trying to get it is about in 1924, er '25 there was a crowd came there and they thought they had it, but before they got it up Silver Buttons came along and they lost it again. And part from that I don't know it 'twas ever found, ever dug up er ever anyone bother to dare and steal it....

Silver Buttons came along. He had a trail. He used to come, come up around, go up around the field and come around by the clift, come down where they was diggin'. They had to leave everyting and - .... He jest appear and they all, they go on, they all quit and leave their tools and everyting dere, lots of em. One time they left all their tools there.... Ole man, and he had a big sea coat on, those buttons they had on the sea, that's how they named, that's what they named en, Silver Buttons....

[I] never saw en, only the people, the older people, father and them people. Lot a people did see em all right, ... the man that lived there next, bout a hundred yards from where dis gold was hidden, he made two er tree attempts but Silver Buttons came along and he give it up.

(Tape 68-9/C468)

Silver Buttons' reputation as a frightening figure is remembered by a woman and a man in a description of him in which the treasure is barely mentioned.

Woman: ... down dere dey used to say dere was Silver Buttons, you know, that had the money there.... That's what they were called, Silver Buttons.

Man: At dat time, and the women used to be over there berry pickin' and all kinds goin' around years ago and eh, dey used to chase 'em dey said, chase de people. I don't know whether that's true.... But every kind of a noise is made down there.

Woman: ... like dat, I forgets it all. I remember my poor old mother talkin' about lots o' stuff what happened....

Man: Well, I don't know if dey ever did it, but eh, dey used to make theirselves believe dere was something chasin' em see, and dey used to run, never could reach over where he was goin' you know, 'twould be something come across 'im, dey said. Dere was several go out in de storm, and dey used to have to come back again, couldn't, could never cross it, 'twas a brook over dere, dey could never cross it.

Woman: That's a joke. [laughter].

(Tape 64-10/C26)



A report from a member of a younger generation, and a member of the merchant class, still remembers Silver Buttons, but changes him from a treasure guardian to the captain of a ship, and from a frightening ghostly figure to a realistic, natural phenomenon:

"Silver Buttons" was a legendary old pirate with one leg and a patch on his eye who was captain of the old pirate ship which sank ... in Bonavista Bay. (Today this old ship, possibly of Spanish origin, lies on the bottom partially intact.) His ghost is heard near the sunken ship at a small cover ... where the sea rushes into a "blowing hole". The sound of the water and air being compressed is said to be Silver Buttons.

My father believes that this traditional story was believed by many of the older people. After seeing the "blowing hole" with a heavy sea running, a hissing and growling sound is apparent and to a person who is superstitious and who is aware of the sunken ship, a few hundred yards from the shore, he may surmise it to be the ghost of Silver Buttons.

(Card 70-18/94)

The belief in a treasure guardian is so strong that not only can the colourful guardian survive the tradition of the treasure he guards but a guardian invented as a practical joke can develop a tradition of his own. The impersonation of a treasure guardian is the basis of a series of treasure stories which deal with practical jokes played on individuals and, in one instance, on a whole community. The traditional treasure stories from one community on Newfoundland's west coast are mainly of an elaborate prank undertaken by a group of young men, a prank which would have no point without the belief in the treasure guardian.



Allied with the deliberate practical joke based on the treasure diggers' expectation of encountering a guardian, is the thoughtless action which causes panic among the diggers and the abandonment of the search. In Nova Scotia one man climbed out of the hole where the group was digging. He put a bucket over his head. The others looked up, thought he was the headless guardian ghost--and fled.<sup>18</sup> Whether he deliberately planned the fright or yielded to a whim of the moment is not certain, but the final effect was the same.

From Newfoundland's Southern Shore comes a story that tells of a digger's actions which contributed to the tradition concerning one treasure:

Grandfather and four or five more, when they heard tell of the money being buried there, they went out to St. John's and they met up with a fellow out there, and he told 'em about it. He had the measurements of where 'twas to. So they decided one night they'd go down and they'd dig for it. And they dug down an awful long time and they never struck nothing. They couldn't go in the daytime because if they got a treasure in the daytime the Government would take it. So they kept digging away, and the later end, there was one fellow, he was diggin' away and they were talkin', and the fellow that was down in the grave [not the digger] sung out. He says, "You're after driving the pick axe through me leg." So he [the digger] hauled up the pick axe and they filled in the hole, and got out of it as quick as ever they could, and they never went back there after....

Well, 'twas supposed to be sixty people buried down there on that point.... I've often heard me grandfather tell them in the olden times about a, a battleship, some kind of a fever on it and there was a lot of his men died.... And they come in and dug holes down there or over that, and buried them in it.

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<sup>18</sup>Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, pp. 172-173.



But 'twas true about the fellow down there singin' out when they stuck the pick axe in him.... So they never bothered her after. But how it was, you see, there was one fellow in the bunch, he could pitch his voice.... And when he made the big dig down, you see, he pitched his voice, and they never caught on to 'n, and maybe none of 'em knew about it only that man that come up from town. So that finished 'n. No more ... only filled it up and went on.

(Tape C68-16/C498)

This encounter with the man buried above the treasure to serve as a guardian now forms the basis for a number of stories from the area, none of which have any mention of the prank which was played on the searchers. A version of the story broadcast on the CBC Radio program "Southern Shore Queen" retains the search for a treasure.

Dere's supposed to be, I don't know, maybe eight er ten million dollars just a hundred yards from here now, look. And no one never got it yet. The treasure that Captain Kidd buried in he's time, just the other side a that other house dere. Dere's fellers out in town [St. John's] got de map a dat and some a the men was on de ship. And dere was one fella come in here and he brought in a mineral rod with him, he had an idea where 'twas to. Well my grandfather, he knew pretty well where 'twas buried cause they knew be the ground, how 'twas disturbed you see in the olden times. So dis feller come in and kept goin' around till he found dis spot. And dey started diggin. Dey had to go over in the night-time. They couldn't go in de day, the government 'id clean all the treasure if they got it. So dey started out one night and they went down and they started diggin' away around dis place and dey got down so far by usin' the pick axe, diggin' away. The feller was buried dere to watch it sung out; he said, "You're after drivin' the pick axe through me." He hauled back the pick axe and the six of em went home and they never went near it after. Frightened to death....

See, they kills a man and buries em with the treasure. Wherever they use to bury their treasure dey used to leave a man to watch it. Well, he was watchin' it but when they drove the pick axe through



em, he had to squeal den. And das where it remains since, never anyone went near it since.

(Tape 70-38/C747)

There are, however, indications that in narratives of this dig the tradition of the treasure search is lessening and that the voice of the corpse complaining about the pick axe is becoming the memorable element, a case where a practical joke started a series of stories of the supernatural. The pattern seen with Silver Buttons is repeated here; the guardian is again surviving his treasure and becoming part of a new tradition of belief with stories which lessen or ignore the treasure's importance.

Treasure guardians are not always men associated with the group who buried the treasure. Sometimes animals were sacrificed to watch the hidden hoard:<sup>19</sup>

About two hundred years ago the pirates used to come in during the night and hide their money in the cliffs. This was going on for years. Men used to be out looking in the daytime for it. But they never found the money. However it was there.... This happened at High Hill Cove [in eastern Newfoundland].

Anyhow they had to kill a man or a dog to watch the money in the night. They decided to kill a dog. And for years after, that dog was seen walking along the cliffs and on the beach with a light in his mouth.

(Q68-477-2)

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<sup>19</sup>The motifs Dog as guardian of treasure (Baughman B576.2.1\*) and Ghostly dog as treasure guard (Baughman N571.2\*(d)) recognize the widespread belief that dogs serve as treasure guardians. None of the reference, however, provides a parallel for the dog specifically sacrificed to be a watcher of the treasure, nor do they imply such an act.



That the dog as guardian is associated with the victim sacrificed for such a purpose rather than a manifestation of the devil in dog form, as black dogs are sometimes presumed to be,<sup>20</sup> is emphasized by another story from the same community which associates the dog with the headless man:

In Treasure Cove, ... there are believed to be two treasures buried there. A small well, called Pirate's Well can still be seen in Treasure Cove today. It is claimed that this well, which is of solid rock, marks the place where a pirate's treasure is buried.

In the latter part of the 18th century, two fishermen from High Hill Cove were fishing out in Treasure Cove; they had a stage built on the shore. Fish, however, was scarce there and they stayed out late one night and managed to get a load of fish. It was quite late when they reached the shore on Treasure Cove, they were going to put the fish on the stages and start for home. When they got out of their boat one of the fishermen said to the other, "Oh, there's a big dog coming down the beach."

The other man replied; "Yeah, that's Governor's big Newfoundland dog."

The other fellow said; "God, it's not, look at his eyes." And his eyes were two big globes of fire, shining all over the beach. As the dog walked along the beach, there was a rattling sound coming from the rocks and cliffs, so much so that the two fishermen thought they could come down upon them. Just about this time they saw a man behind the dog with no head. The two men went mad to get out of there. They got their boat afloat and went out on the moorings and spent the night. The next morning they were still there when the other fishermen came down. The two men were so weakened out they had to be taken ashore. One of the men ... became ill, took to the bed and became an invalid for the rest of his life. The other man ... died about a year later.

This ghost dog in Treasure Cove has been seen more than once. It was claimed by the people living there at the time that anyone who saw it, it meant the end

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<sup>20</sup> See Barbara Allen Woods, The Devil in Dog Form (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 122-142.



of their days, as those who witnessed it didn't live very long after.

This strange happening all started after a pirate ship came into High Hill Cove - it was called the "Flying Cloud". There is a famous song about this ship.... This was a feared and notorious ship, but as the people of High Hill Cove had no newspapers at that time, they had not heard of the ship before. They didn't know they were dealing with pirates until about four or five years later when they learned this was the same ship - the "Flying Cloud", that was captured by the British. Some of the crew were brought to England and hanged for piracy. This ship went also into the black slave [trade] before her capture.

There were two Newfoundlanders supposed to be on this ship; they were from the Codroy Valley.... They apparently managed to get back to Newfoundland and were always in dread they would be brought back to England and hanged.

For all we know we could be sailing over a fortune in High Hill Cove today or by-passing another in Treasure Cove. There have been numerous residents of the area looking for these treasures over the years, but as yet none have succeeded in finding them.

(MS 72-118/pp. 10-13)

The suggestion of evil befalling those who meet with the guardian ghost is not always present in stories of such encounters. It does, however, occur often enough for the treasure guardian to form a part of the tradition of cursed treasure, discussed below in Chapter IX.

The motifs Person burying treasure kills person to supply guardian ghost (E291.1) and Ghost in human form guards treasure (E291.2.1) apply to the stories cited above. In his Motif Index Baughman notes of the motif Person burying treasure kills person to supply guardian ghost (E291.1): "This motif is implicit in most of the E291 references." Certainly it is in those which apply to narratives from Atlantic Canada. This implied motif in stories of treasure guardians has been



mentioned by a few other folklorists but has not been emphasized. In fact, motif references to treasure guardians tend to concentrate on Guardian of treasure (N570) and Ghosts prevent men from raising treasure (N576). The failure to utilize the motifs which specifically apply to much of the treasure tradition of eastern North America may be caused by two factors: the motifs with the prefix N occur in the section of motifs basically concerned with treasure, and there is no cross-reference given in Thompson to any motifs in the E291 series although there is in Baughman. If one intends to use motifs, and they can be useful, then one should use pertinent motifs where they exist and not classify patterns under motifs such as N570 and N576 which presently serve only as general catchalls. There is no motif in either Thompson or Baughman which specifically accounts for an animal sacrificed to guarantee the safekeeping of the treasure.

Not all treasure guardians are men killed specifically to watch the wealth. On Prince Edward Island there are several stories of the hunchbacked ghost with a livid scar on the right cheek who is seen near a pine tree at Point Prim.<sup>21</sup> He is supposed to be an Acadian who was removed at the time of the Expulsion. When the transport on which he

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<sup>21</sup>"Ghost Returns to Guard Treasure", Vacation Times, Vol. 3 No. 3 (19 to 26 July, 1969), p. 14. This publication is a supplement of The Eastern Graphic, Montague, P.E.I.



had been placed was lost in a storm he returned to Point Prim to protect the treasure he had buried there.

In eastern Newfoundland a pirate crew, who apparently did not completely trust the sentinel they had left behind, kept returning to check on their buried treasure:

My mother ... recalls her grandmother, Mrs. Rachel, speaking of the pirates' ghosts that haunted Gambler's Gut when her grandmother was young. In Gambler's Gut there is a section of road that runs parallel to a beach and has a lot of land behind it. In my great-great-great-grandmother's day there were no houses along this stretch of road. In fact, after dark no one would, according to Rachel, who remembers what her grandmother told her, walk there.

At times, especially on misty nights, men could be heard rowing into the beach, singing as they pulled on the oars. The boat would be pulled up onto the beach then footsteps would be heard going up the hill. Later the footsteps would return and again the boat would be heard pulling away from the shore. According to Rachel's grandmother these noises were made by pirate ghosts who came regularly to check on their gold which was buried, along with a fellow pirate, in what is now my uncle's garden.

When my great-grandmother was married her home was built on this section of road, the story having died out considerably. My mother can remember being at my great-grandmother's for supper one night. Suddenly, the back door began to shake and then it opened. No one entered but my great-grandmother said "Don't fret, it's only the pirates passing through to check on their gold." Although a very religious woman it was perfectly natural for her to believe in ghosts.

(Card 71-33/33)

Mrs. Rachel died in 1968 at the age of ninety-eight. The tradition of the ghostly crew checking on their gold, which she heard from her grandmother in 1880, was reinforced for her great-granddaughter, the collector, by a personal experience in the mid 1960s:



Our summer home now stands where her [Rachel's] home had been. When we first had it five years ago, my cousin and I spent the summer living there by ourselves, neither of us having heard the story. Nearly every night about 10:30 we would hear footsteps walking up our outside steps. Sometimes the door would fling open and the lantern would flicker dangerously. On each occasion my cousin, being braver than I, would check. Nothing was ever there. My mother and an aunt have also heard these sounds. My grandmother's home was only a little ways from us and every night someone would watch our home, and although we still heard the footsteps they never saw anything. This continued for over a month. One night my cousin was furious, she ran to the door threw it open and shouted "Pop get your gun, there's a rat under the steps."

Was there a ghost? Perhaps not but whatever it was, was never heard from since. It seems rather ironical that my little five-foot-two cousin should frighten a pirate away.

(Card 71-33/33)

This record of community and especially of one family's acceptance of the visits of the pirate crew is another example of how many Newfoundlanders have perceived as natural what many would regard as supernatural.

Most of the crews who return to check on their buried treasure do so by boat. It is the appearance of this ship which serves to stop the activities of those who search for the hidden hoard, as happened in eastern Newfoundland:

One day my grandfather ... and his friend went 3 miles away to Blackeyed Island to dig for gold that was believed to be buried out there. Mannin' pick axes and shovels they set out. They arrived on the island and started to dig in the area that the old folk had told them.

They dug two holes but couldn't find anything. They moved to another location and after digging about 6 feet hit what appeared to be an old wooden chest. In their excitement they didn't notice the fog setting in and the wind blowing harder. Then



in the fog they saw an old Spanish ship and men in the rigging. This old pirate ship frightened them so much that they forgot the treasure chest that they had spent hours looking for and headed for their own boat. As soon as they stepped in the boat, the fog disappeared, it became calm, and the sun shone. The boat also disappeared but my grandfather and his friend returned home rather than return to the treasure because they were afraid that the pirate ship would come back. My mother doubted that this story was true but my grandfather swears it happened.

(Card 73-126/)

The collector's mother may have based her assessment of the event on a knowledge of her father's storytelling practices.

Certainly, the uncanny events in the story can be rationalized. Along many portions of the North Atlantic coast fog and a brisk breeze frequently arrive toward the end of a making tide. Soon after the tide is full, or after the turn of the tide, the wind drops and the fog quickly disappears. People who have been on the water during periods of heavy fog know that it is possible to see images with very solid outlines of landscapes and objects which are not present.

These images may be seen by more than one person, and all who see them must keep reminding themselves that what they perceive is false, as when they observe a nearby harbour in which all the houses are of Spanish architecture though they know they are in the middle of a bay, miles from land, and the architecture which is found in the area is not of



the type they see in the fog.<sup>22</sup> A yachtsman from Nova Scotia's St. Margaret's Bay--Mahone Bay area--commented that the time to see the phantom ships of the area was on a foggy night when one could see the stars overhead and a light breeze was blowing.

Fog, however, will not serve to explain all the ships which appear to stop the activities of treasure searchers. People who dug at Copper Island, off Musgrave Harbour in Newfoundland, reported that:

as soon as they started to dig, a brigantine would come in, a boat would be lowered, and a boatload of men would come on shore. They would be so scared when they saw all these men coming, that they would jump in their own boats and get out of the place as quickly as they could.<sup>23</sup>

In Cape Breton, on the shore opposite Margaree Island, a group of diggers had just struck what they thought was an iron chest when a ship appeared out of the night. Men attired as pirates came off the ship and pursued the searchers who took refuge in a house. Ghost-like faces were pressed against the window panes until midnight when the phantoms disappeared.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Personal experience, Summer 1969.

<sup>23</sup>H. J. Reader, Newfoundland Wit, Humour and Folklore ([Corner Brook, Nfld.: printed by the Western Star, 1967]), p. 36.

<sup>24</sup>Mary L. Fraser, Folklore of Nova Scotia, n.p., n.d., [Toronto: Catholic Truth Society, 1932], p. 80.



The full-rigged ship that showed up in Nova Scotia's Bedford Basin while Black Dickson tussled with a spirit for a cask of money said it was from hell. Dickson told it to go back where it came from. It went. Dickson then listened to the request of the spirits to leave the money alone, and he went home.<sup>25</sup>

New Brunswick has a strong tradition of the guardian ship; it occurs along the coasts of the province and up the Saint John River where a Viking ship arrived to stop one search.<sup>26</sup> So strong is the belief in these ships, which are believed interested in vengeance as well as protection of the treasure, that when some men rowing home turned shoreward to see why dark figures were digging by lantern-light, the diggers fled. Later, the rowers

relished the fast-spreading stories of how treasure-hunters were on the verge of finding Captain Kidd's gold when they heard a faint sound on the river -- and beheld a ghostly boatload of ugly-looking blood-thirsty pirates rowing in to kill them.<sup>27</sup>

Such misunderstandings and misinterpretations of fact can occur when expectation overrides reasoned observation. Throughout Atlantic Canada the belief that a treasure is guarded in some manner is so strong that searchers expect

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<sup>25</sup>Creighton, Lunenburg County, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup>Stuart Trueman, Ghosts, Pirates and Treasure Trove The Phantoms that Haunt New Brunswick (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975), p. 126.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 127-128.



to encounter the extraordinary when digging for it. The failure to encounter the supernatural would be thought unnatural.

Those who go to dig for treasure in Atlantic Canada know they deliberately risk a meeting with eerie and unnerving manifestations of unknown forces. Perception is governed by the mind rather than by the eye. It is further warped when the search is undertaken after dark by lantern light, when "in the night, imagining some fear,/ How easy is a bush supposed a bear."<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the altered perception of reality caused by the expectation of a meeting with the supernatural and the lessened illumination of a search made with a minimum of light, one must almost presume the altered perception caused by the imbibing of Dutch courage. A story from the Gaspé includes the detail that each of the searchers took a good drink of whiskey to help their nerves before they set off to dig.<sup>29</sup> Since none of the cultures in Atlantic Canada are noted for their belief in abstaining from alcohol, it is very probable that the same action would be taken by any group of treasure searchers. So much is "a drink" part of any group activity in this area that the absence of alcoholic spirits would be noted rather than their presence, especially

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<sup>28</sup>William Shakespeare, A Midsummer-Night's Dream, V,i,21-22.

<sup>29</sup>Roy, Littérature Orale, p. 135.



in telling of spirits of another sort.

The spirits which unnerve those who dig for treasure more than the headless guardian, the pirate ghost, or the phantom ship are those which they do not expect to see, to hear or to feel. Even smell can stop a search. The odour of sulphur is sufficient to suggest the presence of the devil and cause digging to cease.<sup>30</sup> The devil himself seldom appears but is presumed to be associated with some of these unusual occurrences.

Vague forms are more unnerving than corporeal ghosts. A white form, a "big white thing", a tall white pillar, or a figure in a white cape have served to protect a treasure. A thing "as big as a puncheon" was the description of one sentinel; another was a shining object like a star.

A black duck as a ball of fire was the guardian of a treasure on the Labrador:

...We landed on this island and we followed this trail up. On the Labrador you know there is no soil just a row of turf, you got to build it up with sods anybody that's buried or anything. And we landed there anyhow and when we went up, now old Squatter he was a salmon catcher, he was over around the point and they told us all his money and stuff were buried on this island, we went up on this island....

When we went up there was three piles of sods like graves you know the way the Labrador men used to make then and when we went up they was after telling us about this puncheon of money before that see, the old people used to tell us, and we went up and sure enough there was this three piles of sods, you know,

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<sup>30</sup> Anselme Chiasson, Les Légendes des Îles de la Madeleine (Moncton, N.B.: Éditions des Aboiteaux, 1969), p. 119.



three graves like, and we started rootin' for it in the center grave, and we dug down so far and there was a black duck. The Black duck came up out of the grave all of a ball of fire and we had to leave the island. What happened after it came up? Ah it came up, just went around ohhh you know anyhow in circles like, that's really the truth. We had to leave, we scared to death, and went aboard, and when we got aboard we got a bawlin' out for going there from the skipper for doing what we did.

(MS 74-209/)

A single hen routed searchers on Newfoundland's south coast (Tape 68-43/C525), and one crow was all that was necessary in Trinity Bay:

In a Trinity Bay community ... there is a story of buried treasure. People at one time were going to clear the land and a large black crow flying around them gave them so much trouble, the land was left idle. Several years ago, a gentleman came from the U.S.A. with the intention of digging for the supposedly buried treasure. He left again hurriedly and no one knows anything more about the treasure. It is said the Black Crow guards the treasure buried there hundreds of years ago.

(Q68-141-2)

Sometimes it is a flock of birds that drives the searchers away. Reports from Mabou, Cape Breton, and from Prince Edward Island say that the guardians begin as birds and then turn into phantoms to chase the treasure diggers.<sup>31</sup>

The crow may be a North American substitute for the European raven as a treasure guardian. It is, however, almost as large, its wing-spread is impressive, the sound of the beating of the wings is relatively noisy, and it is not

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<sup>31</sup>Fraser, Folklore of Nova Scotia, pp. 79-80.  
Sterling Ramsay, Folklore Prince Edward Island  
(Charlottetown, P.E.I.: Square Deal Publications, n.d.  
[1973]), pp. 53-54.



easily frightened off; a crow may prove disconcerting in its own right. Many fishermen regard crows as birds of ill-omen, and most of the treasure diggers in Atlantic Canada are, or have been associated with the fishery. Those who search at night do not mention that the birds might have been attracted by the light from the lanterns. The swooping and fluttering of the birds in the air is what is remembered, as well as the sound of the beating of wings.

Monkeys sitting on a fence,<sup>32</sup> a bull seeming to attack a digger's daughter,<sup>33</sup> a collection of cats,<sup>34</sup> and a "something" animal<sup>35</sup> have also stopped treasure searches. Dogs, in contrast to the European traditions, are seldom encountered as treasure guardians.<sup>36</sup> No stories tell of wild native animals appearing during a search although one way to attract deer is to go out at night with a light and wait for them to come to see what it is. Bears, deer, caribou might

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<sup>32</sup> Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, p. 56.

<sup>33</sup> See below MS 74-114/.

<sup>34</sup> Helen Creighton, Bluenose Magic: Popular Beliefs and Superstitions in Nova Scotia (Toronto: Ryerson Press, c. 1968), p. 78.

<sup>35</sup> Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, p. 59.

<sup>36</sup> One might expect to find black dogs appearing frequently in the Germanic areas of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, especially in Lunenburg County. Such is not the case although they are prominent among treasure guardians in German treasure legends. See Leo Winter, De deutsche Schatzsage (Wattenscheid: 1925), pp. 47-54.



reasonably be expected to approach close enough to observe the scene taking place by artificial light. Reports of smaller animals coming to see what is going on are also missing. Yet the movements of such smaller animals might well account for the strange noises which the diggers often hear. The cats who surrounded the man from Liverpool, N.S., and caused him to speak and lose the treasure might not have been spirits; they might have been actual cats yielding to a curiosity sufficient to make them show themselves.

The screeching noise and moving bushes which stopped a search in northern Kings County, Nova Scotia,<sup>37</sup> suggest the presence of an inquisitive small animal. In this story the digging party did stop to look for the cause. They were frightened off because when they looked the noise would move behind them.

Sounds prove very effective treasure guardians. The frightening sound may be that of a boat rowing, it may be "all sorts of complaining", it may be simply strange and undefined. The very vagueness of description of the noise which causes the treasure to remain safe is the element which gives the supernatural aura to such sounds. The sound of children crying is felt by some Newfoundlanders to be associated with pirate treasure,<sup>38</sup> not with the sound of gulls

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<sup>37</sup> [Richard S. Tallman], Belief and Legend from Northern Kings County, Nova Scotia ([Canning, N.S.: Cornwallis District High School, c. 1969]), pp. 27-28.

<sup>38</sup> MS 74-2091.



which frequent the area.

Strange groans coming from the hole where she was digging for treasure were the cause of one woman's hesitation in her search. When she had to stop to speak to her dog who had taken off after the sheep, she heard a jingling from the hole; "She was almost too frightened to run, but she did run though."<sup>39</sup> (Male searchers have not been granted greater courage in the treasure stories told in Atlantic Canada.)

Women have proven to be good bearers of the treasure traditions. They have dreamed of treasures, some of which have been found. They have, however, seldom undertaken a dig for buried treasure without male companions, and, more frequently, men have gone to dig where a woman has said they should.

Two Nova Scotia girls who attempted to recover a treasure were frightened away by the sound of a baby crying:

On the west side of Mushaboom Harbour, there is a large rock beside which it is claimed that a woman buried a large sum of money she had saved for her baby's future, since people did not trust banks as they do today. Many years later two local girls decided to dig for the money, having heard the story of its burial from their neighbors. After they had dug two or three feet down they both heard the sound of a baby crying, and on investigating they could find no reason for the sound, since there were no other people, birds or animals near the water side. Thinking they had been mistaken they resumed digging and this time they realized the crying came from the bottom of the hole they had

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<sup>39</sup> Creighton, Lunenburg County, p. 10.



been digging. Pale and shaken the girls ran home and confessed their attempted treasure hunt. The money is still there as far as is known, and the lady to whom I am indebted for this story, manybe [sic] the only person now living who knows the exact location of the money, which can only be reached by boat or a long walk along the rocky shore, in fact it was this lady's father who filled in the hole which the girls had dug.<sup>40</sup>

Sounds, birds and animals are regarded as forms of the treasure guardian. There are, in addition, a series of phenomena which may occur separately or in conjunction with other uncanny happenings which are told of as protectors of a treasure. The storytellers do not differentiate between the guardian spirit and these other extraordinary occurrences. The sudden arrival of big seas and strange storms are seen as guardians of treasure as effective as any ghost. They are assumed to occur because the area is under a spell:

Just off the [northern Newfoundland] coast ... is an island.... Years ago pirates buried some gold on it. If anybody tries to land on that island, they just can't do it because a big sea (wave) comes in even if it is a calm day and a gull flies over at the same time. A few years ago some young fellows tried to land there but couldn't because of the big wave that used to prevent them from doing so. The older men of the community got angry with the young fellows for trying to land on the island since they believe something evil is connected with it and should be left alone.

(Card 69-6/159)

Rough seas and big waves on calm days are unnatural to those who do not realize that the contours of the sea bottom can influence wave patterns. What is natural to the oceanographer

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<sup>40</sup>Stan Farnsworth, "The Unexplained", The Grapevine (January 1973), p. 2.



is supernatural to the layman; scientific fact is seen as magic.

A protective manifestation not easily explained is the way the earth shakes in certain areas when men go to dig for treasure. In both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland stories are told of men tossed into the sea by the tremors. The Nova Scotian's companions were left on shore, presumably because they had begun to think of quitting the search when the discovery of an extra man in the party was compounded by "the devilishest noise I ever heard. The ground trembled and the rocks shook." The man who ended up in Annapolis Basin was the one who refused to leave. When they fished him out of the sea he went home without argument.<sup>41</sup>

Several Newfoundland stories tell of the earth shaking when people go to dig for treasure. They are told of sites in several areas of the Island. One tells of the happenings on a small island in Bonavista Bay:

Pirates are supposed to have buried treasure there at least that's what the older people of the area say. Anyway, most young people seem to have been indoctrinated into this belief. "You should never go on the island with a shovel," says my father, for "if you do the island will start to tremble and shake." In fact, Dad told me of one old man who did not believe the story and went to try to disprove it but he barely escaped with his life and was thrown into the sea. Hardly anyone ever lands on the island today. I have never been there although I have had many opportunities.

(Card 69-26/58)

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<sup>41</sup>Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, pp. 61-63.



Some diggers end up in water when the hole they are making suddenly fills with it. The stories make it evident that the water is regarded as a protective device rather than a natural occurrence. Throughout Atlantic Canada the water table is normally high and one should expect to encounter water at shallow depths, especially if digging near a shoreline.

The treasure protection which enjoys a high degree of popularity throughout the region, and which may guard the treasure by itself or in conjunction with other forms of discouragement is the hole which keeps filling itself:<sup>42</sup>

On the top of the point [on the South Coast of Newfoundland] in a little hollow is a place that is supposed to contain treasure. The area is supposed to be "under a spell", that was placed on it by the pirates to make sure no one took the treasure.

A story is told of an old fellow ... who went to the place to dig up the treasure. Each time he took a shovel full of 'dirt' out of the hole, two fell back to take its place. When he finished, a small mound of earth was present rather than a hole. He is said to have left the area in 'quite a shock' and no one since has attempted to find out whether the treasure really exists or not.

(MS 68-3/pp. 45-46)

Other stories do not tell of the hole turning into a mound, but they emphasize the diggers' difficulties in deepening the hole:

He told me of gold being buried ... on the South West Coast of Newfoundland.... I asked him if anyone had tried to get the gold and he replied that he did not know anybody who did, but he had heard some old people say that people, before their time, did but

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<sup>42</sup>Cf. Motif Treasure slips from seekers; hole refills, appears to be undug (Baughman N557(b)). In this motif the refilling hole does not function as a guardian to prevent the finding of the treasure.



could not get it because every time they tried to dig up the mud it would fall back in the hole again and it made no difference how long they dug the hole would get no deeper.

(MS 69-45/p. 30)

These self-filling holes are found in all areas of Atlantic Canada, usually when the searchers are digging near the shore, on a beach or in loose soil. The natural tendency of sand, gravel, mud and easily dug earths to slide from the side toward the centre of the hole seems to be forgotten in favour of a magic force which keeps filling the hollow.

The stories which tell of a treasure protected by a hole which fills itself very frequently also mention the traditional treasure guardian:

There is one place down there [White Bay], and there was treasure buried down there. They said that in most of these places where there was treasure buried that the pirate would kill a man and he would be left to guard the treasure.

Now there were some fellows brave enough to try to get it. They would dig so much and come to a big flat slab and it was hollow underneath but they didn't have nerve enough to take it up. When he would go back the next day it would be all filled in again. This went on several times. They never did get the treasure.

(MS 71-44/p. 69)

Sometimes the guardian appears in front of the digger:

Long ago when the pirates were around the shores of [eastern] Newfoundland they were supposed to have buried gold around the cliffs at Centre Cove.

Years later people decided to try and find some of the gold but never had any success. One old man said in partiucular that he would dig until he found it. One day he took his pick and shovel and started out for Centre Cove in an attempt to find some treasure.



It seemed that when the pirates hid the gold one of their men had to agree to be killed and buried on the spot to watch the loot. The old man in question dug all day until darkness set in this one particular spot. A man appeared in front of him dressed in a suit of oil clothes and rain hat. The man decided to give up and go home because he became very frightened.

He told his friends about the experience and got one of them to go back the next day and finish the job. When he reached the spot where he had the hole dug, it was all filled in. They both started to dig it up again and finally the man with the oil clothes and hat appeared on the scene. They tried to ignore him but as fast as they would throw the clay out it would roll back again. They became scared and gave up. They both agreed that it must be a ghost and never returned to that place again.

(Q68-113-1)

The striking of a presumed treasure chest can call the guardian and protective forces into action, as happened on an island in Newfoundland's St. Mary's Bay:

One day (1920) as Simon Laidey was digging for treasure he was supposed to have struck something. Simon Laidey claimed he knew that it was a chest. At the same time that he struck the chest he heard "wicked" screams. When he looked around there was a "devils big bull", attacking his daughter. Simon went to save his daughter but when he got there, there wasn't any bull. In fact there was never any animals living on the island. When Simon Laidey went back to where he was digging the hole was filled in - no trace of anyone ever having dug there. Although he did dig after he never struck the chest again.

(MS 74-114/)

Two men from eastern Newfoundland also had the treasure protect itself by filling up the holes where they had sounded the treasure:

One day when we didn't have to work, Bill and myself decided to walk around the island and see if we could find any signs of treasure. It's a good day's walk around the island so we started early and took lunch with us. We took a steel bar with us and when



we saw a place where treasure could be hidden we pushed it into the ground to see if it would strike metal. We kept on going all day and couldn't find a thing. We were pretty tired when we reached the flats just up past Steff's Farm. We saw this place that looked just like a grave and pushed our bar into it. It went down three or four feet without striking any rocks and then hit something solid. You could tell by the way the bar hit that it was metal. We punched twenty or thirty holes in different places to see how big it was and it was a couple of feet wide each way. We didn't have any tools with us and it was too late that day to go and get tools and dig it up.

A few days after when we got a chance we went back to dig the treasure up, but we couldn't find the spot. We knew the general area but we still couldn't find the spot with the holes punched in the ground. It was too short a time for the holes to have filled in by natural weathering, but still we couldn't find the spot.

(Q68-464-0)

The belief that treasure can guard itself against recovery by moving through the ground cannot be assumed from these stories. Although the belief is found elsewhere in Atlantic Canada it has not been expressed in Newfoundland. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick the disappearance of the gold is associated with the breaking of the taboo against speech while digging for treasure. As someone strikes what is believed to be the treasure chest silence is broken and the treasure disappears.

The question which is not answered in these stories, nor in the two from Newfoundland given above, is how is the digger positive that he has struck metal. The sound of a pick striking a hard rock is almost identical with the sound of metal on metal. No sound can be heard when a metal rod or bar hits an object three or four feet underground. The



resistance of rock and heavy metal are very similar. A stone in situ need not be very large to stop a pick or a crow bar. If someone should speak, the expectation of loss by such an action would explain the failure of the pick or bar to encounter any resistance on the next stroke. Yet, if the stone were not a large one the initial hit might have moved it aside so that a second probe in the same area would meet no solid object.

One narrative from New Brunswick does suggest that anticipation can alter perception. The story is from an Apohaqui man who as a boy took part in a treasure hunt:

... the iron bar hit something - a hollow sound.  
A quick exchange of glances, and the digging began again frantically. Several feet further down, their hopes fell - solid rock. In dismay one man exclaimed:  
"I don't believe it's there at all."

And, of course, it wasn't, because it moved when the man spoke, at least so the leader of the expedition said. The party chased that money to four different locations before giving up.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps the disbeliever was right.

In stories of treasure which moves within the ground or which cannot found again once the searcher moves away from the area, the disappearance of the chest, pot or other container functions as a protective device. Despite the uncanniness of the vanishing of such treasures, narratives do not suggest a fearful response from the searchers; instead,

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<sup>43</sup>Trueman, Ghosts, Pirates, pp. 122-124.



frustration and discouragement are the reactions which are most often suggested.

The story of the treasure guardian, of how he came to be and of his actions to protect his treasure, is the basis of a large portion of the treasure tradition in Newfoundland. His presence is assumed although not necessarily enunciated in treasure narratives from other areas of Atlantic Canada. The function of all forms of treasure guardians and protective devices in treasure stories is to offer a reason for the non-discovery or recovery of the wealth.

In the narratives which tell of the discovery of money, gold or other valuables, there is little mention of the treasure guardian, although he may have appeared in a dream which led to the discovery of wealth. There are, however, no stories of the actual finding of treasure in which a meeting with the guardian is described. Treasures which have been accidentally discovered are set apart from those intentionally sought and appear to be outside the guardian tradition. Narratives of the discovery of treasure which tell of a deliberate search might be expected to follow the standard pattern: a meeting with some form of treasure guardian. There are no stories in which a hostile guardian has been encountered and the treasure successfully obtained.

The only association of the treasure guardian with wealth which has been found is his presumed involvement in any curse which forces the finder of the treasure to return it.



## CHAPTER IX

### CURSED TREASURE

To dig up a dead man's treasure and escape a curse, you must dream about it three nights in a row. Turn your coat inside out and begin digging at midnight.

(Card 73-164/)

Stories which tell of a curse on buried treasure, of misfortunes which are associated with such wealth, are very popular in Newfoundland. The idea of a curse on treasure is also found in other parts of Atlantic Canada, but the concept is seldom explicitly expressed in narratives from the areas outside Newfoundland. Some stories of misfortunes which befell those who dug for or recovered buried treasure are found in the west of England and Ireland, as well as in the European tradition. Such stories do not seem to be of importance in the narratives from the eastern seaboard of the United States.

The fact that the belief in cursed treasure and stories which embody such a belief have not been published by folklore collectors does not mean that such stories or beliefs do not exist among the people of a region. It is more likely that an assumed understanding among members of a culture may not have been recognized by an outsider. When the clerk in a



drugstore in a Nova Scotian village said:

My brother-in-law's down at Oak Island with the well-drilling crew this summer. I keep telling him to get off. You don't know what will happen,<sup>1</sup>

she could expect that her listeners were aware of the record of misfortunes which have plagued those who searched for the elusive Oak Island Treasure.

This assumed understanding is similar to that found with the belief in the man killed to guard the treasure discussed above (Chapter VIII). The belief is present in but is not always spelled out for the listener in stories of the search for buried wealth. If a listener does not understand implied detail, and if the story seems complete without it, he may repeat the description of the event but omit what is a pertinent part of the narrative because it was not spelled out for him. As a result, subsequent repetitions may then reduce the story to a seemingly simple statement since all the pertinent detail has been lost.

Allied with the assumed understanding of a curse on certain treasures, or on the areas where treasures are supposedly hidden, is the election of non-action, the conscious decision by some people not to dig for a treasure they know to be buried at a certain spot. This same election not to dig was seen in the stories of dreams of treasure. With the curse on the treasure the failure to act is not based on any

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<sup>1</sup>Personal collection, June 1970. Informant aged 20.



fear of ruining a dream; the decision not to dig is a reasoned reaction to what is or to what has been a tradition of misfortune for those who searched. Mary Julia MacCulloch noted among the inhabitants of the Isle of Skye a similar reluctance to search for reported treasures.

Legends of buried hoards are quite common in the islands, arising from actual finds of pirates' or sea-rovers' money. But there are still many places where money is said to be hidden.... Some feeling of superstitious awe, the result of some legend attaching to the spot which is now forgotten, forbids the people, however needy, from attempting to find these hidden hoards.<sup>2</sup>

There is no evidence that she, or any other collector attempted to discover if the legend were completely forgotten.

The failure to ask Why? seems to be a contributing factor in the decline in reports of the tradition of cursed treasure in areas outside Newfoundland. Two comments from the Gaspé certainly reflect a belief in it:

"I wouldn't want pirate money," interjected a hitherto silent listener to these old tales; "if I could find mineral or a mine it would be different." My old friend smiled as she said: "The first thing to do, when you open a box of money is to take a handful of gold and throw it over your left shoulder, with the words: 'Take that!' There is then nothing more to fear."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Mary Julia MacCulloch, "Folk-Lore of the Isle of Skye. III". Folk-Lore, XXXIII (1922), 386.

<sup>3</sup>Margaret Grant MacWhiter, Treasure Trove in Gaspé and the Baie des Chaleurs, 3rd ed. (Quebec: The Telegraph Printing Co., 1919), pp. 200-201.



No explanation is given for why one would not want pirate treasure nor for the necessity of a ritual when it is found. The idea that such treasure is cursed is implied by the speakers, but not explained by the recorder.

It must be granted that it is not always possible to determine whether a decision not to dig is based on a fear of finding that a presumed treasure does not exist or on a fear of the curse on the treasure:

Dee's uncle says that there is pirate treasure buried on his property down in one of the fields. It is covered over with a huge rock and he just hasn't had the time or been interested enough to go dig it up.<sup>4</sup>

The collector of this story from New Brunswick did not ask why the uncle did not have the time or the interest, but did collect an explanation of how pirate treasure came to be so far from the sea:

Supposedly Pirates often came up the Saint John River and then up the Nashwaak in order to bury treasure.<sup>5</sup>

Evidently she had asked how the treasure got there, but not why there was the reluctance to dig.

Once the tradition of cursed treasure is known to exist, its existence may be recognized through half-statements and implications in treasure stories from outside Newfoundland. In the Newfoundland oral tradition there is a goodly corpus of

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<sup>4</sup>Karen Crandall, Moncton, N.B., October 1974.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



narratives to illustrate the belief. Some storytellers obviously believe that the chance of meeting the treasure guardian is a sufficient curse. Other storytellers report misfortunes and attitudes which suggest a separate but allied tradition of cursed treasure. The Newfoundland narratives and expressed beliefs may well illustrate the status the tradition of cursed treasure once held in the oral traditions of other regions.

The motif Curse on treasure. Finder or owner to have bad luck (N591) in Thompson provides very limited recognition of this tradition. Baughman does not even include the motif in his Index. The motif, moreover, does not recognize the several ways in which the folk see evidence of the curse on a treasure. The motif only accounts for the finder or owner.

In Newfoundland treasure which is cursed may affect the spot where it is buried. It may affect those who attempt to dig for it, and it may affect those who recover it. While some prescriptions for avoiding the curse are given, the main one appears to be a ban on searching for it.

A man from Bay Antique [in eastern Newfoundland] told me that there is still some gold in the caves there, left by the Spanish pirates. When I wanted to look for it, he said that it was bad luck to search for the gold, and even worse luck to find it, unless you are told where to look by a ghost in a dream. Then he gave me some specific examples of people who had died tragically while searching for the gold. He explained their deaths as "the revenge of the dead pirates".

He also told me stories of people who had found gold, although it happened many years ago. These people had been told exactly where to look by a ghost of one of the dead pirates.

(Card 70-23/128)



An informant from Bonavista Bay elaborated the beliefs concerning the little island in that Bay which had tossed a treasure digger into the sea. The island is supposed to hold 'a great pirate's treasure':

The pirates buried the treasure here to protect it from the French and for some reason they never came back to collect it.

I asked Mr. Fence how he knew it was there, and he told me "Everyone knows that' besides the ground where the treasure is buried is different from all the rest on the island. There is a brown patch of ground, almost in the middle of the island. No trees, grass or anything has grown on the spot since the treasure was buried. It has been there so long now that no one can get it and no one in their right minds would try to get it. For years people were afraid to even land on the island. I don't know why people should want to get it, but nothing good will come out of it if they do."

I asked him to explain this last statement, but he insisted it wasn't safe to talk about things like that.

When I asked him if he believed the story he said, "There must be some truth to it. Everyone has believed it and talked about it for as long as I can remember [aged 85]. I can remember my poor father telling me about it and pointing out the island to me. I used to be frightened when I pass the island in [the] boat, but that was when I was a boy. The island don't fiss [fizz] on me now."

(MS 71-4/pp. 50-51)

While the sterility of the land in the middle of the island might be explained by salt in the soil, it is obvious that this informant feels the curse on the treasure affects even the vegetation of the area where the hoard is hidden.

Stories of misfortunes associated with treasure are often different reports of happenings at the same location:

Grandfather Fred used to tell some pretty tall tales.

You know where Shellbird Island is? It's in the Humber River just as you leave Corner Brook on the



way to Deer Lake. Yes, by the gas station. There's a pirate's face in the mountain. He's guarding his treasure. Everybody who tries is drowned or dies before they get it. Nobody knows who the pirate was. There was a group - anyone - this [the fact that diggers die] is according to my grandfather. No one digs. The story is well known.

The Light Company had a problem. They dug a hole [on the island] to put in a pole. You heard last summer about the three men - foreman and two men - the two men who died in the flash fire at the sub-station were the two who had dug the hole. No one will confirm it.

There was supposed to be an article in the Western Star [the Corner Brook paper]. Was told it was an article on Shellbird Island and Newfoundland Light & Power. The man supposed to have written it, his car went off the curve by Shellbird Island - was lucky enough to escape. Tom and I searched but we couldn't find the story.<sup>6</sup>

A number of stories repeat the grandfather's information about the pirate and the bad luck that follows treasure searchers who dig on the island.

Three stories from the West Coast of Newfoundland tell of the sudden death of a man who located a treasure site on St. John's Island. The narratives were told by residents of different communities, and vary somewhat in the chronology, but the basic facts remain the same:

About eighty years ago, there were two Micmac Indians, Gil Nett and Gus Gloade, who were searching all over Newfoundland for pirates' gold. They heard about St. John's Island and went there. I don't know where they got their information, but they found out that the pirates had landed near a big rock on the beach and went inland by a compass direction. (They knew the direction.) The gold was supposed to be buried in a bog. Well, late in the fall the two Indians went out to the island from Eddy's Cove, near Port au Choix. They found the rock, got the compass bearing was walked

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<sup>6</sup>Mrs. T. Rose, St. John's, Newfoundland, who grew up in Corner Brook. Fall 1969.



inland and found the spot. Nett wanted to stay and start digging right away, but Gloade wanted to leave again and come back in the spring, because they never had any food or supplies, and if they stayed out there very long, winter might set in, and they would be marooned on the island to spend a desolate winter.

They got into quite a row, but, finally, Gloade won out and they went back to Eddy's Cove until spring. Gil Nett died that winter and Gus Gloade was delighted because, now he was the only one who knew where to find the treasure. As soon as spring came he went out to the island by himself, found the spot and started digging. He had just struck the box with his shovel when he thought he heard someone behind him. But before he knew anything else, someone slapped him on the back with his hand. Gus got such a fright that he dropped everything and ran. (There was no one there to be seen.) He went back to Eddy's Cove and told what had happened. Three days later he took sick and died, and when the people there saw his back, there was a print or mark of a man's hand on it. Gloade said before he died that it was Gill Nett who had come back and slapped him when he was digging.

(MS 68-1/pp. 103-108)

A second version lessens the time of the onset of illness:

Old Gus Gloade, the old Indian, went down to look for it, but as soon as he got there he took sick, and died the very next day. He knew how to get it.

I always heard that story. That must have been in the early 1800s.

(Card 73-105/46)

A third version adds the detail that Gloade was the man who discovered ore where the Buchans mine now is, and sets the story in the mid 1930s. Gloade becomes seriously ill but his death is not reported. The story concludes:

About fifteen years ago in 1955, another party of ten men from the mainland of Canada went out to St. John Island and stayed about a week. When they were brought back, they seemed quite pleased, although they wouldn't admit to having found the treasure, but everyone feels sure they did.

(MS 71-16/pp. 7-8)



Apparently the illness which attacked the Indians did not affect the men from the mainland of Canada. Perhaps the curse on the treasure only worked against Newfoundlanders.

A group of stories also tell of a treasure hunt in which the searchers became ill. This area is in southeastern Newfoundland, the diagonal width of the Island from St. John's Island:

[On] a piece of ground belonging to the Heavytoy family of Roast Nose there is supposed to be treasure buried by pirates who never got back to claim their gold.

Around 1874 a Miss Heavytoy, who was in New York, was planning a vacation to Newfoundland. She was given a map by a friend. On this map Crest Point was marked as a place where gold, etc. was buried.

When Miss Heavytoy arrived home, her father to whom she showed the map began to dig at Crest Point. He found a coffin and in it was found a skeleton of a man eight feet tall. This so frightened the diggers that they stopped digging and fled the scene.

Later one of their group fell sick and on calling the priest were advised to cover up the hole they made and dig no more. Rumour still has it that there is gold at Crest Point but no one is brave enough to try for it.

(Q68-136-2)

A longer version of this story gives more details concerning the search and the mysterious illness of the digger:

The treasure was to be found under a flat stone. The digging began, and they came to the flat stone, and they came to the remains of a coffin. And inside the coffin the skeleton of a man which, legend had it, was nearly eight feet long. The digging ceased, but [sic] the treasure almost in sight. And a priest from the area who heard of it advised the Heavytoys to leave the treasure alone. That more harm than good might come of the digging up of such a treasure. The Heavytoys didn't listen to the parish priest. They went ahead and they dug. A few days after, one of the Heavytoys was stricken ill. The doctor was called,



could find nothing wrong with the man. He seemed to be getting steadily worse. So the parish priest came back again, and he advised him to cover up the hole. This they did, and immediately the Heavytoy man grew better.

(Tape 70-13/C728)

The longer variant of the story also tells of a search by a younger generation of Heavytoys in the twentieth century.

The whole of the community turned out to watch, but the older people would not go as near the site as the younger ones.

This search party apparently did not become ill, but the young Heavytoys received a fright; no one yet knows what really happened.

What is not apparent from the two versions of the story given above is whether the strange illness of the searcher resulted from the curse on the treasure or from breaking a taboo against disturbing the dead.<sup>7</sup> The comments attributed to the priest do not clarify the matter. The third version of the story reports:

[She told] me that there was an old Irish priest who didn't want his people to go digging around where it [the treasure] was supposed to be buried. Some people, she said, had tried to dig for it and (she didn't seem to know how many) started to go blind.

(MS 68-25/p. 204)

The comments of the informant here suggest that both factors might well be involved.

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<sup>7</sup> A Devonshire man who broke into a barrow in search of treasure very shortly lost both sight and hearing and died within three months. R. N. North, ed., "First Report of the Barrow Committee", Transactions of the Devonshire Association, XI (1879), 149-150. And elsewhere.



The curse seems to operate most often against those who dig for treasure. One woman in northeastern Newfoundland who owns property on which treasure is supposed to be buried no longer gives permission to dig. Something always happens to those who do. The last searcher who dug with her permission broke his leg.<sup>8</sup>

Another woman from northern Newfoundland stopped men from digging on her land not because of what might happen to them but because of what might afflict her:

Uncle J. lived near a little pond in the community. This pond was surrounded by three meadows (for grass growing) and these meadows were owned by three different people. Years before, when Uncle J. was a youth it was believed that there was buried treasure by this pond especially in the area occupied by two of the meadows. Once when Uncle J. was younger some of the men started digging in the meadows and they did find some boxes which had covers but only slats in the bottom. However, one of the old women who owned the meadow became worried that the diggers might get some treasure and she stopped them from digging in her meadow. It was claimed by the people who used to tell the story about the men digging for the treasure that the old woman believed that she would be haunted by the ghost or spirit of the man who was shot and left to mind the treasure, if the treasure was found or moved by anyone.<sup>9</sup>

The curse on a treasure can operate in two directions against those who would discover it. It can prevent their arrival at the site:

[My friend] told me a story that her grandfather told her. He said there is an island off Twillingate

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<sup>8</sup>Personal collection, 1974. Informant was promised anonymity.

<sup>9</sup>G. J. Casey Collection, Folklore Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland, c. 1968.



on which there is supposed to be a buried pirate's treasure. He said that every year many people try to get out to the island but before they can get there some misfortune befalls them. He said that as far as he knows no one has ever set foot on the island. He believes that there is a curse on the treasure and this curse means to keep the treasure on the island, and not to let anyone near it.

(Card 73-21/21)

and it can follow them into their homes if they do begin to dig:

The story goes that a pirate's treasure is supposed to be buried in a meadow in a community in Conception Bay. The spot is said to be marked by a skull and cross-bones drawn on a rock there.

Two men of that community, J. Black and P. Tann (long deceased) went to the meadow to try and dig up the treasure. The ground in that spot is very soft, almost sandy, yet when they drove down a crow-bar it snapped off. Dumbfounded but determined, they continued with a pick-axe. When the pick-axe hit the ground, it suddenly flew out of the man's hands into the air and never landed. Bewildered and somewhat frightened, the men gave up their efforts and returned home.

That night something unknown got into Mr. Black's house. All sorts of weird things began to happen for no apparent reason--window blinds flew up of a sudden; dogs barked and whined and couldn't be quieted; doors opened and close on their own; the lights (lamps) dimmed.

Mr. Black was very frightened by all of this and sent for the parish priest who came and blessed the house. Following the blessing the strange happenings ceased.

The next night Mr. Black saw a big white horse walk down through the meadow, around his house, and pass through the fence which surrounded his property.

The people concluded from this that the treasure must have been cursed and no attempt has since been made to recover it.

(MS 69-13/pp.139-141)

On the Burin Peninsula, a Mr. Hundburg and some friends decided to investigate a grass-covered mound surrounded by a border of large stones which was on a section of Mr. Hundburg's



property:

... after digging for a day or so one of the men eventually hit something with his crowbar. It had a rattling sound so they became excited and hurriedly dug. However, suddenly the men noticed how heavy the pick-axes and crow-bars were getting. They became so heavy and the men were frightened so that they no longer could lift the digging tools so they went home. Now that same night when Mr. Hundburg and his family was in bed, a large noise was heard downstairs and the house began to tremble. All the dishes began to shake and rattle but finally things became still. In the morning when everyone went downstairs there was not a sign of any broken dishes. Mr. Hundburg and the two men that same day immediately went to the area and filled in the digging. This suggested that the pirates' ghosts did not want the treasure removed, and the men never again attempted to find out what rested below that mound. My mother also told me that she would take me to that same mound today still untouched since that strange happening.

(Q68-441-3)

Strange misfortunes can also follow those who actually find treasure as a young fellow from eastern Newfoundland discovered:

There was a young chap by the name of O'Foote - he was of an Irish family and he went away to the States at a very early age.... He was up there around twenty years, he came home, married a girl there and was a fisherman....

Now there was a yarn went around [the community]....

It was said that a pirate's ship came in one morning, and a boat came in, and there were seven men in it and they had a box. They went up the road, they heard a shot and only six came back. Now it was a pirate's law to shoot somebody so the spirit could guard the treasure....

Anyway, this chap (O'Foote) he had a lot of superstition knocked out of him and one Saturday when most of the people out around that area went to town shopping, he went up and he actually dug up the treasure. That night - he had stored it in the barn, now this comes from a relative of his, he stored it in the barn and that night we had a thunder and lightning storm and the lightning hit the barn and it burned down and he lost his horse and cow.



The next day going to Mass he told his brother-in-law and he said "For God's sake Walt, why did you disturb the dead?" So that evening when everything was quiet they went out to the barn and picked up as much treasure as they could find and they put it in a wheelbarrow and dumped it over the cliff.  
(MS 73-119/pp. 34-36)<sup>10</sup>

In this story the curse on the treasure is definitely connected with taboos about disturbing the dead, and the possessions of the dead. The cultural mores which might largely prevent the disturbing of the respectable dead in cemeteries do not seem to apply a check to the digging up of treasure and its guardian.

In northeastern Newfoundland a man discovered a treasure:

[He] found an old treasure chest full of antique things. He took the chest with him back to his home. That night his house started to shake, tremble and creak as if it was going to cave in. It had never happened before.

The only thing he could think that caused it was a spell put on him from the chest. He was so scared he buried the chest and he said he would never tell anyone where the chest is hidden.  
(Q68-74-2)

The "spell" from the treasure did not, however, include a visit from the treasure guardian. In some areas of Newfoundland, the power of the guardian is not broken if the treasure is recovered; the guardian is tied to the treasure, not to the

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<sup>10</sup> This man was somewhat luckier than the vicar of Widdecombe-in-the-Moor who brought home treasures from the barrows of Dartmoor. His house exploded and buried the vicar and his spoils in the ruins. [Mary Elizabeth] Mrs. Henry Pennell Whitcombe, Bygone Days in Devonshire and Cornwall (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1874), pp. 50-51.



spot where he was buried:

The coast [the French shore] was inhabited by the French fishermen but they were never said to bury treasure. The treasure was always said to be buried by the "pirates". This treasure was believed to be gold and sometimes some of the older people would tell a story about how the captain of the pirate ship would go ashore and have his men dig a hole and put the treasure in it. Then all of the men would line up and the captain would select one man and ask him if he would guard the treasure. This man was shot and buried with the treasure and he would definitely haunt anyone who would move or take the treasure. Incidents would sometimes be cited about how the ghost would come and take the person who moved the treasure out of his bed and that person would not get any sleep or rest until the treasure was put back in its original place.<sup>11</sup>

A report from Placentia Bay tells of the experiences of one person who was haunted after the treasure was found:

There's one person, I said, dug up money here. They says he went back and buried it again. He couldn't sleep or used to - haunted, and, I said, now I think if I dug it up I'd be haunted a lot if I, before I'd bring it back. But perhaps I would be, have to bring it back. I don't know. You don't know what can happen. There's nothing impossible. So, I said, 'tis up here, I said to the westward of us.

So he got up on deck with this fidout [a treasure detector]. He said, there's money up there, and he pointed right at the very place where she dug it up, where [whether?] she put it back there er not, says she put it back.

(Tape 70-8/C646)

The tradition of cursed treasure is normally found in association with treasure which is buried. The belief that any found money is unlucky is illustrated by stories from southwestern Newfoundland. Although there is disagreement

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<sup>11</sup>G. J. Casey Collection, c. 1968.



about how one man found some money, there is unanimity over the fact that it was the result of accidental discovery rather than a planned search. Be that as it may, he was afraid of the money; he sent \$500.00 of it to Quebec to Ste. Anne, and built a house for his sister. (Tape 74-195/F1714) Another informant said that the man had found fifteen hundred gold dollars. He gave three-quarters of the money away because he was afraid of it. But still, he went mad. (Tape 74-95/F1661) Again, there is a group of stories concerned with a treasure and its curse. This group of stories is the only instance where the idea of a cursed treasure is not allied with buried treasure.

Buried treasure which is cursed is that said to have been hidden by pirates. Such money has a general reputation of being tainted by blood: blood was shed when it was taken and, where the tradition of the sacrificed guardian exists, blood was shed at its burial. Those who are bothered by the idea of possessing ill-gotten gains are doubly repulsed by the association with bloodshed.

The idea of a curse on a treasure prevents many people from digging for wealth believed to be hidden in their area. No such check seems to exist for those who come from away and dig for the gold. While Newfoundlanders will frequently say that no one digs, or that they are afraid to dig, they also tell of people from outside the province who arrive and take the treasure. There are no stories which tell of any



ill-fortune befalling those who have come from away, stayed for a short period, and left again.

The men who died at Oak Island in August of 1965 were not Nova Scotians,<sup>12</sup> but they had been working on the island for several years. They may, therefore, have been subject to the same influences as local residents rather than to the suspension of malevolence enjoyed by the short-term visitor. Visiting treasure retrievers seem to enjoy immunity from encounters with the treasure guardian and from any curses on the treasure they recover. In spite of the freedom from supernatural persecution, the strangers may be avoided by the residents of a community lest they be affected by association with those who had contact with a treasure:

Our neighbour tells me that in Board Cove, C.B., there is a large hole in the ground where a treasure was supposed to have been found. The hole is still noticeable, he says, although it has grown over with grass. He remembers hearing about the treasure from an old man in the community in about 1940.

The story goes back to the 1800's - he cannot remember exactly what date. According to the story the local people always believed there was a treasure buried on this certain spot. But they were afraid to dig for it because it was a pirate's treasure. Since pirate treasure was stolen, they believed that the spirit of the person who really owned the treasure protected it and his spirit would haunt anyone who disturbed it.

However "strangers" came into the community and dug up the site. According to the story they did

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<sup>12</sup>Rupert Furneaux, The Money Pit Mystery (London: Tom Stacey, 1972), p. 87.



find a treasure. They took it away and no one ever heard of them after. The local people would have nothing to do with the strangers for fear that the spirit of the treasure would haunt them.

(Card 74-132/)



## CHAPTER X

### TREASURE FOUND AND PRESUMED FOUND

Stories which are primarily of treasures that have been found are of three basic classes: (1) reports of valuables known to have been discovered; (2) speculations that a member of the local society found wealth because of suddenly improved economic status; and (3) conjectures based on circumstantial evidence that a treasure was recovered by strangers from outside the society.

Reports of factual findings serve to offset the impression that buried treasures are never found. The finding of the treasure, however, seems to hold less interest for the people than the search or the factors which led to the search. In consequence, reports of found treasure are relatively brief: "Over at Stapper's Side a crock of gold was dug up."<sup>1</sup> "Some guys found treasures - Little Bell Island, that was the place".<sup>2</sup> This brevity is particularly noticeable in printed collections where the recording of

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<sup>1</sup>J. Tremills, Bedford, N.S., formerly of St. John's, Newfoundland, 4 January, 1970.

<sup>2</sup>Roy Andrews, St. John's, Newfoundland, formerly of Port de Grave, October, 1970.



the discoveries is primarily a listing of finds and locations.<sup>3</sup>

Part of the reason for the terseness of the stories of such finds may rest with the fact that finders of valuables do not talk about their finds. Not only do their best friends not know the details but even the finders' families may not be fully privy to the information:

In Trinity Bay my brother-in-law met an old guy who had found buried gold, gold bars. He showed it to him, since he's a minister, but wouldn't show his own son. Only the two of them know [where it is].<sup>4</sup>

Where a community does know of a find of treasure, its interest appears to lie less with the treasure itself than with the details of the find, if such are known. This factor was noted in connection with the dream of treasure where the dream and/or the search were of more importance to the narrative than the actual treasure.

Where the money is found as the result of an accidental discovery, the longer stories concentrate on how the finder was able to keep the gold for himself: the man in Berwick, N.S., who sat on the pot and sent his helper home so he could unearth the pot by himself;<sup>5</sup> William Mosher of

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<sup>3</sup>Anselme Chiasson, Les Légendes des Îles de la Madeleine (Moncton, N.B.: Éditions des Aboiteaux, 1969), p. 118.

Helen Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1957), p. 45.

<sup>4</sup>Faculty member, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1974.

<sup>5</sup>Creighton, Bluenose Ghosts, p. 45.



Feltzen South who sent the carpenters helping him repair his barn home for the rest of the day when a cache of gold coins was discovered by his son.<sup>6</sup>

Even when one finds a story which is concerned with the treasure itself, the narrative is relatively brief:

Seven brothers were fishing in the Straits of Belle Isle. Suddenly this [sic] discovered some signs of hidden treasure in the harbour of Black Joe. They decided they'd start a search for the treasures supposed to be hidden by pirates of long ago.

On continuing their search, they finally came upon large boxes. In removing them from the place where they were put, breaking them open, they found hundreds of thousands of dollars, gold and silver, coins from different countries, jewelry from foreign lands. 'Twas all taken back to their home-town where each brother was given a share of the findings. Sufficient silver and gold to keep every man and his family until they become old men and women.

(Q68-434-2)

The interest in the actual find is slight. The circumstantial details are what make the story of interest for the teller and to the listener:

There was a man in Haven Harbour, Bonavista Bay ... the store, it was a large supply store, had been built by his grandfather. I suppose the store was probably a hundred years old by the time that he had start to take it down. It was built a nice bit out over the sea and the posts and shores as they called it, you know these.... This was beginning to get weak. Some of them was washed away and he decided that he was going to take the store down and build a store further inland now because ya wasn't using boats like you did in those days, because when they built those stories out over the water you see they come right to the store with their vessels and take the supplies right out.... And laid it in the stores. And he was taking down the store and he found two kegs of gold....

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<sup>6</sup>Helen Creighton, Folklore of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia (Ottawa: The King's Printer, 1950), pp. 12-13.



Two kegs. Now a keg, probably you know what a keg was, it was probably about what, two and a half to three feet long and on a h'oval shape.... It wasn't round like a barrel.... It was, the keg was on the h'oval shape. Well he found two kegs of this gold....

Gold sovereigns. And he had them brought here to the capital here somewhere and, to find out what, what they were worth and they told him that the sovereigns was far outdated and they wasn't much value, but I don't really know what he got for the two kegs of gold, but I know he was cheated....

Because gold was gold regardless of what date is on the sovereign ... and I think that would make it far more valuable.... The age alone, but someone kind of hoodwinked him ya know, I mean I don't think he got what he really should have got for them.

(Tape 69-15/C603)

The element of gossip and conjecture about a known person is found in many of these stories of treasure finds. If the audience for such narratives knows the people concerned, and/or the details of the way of life involved, much of the detail can be omitted. The teller will expand the core facts of a reported find to explain details to a sympathetic listener. For someone from outside the culture who would not be interested in the homey matters of the discovery, the story may be reduced to the fact of the find.<sup>7</sup>

The continued presence of a finder of treasure in the community also serves to keep a story of a find alive. The

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<sup>7</sup>Such a find could be reported much like that recorded by Creighton, Lunenburg, p. 5:

A chest of gold with a lot of double loons was found this year at Port Medway. There had been a light above the place where it was found. They took it to the bank, and the bank gave them credit for a lot of money. --Lunenburg.



other residents can indulge in comment and speculation about them. The feeling that too much observation of how one's money is spent is not desirable may be the factor that causes so many finders of treasure to leave home. The ending to many stories of actual finds of treasure is "and they went to the United States".<sup>8</sup> In the days when the English Law of Treasure Trove might have been argued as applying to the colonies as well as to the mother country, the departure for the United States was the one way of assuring oneself of the continued possession of the wealth.<sup>9</sup>

One very long story of a young Englishman who became rich when he discovered a hole lined with gold has been recorded from the oral tradition of Newfoundland's West Coast:

A chap came to Newfoundland from England. He was an only son who told his mother he was going to Newfoundland to get rich. He landed around St. Paul's, made a cabin and began salmon fishing. He was paid in gold which he hoarded in tins. He buried two pints under the floor of his cabin. One day when he was out fishing he was driven off course to the north. He made a new cabin and stayed over the winter. On

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<sup>8</sup>This ending is also found in a story from Somerset, England. See Ruth L. Tongue, Somerset Folklore (London: The Folk-Lore Society, 1965), p. 197:

They turned up a heap of money at the old Castle near Three Horse-shoes Hill above Aisholt -- And when he went to the States he sold the coins there for a dollar each!

<sup>9</sup>See above, Chapter II, for an instance where a presumed possessor of treasure trove could be charged with violating the law.



his way back he fell into a hole. It was lined with gold. Candles of pure gold hung from the roof. He went back to the cabin he had built there. Then he arranged with a vessel going home to ship six barrels of fish; two were fish and the others were gold shoved in birch rind. He went back to England and hauled the gold home by team. He became the richest man in England. He told his people about the hole and also about the tins on the rungs under the floor of the first cabin in St. Paul's. They came and found that gold but could never find the hole he fell in. The ground blew and drifted the hole right level. They couldn't find the hole.<sup>10</sup>

A version of this story appeared in the St. John's, Newfoundland, Evening Telegram in 1974<sup>11</sup> and referred to an earlier printed version in a weekly paper "between forty and fifty years ago". The details vary enough between the version in print and the oral one to suggest that neither is derived from the other; each appears to be an independent account of the same treasure find.

The treasure stories which are based on speculation, on the deduction that a member of a group has found hidden wealth are some of the most interesting of the narratives of treasure found. All of these are used to explain the suddenly improved economic status of a man or of his family. They function for the people of Atlantic Canada in the same manner George M. Foster found the treasure tale functioned

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<sup>10</sup>Constructed from notes taken of material on Tape 74-195/F1691.

<sup>11</sup>"'Youngster' Stumbles on Wealth", The Evening Telegram, St. John's, Newfoundland (21 October, 1974), p. 6.



in a Mexican peasant community.<sup>12</sup>

The economy of Atlantic Canada has had many of the characteristics of a peasant economy. There has always been a shortage of cash for most of the people in the area. This has not meant that communities were poverty-stricken, but wealth has been tied to the land or to the sea. Men have seen no way to break their pattern of life except through the arrival of wealth from outside their normal living. Since most could not count on inheritances from wealthy relatives, the only hope was to find a buried treasure.

Sir Andrew MacPhail, writing of his boyhood in Prince Edward Island, expressed the same idea as Foster:

But at Orwell, any night a boy might hear the sound of guns, and feel a rush of wind ... he might even see the phantom ship of the dead pirates. Then he would know that some searchers were disturbing their treasure; there was no other way; the efficacy of ten per cent was not understood.<sup>13</sup>

He illustrates his comment with the story of "Old Myers" who was known to have dug for treasure and suddenly began to display signs of wealth, "and had money to lend anyone who

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<sup>12</sup>George M. Foster, "Treasure Tales, and the Image of the Static Economy in a Mexican Peasant Community", Journal of American Folklore, LXXVII (1964), pp. 39-44.

<sup>13</sup>Andrew MacPhail, The Master's Wife (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, c. 1939, 1977), p. 108.



asked for it with good security."<sup>14</sup>

The feeling that nothing except a sudden windfall of wealth from somewhere outside their normal income can change their standard of living or way of life is still observable among some groups of Newfoundlanders. They do not appear to budget for the luxuries they desire but buy lottery tickets and play bingo in the hope of acquiring the extra money they want. The lottery and bingo are the modern and urban equivalents of the search for buried treasure. The appeal of the lottery and of bingo are found in other areas of Atlantic Canada, but the dependence upon them to alter economic circumstances appears to be less widespread.

Newfoundlanders of the older generations who come from rural areas speak of never seeing cash from one year's end to the next. Credit was extended by the local merchant and all income was owed to him. It was not until after Confederation with Canada and the arrival of the Family Allowance that many families had money which was not tied to their account with the merchant. The Family Allowance was not buried treasure but it relieved some of the pressure to find such a treasure as the only way of breaking out of a static economy.

People, from Newfoundland and elsewhere in Atlantic Canada, who are unsophisticated in matters of money and

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.



financing, can only explain seemingly sudden riches in terms of finding a fortune. The acquiring of wealth, or of the means to earn wealth, was explained by the older generations in terms of finding a buried treasure. The speculation that the discovery of hidden wealth permitted the change in a neighbour's circumstances seems to be confined to the period before World War II. This line of demarcation applies to the whole of Atlantic Canada.

Stories of the finding of treasure which explain the sudden wealth of neighbours in communities where any resident can predict what any other resident should be earning are found in all the provinces of Atlantic Canada. Illustrations of such stories have been chosen only from Newfoundland. This Island's oral tradition displays a gossipy tone in these narratives which is missing in the published collections from the other Atlantic Provinces. This gossipy tone, combined with the speculative element, is found in most areas of Atlantic Canada when neighbours' finances are being discussed.

The speculation that someone has found treasure may be added, almost as an epilogue, to a treasure story:

There is a small cove near Sweetheart Harbour [in Conception Bay]. It is here that a great amount of money is said to have been buried by pirates hundreds of years ago. There is no definite proof that pirates were there but the fact that several axes have been found by people who dug for the treasure does indicate that someone was there earlier. The carvings of ships on rocks also show that someone,



maybe pirates were at one time there.

The superstition which accompanies the story is that the treasure can only be found if a person digs for it at midnight. The cove is also said to be haunted so not many people have attempted to do this.

The treasure may no longer exist, however, because one person of the community became rich overnight and then left for other places. It is believed he went to the cove at midnight and found the treasure but this cannot be proven.

(Q68-476-1)

It may form the core of a story about a member of the community:

About 40 years ago a Mr. David Nettle [of Conception Bay] and his brother, who had no visible means of support, moved suddenly to Halifax where they lived comfortably for over 20 years. They were known to be digging at night on a headland ... where it was claimed there was treasure buried. In any case, they suddenly came into some source of wealth as previously it was told me, they had nothing. David is home now living with a family, but refuses to talk on the subject.

(Card 74-91/)

Speculation that a person has found a treasure can extend to men from nearby communities:

There was a family of Potwaters in Cow Bay [in southeastern Newfoundland]. My father always said there was a treasure buried in Shoal Bay between Petty Harbour and Bay Bulls. It was supposed to be Captain Kidd's, and was believed to have been by some fishermen's huts in Shoal Bay. Potwater suddenly became very prosperous. My father claims he got the treasure and left his nets and everything in Cow Bay and left the country.

The finder is often a resident of a larger and more prosperous settlement than the storyteller. This fact is seldom apparent from the story itself:

I heard, heard tell of a fellow gettin' money up here ... all right. It was buried in a place, on on that old [south] coast. But there was a place



called Look Out there, he used to work along, he used to work a lot, had a lot of ground there, anyhow he, he got a big fellow I know after a short time. Whether he got the money or not, we don't know.

(Tape 68-43/C530)

The economic status of communities is knowledge assumed by the narrator to be known by the listener, especially when both are residents of the region.

Speculation that a found treasure was the basis of a family fortune can be found not only in a community, but also among those who marry into the family:

This is the story I first heard from my parents and also from relatives in my family [in eastern Newfoundland]. However I got to know more about it after meeting my wife. Her grandfather's (who is still alive, is 85 years old and runs a tavern and is quite rich) father is the main principal in the story. My wife's mother gave me a fair account of the story.

Apparently Mr. John Schooner (Jack he is generally known by), my wife's grandfather, being quite rich and one of a family of 14 children, is many times the centre of discussion of how he came to possess so much money. "The story goes," my mother-in-law says, "that Jack's father Don apparently went looking for gold one time on The Island (whether it was in the 1800's or early 1900's she doesn't know) hearing that pirate treasure had been buried there."

"Apparently he is said to have found some of the pirate gold which greatly enhanced the family's fortunes. After this the Schooner family were considered of the upper class on The Island. All the children of the family when they spent money were said to be spending Donny's dollar."

This is quite a hushed up or secretive story. My mother-in-law says, "Chan (her husband, Jack's son and Don's grandson) laughs about it when it is mentioned and so does Mr. Schooner (Jack). True or not," she says, "I do know that Evelyn (Mr. Jack Schooner's sister) used to go to the United States to change gold."

This is a fascinating story. Obviously a lot has been left out because the facts are all not known by me. I have never asked Mr. Schooner (my



wife's grandfather) about it, as the story (as I said before) is not usually a household topic around him.

(Card 73-31/48)

One informant told of a man he knew who had become an important businessman in a Newfoundland urban industrial area. He declares that the only way his friend could have become so important was to have found one of the most talked about treasures:

Old Mr. Golden, the big fella in Urbana, old Mr. Golden, he told me, always told me dat he went in Urbana a poor man, he and his sons, poorest men was in Little Cove, down here in Little Cove, that's where he lived, down here in Little Cove. He went in dere a poor man, so poor as ever went anywhere and his sons too, he went in and went to work in Urbana. And somebody told him 'bout the money was buried on Copper Island there outside o' Seldom [Notre Dame Bay] there, on the Copper Island, there's money buried there and he leaved, he leaved to come out, he leaved to come out. And he went off he said, he went to Copper Island, he was out to Copper Island, went of dere in motor boat and was dere for best part of a day. And dey said he got de money because he come back to Urbana dey said, in a few days dey said, he had it all took over, everyting. He had, he had de hand to everyting, everyting come in Urbana he had a hand on. All the harses, he had de harses to look after, all de roads, everyting like dat, he had to look after the lot of it, dey wondered where he got the money to do it as quick. Cause he come to, went to work in de mill, went on de harnorary [?] work ya see. And by n' by way he goes down, after a few years he went down Bermuda, used to down dere wintertime, he and his wife, and be gar, he went down too often. He died on de way home, de last year he was down there, de two of 'em died on the way home. And his sons had everyting, everyting, got it now, got it now, got charge of everyting I'd say and dey wonder where dey got de money, had it so quick. And dey say das where dey got it to, dey got it on Copper Island. Dey got it, dey went away, he went away smartly afterwards and he was goin' to get it analyzed, or perhaps all gold, or perhaps 'twas silver or something like dat see. And he went away dey said, to



get it analyzed, das what we hear, dey went away for a trip and das where he went, down, way down the other country somewhere. But he said he got up like a fire, he come up like a fire, yes, that very man.  
(Tape 64-10/C31)

Fishermen who suddenly acquire a larger vessel and supplies for a general store must have found a treasure. The residents of the area know that they could not have made the money such purchases would require from the size of their fishing operation. The money must, therefore, have come from a find of treasure:

A settlement on the south east corner of Newfoundland has a story for itself.... Now the story is told that a family there who were fishermen at the time and had a large fishing skiff as they called her in which they'd make a trip of three or four days staying on that skiff as approved of course, she was fairly large, had been hearing stories about the treasure that was up on the ledges of the cliffs of Cape St. Anne. So it is told as fact that once they left to go on a fishing trip and by 'n by they came back with no fish but after they were back for a while they tied up the vessel and one of the brothers left and went to Halifax. And he was at Halifax for a long time and came back in another larger vessel and he had a full cargo of provisions, supplies and outfit for a general store, so much so that he started up a business which later bore his name, or the name of the family at any rate. And they wondered where he got this until later some other people passing along by the Cape that showed something was up on the ledges saw that something was gone, and they put two and two together in their own way and decided, well, that's where the ... Anonymities had got hold of what they said must 've been treasure because how could they afford to buy all the goods that they had to start their business with, if they hadn't got it somewhere like that. Because they had not made much of a fortune in their fishing as fishermen never did in these early days for the size of the vessel they had. But there's the story as was told to me and a good many years ago.... Tha story was told to me around the year



1913-14.... It was told to me in Fortune Bay.

[And by a person who knew this family or, eh, from the settlement?]

In such a place everybody knows everybody else and that's how the story got around.... And whether it lost anything in the telling or gained I do not know, I'm giving the facts as they were given to me.

(Tape 68-9/C483)

As can be seen from the preceding examples, the treasure story functions in the static economy of any area in the same manner found by Foster in his Mexican peasant community. The use of the presumed treasure find to open a store, to go into business and gain success through trade or commerce is the procedure followed in the north as well as in the south. Foster suggests that the role of all treasure tales in Tzintzuntzan is to account for wealth that can be accounted for in no other manner.<sup>15</sup> This conclusion is not true for the treasure stories of Atlantic Canada. Only the narratives of presumed finds of treasure by people from the immediate area function in this way. That group of stories is only a small part of the total collection of treasure stories from Atlantic Canada.

Presumed finds of treasure by strangers who came from outside the area form a far larger group of narratives. Many of these stories fit a single basic pattern: a ship was seen to come in; when she left the local people went to see what had happened and discovered a hole where a chest had been taken out of the ground. From these facts the

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<sup>15</sup>Foster, "Treasure Tales", p. 42.



people deduce a find of treasure. The stories occur throughout Atlantic Canada as well as elsewhere in North America. Baughman's references for the motif Treasure seekers find hole from which treasure has recently been removed (Baughman N563) include some from the United States but none from Canada. The basic structure of such stories is elaborated upon by conjectures concerning the source of the hidden wealth and the identities of the strangers.

Circumstantial details of the community's observations and actions also add to the story:

I was in me boyhood days [on the south coast of Newfoundland]. I see'd where the chest of gold was took up down there in the engine room [Injun room?] .... Oh I see'd where he come up to, square as that table.... I see'd where he come up to....

When I see'd it I suppose 'twas oh perhaps that was oh seventy or eighty or a hundred years, but the print was still there in my boyhood days.... The pirates, pirates buried there.... Years ago, and, and there's, there was a schooner come in and took it up, in poor Bert Barnstable's grandfather's time. This old fellow was a Foam Islander and he lived to Foam Island, oh about two miles from where he lived to and he see'd this schooner come into this day and, in the summer it was and in the fall of the year, he was trappin' then, furrin', fox catchin', and he went up, he had to go along by this place for to go up and put his traps on a place called Blank Head, and when he come through the woods, here was the, the air holes and all where they hoist up the chest of gold.... I see'd this where the chest was took up to....

They took it along with em.... The schooner what come there and picked it up, they had maps of this see. Pirates buried it years ago, understand....

I don't know, I don't know how they got it, but they took up from this place, I see'd the print of en, he was squarer than that table, where they took it up to, in the woods it was.

(Tape 67-29/C481)



The strangers who come from away are sometimes said to have maps or instructions for finding the treasure which the local people did not have. Those who leave the hole as the only evidence of their activity are simply "strangers" although they are occasionally presumed to be pirates returning to recover treasure buried many years before. They seem to have no problems with treasure guardians during their dig, although one group was challenged by the owner of the property:

Around 1909 ... [a Conception Bay man] was on his way home ... when he heard some people digging on his property. He went towards them and saw they had a hole dug. Then he shouted to them saying, "What do you think you're doing there?" Then some shots were fired over his head. He took off running but later came back with some other men. When they came back no one could be seen, only a hole and what looked like the print of a chest pulled up through the hole. The men figured it was a buried treasure but didn't know where it came from.

(Card 74-116/)

Time after time the story of such finds will speak of the perfect print left in the ground where a chest or pot had been. It is difficult enough to free a fairly large rock which lies partly on the surface without digging the soil away from it. How the strangers have raised the chest or pot straight-up so as to leave the impression intact is never explained. Nor does any story take into account the effect of time except to mention the imprint of rusty hinges in the soil.

The number of stories which tell of treasure presumed to be found because of the discovery of a hole is so great



that one begins to feel the whole landscape of Atlantic Canada must be pock-marked with these holes. They, apparently, do not refill themselves. That action is only taken by holes in which treasure still remains.

There are also strangers who come to a hamlet and ask for the loan of a boat. When the boat is returned, either a gold coin is found in the bottom<sup>16</sup> or the owner of the boat feels that he has been overpaid for the use of it.<sup>17</sup> Both actions will cause people to presume that the strangers found a treasure: sometimes a treasure that was unknown, at other times a treasure for which the local people would not dig.

From Newfoundland, Nova Scotia<sup>18</sup> and the Magdalen Islands<sup>19</sup> comes a story of the unknown persons who arrive and asked for the use of a house for the night. They may either ask the owners to leave or to remain upstairs during the night. Later, evidence of digging is found and the shape of the hole suggests that a chest or a barrel of treasure has been removed. One family on Newfoundland's

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<sup>16</sup>MS 68-25/p. 181. See above Chapter IV Where Treasure is Buried for full text of story.

<sup>17</sup>G. J. Casey Collection, Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland. From his informant #8, c. 1968.

<sup>18</sup>Creighton, Lunenburg, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup>Chiasson, Îles de la Madeleine, p. 121.



west coast returned to find that the removal "of a chest or something" was emphasized by the hole cut in the kitchen floor under the stove.<sup>20</sup> On the Northern Peninsula the owners remained in the house and heard the digging; the next morning there was a two gallon jar full of money waiting for them.<sup>21</sup> Usually the strangers involved in these stories arrive and depart by steamer.

Ships play a role in stories of presumed finds of treasure by those from outside the area. Either the visitors arrive on their own yacht<sup>22</sup> or they hire a ship to take them out to a treasure site.<sup>23</sup> Usually the places from which these people come is known. The homes of outsiders who come to dig for a community's treasure are also frequently known, especially when they are known to arrive and leave after a stay during which the residents find out what they are doing, or proposing to do.

The outsiders and strangers from away who are presumed to have left with a treasure are credited with coming from certain places. In the Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland, those who are residents of the province if not

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<sup>20</sup>Tape 74-195/F1685.

<sup>21</sup>Casey Collection. From his informant #8, c. 1968.

<sup>22</sup>Tape 68-9/C466. From the west coast of Newfoundland.

<sup>23</sup>Tape 64-13/C79. An American millionaire hires a "boat here in the trade, she was a yacht". From northern Newfoundland.



the community are said to come from the cities, from the centres of commerce. Those who are foreigners are usually said to be Americans. In Newfoundland, English searchers also turn up and leave happily, presumably with found wealth. In the Magdalen Islands treasures have been lost both to the Americans and to men from Arichat, Nova Scotia.<sup>24</sup> So frequently are the Americans the people who coming looking for the treasures of Atlantic Canada that they begin to assume the stature of villains. When they do not arrive on their own for a search, they accompany native-born Newfoundlanders or Maritimers and the success of the search is usually said to be assured. A treasure from upper New York State, however, was lost to some men from Montreal.<sup>25</sup>

The clever outsiders who take "our" treasure are always from a culture seen as wealthier and more knowledgeable than the one in which the treasure is located. They must come from at least a full day's journey away whether it be by land or by sea. It may be further away but not closer. Because much of the transportation along the Atlantic and Gulf of St. Lawrence shores was by boat the distances travelled in small vessels during a day's run seem very short by today's concepts of distances to be covered

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<sup>24</sup> Chiasson, Îles de la Madeleine, p. 121.

<sup>25</sup> Rowena B. Peterson, "Where Lake and River Meet", New York Folklore Quarterly, IV (1948), 123.



by a day's journey.

The fascination of stories of treasures presumed to have been found by strangers is not easily explained. Part of the interest lies in the mysterious holes found after visitors have quietly come and left. The constant occurrence of this type of narrative makes the tell-tale hole seem trite when a large number of stories are examined. The event is never stale to those who know of only one or two such instances and hear of them taking place in their own villages.

There appears to be an ambivalence of attitude in the stories of the men from larger centres who come and take a treasure. There is an implied resentment that those who are already living in a culture that is wealthier than their own should take away the treasure which might be the means of some local man breaking away from a static economy. Even when the residents of a community do not choose to dig it themselves they still have an option on action as long as the treasure is not known to have been taken away. Though the loss may be resented there is at the same time a satisfaction that a local tradition of buried treasure has been confirmed. It is doubtful that any storyteller could accurately define even his own attitude to these events, let alone the feelings of his listeners.

All stories of found treasure serve to prove to those who will hear that buried treasures do exist. They serve



to support the credibility of other narratives about buried treasure.



## CHAPTER XI

### A WILLING SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

The treasure stories and beliefs of Atlantic Canada are rooted in reality. The treasure of which they tell is the gold, silver and jewels of the Law of Treasure Trove with its threats of government claims and of punishment for the possession of treasure. To the basic definition of treasure, the folk have added liquor.<sup>1</sup> These valuables were hidden by human beings known to have frequented the region over the past four centuries: pirates, Acadians, French and earlier settlers, all assumed to be rich. Which of these groups is believed to have hidden the hoard varies from area to area. The treasure is believed to be buried or hidden in distinctive topographical formations, often very close to the settlement where the story is told.

From these realistic roots, however, there grows a tradition which includes many elements of the uncanny and the supernatural. These occur in stories of and beliefs concerning the ways to find the treasure, how to claim it for one's own, the dream of treasure, the treasure guardian and

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<sup>1</sup>To be treasure, this liquor must be imported. Home-made wines and spirits do not count.



cursed treasure. Most of these elements are part of the international traditions of treasure. The oral traditions of buried treasure collected from Atlantic Canada, however, suggest that the emphasis given some of these beliefs and practices by folklore publications is not that of the folk themselves, as was noted above in the chapters on the dream of treasure and on cursed treasure.

In the oral tradition, stories of treasures which have been found, or are presumed to have been found are, again, based in a realistic world. Many of these stories of found treasure serve as explanations for changed economic circumstances, as did those discussed by Foster in "Treasure Tales, and the Image of the Static Economy in a Mexican Peasant Community".<sup>2</sup> Atlantic Canada, too, has what may be regarded as a static economy, but only a small percentage of its treasure stories tell of found treasure. Most of its treasure stories and beliefs are of treasures which were not found; some are of treasures for which people would not even look.

The lack of money in a subsistence or trading economy may well explain the popularity of treasure stories in Atlantic Canada. The feeling that the bonds of a static economy can only be broken by the finding of a fortune encourages the desire to believe, despite the improbabilities,

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<sup>2</sup>George M. Foster, "Treasure Tales, and the Image of the Static Economy in a Mexican Peasant Community", Journal of American Folklore, LXXVII (1964), 39-44.



in the many treasures said to be buried at a multiplicity of locations. This desire is sufficient

to transfer from our inward nature[s] a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the normal, which constitutes ... faith.<sup>3</sup>

The willing suspension of disbelief for the normal found in the treasure traditions of Atlantic Canada permits the acceptance of practices and explanations which, were treasure not involved, would be discounted. They include the improbabilities of the great wealth of earlier settlers, of pirates having buried as much gold in the area as the stories say, and of the suitability of some of the burial sites themselves. These improbabilities seem more the matter of fantasy than do the magical and supernatural elements found in the tradition.

Of course, many of the supernatural happenings of the treasure stories from Atlantic Canada would not be recognized as supernatural were treasure not involved; they are happenings which the treasure searchers would recognize as normal were they not expecting the abnormal. Belief that treasure is associated with the uncanny permits a willing suspension of disbelief for normal happenings, and practical considerations are suspended in favour of magical methods for

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<sup>3</sup>Samuel T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria [1817], Criticism: The Major Texts, ed. Walter Jackson Bate (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., c. 1952), p. 376.



finding and claiming treasures.

The breaking of taboos which are almost impossible to keep and encounters with the guardian of the treasure are often used to explain the failure of the searchers to find the treasure which is believed to be in a certain spot. These magical and supernatural elements are a part of the fantasy factor in treasure stories. The blame laid on them for a searcher's failure to find a treasure may well be a projection of a secret realistic recognition that no treasure may exist to be found.

Some stories tell of people who have apparently recognized the fantasy in treasure narratives without the need to test it; they do not search for buried treasures. Other stories tell of those who searched once but did not try again; for them the recognition, consciously or subconsciously, of the improbabilities involved had to come after the practical test.<sup>4</sup>

While some supernatural manifestations such as ghosts are regarded in parts of Atlantic Canada as part of the everyday world, the element of fantasy in the treasure stories aids in the extension of the natural into the supernatural. In fact, the treasure guardian in many of the narratives

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<sup>4</sup>The practical test is much like that which little girls give frogs. They do not really believe that a frog will turn into a handsome prince, but they will often kiss one or two in the hope that the change will occur.



functions like the ogre in märchen. He is a scary figure<sup>5</sup> but can only frighten the searchers. He cannot harm them, although they may harm themselves in their terror.

As against this, when the treasure guardian is associated with cursed treasure it leaves the realm of fantasy and becomes part of a factual tradition: those who search for treasure often come to harm and those who gain it suffer misfortunes.<sup>6</sup> Stories of instances of ill-luck connected with treasure hunting are told with names and places, thereby adding emphasis to the factual element.

The tradition of cursed treasure is found in the unpublished oral material from Newfoundland and has been noted elsewhere in Atlantic Canada. It seems to have been largely ignored in published collections of treasure stories from other areas.

One way to avoid the curse is to dream of the treasure before going to look for it. The dream of treasure forms nearly a third of the texts from oral sources in this region.

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<sup>5</sup>Dr. J. D. A. Widdowson of the University of Sheffield is presently working on a book dealing with threatening and frightening figures. It will be a briefer version of his Ph.D. dissertation for Memorial University of Newfoundland, December, 1972.

<sup>6</sup>Although these stories are told as factual happenings and are not part of the fantasy element of the treasure tradition, they may embody an older feeling of punishment for infringement of the traditional code of right and wrong. See Seán Ó Súilleabháin, A Handbook of Irish Folklore (Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, 1963), pp. 434-438.



It is less fully represented in stories from the eastern United States, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Most stories from these areas focus on the treasure which is found through a dream.

In Atlantic Canada many stories are told of dreams of treasure in which nothing is found. Five separate patterns of narratives concerned with the dream of treasure were noted: (1) the treasure is discovered and recovered by the dreamer as the result of the dream; (2) the dreamer discovers the treasure but loses it; (3) the treasure is found by others because of the knowledge of the dreamer; (4) the treasure is not found despite a dream of treasure; and (5) the person who dreams of a treasure decides not to search for it. The only extant motif in either Thompson or Baughman is for the treasure found through a dream.

Some people who have a dream of treasure will not look for the gold. This lack of action may be, as Dr. Creighton suggests, because they do not want to lose their dream, but few such dreamers have actually said so.

The conscious decision to take no action, the election not to dig, is found not only with people who have dreamed of treasure. It is also found with those who fear the treasure guardian too much to risk a possible encounter, as well as with those who fear the curse they believe is placed on a treasure. Some people will tell of a treasure, say they know where it is, but will not have dug for it.



Which of the above reasons is the controlling factor, or if there is any other, cannot be determined. Collectors have failed to ask such people why they would not dig.

This study has shown some of the topics which interest the folk of Atlantic Canada when they tell of treasures. The two factors which the people themselves find most interesting are the dream of treasure and stories of the treasure guardian. One or the other of these topics, if not both, forms the basis of most of the treasure stories and beliefs found in Atlantic Canada. Most of the longer stories are told of the treasure guardian, with special emphasis on how a man was sacrificed to watch the buried gold.

Although some of the narratives examined for this study were very brief, it was found that in the unpublished oral material few were as succinct as published collections would suggest. Many could be condensed to a few lines, yet the folk seldom forget the details which seem to be ignored by the collectors of published material. The homey details found in many of the stories from oral tradition are often forgotten when a story appears in print. Literary reworkings of treasure stories concentrate on the wrong details.

Once one has examined a body of treasure material from the oral tradition, he can quickly recognize the "literary" treatment. It will usually emphasize the value of the treasure, give an historical background of the supposed burier of the wealth, and give the mechanical details of



of the search. The search will take place far from home and will be the basis of an adventure story. The uncanny and the supernatural will either be ignored or treated very lightly. The emphasis in the literary treasure stories is on entertainment. The emphasis in the treasure stories told by the folk is essentially informative.

One element of the treasure tradition of Atlantic Canada which has not been noted but which should be mentioned is that these stories belong to an adult tradition. They are told by adults to adults. Children may be allowed to listen. Informants tell of first hearing a treasure story when they were a child, but do not appear to have told it until until they were part of the adult world. Nor do storytellers speak of searching for treasure until they have reached the mid-teens. The only specific treasure item recovered as an item of children's lore was the game described above in the Prologue.

The treasure tradition of Atlantic Canada is basically a realistic one. Many of the storytellers are aware of the questions listeners will want answered. These are the same questions an investigative reporter is taught to ask: what? who? where? when? why? how? and to what end? The unskilled storyteller will wait for his audience to ask some of these questions. When a collector does not, he does not get a full story, especially if he is presumed to know some of the underlying beliefs which help to shape it.



The treasure stories and beliefs of this region are so firmly based in realism that the willing suspension of disbelief for the normal, the ignoring of practicality and probability, when treasure is involved, produces an interesting tension between fantasy and fact. It is this admixture of fact and fantasy which characterizes the treasure traditions of Atlantic Canada.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> It may well be that close study of the treasure traditions of other regions would show the same admixture: fantasy in a basically factual tradition.



## EPILOGUE

## "Waterhouse Cove"

In Tickle Cove Harbour the attractions are few,  
But it's lately been brought to the public view,  
And of late there's a rush to beat Hart Bay of old,  
For in Waterhouse Cove they are now digging for gold.

It was late in November, the twenty-third day,  
When the clanging of crowbars re-echoed the bay,  
And men are with shovels and maddocks galore,  
The diggers arrived near Waterhouse shore.

Two men from St. John's you all know quite well,  
It's not my intention their names for to tell.  
With bundles of fuses and some dynamite,  
Arrived on the beach to go digging that night.

The next on the scene were some Tickle Cove men,  
Who, taking their shovels at once did begin,  
They threw off their coats like miners of old,  
And soon had off the sod in digging for gold.

They dug up great stone and charcoal also,  
Much rust reached the surface.  
They were raised up in spirit with joy of it too,  
When a monster hatchet appeared in their view.

They dug up tarred paper right from the ore mine.  
And bright shining gravel, much nails and birch rind.  
And water-washed beach rocks long lain a dise-ways,  
Supposed to be buried in old pirates' days.

It was Captain Kidd's treasure of that they were sure,  
They would soon have the chest, yes, perhaps three or four.  
They dug with a vigour that would shame a wild cat  
When all of a sudden they struck something flat.

It was iron no doubt, it was scrape off the clay.  
Each man plyed his shovel to haul it away.  
For the chest sounded hollow, it was certainly gold.  
It was Captain Kidd's treasure five hundred years old.



Each man suggested to raise up the thing,  
 The handles did bend and the shovels did ring.  
 When it was raised up, each man had to stop,  
 For instead of a chest, it was a piece of a pot.

All hopes were now blasted, it could be seen all around  
 Each man dropped his shovel to rest on the ground  
 And many weird stories of what they had seen,  
 Were told the next morning on Waterhouse green.

Someone saw a Frenchman out on Blow Cliff.  
 And others saw a crowd sailing down in a skiff.  
 But the keen disappointment was not soon forgot,  
 The night they unearthed a piece of a pot.

If you were in the district you were sure to survive,  
 It would do your heart good when it started to rise,  
 For the merchants are fitting as they've done of old,  
 The strength of their finding the Waterhouse gold.

From a keg of molasses to a bundle of fuse,  
 They will hand it all out when they hear the good news,  
 From a stick of tobacco to a "Waterloo" stone [stove],  
 You can take what you want on the Waterhouse gold.

It isn't all over or so I've been told,  
 It's spreading like measles all over the bay.  
 They are coming from Head Cliff in dozens and scores,  
 To dig for the money on Waterhouse shore.

Oh, the verses are finished, the gold is not found.  
 There's a man very sore that they dug up his ground.  
 And the merchants regret that they had held it down,  
 Until Captain Kidd's cage lifted over the ground.

So take my advice and go home with your picks,  
 If not they'll be stolen, you'll be in a fix.  
 Let alone the poor fellows, may their spirits still roam,  
 For there's nothing but beach rocks in Waterhouse Cove.

(MS 72-75/pp. 17-20)

This song was composed by one man but collected from  
 another. The collector commented:

[The song] has recently been sung by Mr. X from whom  
 I obtained it. Actually it is quite possible that  
 some of the words are not the original because Mr. X  
 seems to have forgotten many of them.

(MS 72-75/p. 17)



## SOURCES - OTHER THAN PRINT

Coldwell Collection. Transcripts of stories, comments and miscellaneous notes obtained through conversations with individuals from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Maine. Presently in the personal possession of the writer. Informants were relatives, friends and casual acquaintances. Material 1968-1974.

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NYFQ = New York Folklore Quarterly.  
PFLS = Publications of the Folk-Lore Society.  
PTFS = Publications of the Texas Folklore Society.  
SFQ = Southern Folklore Quarterly.  
TDA = Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association  
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