

THE MYSTERY OF THE CORAL CASTLE IN FLORIDA UNRAVELED

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"I have discovered the secrets of the pyramids, I have found out how the Egyptians and the ancient builders from Peru, Yucatan and Asia, with only primitive tools, raised and set in place block of stones weighing many tons," the constructor of the Coral Castle in Florida, Edward Leedskalnin wrote in 1930.

Drawn by this text and the impressive megalithic park, it was almost twenty years ago that I wrote about Ed's achievements for the first time. At the time, my text was a result of researching various Internet sources. Among others, there were statements claiming that 'Ed had found how to channel the force of gravity using Earth's magnetism, applying hyperdimensional physics.'

And, indeed, it was hard to come up with a rational explanation of how a man, 150 centimeters tall and weighing 55 kg, could work, transport and erect a megalithic park consisting of more than a thousand tons of material.

As part of my attempt to explain this mystery, in early 2017, I found myself at the site. I paid a visit to the Coral Castle, which Ed Leedskalnin had built between 1923 and his death in 1951.

I am not certain if Ed discovered the secrets of pyramid construction, but it seems to me that there are fully rational explanations for Ed's achievement.

Edward Leedskalnin was born in Latvia on August 10, 1887. When he was thirty, he was about to get married, immediately before immigrating to America. However, one day before the wedding, his never-to-be wife, sixteen-year-old Agnes Skuvst (according to other data Hermine Lusis), refused to marry him claiming that he was 'too old for her'.

Ed arrived in America in 1913, broken-hearted, and over a very short period lived in several states. From Canada he went to California, then to Texas and Oregon. In Portland (Ohio), he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and he received a recommendation to move to Florida because of the climate. There he settled for the rest of his life.

In a little town called Florida City, he bought an acre of land (4,000 square meters) for 12 dollars. There he began the project of his life: the construction of a megalithic park dedicated to his unintended love who never came with him to America.

Everyone who wrote things about Ed or knew him could agree on one thing: no one ever saw him working, carving, carrying, or lifting stones or setting them in the desired place. That was why many said that Ed had superhuman powers, as he was capable of transporting stone blocks weighing many tons without any help and without cranes or any similar equipment. Ed simply claimed that he "knew the secret of the builders of pyramids, and if he could master it, then everyone else is capable of it too."

Ed constructed his stone park in 1923 and called it the 'Ed's Place'. He charged an entrance fee of ten cents. However, Florida City is the southernmost continental city in America, in a remote area with few visitors.

Thirteen years later, Ed decided to move more up north to today's City of Homestead, south of Miami. According to one version, the reason for relocation was that an urban development was scheduled to be built just next to his park, which would prevent him from the construction of new exhibits, since he did not want to be observed while working. Another version pointed out that his park was simply too far from main traffic routes, so he could not earn enough.

Ed bought a 12 times larger lot and for ten dollars only. Abandoned at the time, the lot soon became very attractive, because it was near the starting point of the highway US 1 that was under construction.

Ed faced a great challenge. He had to relocate the entire stone park from one location to the other. He did not want any help, equipment or anyone present while he worked. He started the relocation in 1936 and it took an entire year.

Orval Irwin, Ed's neighbor at the time, was a witness of the relocation. He was a fourteen-year-old boy who drove a truck. He arranged with Ed to transport all his tools and equipment from one location to the other. Later, Orval wrote a book ('Mr. Can't Is Dead') in which he described in detail what he knew about the famous Latvian.

The transportation of tools took two days. Amongst a multitude of homemade tools, iron and wooden parts made by Ed stood out. Winches, rollers, pulleys, leverages, saws... The largest piece of equipment was a massive pine log, cut at the height of one meter, complete with its root system. Ed used this as a fulcrum for lifting loads.

Orval helped Ed load and offload the tools. And this was the only help that Ed was known to have received during his endeavor. At the end, Ed paid Orval two dollars as agreed. They were both satisfied. Ed was able to continue with the construction of his second park, and Orval, after deducting 20 cents for the fuel, had earned \$1,80 – which was the equivalent of two days' wages of an adult.

'Ed's Place' became the 'Rock Gate', and nowadays it is globally known as the Coral Castle. Most of its installations were created since 1923. He worked the limestone created by coral

sediments in the Florida soil. A long time ago, Florida lay at the bottom of the sea and once the Atlantic receded, an abundance of coral rock remained in the soil.

Ed used to work during the night by the light of a lantern. As there was no street lighting in his neighborhood, he had no visitors during the night.

At the entrance to his stone park there was a three-ton stone block shaped like a triangle. Beautifully worked on all sides, it was positioned several centimeters above the ground, closing the entrance to the park. A bell hung above. When visitors rang the bell, and if Ed had time for them, he came down to the gate, welcomed them and invited them to come in. He would move the metal barrier from the stone block and he would ask the visitors to push the block. When they were prepared to push the block with their maximum force, the stone moved without making any resistance. After they entered, Ed would stop the block, which weighed many tons, with just his little finger. This was an excellent introduction to the miracles that awaited the guests in the park.

To wit, Ed had drilled exactly through the center of the block, inserted a tube (an axle shaft of a Ford T model), placed it on a Coca-Cola bottle and, thus balanced perfectly, he was able to move it without much of an effort.

In his first park, Ed charged the entrance fee of ten cents per visitor. After the relocation, the suggested donation was 25 cents.

When asked why he had built the stone park he would answer: 'It was for my Sweet Sixteen'. Later on, after the relocation, the park's theme partially changed and became more of a tourist attraction and less the longing for the love once lost.

Ed claimed he had no need for insurance of the stone castle. Apparently, nothing inside could burn. As for the visitors, he hung a sign: "Exercise caution. Everything you do is at your own risk."

The Coral Castle has the actual look of a real castle. A thousand tons of blocks were used to construct the walls, a tower, stone furniture and stone art. At the entrance to the courtyard, one comes across two stone armchairs, weighing 500 kilograms each. They show no traces of work on the stone with a chisel or hammer. It seems as if these armchairs grew directly from the earth. When you sit in one, it would start rocking. These rocking armchairs are another example of Ed's affinity for the perfect balance.

Going on, one comes across three armchairs intended for reading. They are placed on three different locations coinciding with different cardinal points at a 90-degree angle, facing one another. Since Ed had no electricity, he used daylight for reading. As the sun moved across the horizon, he would switch the armchairs. They are comfortable and of universal dimensions, which he achieved with a semicircular shape. Only the central armchair was distinctive because of the two stone bars that Ed used as foot rests. They are a reminder of his small stature, merely a meter and a half. Each armchair was hewn out of a single block of stone.

Next, there is a large table with stone rocking armchairs around it. The table is shaped like Florida. At the bottom part, he drilled a hole to represent Florida's largest lake, the Okeechobee Lake. While giving his tours, Ed rocked the first armchair and then passing by the others he rocked them all. Standing in front of the amazed visitors, he pointed to the armchair at the head of the table and said:

"This is the armchair of the Governor of Florida, and the others are for the senators. While seated in the rocking chairs, they would think how to raise taxes in the state."

Ed frequently visited the local library and read books on astronomy, mathematics, physics and geography. This explains his installation called 'Polaris Telescope'. This installation consists of two stone blocks. The bigger one is situated six meters outside the walls of the Coral Castle. The block is eight meters tall and weighs 18 tons. The engraved number '1940' on it represents the year when this megalith was finished and erected. Near the top, there is a narrow slanted hole in the stone. The primary block of the telescope, placed in the castle's wall, also has a hole. When one looks at the sky through these two holes, the North Star (Polaris) appears. After longer observation, Ed found out that the North Star shifted a bit in the sky. He crossed two wires to form four small squares. The North Star moved inside these four squares, depending on the season. Ed observed the movement of the North Star in the night sky with considerable attention.

Thanks to this unique telescope, Ed was also able to determine the movement of our planet Earth. This motivated him to create another brilliant and original stone invention: the Sundial. It was calibrated at noon during the winter and summer solstices.

To wit, in a concave stone he drew extended ellipses, and inside he engraved the hours of the day from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Ed considered this interval appropriate for the work that a man does, and the hours before and after this interval were insignificant, and, therefore, they are not found on the Sundial. The semi-ellipses represented a full hour and they were numbered; the other half of the ellipses was unmarked, representing half-hours. Above the stone bay, he placed a metal plate ('an indicator') inside another stone block. The shadow cast by the metal plate on the Sundial showed the exact time. Without much practice, everyone is able to determine the exact time on this clock. Ed stated that the Sundial had better precision than any watches his visitors had and very often he corrected the time they had.

The first coral-stone rocking chair that Ed created weighed 350 kilograms, and it is distinctive in its elegance. Ed had a particular regard for this chair and he placed it on the stone block above the Sun Clock, at the center of the Coral Castle, where everyone could see it.

The most photographed sculptures of Ed's castle are those with the Moon's theme. To wit, Ed shaped three blocks: one as the first quarter of the Moon and on the other side he placed the last quarter of the Moon, and the two sculptures weigh 18 tons each. In the center there is the sculpture of the full Moon with the impressive weight of 23 tons. Ed placed a fish pool in front of these sculptures. On one side of the pool there was a higher wall, used by tall people to lean on and take photographs, and on the other side there was a lower wall for children and smaller people. Today, it is a wishing pool into which coins are tossed. The money is used for charity.

Other very famous themes from the castle are found on the east wall. These are the planets that Ed sculpted. One of them is Mars, with a plant placed on the top of the stone. For Ed this had a symbolic meaning that there was life on that planet. The next was Saturn with its rings. Lastly, another (half) Moon, six meters tall and again weighing 23 tons. Originally, Ed created them in Florida City and later moved them to the Coral Castle.

Ed considered that the home is every man's throne. Thus, he made himself a (two-ton block) throne, another for his imaginary beloved wife, a baby cradle and an ugly and low chair for the 'mother-in-law'. It is the most uncomfortable stone armchair in the castle. It seems that the role of the 'mother-in-law' has not changed across time and epochs.

In addition to having no electricity, Ed also had no water. He dug a well in solid stone. He made a staircase and installed a mobile stone circle as a fence. Ed used the lower levels of the well for storage and cooling; in other words, as a refrigerator. In the morning Ed collected the water from the well and filled the small bathtub carved in the rock. By noon, the water would be heated by Florida's sunshine and he would take a bath. The tub's dimensions reminded me again of Ed's small stature and of this magnificent self-imposed challenge of building this megalithic park. In the immediate vicinity, there is a hole in the rock that, filled with water, served him as a mirror for shaving.

The eight-ton gate, which was not in operation when I visited in 2017, was very impressive. A nearly five-meter-long block, half a meter thick and two and a half meters wide, could apparently be moved with just one finger. Ed knew perfectly well the principles of balance and leveling. He placed this block between the walls, less than one centimeter away and moved it effortlessly. He inserted a narrow tube through the center and attached an automobile gear wheel to the bottom.

How he achieved a perfect balance of this imperfectly proportioned block remains a mystery. When the gate 'broke down' in 1986, it took six people and a 50-ton crane to move the block and to establish that the cause of failure was rust, eating away at the iron wheel.

The tallest block in the entire castle is the Obelisk. It stands 13 meters tall, two meters in the ground, and weighs 26 tons. The hole near the top is shaped like the Latvian Star. Several engraved years commemorate the dates of Ed's birth, his migration to America, the year when he shaped this block and when he relocated it to Homestead. And again, we wonder how this little man, almost barehandedly, could have worked, moved and erected these giant blocks of rock?

Ed's Love Table was mentioned in Ripley's collection 'Believe it or not'. With its 2,300 kilograms, it is the largest heart-shaped love table in the world. It has been there for 80 years, and today it is occasionally used for Valentine's Day weddings.

This is not the end of the list of Ed's miracles. There are the two-directional armchairs (in which partners would face each other), a stone barbecue, a corner for disobedient children, a bedroom, chairs for the family of bears from the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, an umbrella chair and others.

A two-story tower stands at the southeastern junction of two walls. The total weight of stones used for its construction is 243 tons. Individual blocks that make up the walls weigh between four and nine tons. Here, Ed used cement as a binder to reinforce the structure in case of a hurricane. His tool room is on the ground floor and he lived in a chamber upstairs.

There are sixteen steps to climb to reach his apartment (a reminder of his Sweet Sixteen?). His bed of wooden planks was on a chain, so he could raise it after use. Other original items in this room are the jars he used, items of clothing, shelves for storage and a rocking chair. A rectangular box with wires was his 'homemade-radio', which he assembled himself. A pipe, suspended from the ceiling and leading to the stove, was soaked in kerosene in the middle. The reason: if insects tried to reach the food on the stove, they would drown in kerosene before reaching it.

Attempting to answer the question of how Ed Leedskalnin had worked, transported, erected and set in place thousands of tons of stone blocks during his life, I will consider three aspects:

- The original tools that are found in his tower,
- texts written by his friend Orval Irwin (the book 'Mr. Can't is Dead') and
- partially open sections of the quarry, located in the vicinity of the walls of Ed's Coral Castle.

As mentioned above, among the tools of Ed Leedskalnin there were winches, rollers, pulleys, leverages and saws. Ed used metal saws to slowly and exactly carve stone blocks. He used levers and piled rocks to slowly lift them and continue to carve. When a block was carved, he used winches, chains and levers to raise them. He would place smaller stones to the sides to move the blocks.

Above the blocks and chains, he placed the massive, strong and tall wooden tripods. They served as cranes. By combining several chains and winches he increased their capacity/tonnage. He would switch the position of chains from one side of the blocks to the other to move them in the desired direction.

Today, the tools and equipment that remained in Ed's room represent only 10 percent of what he had between 1920 and 1950. What remained could fit in a trunk of any bigger car. Originally, it took two trips for a truck to transport the lot during the relocation from Florida City to Homestead.

Before acquiring the property in Homestead, Ed made sure that enough stone material was available. Almost the entire ground of South Florida consists of limestone created from corals. In effect, coral rock can still be found even today, 30 centimeters below the topsoil.

Ed had cut the stone with great care and raised it to form a wall around his stone exhibits. He did not use any binding material, but the blocks fit together perfectly. Sunbeams cannot penetrate

between the blocks. In 1982, the hurricane 'Andrew', a hurricane of the highest category 5, directly hit the Coral Castle but none of the stone monuments shifted in position in any way.

In his book on the Coral Castle, Orval Irwin presented a series of illustrations, which finally revealed Ed's construction secrets. Self-made tools and equipment were only ancillary to Ed's genius, persistence, patience and careful and hard decade-long work.

Ed fell ill when he was 64. In November 1951, he placed a sign "Going to the Hospital" over the entrance to the Coral Castle and he took a bus, to the 'Jackson Memorial Hospital' in Miami.

28 days later, in December 1951, Ed died of kidney failure.

His autopsy did not show any traces of tuberculosis. He was misdiagnosed in his youth and ended up in Florida because of the wrong diagnosis.

The Coral Castle was added to the National Registry of Historic Places in Florida in 2011.







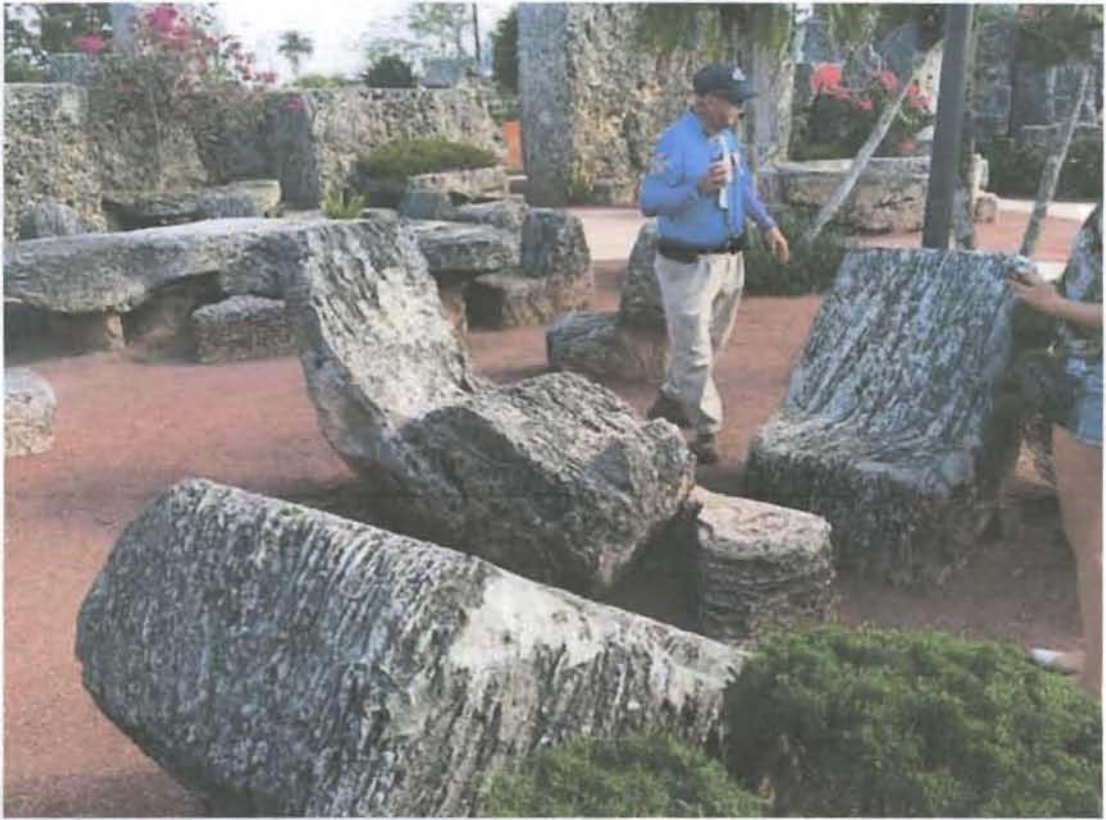




















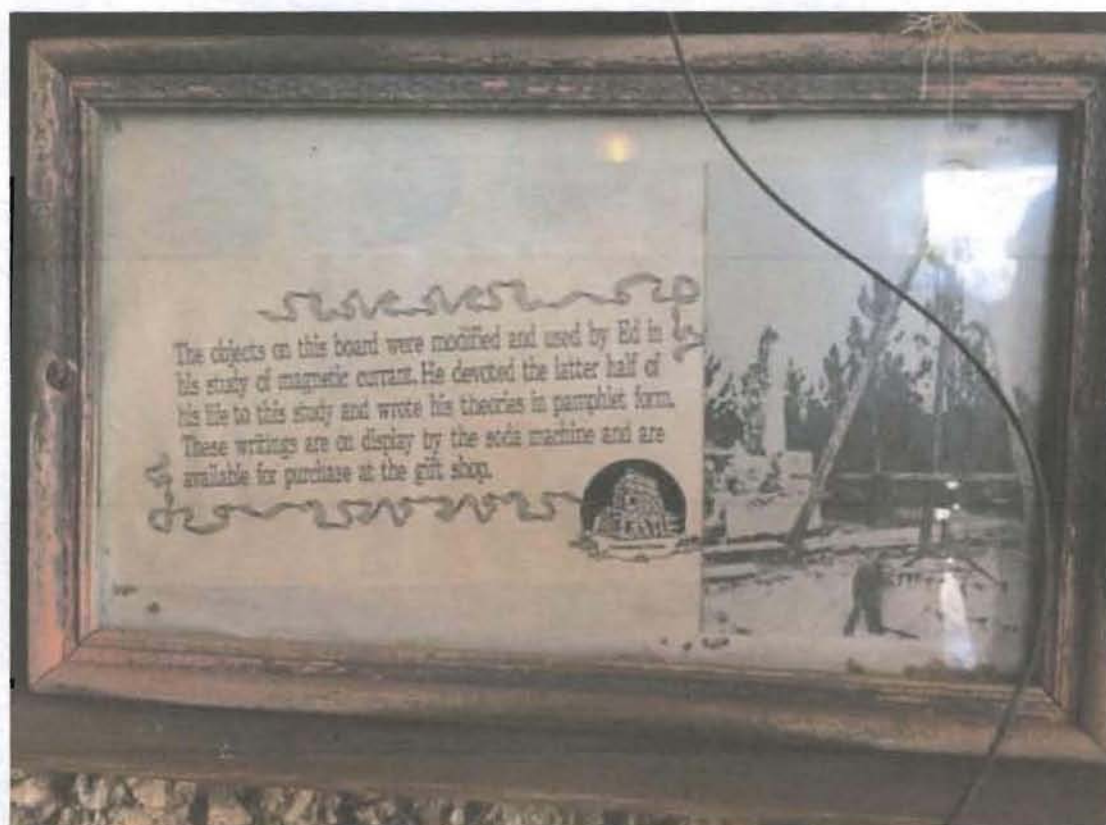
THE MOST FREQUENT QUESTION OVERHEARD HERE IS: "HOW DID ONE MAN WITHOUT ASSISTANCE CONSTRUCT THE CORAL CASTLE?" THE ANSWER IS:—WITH AN UNCANNY KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAWS OF—LEVERAGE AND BALANCE,—ENGINEERING, AND SCULPTURE,—AND WITH THE AID OF SIMPLE TOOLS SUCH AS METAL FALLS, (BLOCK AND TACKLE) ROLLERS, JACKS, WEDGES, SLINGS, CABLES SLEDGES AND CHISELS. AND ABOVE ALL, INFINITE PATIENCE AND A TREMENDOUS IMAGINATION.

THE TOOLS DISPLAYED HERE—MANY MADE FROM OLD AUTO PARTS—WERE USED BY EDWARD LEEDSKALNIN IN BUILDING THE CORAL CASTLE.

WHILE TODAY THE CORAL CASTLE IS A PRICELESS WORK OF ART IT IS BELIEVED THAT LEEDSKALNIN'S COST WAS MINIMAL SINCE HE EXCAVATED THE CORAL ROCK FROM THE PREMISES AND RECYCLED OLD AUTO PARTS.

HE LIVED ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF THIS BUILDING IN A VERY SPARTAN FASHION, HAD NO ELECTRICITY OR RUNNING WATER. HE SPENT TIME IN LATER YEARS IN THE STUDY OF MAGNETISM, ASTRONOMY AND RADIO, AND WAS SEEN OFTEN IN THE HOMESTEAD PUBLIC LIBRARY. HE DIED IN DEC. 1951 AT THE AGE OF 64.

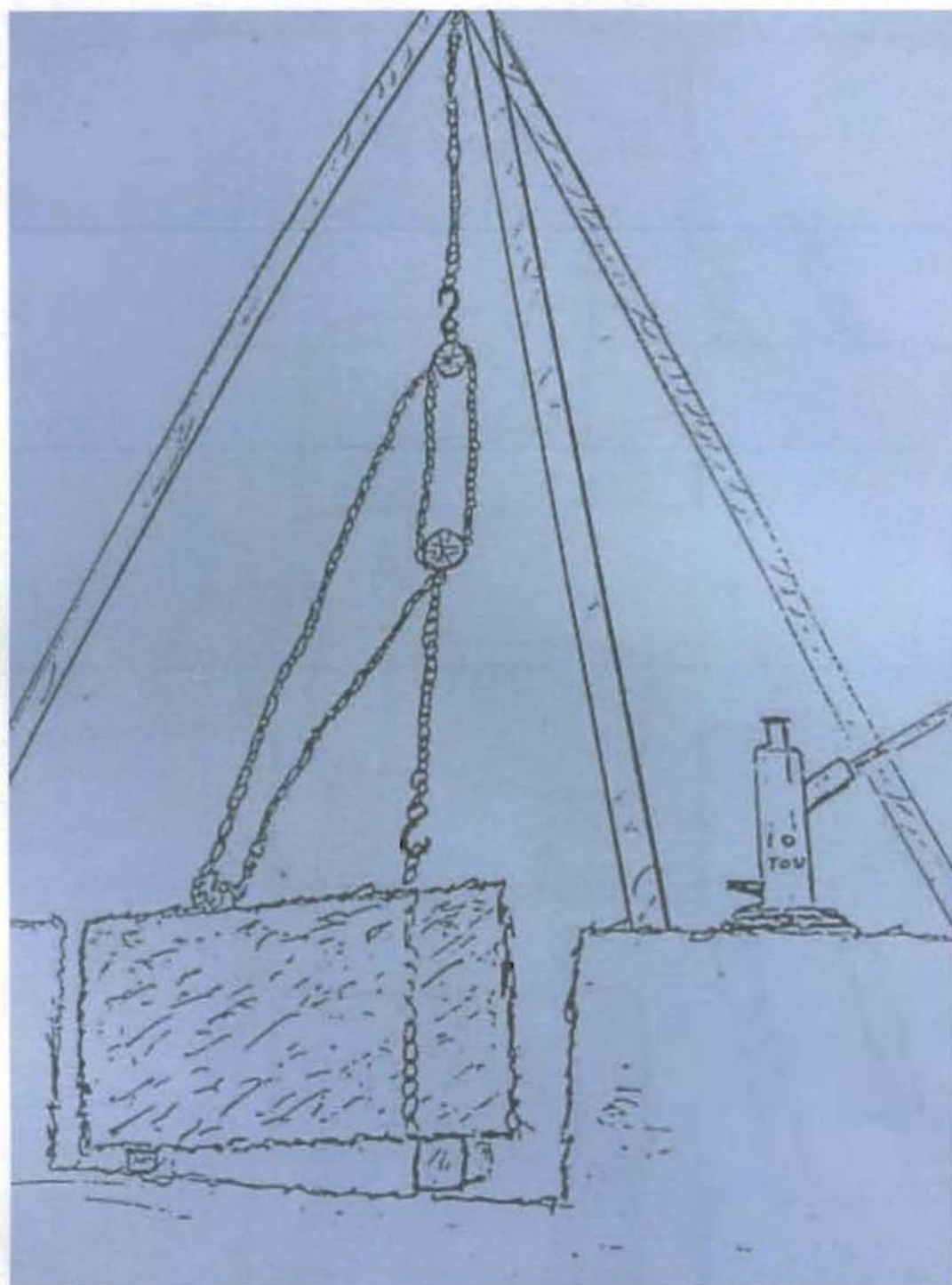
THE CORAL CASTLE IS PRIVATELY OWNED AND HAS BEEN OPEN TO THE PUBLIC SINCE 1953

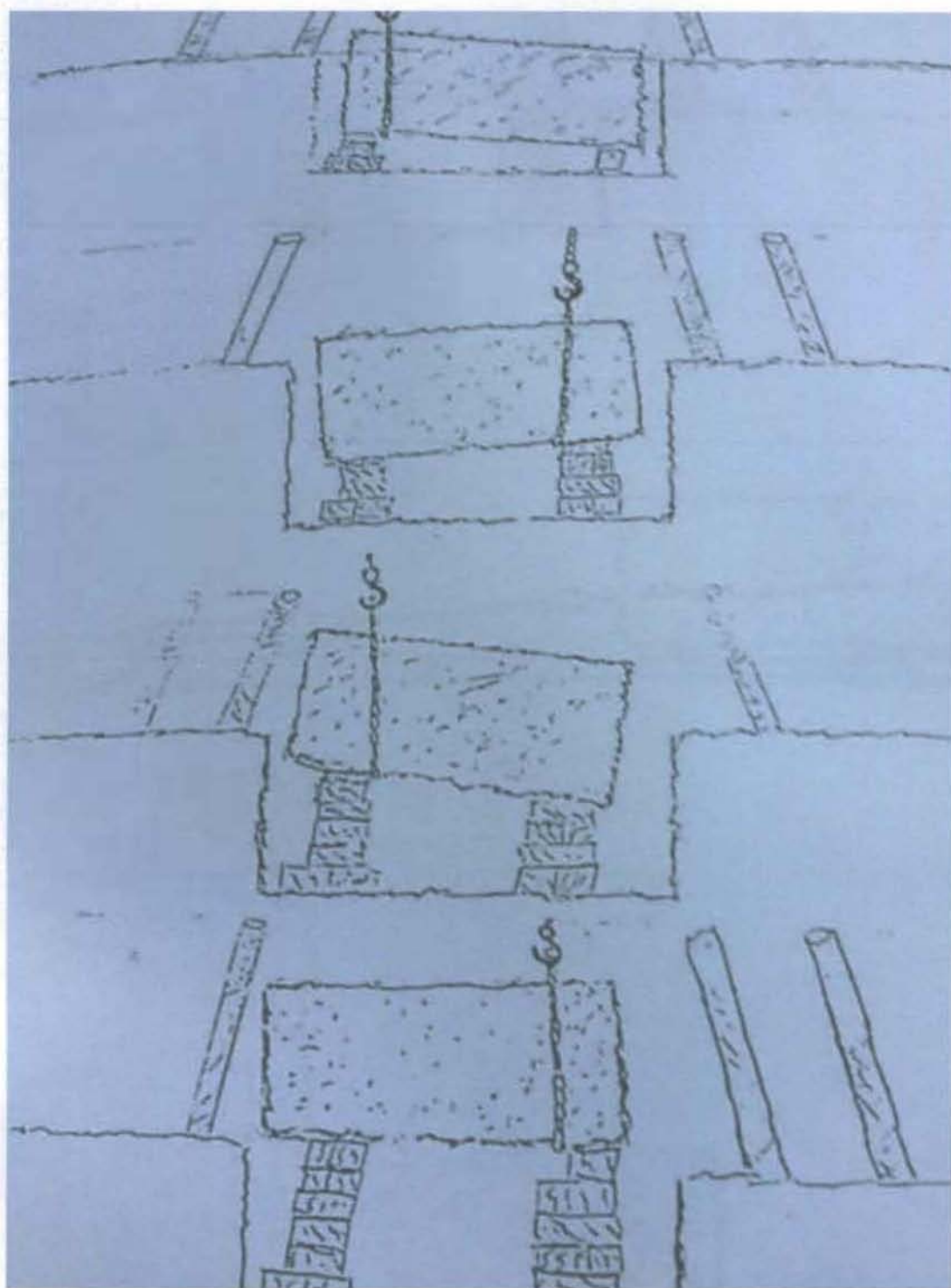


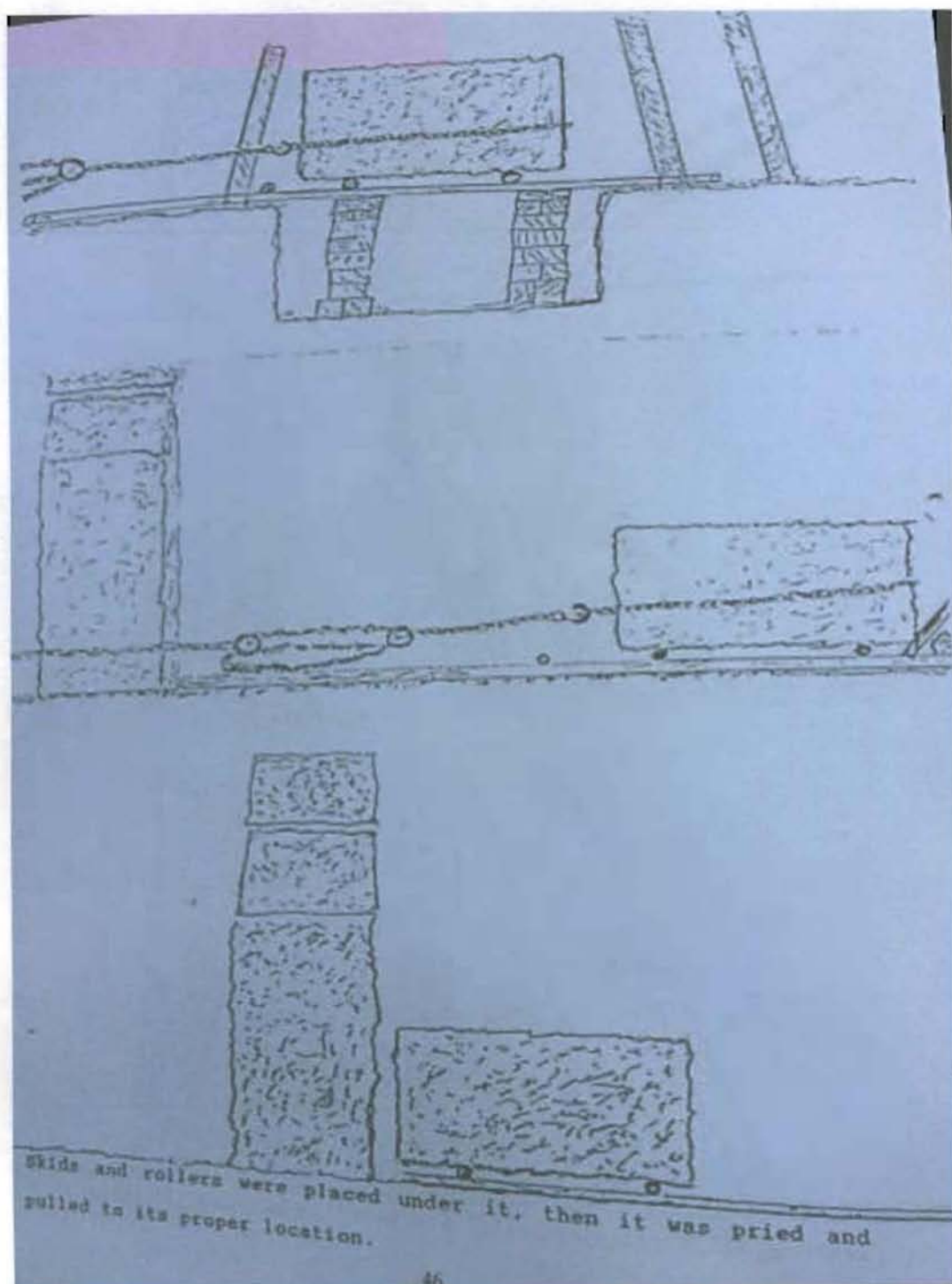


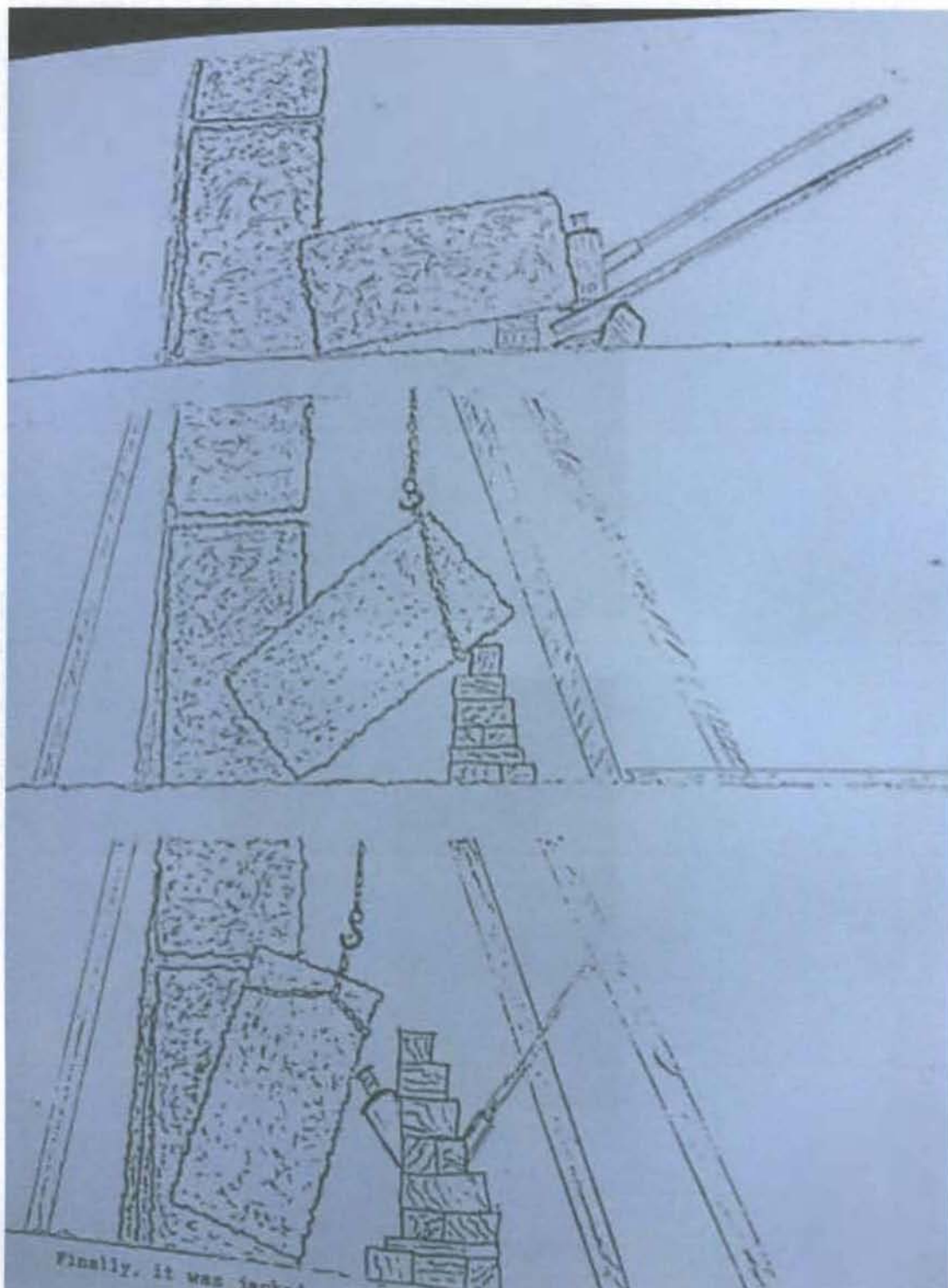












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