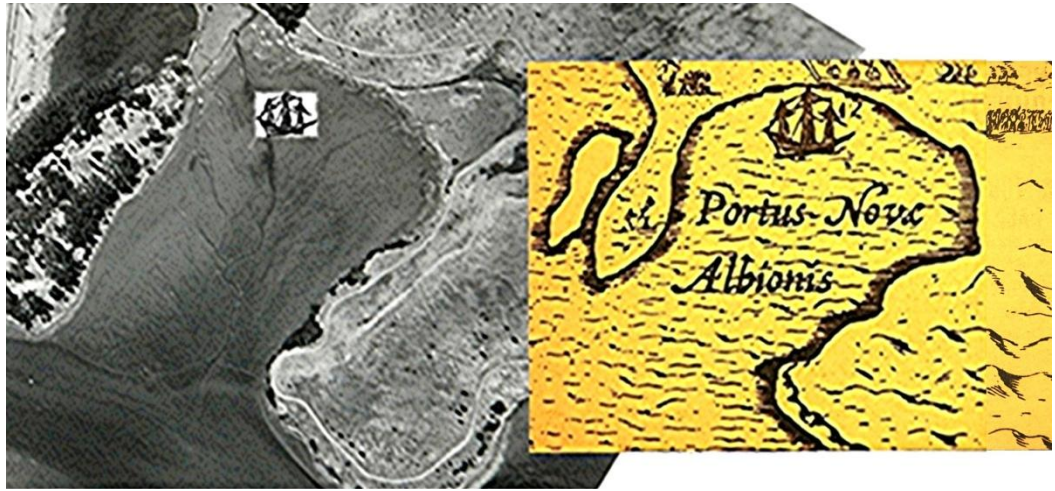


Could Francis Drake Have Found San Francisco Bay?



Sir Francis Drake



By Duane Van Dieman

FRANCIS DRAKE; A BRIEF BACKGROUND

In the most remarkable known event in pre-California history, Captain Francis Drake and his crew landed in what is now Marin County in the summer of 1579, staying for 36 days while careening their ship, *the Golden Hind*, and peacefully mingling with the natives. Drake and his crew of about 75 men were Northern California's first European visitors.

Although Francis Drake was the most famous of all Elizabethan "seadogs", little is known by most people living in the Bay Area about the man and the voyage that brought him to the shores of California. The nearly three-year adventure originated with five ships in Plymouth, England in December of 1577. By the summer of 1579, Drake and his crew aboard the only remaining ship of the voyage had amassed great quantities of booty by attacking Spanish treasure ports and merchant ships while sailing north along the west coast of South and Central America. During those surprise raids, Drake reportedly relieved a Spanish treasure ship, commonly known as "The Cacafuego", of some 28 tons of silver and other valuables.

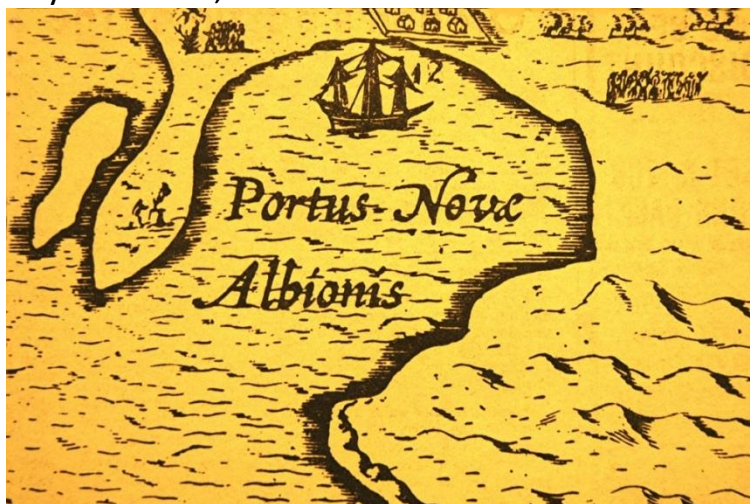
After sailing as far north as the Vancouver area, looking for the mythical "Straights of Anian" (or "Northwest Passage") as a possible way back to England, Drake and company sailed back down the coast to find a safe harbor in or near what is now Marin County. Over 40 tons of silver, along with gold, jewels and other treasures were aboard Drake's ship when they landed for repairs and built an encampment for their five-week stay. This was the first landing by the English on any shore of what is now the United States, preceding the East Coast settlement of Roanoke by six years and Jamestown by twenty eight.

Upon coming ashore, Francis Fletcher, the ship's chaplain, held the first Protestant service in North America. Remarkably, the first English language spoken in what is now the United States of America was heard in Marin County by the Coast Miwok people! Upon his return to England via the Pacific Ocean, Drake was knighted by Queen Elizabeth I aboard his ship.

Today, 440 years after that historic landing and after some two hundred years of heated debate, the true location of where Drake harbored his ship and claimed the area as "Nova Albion" (New England) for Queen and Country has still not been resolved without question. After years of dedicated historical and scientific research by myself and a team of experienced historians, archaeologists, geophysicists and geologists, I can now say with confidence that the true location of this great chapter in British and American history is almost certainly a well-known southern Marin cove that many thousands of people look at every day.

It's important to note here that, to date, there has been no indisputable artefactual evidence found at *any* of the proposed cove locations over the many years of trying to solve this important historical mystery. The previously proposed landing sites include the federally recognized location at Drakes Estero (at Drakes Bay) and many others up and down the entire west coast of the United States. Most of these sites fall reasonably within the latitude readings that were recorded by Drake, that is, somewhere in or near Marin County. Considering the lack of conclusive artefactual evidence by these proposed sites, I'd like to present a brief and clear hypothesis, comparing some key evidence I've compiled to the known and accepted facts about Drake and his crew's five week stay here in Marin.

The accepted historical descriptions of Drake's voyage were presented as personal journals, published several years after Drake's return to England. There is also a detailed map of the cove and encampment area that was originally an inset from a larger "broadside" map depicting his entire voyage (known as the "Hondius Broadside"). The cove map was drawn from sketches made on location and is commonly known as, "The Portus Plan of Nova Albion".



According to the subsequently published journals, Drake and his men built a small rock fortress before bringing their ship onto a beach area (at high tide) to be "careened" for the repair of a leak and to clean the ship's hull before returning to England via the Pacific Ocean. The men camped in their enclosed "fenced place" while repairing the ship and exploring the area. They soon developed a deep friendship with the natives and Captain Francis Drake was crowned as an Honorary Chief by the Miwok leader.

Logically, Drake's encampment location would have to be calm and have both food and fresh water nearby. It would also need to be hidden and defensible, especially for that long a stay. They were keenly aware of a possible surprise attack if discovered by Spanish ships. It's notable that very few other proposed Drake landing sites are either hidden or defensible.

THE DISCOVERY

As a native of Marin and a long-time amateur local historian, I decided to thoroughly investigate this most important chapter in California history, beginning in the summer of 2001. While searching the northern California coast, it became clear to me how difficult, dangerous and impractical it would be to safely careen and protect the ship and its crew for five weeks at almost every conceivable location. I didn't spend much time looking around San Francisco Bay, mainly because of the reason (expressed by some) that, "Drake couldn't have found San Francisco Bay because it was too foggy to see the entrance".

The fact is that Drake was a master navigator who, with the possible aid of stolen Spanish coastal charts and lifting fog could have detected the large entrance to San Francisco Bay by reading the shifting tides, winds, and by visual detection of the three-mile bay inlet along the coastline.

Drake reportedly also had the use of a small Portuguese scout ship, known as "Tello's Frigate" that had been commandeered (due to the excessive weight of treasure aboard the Golden Hinde) by Drake near Costa Rica.

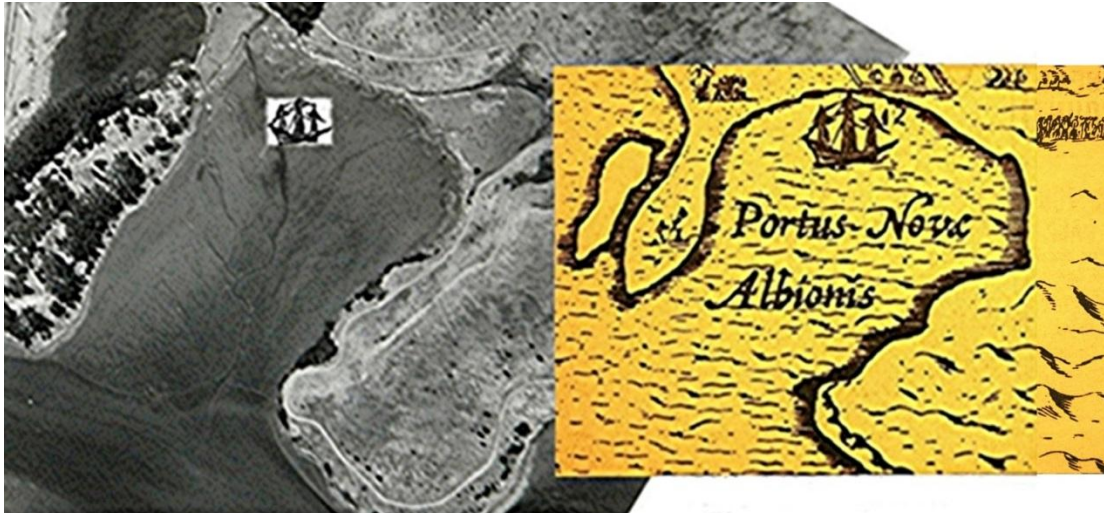
In July of 2008, about seven years after my search had begun, I found myself in a cove along the Richardson Bay shoreline of southern Marin. After I noted that it fit the journal descriptions perfectly in almost every respect, I was further encouraged by comparing old maps and aerial photographs that showed how well the site fit the "Portus Plan" map, right down to the water channel on its west side and the cartography of the area, including the ground elevation along the cove's shoreline. I also noticed that, as was described in the journals, there is a high hill right next to the map's encampment area. Unlike all other sites that have been considered, it was almost a perfect "fingerprint" of Drake's map. I had to be convinced, however, that Drake could actually get his ship into that particular cove, considering its location.

The Strawberry Cove Southern Marin County Location



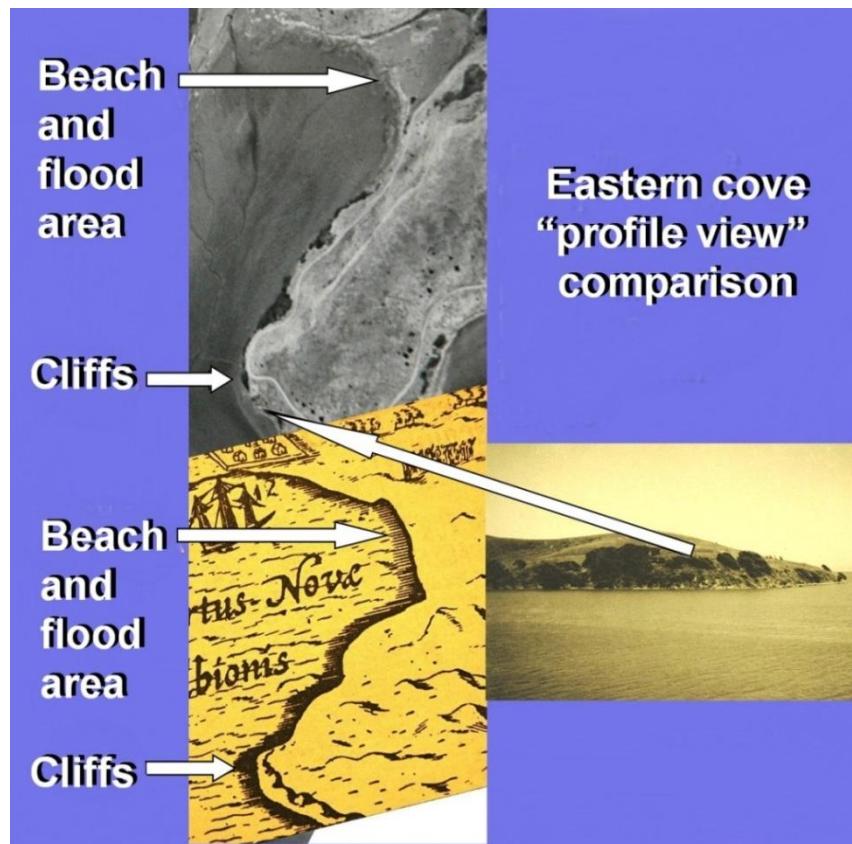
I then researched many early depth charts of San Francisco Bay and they all showed a navigable, natural, deep channel leading directly to the cove. After the discovery, I put together a 12 chapter DVD presentation of the evidence that was compiled over time.

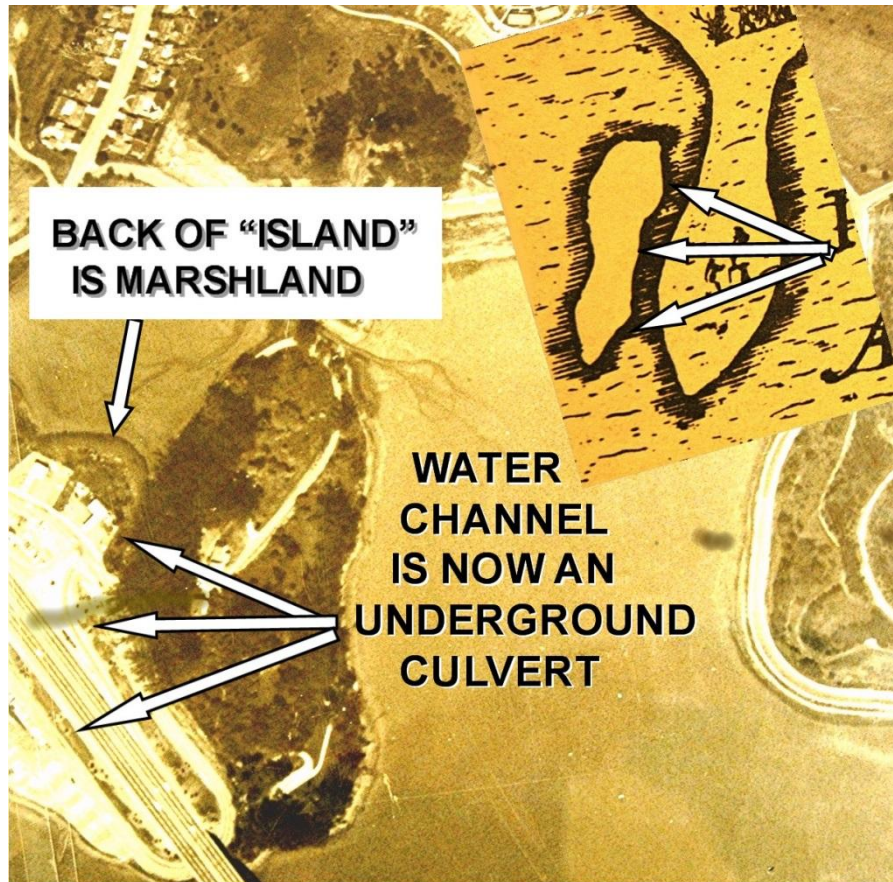
I now invite you to take a look at some of the visual and other evidence:



The site photo and the Drake map comparison. On the right, the Hondius Broadside inset, known as "The Portus Plan of Nova Albion" drawn by mapmaker Jodocus Hondius. On the left, an early 1950s aerial photograph of the cove.

Photo images courtesy of The Marin Historical Society





Journals

Cove in Marin County

Latitude: 38.00 (approx.)
Native People: Coastal Miwok (most historians agree)

37.88 (well within margin of error)
 Coastal Miwok

Descriptions:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) "Convenient and fit harbour"
"A fair and good bay" | 1) A very short sail from the opening of the Golden Gate. Calm and well-protected. |
| 2) "Trees without leaves" &
"Ground without greens" | 2) California Buckeyes can lose their leaves earlier than in Fall. There is still a natural grove there. Once a very barren and sparsely wooded area. |
| 3) Heavy fog for the first 14 days | 3) Fog rolls through the area frequently, coming from Tamalpais Valley . |
| 4) Drake visited a native village about a mile "up into the country" | 4) There was a Miwok village about 1 mile north (near Edna Maguire School in Mill Valley) |
| 5) A rock & mortar "fenced place" was constructed in 3 days | 5) There is evidence that a nearby area of the cove was heavily quarried |
| 6) The "fenced place" (fort) was near the bottom of a hill. | 6) The area where the fort would have been is near the bottom of a hill. |

Considering that almost all of the previously claimed cove locations don't come close to precisely matching the Drake map, most local historians and Drake scholars I've shown my collected evidence to first notice the strong similarities of the map/site comparison. In addition, many of those who were previously convinced of another cove location had very little argument after examining the exact match of dozens of other key factors that were reported in the historic Drake journals (details are available on my website). In addition to matching what Drake called "a fair and good bay" and a "convenient and fit harbor", the flora, fauna, geography, weather as well as the natives themselves at and around that particular cove site match perfectly. Now, after ten years of thorough investigation in both trying to prove and to *disprove* my hypothesis, I am absolutely convinced that the final answer to what's been called, "the great, great grandfather of all California historical mysteries" is...

Strawberry Cove in Mill Valley!

The cove discovery was made after several years of research, study and travel. Since that time, I have kept this discovery well-guarded. Over the past seven years, I've worked with the for-mentioned group of professionals conducting over a dozen geo-physical and geologic surveys and several excavations (finding only dissolved iron tracings) at the site.

Over several years, we thoroughly searched for Drake-related artifacts throughout the entire area around the cove, using state-of-the-art metal-detecting devices operated by experienced professionals – and always with proper permission and permits. I would like to state, for the record, that it is illegal for anyone to survey or excavate for artifacts on private or protected property without legal permission. During those geo-physical ground surveys, we looked for "kedge anchors" (land anchors used during the careening process), cannon, tools, ship-related parts and even treasure. I can assure everyone that, after years of thorough investigation, there is almost certainly no major artifact there on land. What may be in the water near the proposed careening area is another story. I would certainly welcome discussing that possibility with anyone who is seriously interested in assisting with an underwater investigation.

The treasure brought home from Drake's 16th century voyage of circumnavigation (the second after Magellan's) payed off England's foreign debt, his investors by 47-1, and helped to set the foundation for what would become the British Royal Navy. His claim for England of Nova Albion was the first major land claim by the English and, in effect, was the beginning of the British Empire. His discovery of "San Francisco Bay" preceded the Spanish (1769) claim by 190 years! Here on the 10th anniversary of the cove discovery, I sincerely hope to help promote, for all to enjoy, greater interest and knowledge about Sir Francis Drake and Marin's amazing connection to Elizabethan England.

Please take a look at the additional evidence & information available here on the "DISCOVERY" page! Much more evidence will be shown and questions will be answered, including why Drake didn't announce to the world his discovery of "San Francisco Bay", depth charts, and the probable quarry site (rocks used to build the fort) that, because of erosion, has slightly changed the cove's shoreline. Please take a look at the Strawberry Cove Drakes Estero comparison for additional key evidence. There will also be the intriguing story of the brass plate that was found in the area in 1936. On the "HOME" page, and others, you will discover, short and simply, many historical facts about that great Elizabethan seadog, known to the Spanish as "El Draque" (the Dragon) and to his fellow Englishmen and their Queen as a true national hero and an inspiration to all.

THE DRAKE LANDING SITE LOCATION

Below is a detailed close-up of depiction of Drake's encampment at Strawberry Cove in upper Richardson Bay as painted by acclaimed local artist, Andrew Annenberg. If you look to your right while crossing the Richardson Bay Bridge heading north, you'll see Strawberry Cove. How I *love* local history!



“The Fog Lifts at Nova Albion”



THE DRAKE COMPANY OF CALIFORNIA



sfdrakefoundation.org / duane@NovaAlbionProd.com

