

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 20, 1956

Drake's Voyage

It was a great day in San Francisco last Thursday when the members of the California Historical Society entertained the members of the Drake Navigators Guild and a number of distinguished guests including: A. A. Cumming, curator of Buckland Abbey, Plymouth, England, and Lady Cumming; Sir Robert Hadow, Her Britannic Majesty's consul general to San Francisco, and Lady Hadow. Very appropriately the event was held at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel in the Empire Room.

Hon. Joseph R. Knowland, president of the historical society, presided and introduced Fleet Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, U.S.N., who, as the honorary chairman of the Drake Navigators Guild, announced that the exact spot on the Marin county shore where Drake beached his Golden Hind had been definitely decided upon.

The site, Nimitz said, is a small cove on the west side and just within the mouth of Drake's bay. According to recorded documents Drake and his men camped for 36 days while they scraped and cleaned the hull of the Golden Hind and gathered provisions for their voyage back home to England.

The exact spot of Drake's landing has been in dispute ever since the discovery in 1933 of the "Plate Of Brass", now the property of the Bancroft Library at the University of California. The plate was on display at the luncheon and was viewed with much interest by the several hundred present. Dr. George Hammond, director of the Bancroft Library, was present to guard the valuable relic.

Drake had left the plate to claim "New Albion" for Queen Elizabeth I and he mentioned it in accounts of his historic voyage around the world. But efforts to designate his landing place as a national monument have been thwarted because of arguments about its location. The Drake Navigators Guild was organized six years ago by a number of Drakophiles and "old sea dogs", to carry on the Drake research, Admiral Nimitz explained.

"The guild assembled facts about their objective from maps, charts and early documentation. This data was then sifted and found to converge at a common point," Nimitz said. Quoting Drake's scribe, the speaker read: "... Neither could we at any time in fourteene dayes

together, find the aire so cleare as to be able to take the height of Sunne or starre ..." He also wrote that the latitude was 38 degrees, there was chilling summer fogs and white banks and cliffs, all of which fits the Estero cove.

The findings of the guild were presented in manuscript form to A. A. Cummings to take back to Buckland Abbey in Plymouth, where it will be treasured by the Friends of Buckland Abbey, the former Home of Sir Francis Drake. Curator Cummings spoke at the luncheon and presented Nimitz with a small gold replica of the famous drum Drake had aboard the Golden Hind. The small treasure was enclosed in a beautiful leather case and for the time being, or until the Navigators club acquires a museum of its own, it will be shown at the headquarters of the California Historical Society, according to Knowland, who accepted it in the name of the society. The curator and his charming wife flew from England to take part in the luncheon program. They were guests of honor at a picnic at Drake's Estero cove last Sunday, in celebration of the 377th anniversary of Drake's arrival there.

Mrs. Edna Martin Parrott who resigned as the director of the headquarters of the California Historical Society a couple of years ago and who now makes her home at the Highlands, had a seat at the speaker's table. She went to Plymouth in June of 1954 to represent the California Historical Society at a celebration in honor of Drake. Adm. Nimitz and Mrs. Nimitz represented the Navigators Guild at the same celebration in England.

Among those from the Monterey Peninsula who attended the event in San Francisco on June 14 were Mrs. W. R. Holman, Mrs. Mary L. Greene, and Mrs. W. M. O'Donnell.