

## Is it California or Oregon's History Where Sir Francis Drake Sojourned in 1579?

It takes more study, research and writing to disprove a lie that's believed true,  
than it takes to tell the truth

By

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**This draft is a short section from an upcoming book. Any mistakes and omissions will be corrected in the final edit.**

California continues to claim that Francis Drake was the first European to land somewhere along the Northern California coast. It is a fact that in the summer of 1579 Francis Drake, with a crew of about 85 men and boys, spent some five weeks on the Pacific coast repairing his ship. He was on his way to become



AP photo dated 4-14-1937 of the [fake] brass plate authenticated to have been left by Francis Drake in California.

Courtesy M. Wayne Jensen Jr. Collection

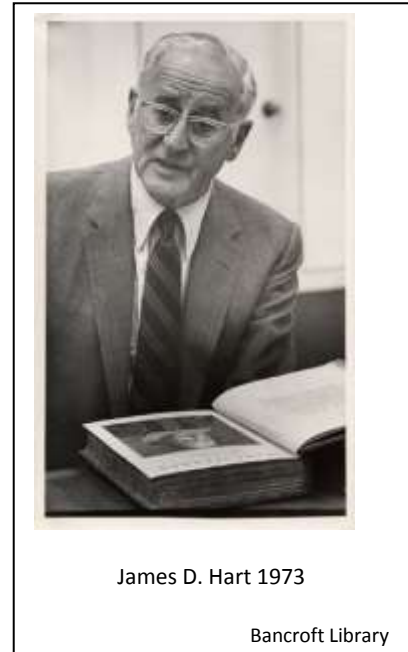
the first European Captain to sail around the world. His stay was described by his chaplain, Francis Fletcher, in *THE WORLD Encompassed by SIR FRANCIS DRAKE...*

The purpose of this work is to examine why historians of the Golden State of California have never been able to agree on Drake's specific bay. The topic of the bay where he landed has been at times, a very emotionally and contested discussion among historians, particularly Californians, for more than 150 years. This year in 2015 not being any sort of

anniversary is a good time to take a look at a few red flags that indicate why the California story doesn't fit. This work will show the California theories are adrift with out-of-date information, wrong assumptions and in a number of cases, they simply stretch the voyage's factual evidence to make it appear they fit somehow. The simple answer is Francis Drake never set foot in California.

Francis Fletcher's *World Encompassed* (WE) says before Francis Drake left the Pacific coast in the summer of 1579 to complete the journey that would make him the first European captain to circle the world, he erected a *plate of brass*<sup>1</sup> on a post as a symbolic act of sovereignty, in the name of Queen Elizabeth I, to claim the lands for England. He named the lands [Nova] Albion (Albion is an old name for England). In 1936 a plate made of brass was found along the NW shoreline of San Francisco Bay. The plate was proclaimed authentic by historical scholars, anthropologists, archaeologists and amateur enthusiasts, and it

was scientifically verified by metallurgists and chemists. It was physical proof that Francis Drake had landed in California near 38° N latitude. It wasn't until 41 years later, in 1977, that the Director of The Bancroft Library, James D. Hart, issued a report *The Plate of Brass Reexamined 1977, A Report Issued by The Bancroft Library* to show the plate made of brass was now a proven fake. However in the years between 1936 and 1977, the plate was used as evidence in support of many theories to show that Drake had landed in various California bays. In those years, the plate eliminated any port beyond northern California. As a result, the most publicized and popular landing sites were Drakes Bay and the little inlets of Drake's Cove and Drakes Estero. Note: Drake's Cove contains the apostrophe because it is not named on official maps while Drakes Bay and Drakes Estero are officially recognized names which do not need an apostrophe.



Our nation and the United Kingdom's true history might have been lost had it not been for two Tillamook County, Oregon, history enthusiasts; M. Wayne Jensen, Jr., a Portland State anthropology student and Donald M. Viles, a former commercial fisherman. In 1971, while searching for the storied treasure of Neahkahnie Mountain, they stumbled upon a 16<sup>th</sup> century land survey<sup>2</sup> and after researching who might have made such a survey, developed a theory that it was Francis Drake during his circumnavigation of 1577-1580.<sup>3</sup> The Jensen and Viles theory was subsequently verified in 1981 by Oregon State University's Phillip A. Costaggini and Robert Schultz A.S.C.E, *Survey of Artifacts at Neahkahnie Mountain Oregon* concluding that it was indeed an old 16<sup>th</sup> century survey type. But for their discovery, Oregon's history might have been lost forever and the location of Drake's landing site would still be open to speculation by only what could be called *old fuddy duddies*.

There has been a lot of new developments and information which has come to light surrounding Drake's landing but early after the plate's discovery, 3 prominent, self-deluded, University of California at Berkeley scholars - followed by an influential band of amateur historians called the Drake Navigators Guild - developed their theories relying on the plate of brass. Even though there were a number of clues over the years as to who might have made such a plate (other than Drake) it didn't matter. In the words of Admiral Samuel Morison, author *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages* (1971), they were on a path of perpetuating; "The greatest hoax since the Piltdown Man or the Kensington Rune Stone."<sup>4</sup> The off-shoot theories they offered as proof is a convoluted trail of twists and turns in logic.

When the plate was found, the most influential and prominent historical authorities in California proclaimed the brass plate authentic. They were led by one of the most influential historians of the time, Professor Herbert Eugene Bolton chairman of the history department from 1911-1933 at the UC Berkeley. He was president of the American Historical Association and a recipient of Commonwealth Club of San Francisco's Gold Medal in 1931 for his book *Outpost of Empire* on the founding of San Francisco. Again in 1936 the Commonwealth Club awarded him the Literature Medal for California's best book for his *Rim of*

*Christendom*. Professor Bolton wrote numerous articles on early Spanish California and was the Director of the Bancroft Library from 1920-1940. Bolton's acquiring of library materials for the library is credited with making it into one of the most outstanding research centers in the west. Professor Bolton reminisced on numerous occasions before the plate was found, "for years I have been telling my students to keep an eye out for the Drake's Plate."<sup>5</sup> He wanted to believe the plate real when a shop clerk, Beryle Shinn, found the plate on a hill inside San Francisco Bay in 1936. It was the authoritative and very influential Professor Bolton who blindly turned away from any discrepancies of the plate's authenticity when pointed out by other historians.

As soon as the plate was found Bolton declared it to be genuine after he compared it with the description made by Francis Pretty, a crew member of the famous voyage. Shortly thereafter, Bolton informed Robert G. Sproul, the President of the University of California and Allen L. Chickering, the President of the California Historical Society about the famous find. Not wanting to miss-out on obtaining such an important artifact Chickering, Bolton and the other "Friends of the Historical Society" offered to buy the plate for \$2,500; a lot of money for 1936. They didn't hear from Shinn for a few days and apparently they were riddled with anxiety that they might lose the plate to another buyer. Chickering then offered \$3,500 after raising additional member donations. As a stipulation to the finder - Shinn, it was agreed by the buyers not hold him responsible for the plate's legitimacy. They would assume all risk regarding the authenticity. Once the purchase was finalized it was donated to Bolton's Bancroft Library.<sup>6</sup>

It was now time to announce to the world of the discovery of the Drake plate, so on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1937, the Associated Press (AP), the leading U.S. news provider of the day, reported:

*"Famous Drake 'Brasse Plate' Found Near S.F. The "plate of brass", California's greatest lost historical treasure, with which Sir Francis Drake claimed the lands about San Francisco for England 357 year ago, has been found it was revealed by Dr. Herbert E. Bolton, professor of American History at the University of California at Berkeley. Found by an autoist accidently while resting after repairing a punctured tire a year ago, exhaustive tests and research was undergone before the find was pronounced 'authentic without question'.*

The accompanying photo (See above) was captioned:<sup>7</sup>

*"The 'brasse plate' of Sir Francis Drake.*

*The inscription reads: BEE IT KNOWN VNTO ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS IVNE 17 1579 BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND IN THE NAME OF HERR MAIESTY QVEEN ELIZABETH OF ENGLAND AND HER SVCESSORS FOREVER I TAKE POSSESSION OF THIS KINGDOME WHOSE KING AND PEOPLE FREELY RESIGNE THEIR RIGHT AND TITLE IN THEWHOLE LAND VNTO HERR MAIESTIES KEEPEING NOW NAMED BY ME AND TO BEE KNOWNE VNTO ALL MEN AS NOVA ALBION - FRANCIS DRAKE.*

*One identifying mark was the hole in the lower right corner described in accounts of the day as being the size of a silver sixpence. A silver sixpence is seen fitting in."*

Two days after the AP release, Bolton announced at a meeting of the California Historical Society in the Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco: "One of the world's long-lost historical treasures apparently has been found! . . . The authenticity of the tablet seems to me beyond all reasonable doubt."<sup>8</sup> Although having only minimally investigated the plate, Bolton and Chickering publicly committed themselves, personally and professionally, and their institutions, to the authenticity of the plate. Nevertheless, the plate did have legitimate dissenters; scholars R. B. Haselden,<sup>9</sup> W. Hume Rothery,<sup>10</sup> Henry R. Wagner,<sup>11</sup> and Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison all doubted its authenticity, but the historical society's gentry combined with Bolton's well respected reputation as an historian pushed for its acceptance.<sup>12</sup>



Professor Herbert E. Bolton, circa 1975.

Courtesy Bancroft Library

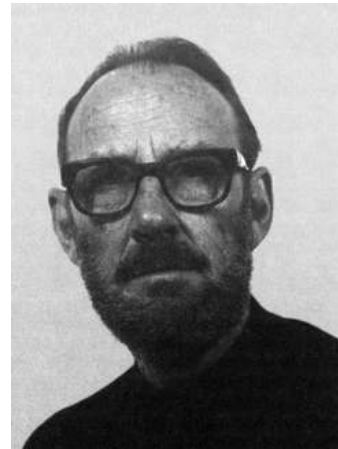
In 1938, in order to sweep away his dissenter's opinions, Bolton solicited scientific professionals to verify the plate's authenticity. He had the plate examined by Dr. Colin G. Fink, Professor of Electro-chemistry at Columbia University, a Perkin Medal winner (considered the highest honor given in the U.S. for a chemist), accompanied by Dr. E.P. Polushkin, a consulting metallurgical engineer of New York City. They concluded that the plate was "**the genuine Drake Plate**"; as Bolton and the other California Historical Society members had previously concluded *ex parte* (as judge and jury). The 1938 authenticating report *Drake's Plate of Brass Authenticated, Report on the Plate of Brass, California Historical Society* would eventually damage Fink and Polushkin's reputation, but not until 1977 when it was proven a fake after both had died.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, by then, 40 years of fabricated California Drake landing stories had been built around a bogus authentication; ignoring the legitimate history of Drake's Pacific coast landing site.

Bolton was not the only influential California authority whose acceptance of the authenticity of the plate caused their research to diverge from reality. The fake stories gained additional archaeological momentum in 1942 by Berkeley Professor Alfred Louis Kroeber, considered the Father of California Anthropology, whose Introduction to Dr. Robert Heizer's book called *Archaeological Evidence of Sebastian Rodriguez Cermeno's California Visit 1595*<sup>14</sup> discusses the porcelain sherds Heizer discovered in the shell mounds around Drakes Bay. Kroeber, believing that the brass plate being real begins; "The porcelain is definitely identified as of two types. How and when did these quantities of two kinds of civilized manufactures get into half a dozen Indian shell mounds of the Marin coast?" After he proposed a few nonsensical (idiotic) scenarios, his answer was that the sources of the manufactured goods were from Drake and Cermeno's ships he said: "Drake was on the coast in 1579 and Cermeno's *San Agustin* was wrecked at Drakes Bay in 1595." Kroeber wrote: "The significance of the discovery is multiple. First, the high probability that Dr. Bolton's Plate of Brass is authentically Drake's..." which for decades, unaware it was a hoax, Professor Kroeber's writings misled many anthropologists, archaeologists, historians and politicians into believing that Drake landed in California.

Robert Heizer, a former student of Bolton, received his doctorate in 1941. He rapidly rose to be one of the premier California archaeologists of the twentieth century. While reading a paper to the California Historical Society on December 16, 1941, Heizer had this to say: *"Of Sir Francis Drake's five weeks' sojourn on the California coast in 1579 we have concrete evidence in the form of the plate of brass which he left nailed to a great wooden post."*<sup>15</sup> Also believing the plate to be authentic, as Bolton his former professor had taught, Heizer went on to say the Coast Miwok Indians were the natives met by both Drake and Cermeno. Even though the male Indians that Cermeno observed in winter of 1595 at Drakes Bay were entirely naked. While Francis Fletcher's *World Encompassed 1579* described the male Indians in the middle of summer wearing furs. The comparisons of food, actions, housing, canoes, fishing and basketry were also all very much different.<sup>16</sup> It is obvious that there are two Indian tribes being described. In Heizer's effort to build a comparison between the Cermeno and the Drake/Fletcher accounts, he took it upon himself to mingle the Pomo Indian culture, a coastal tribe living miles above Drakes Bay, together with the Miwok Indian culture; to justify his comparisons; all without any factual merit for there is no archaeological evidence of Drake ever set foot in California unless you credit the Cermeno wreckage to Drake.

There are a number of differences between the Cermeno and Fletcher Indian descriptions but they can be explained away with a believable bias, if you accept the brass plate as being real. Heizer justifies his deluded belief with fuzzy logic when he says: *"California aborigines regarded both the English (1579) and Spanish (1595) with fear and wonderment. This is a point which favors the view that both Drake and Cermeno landed in Drakes Bay. It is not easy to explain this difference, except perhaps on the ground that the Spanish acted very differently toward the Indians than did the English."*<sup>17</sup>

The following year, a 3-page article in the *Pacific Historical Review* *Francis Drake's California Anchorage in the Light of the Indian Language Spoken There* by Dr. Heizer and co-author William Elmendorf continued to build a case for a Drake landing in California. The article stated: "Linguistic material collected by us... indicates that the natives at Drake's landing spoke a dialect of Coast Miwok there." And they concluded with: "...we can now state definitely that Drake landed in territory held by Coast Miwok speaking natives. There are several bays within this territory, Bolinas, Drakes, Tomales, and Bodega, any one of which theoretically might be the site of Drake's sojourn." New research has come to light to show that Heizer and Elmendorf used for their comparisons an east coast Labrador Inuit language recorded from a 1582 journal of a Reverend Richard Madox. This totally negates Heizer and Elmendorf's use of linguistic evidence to conclude that Drake and the Miwok met by using language. (This topic is covered in detail in unpublished article by this author.)



Robert F. Heizer

Heizer's muse was the distinguished Professor Herbert E. Bolton, the original authenticator of the plate.

Courtesy S. Heizer

This might be a good place to digress and discuss how these 3 eminent men came to think Drake had landed in California in the first place which caused them to think the brass plate was real. A person who Heizer liked to reference for his theories gave credit to George C. Davidson's 1890 *Identification of Sir Francis Drake's Anchorage on the Coast of California in the Year 1579* by the California Historical Society. Heizer says that not only was Davidson the first to recognize Drakes Estero but also for identifying one of the large seashells mounds surrounding Drakes Bay from an Indian village. Davidson believed the village was the one on the 1589 world map of Dutchman Jodocus Hondius as "*Portus Novae Albionis*" (Port of New England).<sup>18</sup> The average reader might take Heizer's endorsement of Drakes Estero as being Davidson's choice as well. However, George Davidson never referred to Drakes Estero as being where Drake landed. Davidson initially theorized the landing site under the leeward side of Point Reyes and then in his 1908 *Francis Drake on the Northwest Coast of America* he changed to San Francisco Bay as his bay of choice; neither being correct. So now we have 4 different locations proposed: Drakes Bay, Drakes Estero, Pt. Reyes and San Francisco Bay by reputable Californian theorists; neither of them correct.

Davidson, in many respects, was a most remarkable man for his writing of the *Coast Pilot of California, Oregon and Washington, Washington* (1889) with its drawings of the coast line viewed from off shore and his supervision of the first U.S Pacific Coast Geodesic survey of the Pacific coast from Mexico to British Columbia. Nevertheless, he was politically influenced as the man who assigned the names of Drakes Bay and Drakes Estero on our maps during his Pacific Coast Geodesic survey. His was politically subjective by the 1848 U.S Department of State's Oregon Treaty with the Hudson Bay Company which established ownership of the Pacific coast lands from 43 to 48° N. latitudes taking in most of Oregon and Washington. Davidson agreed with the 1840 State Department report by Robert Greenhow titled *Memoirs, Historical and Political, on the Northwest Coast of North America, and the Adjacent Territories* which identified ownership of the Oregon Territory (Oregon, Washington and Idaho) to the U.S. Written and assembled under the direction of John Forsyth, Secretary of State of the United States to determine the U.S. ownership said that Francis Drake never sailed above 43° N latitude. The report focused on showing ownership which is why it failed to take into consideration that the first hand reports of Francis Fletcher's WE and others which say Drake went to 48° N. latitude. In fairness to the 1840 Greenhow report, 2 important documents surfaced after his report a reasonable person could understand that Drake sailed to the 48° parallel. One was by a crewmember, John Drake who was a cousin to Francis Drake. John Drake gave two depositions to the Spanish Inquisition in 1584 and 1587 that were not discovered until 1914 by Zelia Nuttall while doing research in South America. Drake told his potential executioner, if caught lying, that they came in to the coast at 44° and went 48°.

Another import piece of information to identify Drake's landing was the 1599-1600 world chart of Edward Wright, mapmaker to Queen Elizabeth I. This first English navigation chart made by an English cartographer wasn't identified until 1974 by Helen Wallis, Map curator of the British Museum in the Hakluyt Handbook (Vol. 1) *Edward Wright and the 1599 world map*. It wasn't until this author published *Edward Wright's World Chart 1599* in "*Terrae Incognitae*" (Vol. 46.1, April 2014) journal of the Society for the History of Discoveries that the map was shown as proof positive that Drake sailed above 43° latitude.<sup>19</sup>

In 1947, the year before Heizer, the *increasingly* influential archaeologist received his Associate Professorship, he wrote the monograph *Francis Drake and the California Indians, 1579*, published by University of California Press.<sup>20</sup> He was still basing any theory on his belief in Greenhow, Davidson and plate of brass being authentic with: *"The ethnographic evidence indicates strongly, indeed almost conclusively, that Drake landed in territory occupied by Coast Miwok Indians. The plate of brass left by Drake and recently found at Drakes Bay may therefore be concluded that Drake had contact mainly with the Coast Miwok. Granted the authenticity of the Drake plate, now does not rank as an isolated find, however spectacular, but rather as good supporting evidence of the conclusion based upon my ethnographic analysis. In June, 1579, then, Drake probably landed in what is now known as Drakes Bay. He remained there for five weeks repairing his ship, and found the Indians the most remarkable objects of interest with which he came in contact. From a comparative analysis of the detailed descriptions of the native ceremonies, artifacts and language I conclude that in the fullest authentic account, The World Encompassed, it is the Coast Miwok Indians that are referred to."*<sup>21</sup>

By 1974, he had been teaching at the U.C. Berkeley for 30 years. Professor Heizer, the now noted Miwok expert later work "Elizabethan California" (1974), continued to mingle Fletcher and Cermeno's ethnographic descriptions. After He and others had excavated the 16 Indian sites along the Point Reyes, Drakes Bay, Drake's Cove and Drakes Estero and found nothing to indicate Drake's visit, Heizer had to finally settle on: "Drake probably landed in what is now known as San Francisco Bay."<sup>24</sup> Ironically, the original place the brass plate was found by Beryle Shinn. Until now, no one has ever questioned the inconsistencies in Heizer's writings, or Kroeber's for that matter, for their 32 years of assumptions designating Drakes Bay<sup>22</sup> as the site of Drakes landing.<sup>23</sup> With all due respect, due to his overwhelming mis-belief and understandings, Heizer total deluded the public for he identified neither the Indians Drake met nor where Drake landed correctly.

## Drake Navigators Guild

During 1948 the brass plate was displayed throughout California on the Historical Caravan Tour as a featured item of the California Centennial celebration. Since then, a great deal of the "proof" to verify Drake's California landing site has been provided by the amateur historian group known as the Drake Navigators Guild. Since the founding of the Drake Navigators Guild in 1949 by two former WW II naval officers, Matthew P. Dillingham and academy graduate F. Richard Brace. Their belief in the Greenhow report, Davidson's geopolitical bias, a scientifically certified artifact in the brass plate and Heizer's misguided ethnographic theories, the Navigators Guild: *"set a goal to find the place where Drake's stone-walled fortification had stood and the Golden Hind had been repaired"*.<sup>25</sup> A tall order to fill; especially if you're following hoodwinked ideas while looking under the wrong rocks.

Although the plate was first found along the coastline overlooking the San Francisco Bay, the Guild fought to lay claim to its having previously been found two years earlier at Drakes Bay and then by some unknown

turn of events, lost and then found again inside the SF bay, overlooking San Quentin under a small rubble of rocks.

One of the Guild's first accomplishments or misdeeds to commemorate Drake's historic event using the plate as proof positive of his sojourn in California was having the governor Goodwin J. Knight of California "proclaim June 17, 1953, as DRAKE'S DAY in California." and again in 1954 that Drake discovered California said:

*"Today this plate is a prized relic of our historic past, preserved at our University of California. Authentic reproductions have been presented to her majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, displaying a standing which exist between our Nations. The **California Drake Navigators Guild** has undertaken to conduct research and educational programs based upon this chapter of our State's colorful and picturesque past. This group has already achieved outstanding results and continues to work to bring about a fuller understanding of our marvelous history. IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 9<sup>th</sup> day of June, A.D., One Thousand Nine Hundred and Fifty-four."*<sup>26</sup>

The Guild was quick to take issue with anyone who voiced a competing theory not agreeable with theirs, amateur or professional. As Dr. Adan E. Treganza, Director of the Anthropology Museum of San Francisco State University found out. His 1960 research disputed the Guild's claim of the plate being found at Drakes Bay. The Guild published a response paper, *A Review of the findings of Dr. Adan E. Treganza Relative to the Site of Drake's Landing in California*, in as much as labeled Dr. Treganza a liar for saying that the Drake plate was not found at Drakes Bay. The Guild's President Matthew P. Dillingham and Raymond W. Aker passionately argued: **"Dr. Treganza's statement is a broad generalization and should be considered with caution. Largely those persons who disclaim the original discovery at Drake's Bay are proponents for Drake's landing on San Francisco Bay."** The Guild members boasted: "Why is it no longer accepted, when ostensibly amongst those who have accepted the originally discovery at Drakes Bay is Dr. R. F. Heizer. This Plate was originally found at the Laguna Ranch on Drake's Bay in 1934, moved elsewhere, and was rediscovered in 1936. The important point, and all that can probably now, or forevermore, be said, is that it is possible that the Plate of Brass was earlier found at Drakes Bay and that as long as this possibility exists, it must not be ignored."<sup>27</sup> This is an example of one of the many times over the years where the self-important Guild constructed their hypotheses with obfuscation or doublespeak to proclaim their Drakes Bay landing story.

How did the Guild, this self-opinionated group, gain the attention of the media to propose their unsubstantiated theories even when they conflicted within their own membership. Not many were willing to question their pontifications when much of their influence was achieved through intimidations and brushing elbows with the influential politicians and even royalty. They changed their theories many times and still used the previous 'proof' for their new theory. As exemplified by their turning against Heizer in 1974 when he said Drake probably landed in San Francisco. They still like to quote Heizer's previous Drakes Bay theory to promote themselves as the all knowing OZ of the Drake question.



In their early years after WW II the Drake Navigators Guild grew quickly. Their honorary chairman, active counselor and spokesman was Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, RN, commander-in-chief of U.S. naval forces in the Pacific during World War II, who simply believed the Guild's other naval member's sites were true. Unfortunately, the admiral could not have been aware at the time of his membership, that the plate of brass was a hoax or of George Davidson's geopolitically biased results. Although some members may have suspected the plate being a fake, such as the Guild's first president, Robert D. Marshal, the owner of the property bordering Drakes Bay; or the Guild's Executive Secretary, Captain Adolph S. Oko who was told in 1954 that the plate was manufactured by an active person with the California Historical Society and prominent museum director but he failed to research the subject any further. The Guild President (2003 - present) Edward Von der Porten's report "Who Made Drake's Plate of Brass" (2000) states Guild President Oko believed the plate genuine. Oko rejected the story told to him in 1954 by Al Shumate a Clamper (E Clampus Vitus) historian who had heard the story from fellow Clamper Lorenz Noll (Clampers are a fraternal organization dedicated to the study and preservation of California heritage).<sup>28</sup> Why Oko or any of the other Guild members failed to follow-up on the Lorenzo Noll story until 2000 is unanswered.

Guild President (1968-2002), Raymond Aker, a master mariner who studied sixteenth century ships, seamanship, navigation, cartography and hydrographs is credited with being the leading Drake-in-California proponent and architect of the Drake landing site theories. Along with Robert W. Allen, Guild secretary (1968-1980) both continued to propagate their anecdote of a California Drake landing site against the other competing California bay tales. With a fake plate in hand, along with their selective manipulating of the facts i.e. "white" cliffs and "fully-feathered" baskets, (See *Francis Drake in Nehalem Bay 1579*) to name two of their favorites, the Guild and a few other Drake enthusiasts continued full speed ahead of misdirecting Oregon's history, for their own vain reasonings.<sup>29</sup>

As a group of amateur historians made up of mostly sailing enthusiasts, the Guild was certain to be fully aware of the 1595 shipwreck of Sebastian Rodriguez Cermeno's Spanish galleon *San Agustin* at Point Reyes, California. The wreckage has been found at all of the known archaeological sites of the Drakes Bay and Point Reyes area. Following the lead of Professor Kroeber's 1941 (previously discussed statement above) of selective picking and choosing which artifacts were Cermeno's and those imagined as being Drake's, only provided wood to the fire, to fed the fever, of fitting Drake's landing at Point Reyes of along Drakes Bay. In fact Drakes Bay is not a bay at all but a gentle crescent shoreline extending for miles; offering little shelter enough to be called a bay. Neither the sailing explorers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century nor present day ship captains have ever used or recognized Drakes Bay for more than an over-night anchorage. Perhaps it did or maybe it didn't occur to the Guild members how unlikely it would be for two sixteenth century ships to be in the same non-bay, in the as-yet-undiscovered world, in a short sixteen year time span. One of ships, Cermeno's galleon crashing into the continent by accident and the other was hypothesized by the Guild to have landed (Drake) in/on a non-bay.

None of these anomalies of record were proposed or answered by the Guild, except by double-speaking or ignoring to recognize the factual differences between Drake's *Nova Albion* (New England)<sup>30</sup> and Cermeno's shipwreck descriptions. The Guild never questioned why the natives described by Reverend Fletcher's *World Encompassed* (WE) and those described by Cermeno were so very different in housing,

food and demeanor. And why would they when Professor Heizer, the authority on California Indians, was held in the highest regard by the Guild to support their ethnographic tale. Until even Heizer eventually fell out of favor when he wrote; *“Twenty-seven years ago, having then accepted the now debunked report that [the plate was] earlier found at Drakes Bay. I thought the chief contenders were Bodega and Drakes Bay.<sup>31</sup> I would now rewrite what I then wrote and say, In June, 1579 then, Drake probably landed in what is now known as San Francisco Bay.”<sup>32</sup>* Even now, the Guild promoters pick and choose to use Heizer’s earlier site of Drakes Bay to try and rectify their naive descriptions.<sup>33</sup> Between 1947, when Heizer was advocating Drakes Bay and then changed to San Francisco Bay in 1974, he was still totally convinced that the plate was authentic. Yet the Guild chose to ignore Heizer’s choice of San Francisco Bay, where the fake plate was found. Although it’s now been shown that it was ill-advised for Heizer to have proposed any California bay for that matter having misidentified the Coast Miwok language.

Fletcher’s *WE* describes the Oregon Indians Drake met as wearing furs in the cold summer of June and July while Cermeno’s California Indians were naked in November. Fletcher described the raw food the Nehalem Oregon Indians ate as *Pet’ah* [wapato] being pleasant tasting raw or cooked while Cermeno said the raw acorns they got from the Indians were bitter; Fletcher described Nehalem Indians as friendly, while Cermeno’s Pt. Reyes Indians were hostile; Fletcher described houses as sub-terrain and round with the entrance at the top while Cermeno described them like caves entered from the front. Fletcher said the Islands of St. James where they landed as *‘not far’* after they had departed Nehalem Bay (now known as Three Arch Rocks National Marine Reserve) as having many seals and birds to last them for a while. Cermeno described the Farallon Islands off San Francisco Bay (they cannot be seen from Drakes Bay) as barren and even though his men were starving and in need of food, chose to by-passed them on their open boat voyage back to Acapulco. Neither did Cermeno see any sign of the Indians ever having had any previous contact with Europeans nor was there any evidence of Drake and his 85 men crew having landed there for 5-weeks. The astute historian or even a high school student would ask why are there so many discrepancies between the descriptions of the natives of those met by Drake and those by Cermeno.

The California theorists twist the reason for Drake naming the lands Nova Albion for the “white cliffs” of Point Reyes which reminded him of England while Fletcher never used the word “white” in his description of the cliffs of Neahkahnie Mountain which fall directly into the ocean 1632 feet below. Fletcher’s reference was to “cliffs and white banks” of the white sand dunes or banks along the ocean side of Nehalem Bay which borders Neahkahnie Mountain, Oregon.<sup>34</sup>

Some of the answers to the Guild enthusiasts’ omissions and concocted stories may lie in the sentimental reason given by Guild members Aker and Von der Porten in their *Discovering Francis Drake’s California Harbor*, published by Drake Navigators Guild (2000), in describing the amateur committee’s research being looked at from the water: *“The seaman’s point of view was always there, testing each idea and each proposed solution against realities of seagoing experience.”* The sentimental Guilders go on to say; *“What Drake had seen, the Guild sought to see; what Drake had found, the Guild sought to find - from the sea, for the sea has not changed nor the perception of it.”<sup>35</sup>* The Guild was pitifully sailing back and forth along the non-bay of Drakes Bay as if Francis Drake would have doing such a worthless thing. Francis Fletcher’s chronology of the Drake voyage never described nor mentioned anything pertaining to how the

bay looked from the sea; only that they were lucky to get in to their safe harbor. While literally sailing back and forth, in and around Point Reyes they never chanced to sail over the breakers to enter their favored Drake's Cove (as named by the Guild), a little impression in the marshy Drakes Estero. All of which have been shown to be fictitious California Drake landing sites. Nevertheless the Guild theorists continued building their glass slipper tale to shoe-horn their ideas into their favorite California landing area. Their actions could hardly be described as scientific research with an unbiased view. Yet many people have blindly embraced the Guild's erroneous air of authority into taking their tales for face value, unaware of the primary sources of historical information which have come to light in the last 40 years by this author and others.

Without the new information in hand from the 1950's through the 1970's and with a firm belief in the plate's authenticity, the Guild continued to be the principal group for weekend sailing fun, exhorting their California landing site. They expanded the membership with prestigious additions of Robert W. Allen, naturalist and educator of flora and fauna, and Clarence Shangraw curator of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. Shangraw enlisted a Santa Rosa Junior College crew to excavate the Native American village site at Drakes Bay and, as expected, they were without success in finding any Drake artifacts. Few of their new members possessed the knowledge of the voyage - blindly following the false historical data gathered by the earlier Guild members that snowballed into layer-upon-layer of a fake historical story presented as if factual. New or impartial sources of historical information of a Drake survey, world charts, language, housing and dress were overlooked or ignored completely, allowing the Guild members to frame the writing of history as they imagined it; a Drake plate of brass to confirm a landing in California and then weaving members individually favorite Point Reyes, Drakes Bay, Drake's Cove and Drakes Estero site into a tidy tale.

Prior to the 1979 supplementary Bancroft reexamination report being released to once again confirm conclusive proof that the plate was fake, the Guild entertained many well know visitors to add a masquerade of a Drake landing. They included Sir Alex Cumming, curator of Buckland Abbey, Drake's home near Plymouth; Dr. John A. Pope, Director of the Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery of Oriental Art and anthropologist Dr. Michael J. Moratto of San Francisco State University. The *National Geographic* sailed with Guild member Captain Alan Villiers as he described the 'white cliffs' and various other imaginary Drake landmarks. At one time or another the guest list included Frank G. Carr, director of Britain's National Maritime Museum and R. A. Skelton, the British museum's senior map scholar, along with Dr. A.L Rowse, an Elizabethan scholar. Honorary Guild members included Admiral of the Fleet Lord Louis Mountbatten of Burma, RN and William Edward Kenelm, the Earl of Mount Edgcumbe.<sup>36</sup> Although all of the above mentioned possessed an impressive patina of credentials and honors, none of them could have been considered historical scholars of Drake's Pacific coast landing site.

Rear Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison, dean of American maritime historians, toured the Point Reyes area with Guild members, although he was in total disagreement with the Guild's findings. In a 1975 letter from Admiral Morison to Raymond Aker, Guild President and Sir Francis Drake Commissioner (a commission authorized by the State of California to celebrate Drake's 400 year anniversary), the Admiral expressed his opinion that the plate was "an old metal upon which the faker had worked and the real test is the forms of the letters, unknown in England at the time." Nevertheless the Drake Navigators Guild continued selling replicas of the plate. In a letter dated September

7, 1977, after the Bancroft report announcing the plate a fake, Aker wryly says; "Offering some 'Plate of Brass' replicas that the Guild has had for sale might not be very popular now!"<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the Guild never reexamined their own or other experts previous findings which were previously based on the plates authenticity.

#### Who Made the Fake Plate?

The first public crack into the plate's authenticity was a reported in 1954 by Herbert Hamlin, Editor of a monthly historical newsletter titled *The Pony Express*. Hamlin reported; "If the plate is a fake, whoever made it, was quite familiar with the language, and printing of the times. He, or they, would have to be. *The Pony Express* has in its files testimony as to whom it was – a most 'clever fellow' who died over 10 years ago."<sup>38</sup>

Hamlin had previously written a confidential letter from his office on May 19' 1954 to Henry Wagner, eminent Californian Drake historian, informing him of the signed testimony he had secured from Lorenz Noll, a San Francisco art dealer concerning who had made the plate.<sup>39</sup>

The following testimonial was given by Lorenz Noll to Herbert Hamlin of *The Pony Express* dated May 13, 1954 concerning a conversation he had with a George Clark in the fall of 1936.

*"Dear Mr. Hamlin:*

*Several times I have talked to you about this so-called Drake Plate being a phony, but I never have told you very much about the man that made it, George Clark. He made it for George H. Barron, who was the curator of the de Young Museum of Oakland, California.*

*Clark was a genius and an inventor and at one time when he was young had worked in the Edison laboratories. He held patents on parts of the electric typewriter and sold the patent rights to an eastern firm, about 25 years ago. Edwin Fricke, new in the area [Oakland] knew Clark very well. I also knew him and he was capable of making just about anything he set his mind about to do.*

*Both Clark and Barron were very close friends. They used to drink and have parties where Clark lived, across from Joaquin Miller's home, about a quarter mile down the road. Clark was also a friend of Gertrude Boyle, famous sculptor, who married a Japanese sculptor named Kanno. They both worked with bronze. She made a wonderful life-size statue of Miller that was in Grace Fountain studio. Grace's studio was across the*



George H. Barron - History curator at the de Young Museum until 1934.

Identified as being the instigator of the fake plate of brass by the Clampers (E Clampus Vitus ), a fraternal organization dedicated to the study and preservation of California heritage. Although the notification was printed in the 1954 California Historical Society Quarterly, it was ignored by historians.

California Historical Society photo

*street from Miller's home, about three blocks above. Grace and Joaquin used to go on painting trips together to Oregon. She was noted mountain painter.*

*The reason I mention above characters is because they were all friendly and were present at Clark's home on many occasions. I might mention that William Keith, Charlie Rolla Peters, Will Sparks, R. D. Yelland, M. Valencia, Harry Casset Best, A. W. Best, brother, and sister Alice Best, and Henry Brewer, Thad Welch, etc. were at Grace Fountain's studio. It was a pretentious affair, and in the center stood, Gertrude Boyle's bronze of Joaquin Miller. As they were all artists, painters, and sculptors and had much in common, they fraternized, and gathered at Clark's home for drinks, after an afternoon at Grace's studio. George Barron knew most all of them, and being curator of de Young Museum he was well accepted among the superb gathering of Bohemians.*

*I used to go to Clark's home and through this acquaintance and eventual friendship, is the reason why I was told the story of their implication in the Drake Plate, why they made it, and why they used it as a plant to fool [Professor Herbert] Bolton whom they knew would eventually pass on it.*

*George Barron did not like Bolton. In fact he hated him, probably because Dr. Bolton wanted to get him fired as curator of the Museum, because he drank once in a while. Barron was quite a speaker, made many public addresses, and was highly educated. But he had a failing of drinking once in a while, usually when at Clark's place and Fountain's place both.*

*Barron was the grammarian, Clark was the designer and modeler of the plate. On the plate Barron formed the type and wording, which was used in those days. Barron got some brass from relics of an old Spanish Galleon which he had at the museum that came from Europe. Clark said they had to be careful to get the right type of brass, nothing later than that made in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, or days of the Golden Hind. [\*] Clark made the model in his home. The brass was brought over, according to the story that he told me. It was brought over by Barron from the museum. They took the brass, and the model to a ship's chandlery. Here an old Chandler who had tools for punching in brass followed the lettering on the model. They dipped the plate in acid several times after, rubbing it off each time, so it would show wear, and have a genuine appearance. "Now I'll get even with that fellow," Barron said, and took it over and planted it near the Marin shore, on the San Quentin side, near Corte Madera Creek.<sup>40</sup>*

\* It appears that Barron had falsely led Clark into believing the brass was from the 16<sup>th</sup> century which was proven later to be manufactured in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Barron had been fired from the museum when the plate was made.

In March 1957 there was another mention of the Clark–Barron forgery in the California Historical Quarterly in this way: *“Before leaving the subject of the Plate it should be mentioned that there are those who claim to know that it is a forgery. One story has it that a man named Clark and the late George Barron, one-time curator of the de Young Museum, conspired to produce a forgery and that the plate in question is it. To assert that a forgery has been made is one thing; to identify it with a known object is quite another. No such identification has been made, and this story, like a number of others, fails to qualify as evidence.”*<sup>41</sup>

And so the forgery continued to be dismissed and gained momentum as the cornerstone to a Drake landing in California until 1976. Although questions had been raised to the authenticity of the plate since its discovery and with the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Drake’s landing approaching James Hart, an appointed member of the Sir Francis Drake Commission to celebrate Drake’s Californian landing each year from 1975-1980 and as the Director of the Bancroft Library (owners of the “Plate of Brass”) Hart deemed it his responsibility to prove or disprove once and for all the plate’s authenticity. Hart requested MIT metallurgist Cyril Stanley Smith to examine the plate whose April 27, 1976 report to Hart, originally marked "CONFIDENTIAL" described the plate as a 20<sup>th</sup> century manufacture; began the unraveling of the hoax.<sup>42</sup> The report was subsequently made public 14 months later in July of 1977 “that the Plate of Brass was a forgery.” Ironically, once the report titled *The Plate of Brass Reexamined 1977, A Report Issued by The Bancroft Library* was released the California theorists were silent on the subject, as if they had never based their Drake landing site tales on its authenticity. As proof, there is no mention in the minutes of the Sir Francis Drake Commission of ever having discussed or mention of the report.



George C. Clark, circa 1935

*George C. Clark was born in Chicago in 1874 and moved to San Francisco in 1904.*

*Clark had a few patents filed with the US Patent office Serial No. 205,253 for a surface Dressing Machine, patented Nov. 19, 1918 and Serial No. 245,724 for a Centrifugal Casting Box, patented Apr. 8, 1919 registered to George C. Clark of Detroit, Michigan, assignor to George C. Clark Metal Last Co., of Mishawaka, Indiana, A Corporation of Indiana.*

[www.bill01a.com/articles/gc%20clark.htm](http://www.bill01a.com/articles/gc%20clark.htm)

The Hart report states: "The most recent, although by no means the most precise, public challenge to it was that made by Samuel Eliot Morison. His conclusion was a firm: Drake's 'Plate of Brass' is as successful a hoax as the Piltdown Man or the Kensington Rune Stone."<sup>43</sup>

Some disputed the 1977 findings of James Hart's report so a second report was commissioned titled *The Plate of Brass Reexamined, A Supplement 1979* which was issued by the Bancroft library as an impartial investigation. In summary, the X-Ray diffraction investigation at the Photography Laboratory of Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory by Professors Earl R. Parker, Robert H. Bragg and Paul H. Adler concluded; "That it may be drawn from this work's reexamination is that the results provide convincing evidence that the Drake Plate was produced by a modern rolling process rather than having been made by hammering shape" and "The ... Plate of Brass... is of the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> centuries."<sup>44</sup>

James Hart then began to follow-up on the plate testimonials in the Bancroft Archive concerning the Clark & Barron story told by Lorenz Noll. On August 10, 1977 he was able to locate Mrs. Dolores Barron-Scoble, the daughter of George Haviland Barron (1870-1942) who was living in Monte Rio, California just north of Marin County.

The written account of an August 10, 1977 phone conversation between James Hart and Barron's daughter; then marked as CONFIDENTIAL says: "Mrs. Barron-Scoble recalls walking in on a conversation her father was having with one of his acquaintances whom she had seen several times before but whom she did not characterize as a friend of Mr. Barron. She is certain that the date was 1919 or 1920 since she also insists, and that this conversation occurred when she and her family were living in the Fruitvale area of Oakland. She insisted that it occurred about a decade before she was married in 1930. She believes the prankster, the man whom her father was talking, hoped that the Plate would be found pretty quickly."<sup>45</sup> She said her father laughed about the joke at the time that the Plate was found 16 or 17 years later." Mrs. Barron-Scoble told Hart that her father died in 1942 and a lot of his papers were destroyed by her mother.

Two weeks later she met in Hart's office at the Bancroft Library concerning her recollections of her father, George H. Barron, discussions of a fraudulent plate of brass and again reiterated that: "She was positive that it could have occurred only during the year that her family lived in the Fruitvale section of Oakland, which was in 1918."<sup>46</sup>

The following day on August 25<sup>th</sup> 1977 Hart received a phone call at his office from a Mrs. Gordon White of Walnut Creek, California who had been reading newspaper stories on the recent reexamination of the Plate of Brass. She told Hart that her two uncles, Raynesford "Ray" Taylor and his brother Will Taylor, both knew that the Plate of Brass was a fake and they knew who made it. Ray Taylor was a political reporter for the San Francisco Examiner and Will Taylor was a neighbor in the Fruitvale area of Oakland and a close friend of George Clark, a very prominent electrician or electrical contractor who was known for having done all the wiring in the Oakland Auditorium built in 1914 [renamed to the Kaiser Convention Center in 1984]. Ray Taylor knew Clark through his brother Will. Will and Clark used to go on hikes in Marin County and elsewhere as did Clark's good friend, George Barron. Mrs. White said she did not know Clark or Barron but her uncle described them as pranksters.

According to Mrs. White, Clark and Barron concocted the idea of making a plate of brass and did so in Clark's machine shop. She also said that Barron brought some objects from San Francisco to help in giving authenticity in the fabrication of the plate. She did not think he brought a book to suggest the text, but some artifact to suggest how the plate should be created or how it should appear. Will Taylor in turn told his brother Ray of all this and Mrs. White learned of it from her uncle.

Mrs. White indicated, but did not flatly state, that the creation of the plate was to be a kind of friendly joke, presumably on Bolton. Hart presumed correctly that perhaps Barron, a student of California history and the creator of the California Pioneers gallery at the de Young, knew the Professor Bolton.

Hart was told by White that her Uncle Ray Taylor, knowing the plate to be fake, attempted to tell somebody at the University of California, possibly Bolton, but Mrs. White thinks it was some different name and she believes it began with "H", possibly Herbert Bolton, and that the man was either in the Department of History, as Bolton was, or the School of Law. But the person to whom Taylor communicated this information directly after the discovery would not put any credence in Ray Taylor's contentions.

White thinks the only person living, in 1977, who might have known about this matter firsthand was the married daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Clark who was in her twenties at the time the plate was found and who then knew of its fabrication. When Ray Taylor attempted to interview her but she refused to talk to him. Although White has no idea of the daughter's married name, Hart believed it might have been possible to discover it through an obituary for George Clark, since he was a prominent figure in Oakland. White could not suggest when he died, but she said that he was in his 60's in 1936 when the plate was found.<sup>47</sup>

On September 22, 1977 Mrs. Erma Culin-White went to the Bancroft Library where Deputy Director, Peter Hanff and James Hart spoke with her for about an hour concerning her story about the fabrication of the plate of brass. White reiterated everything that she had told Hart previously. A major point that White repeated was that Ray Taylor definitely wrote out the text about the falsity of the Plate and tried to have it accepted by somebody at the University which was "high-up in the Library or an important professor" to persuade that person not to make announcements about the authenticity of the Plate. At that time, Professor Bolton was the Director of the Bancroft Library. She was absolutely certain that Taylor's written message was delivered in 1936. White said that her Uncle Will Taylor, a dentist and George Clark did hike in Marin County near San Quentin where the plate was found by Shinn.

She described George Clark as a man who liked to play practical jokes and had wired his house so that doors opened and shut by his remote control. This gave that effect of a haunted house which she remembers him showing great enjoyment. She said that the house was located in Fruitvale.



One of the most telling items to the hoax came in a phone conversation between Erma Culin-White and Hart on June 20, 1979. White told Hart that there had been a conversation between Mrs. Clark and Mr. Clark, relayed to her by her Uncle Raynesford, in which Clark said that it was only a practical joke and that anybody would discern it as a forgery immediately because he had ensured that the plate would be recognized as a facsimile since George Clark had actually signed it.

Hart then examined the plate and mysterious letters to the left and slightly above the name of Francis Drake that Robert Power had long interpreted as a "C" containing a smaller "G" standing for Captain General; whereas these letters were indeed the initials of George Clark.<sup>48</sup>

### Why Make A Plate?

It's been said by some historians that Barron had the plate made as an academic practical joke on Herbert Bolton. Bolton and Barron had careers which touched upon each other during the same time period they were in the San Francisco Bay area. Herbert Bolton had



George Clarks' "GC" to the left of Francis Drake.

earned his reputation by 1912 where he found important original Spanish documents in the archives of Mexico and by 1936, the year the plate was found, Bolton had been the Director of The Bancroft Library since 1920; the year Barron's daughter reports the plate was manufactured. In 1910, George Barron was curator of history at the de Young and considered an expert of Spanish papers as well. This may have created a professional jealousy between the two of them; or at least on the part of Barron.

If we agree with Barron's daughter that the plate was made in about 1920, then the rationale for George Barron's continued deception after plate was found in 1936 near the San Quentin location had its genesis in 1917. In early 1910, George H. Benson was hired as the history curator at the Golden Gate Park Museum (renamed later the de Young Museum) and fired on April 5, 1917. Barron was dismissed as the museum curator by Curtis H. Lindley, President of the Board of Park Commissioners, on charges of "absenting himself while on duty and neglecting the affairs of the museum".<sup>49</sup> However, he was subsequently rehired for the position of history curator five years later on October 8, 1922.<sup>50</sup>

By the time the plate was found in 1936, Barron had retired from the de Young museum in 1934 and his daughter said he had expected the plate to be found much earlier and didn't care about the museum or plate any longer. The following year he resigned from the California Historical Society Board of Directors. Barron's daughter said he hated Herbert Bolton so much that he never exposed the joke and carried the first-hand account of the plate's manufacture to his death in 1942.

Barron created a fake plate - to deceive. No matter what his reasons, the fake relic until 1977 was used as the centerpiece in building their myth of Drake's sojourn in California.

## 1977 Reactions of California Historians

Even after the brass plate was uncovered as a fake, some scholars and enthusiasts continued their theories based on its authenticity, ignoring the two Bancroft Library reports (owner of the plate) titled The Plate of Brass Reexamined 1977, A Report Issued by The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1977 and the 1979 confirming report titled The Plate of Brass Reexamined, A Supplementary Report, Issued by The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

The Sir Francis Drake Commission (SFDC), established by the California Legislature Bill 350 (Assembly Bill 252) and signed September 17, 1973 by Governor Ronald Reagan. The commission was to the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Francis Drake's sojourn in California for each of the years from 1975 through 1980 highlighting the circumnavigation (1577-1580). The 24 Commission members were appointed by the California State Assembly (6), Speaker of the House (6) and Governor (12). The text of the legislation was written primarily by the Drake Navigator Guild's Dr. Benjamin P. Draper and Guild President Raymond Aker. Both would eventually become influential members of the Commission.

Because of the debate and controversy around Drake's precise landing site, the enabling legislative statute forbade the Drake Commission from designating a specific location; nevertheless, its members did place bronze plaques at the Golden Gate Bridge Vista Point and Drakes Bay in Marin County, at the base of Drake's statue in Plymouth, England<sup>51</sup> and surprisingly, two erroneous plaques dedicated in Oregon evoking a Drake landing in California.<sup>52</sup> The Commission's 1975 event was the visit by a ¾ sized replica of Francis Drake's *Golden Hinde II* to San Francisco Bay was seen in person by about 250,000 spectators. The subsequent images broadcast over television added to the impression that Drake actually landed in California.

The 1977 timing of the plate being uncovered as a hoax couldn't have been worse for the SFDC. It came right in the middle of the 5-year plan of their state mandate to celebrate Drake's sojourn in California. What were they to do, what could they do? They couldn't cancel, that would be the last thing they'd want to do. Their only course of action was to press on and promote Drake's landing in California.

When informed of the hoax, Dr. Norman Thrower, President of the SFDC, responded to Dr. James D. Hart, Director, the Bancroft Library, on September 15, 1977 with a dismissive, "Thank you for sending me a copy of the report on the results of the recent tests on the "Plate of Brass". This reached me in Plymouth during the recent Commission tour of the city. Personally the report came as no surprise; I was never a believer in the Plate of Brass. Fortunately the Sir Francis Drake Commission does not concern itself with such matters for as I read the enabling legislation we are charged only to make a fitting celebration of Drake's circumnavigation. We did this in a most remarkable way in London and Plymouth. Best regards, Norman

J.W. Thrower.”<sup>53</sup> The good Dr. Thrower did skirt the words “California sojourn” in his response to James Hart; as he had added California sojourn many times in other correspondence.

Although the brass plate was an integral part of the “proof” that Drake landed in Marin County, California, neither Thrower, nor any of the other twenty-three Commissioners brought up the subject of a fake plate during any of the Commission’s agendas, minutes or correspondence throughout their remaining time in promoting Drake’s sojourn in California. Once it became irrevocably proven to be a fake, it’s as if the plate never existed as an integral part to the story of Drake being part of California’s history.

In 2010 Norman Thrower was asked if any of the Commissioners recanted their California landing stories, he said; “There wasn’t any recantation by those, Aker or Power or Neasham promoting their Drake theories when the plate was proven a fake. There was no need to recant, we were to promote Drake in California and that’s what we did.”<sup>54</sup> In fairness to Professor Thrower, during a February 2011 phone conversation he said; “You must understand, the SFDC was set up by the legislation to celebrate Drake in California, if he really was. It was the Drake Navigators Guild who wanted to put him into Drakes Bay and the others[Robert Power, SF Bay and Aubrey Neasham, Bodega Bay] in their bays.”<sup>55</sup>

A year after the hoax was revealed, a 1978 a letter from Dr. Thrower to Ray Aker is commenting upon the Commission’s Drake in California Essay Contest and the interviewing of the exchange student finalists between England and California schools. Thrower says: “Thank you and the Guild for providing the handsome reproductions of the Plate of Brass for the fifteen young people in that category. I know that this gift was much appreciated.”<sup>56</sup> “Appreciated” by 15 young people unaware of the fake plate’s lack of authenticity, yet the Guild disgracefully continued to use the plate as proof whenever it was convenient to promote their special theories.

Drake historian Robert Power, past president of the Board of Trustees of California Historical Society, a respected SFDC member, successful restaurant owner and past president of the Restaurant Owners Association, also believed in the plate. The plate was “found” near his theorized site in San Francisco Bay. In the *California Historical Quarterly* (Vol. 57, 1978, 172-185), Power along with editorial assistance by Donald C. Pike wrote a twelve page report oddly titled “By Me ... C.G. Francis Drake” which dissected the plate, letter by letter trying to cast some doubt that the plate was not a fake. Although well done, it was dismissed for obvious reasons and completely failed in its intended purpose. In fact, the opposite occurred, leaving Power’s San Francisco Bay theory without credibility. Unfortunately, Power left a void to leave the Guild’s theorists as cheerleaders for a California landing site.

To a large degree, the plate’s patina of at one time ‘authentic’ has not been rubbed off as shown by the fact that Drake is still being promoted in California. As an example: as late as 1983, a gold and silver-plated copy of the plate was presented to Queen Elizabeth II in celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her reign by the then Mayor of San Francisco, Dianne Feinstein. After the Queen Elizabeth’s visit to San Francisco, James D. Hart of the Bancroft wrote to the British Consulate General John Beaven to say that: “Through ignorance, Mayor Feinstein presented to the Queen a silver box bearing a gold facsimile of the so-called Plate of Brass that was once thought to have been deposited in California by Francis Drake in 1579. As is commonly known this object has been scientifically shown to be a modern fabrication. Although Prince Philip is aware of this, having said, ‘It’s a fraud, isn’t it?’, I fear that others

at the Palace will not know. I [James Hart] hope therefore that you can make the substance of this letter of mine and the enclosures known to the appropriate persons so that there may not be a repetition of the embarrassing situation.”<sup>57</sup>

On three different occasions In the 1970’s various SFD Commission members pleaded their case to gain an official California Drake landing site recognition. This was not before anti-Californians, but before the California State Historical Resources Commission, the body of historians responsible for the designation of official California Historical Registered Landmarks. The first hearing on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1973 resulted with the application being tabled.<sup>58</sup> The second attempt was October 21-23, 1978 and after some deliberation, the Resources Commission denied designation of a Drake landing site.<sup>59</sup> By March 2, 1979, the third attempt for an official recognition, the assembled theories of a Drake landing in California were no longer considered reliable.<sup>60</sup> This is the reason why history books say that Drake is suspected to have landed in a California bay, but never state it as fact.

In 2000, the Drake Navigators Guild book *Discovering Francis Drake’s California Harbor* continued to keep the imaginary story alive, under the heading “Different Viewpoints”<sup>61</sup> of the plate of brass; as if it’s something other than fake. As the years go by with the continued promotion of the plate it stinks of a charlatan’s scheme.

Many people, even now, continue to believe the plate of brass authentic, thirty-five years after the hoax was proven and exposed in 1977. An authentic plate of brass (which would be lead) has yet to be found. Although admittedly fake by library staff, the plate is still displayed in the entrance to The Bancroft Library for school children and scholars alike.

In early 2012, the Drake Navigators Guild initiated a request to the National Park Service for an official landmark designation of the Point Reyes Seashore honoring Francis Drake and Sebastian Rodriguez Cermeno’s first contact with California Indians. It now sits on the desk of Robert Salazar, Director of the Interior, awaiting his signature. \* Although an Oregon contingent of the Oregon Archaeological Society and Thomas Vaughan, Oregon’s Historian Laureate has asked the National Park Service not to recognize Point Reyes as a Drake cultural site...; so goes another chapter of Oregon’s Stolen History.

\*As of Nov 9, 2012 at Under the American Latino National Historic Landmark Nominations, Robert Salazar designated: The Drakes Bay Historic and Archeological District, Point Reyes Station, California . The park’s statement for authorization stated: “The site is directly associated with the earliest documented cross-cultural encounter between California Indians and Europeans, leaving the most complete material record on the West Coast. In addition, the site contains the earliest recorded shipwreck on the West Coast of the United States, the Spanish San Agustín.” There was no mention of Francis Drake by name. Although the Navigators Guild had propositioned the NPS since 1994, all mention of Francis Drake was blackened out by the National Park System Advisory Board Landmarks Committee of the submitted documents for recognition. The national landmark designation is now named the Point Reyes National Seashore for the 16 archaeological Indian sites it contains.

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14. Heizer, Robert Fleming, *Archaeological Evidence of Sebastian Rodriguez Cermeno's California Visit in 1595*, CHQ, 1942, 1-3. . (For additional reading of Chinese porcelain sherds: *The Manganese Cobalt Ration in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Asian Porcelain*, Harvey Steele, Portland State, Oregon, 1982. *Chinese Porcelains From Site 35-TI-1, Netarts Sand Spit Tillamook County*, Herbert Beals and Harvey Steele, University of Oregon Anthropological Papers No. 23, 1981.)
15. *ibid*, 5

16. Gitzen, Francis Drake in Nehalem Bay, 2008, 72-96. Cermeno and Fletcher's descriptions were very much different. The Cermeno Indians were reported to be naked in December, the month of the year he crashed his ship into the continent while the Indians Fletcher described in the middle of summer were wearing furs. The food, actions, housing, canoes, fishing and basketry were all very different. In Heizer's attempt to find some coordination between the Cermeno and Fletcher comparisons he eventually included the Pomo, a tribal area living miles above any theorized Northern California bay, and mingled them together with Miwok to build his comparisons; all without factual merit due to the fact Drake never set foot in California.

17. Heizer, *Archaeological Evidence*, 1942, 19, n5, n7

18. *ibid*, 19, n 12

19. Gitzen, Garry David, *Oregon's Stolen History*, Fort Nehalem Publishing, 2012, 185-187. In 1850 Davidson was appointed as surveyor of the first U.S. Geological Survey of the U.S. Pacific coast. The dispute of ownership of the Oregon Territory between the Hudson Bay Company and the United States had been settled by treaty two years earlier. The ownership of the territory was determined by Library of Congress Librarian Robert Greenhow's 1840 *Memoirs, Historical and Political, on the Northwest Coast of North America, and the Adjacent Territories*. Written and assembled under the direction of John Forsyth, Secretary of State of the United States, Greenhow's Preface relays a letter to Secretary Forsyth from Senator L.F. Linn, Chairman of the Select Committee on the Territory of Oregon requesting "information relating to the territory of Oregon, its geography, resources, and title of the United States to the same." Although there were other reports at the time saying Drake had reached 48° N. latitude and other primary sources uncovered after 1840 which stated the same, the limiting of Drake's voyage on the Pacific Coast to 43° N. latitude was first initiated by Greenhow's report. Davidson, as a government survey employee was not about to overturn the U.S. Oregon Territory by stating Drake reached above the 43° N. latitude near the present day Oregon – California border.

20. Heizer, Robert and Elmendorf, William W., *Francis Drake's California anchorage in Light of the Indian Language Spoken There*, Pacific Historical Review, 1942, 313-217

21. Heizer, *Francis Drake and the California Indians 1579*, 1947, 278-279

22. *ibid*

23. Heizer, *Archaeological Evidence*, 19, n12

24. Heizer, Robert F., *Elizabethan California*, Ballena Press, Ramona, CA, 1974, 22

25. Aker, Raymond and Von der Porten, Edward, *Discovering Francis Drake's California Harbor*, Drake Navigators Guild, 2000, 13

26. CA, SFDC, Collection number: R348, 1973-1984, Proclamation

27. Dillingham, Matthew P. and Aker, Raymond, *A Review of the Findings of Dr. Adan E. Treganza Relative to the Site of Drake's Landing in California*, Drake Navigators Guild, Pt. Reyes, 1960, 2, 9-10, 26, n1. Phil Costaggini, Certified Civil Engineer, and this author have personally experienced similar disruptions of talks in different years and locations by the current Guild President Edward Von der

Porten. Of course it is no contest when you know the truth and when the Guild has nothing but emotional stories. This author was told later that the disruption was quite funny and sad at the same.

28. Von der Porten, Edward, and Aker, Raymond and Allen, Robert W. and Spitz, James M., *Who Made Drake's Plate of Brass?*, CHQ Vol. 81, No. 2, 2002, 116-133

29. Gitzen, Oregon's Stolen History, 21, 181-184, 205 and 227. The California enthusiasts twisted descriptions offer up "fully feathered baskets", constructed by Pomo artist William Benson in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as their unequivocal proof to the Pomo and/or Miwok Indians met during Drake's sojourn; Fletcher never mentioned anything concerning "fully feathered baskets". Fletcher did describe the native baskets as: "They (baskets) were fashioned in deep bowl, that the most part would hold water... they were wrought upon with the matted down of red feathers, into diverse works and forms." In other words they had designs woven into the basket capable of holding water for cooking. Benson's artistic fully feathered baskets are meant for display and can't hold water. The same Benson baskets were used as examples of fully feathered baskets by Heizer. (Heizer, 1974, plate 2 and 1947, plate 19, 297)

30. The Oxford dictionary describes Albion as a noun meaning a literary term for Britain or England, often used when referring to ancient or historical times.

31. Heizer, *Francis Drake Indians*, 1947, 277-279

32. Heizer, *Elizabethan California*, 1974, 22

33. Aker, Raymond and Von der Porten, Edward, *Discovering Francis Drake's California Harbor*, Drake Navigators Guild, Palo Alto, 2000, 11

34. Fletcher, *World Encompassed*, 1628, 80

35. Aker, *Discovering Francis Drake's California*, 2000, 14

36. *ibid*, 61-63

37. CA, SFDC, Aker, 1973-1984, September 7, 1977

38. Von der Porten, *Who Made Drake's Plate*, 2002, 116-133

39. Bancroft Library MSS 2002/68 c, folder marked confidential, Letter Herbert Hamlin to Henry Wagner, May 19, 1954

40. Bancroft MSS 2002/68 c, Lorenz Noll

41. CHQ, Vol. 36, No. 1, March 1957, 28

42. *The Plate of Brass Reexamined 1977, A Report Issued by The Bancroft Library*, UC Berkeley, 1977, 69-75

43. *Ibid*, 24

44. *The Plate of Brass Reexamined, A Supplementary Report, Issued by The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, 1979*
45. Bancroft MSS 2002/68 c, Scoble
46. Bancroft Library, James Hart Papers, August 25, 1977
47. Bancroft MSS 2002/68 c, August, 29, September 23, 1977
48. Ibid, June 26, 1979
49. The San Francisco Call April 12, 1917
50. Golden Gate Park Board of Park Commissioners Minutes 1917- 1922
51. [www.oac.cdlib.org/data/13030/3j/kt5j49q63j/files/kt5j49q63j.pdf](http://www.oac.cdlib.org/data/13030/3j/kt5j49q63j/files/kt5j49q63j.pdf)
52. Gitzen, Stolen History, 76
53. CA, SFDC, Thrower, September 15, 1977
54. Thrower, Norman J. W., Telephone Conversation with author, November 9, 2010
55. ibid, February 16, 2011
56. CA, SFDC, Thrower, April 14, 1978
57. Hart papers Bancroft
58. CA, SFDC, Thrower, May 15, 1973
59. Minutes of the State Historical Resources Commission, Special Meeting, October 21-22-23, 1978, Subject: Presentations on Possible Landings of Sir Francis Drake, 4
60. CA, SFDC, State Historical Resources Commission, March 2, 1979 and CA, SFDC, Minutes, March 3, 1979 and CA, SFDC, SHRC, May 4, 1979
61. Aker, 2000, 11



