

THE TRUE AND FABULOUS HISTORY OF NOVA ALBION

PRECOCIOUS, even in the womb of time, California was named before it was discovered. A romance of chivalry called *Las Sergas de Espladián*, published in Spain in the year 1510, and popular reading in *Conquistador* circles, told of

An island named California, at the right hand of the Indies, very near the Terrestrial Paradise, inhabited by black women without a single man among them, and they lived in the manner of Amazons. . . Their weapons were all made of gold and so was the harness of the wild beasts, or griffins which they tamed and rode . . .

This was enough for the great Hernando Cortés, never a man to resist the lure either of gold or of women, to investigate rumours that this fabulous land lay somewhere up the coast from Mexico, on the way to India and China which he and the other conquistadors were still seeking. So, in the year 1524, three years after he had conquered and despoiled the Aztecs, he instructed his kinsman Francisco Cortés further to explore the Pacific shores northward

Because I am informed that down the coast there are many provinces . . . containing great riches . . . one of which is inhabited by women, with no men, who procreate in the way in which the ancient histories ascribe to the Amazons.

A decade later, his lieutenants having meanwhile failed to discover any such place, Hernando Cortés, though by this time he was Captain-General of New Spain, Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca and loaded with other honours and great riches, was still hankering after the giant Queen Calafia and her monstrous regiment of women, and the gold-plated griffins that they rode to battle and no doubt—being Californians—to market, and he himself set out for this "island of Amazons or women only, abounding in pearls and gold, lying ten days' journey from Colima" (as he explained matters in a letter to the Emperor Charles). In 1535 he reached a bay which he named Santa Cruz (and which is today known as Puerta de la Paz) on the inner side of the peninsula which we call Lower California. He found no Amazons and no gold, only a barren sandy waste, but stayed there for a year of mounting frustration, attempting to establish a colony. Then he and his men abandoned what it is believed some of them were already derisively calling it "California" (though there is no evidence that he himself did so). But as early as 1539 the men of the last expedition Cortés was to send out, under Ulloa, certainly referred quite familiarly to this bay as "California", and the name soon spread to

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The Discovery and Naming of California

Many ingenious theories concerning the naming of California were discounted by Edward Everett Hale's discovery of the name in Garcí Rodríguez Ordóñez de Montalvo's romance of chivalry, *Las Sergas de Esplandián* (first published in Spain, probably in the year 1510, and reprinted in 1519, 1521, 1525 and 1526). Hale published his findings in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, April 30, 1862, pp. 45-53, and also in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. XLII, p. 265. In a century of further enquiry these have not been shaken (see Donald Cutter on "The Name California" in *Arizona and the West Magazine*, Vol. III, Autumn 1961, pp. 237-43, where Hale's explanation is accepted completely and the search pursued into how and where Ordóñez de Montalvo obtained the name). H. H. Bancroft and his editors devoted the whole of Chapter 3 (pp. 65-109) of the first volume of his *History of California* (San Francisco, 7 vols., 1884) to the discovery and naming of California, and much of this is still valuable. The translation of the passage from *Las Sergas de Esplandián* is by Stephen Clissold (*Seven Cities of Cibola*, London, 1961, p. 80) and that of the Cortés instruction by H. E. Bolton (*Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706*, New York, 1908; reprinted 1959, p. 3).

Francis Drake in California and the Location of NOVA ALBION

A very extensive literature has been devoted to Nova Albion. The most comprehensive survey is contained in H. R. Wagner, *Sir Francis Drake's Voyage around the World. Its Aims and Achievements* (San Francisco, 1926) but some of his more dogmatic conclusions are less acceptable than those of other scholars, such as Zelia Nuttall, George Davidson and Adolph Oko. The last word, to date, may be said to have been uttered by Captain Adolph S. Oko, U.S. Navy (retired), in "Francis Drake and Nova Albion" (*California Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XLIII, No. 1, June 1964, pp. 1-24). Oko's knowledge of the terrain, and of navigation, added to his mastery of the literature of the subject, led him to conclude with Davidson (and against Wagner, who favoured Trinidad Bay) that Drake anchored and stayed for five weeks in 1579 at the small harbour which is today known as "Drake's Bay" on the Point Reyes Peninsula. Dr. George C. Davidson, Superintendent of the Pacific Coast Survey of the United States, wrote voluminously on the subject in publications ranging from 1858 to 1908, some of the most significant being "An Examination of some of the Early Voyages of Discovery and Exploration on the Northwest Coast of America from 1539 to 1603" (*Report of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic*