

4 March, 1938.

Mr. Clayton I Hart
213 4th Street, N.E.
Roanoke City, Va.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of February 26th inclosing a cryptogram is acknowledged.

The cipher message, a copy of which you forwarded, is taken from a document known as the Beale Papers, published in Lynchburg, Virginia in 1835. There are many reasons too numerous and complicated to go into in this letter for believing your cryptogram to be a hoax. It is thought that the aforementioned publication was printed for the express purpose of selling copies of it for profit, the cryptogram therein being merely a succession of numbers which did not have any significance.

The lure of buried treasure and the possibility of finding the same by the solution of the cryptogram was, it is believed, employed by the author as a device for promoting the sale of the pamphlet.

Copies of the cryptogram which you forwarded have come to my attention from many different sources. I know to a certainty that copies of this cryptogram have been sold to persons who were given no knowledge of the existence of the pamphlet from which it was taken. This cryptogram is to be regarded in the same light as the myriad "treasure maps" which are sold in the southern states purporting to come down from pirate days and to reveal the location of hidden treasure. Such maps, when examined, have almost invariably been proved to be forgeries. It is likewise believed that the cryptogram which you forwarded is nothing more or less than a hoax foisted upon an unsuspecting public but which has, thanks to the double lure of buried treasure and cryptographic form, persisted throughout the years since it first appeared in 1835.

Very truly yours,

E. S. FRIEDMAN.

Address:
Division of Intelligence
U. S. Coast Guard
Washington, D. C.