

22 October 2016

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen:

This commemoration has been a long time coming. Millennia have passed since the ancestors of our Coast Miwok People arrived on this site, settled, and created their unique culture.

451 years ago, Spaniards completed the dream of Columbus to connect the peoples of the world in peaceful commerce by way of the great oceans by creating the Manila galleon route that is marked on our shores by the wreck of the *San Agustin* and the encampment of her crewmen here in 1595.

437 years ago, Francis Drake and his crewmen landed here, met peacefully and respectfully with the Native Americans, made the first English claim to the land that would, in time, become the United States of America, named the land *Nova Albion* -- a name which, as New England, would mark permanent English settlements on the other side of the continent, and held the first church service from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* in this land.

Sixty-seven years ago, the Drake Navigators Guild was formed to seek the traces of the English and Spanish contacts with our shores, to learn about their relationships with the Native peoples, and to tell those stories to all the peoples who now inhabit this land.

Four years ago, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar signed the document creating the Drakes Bay Historic and Archaeological District National Historic Landmark to commemorate those three themes.

The Drake Navigators Guild, which wrote the Nomination for this Landmark and shepherded it to fruition has been fortunate in its leaders and colleagues, of whom only a few can be mentioned here today:

Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, who inspired and guided us in our early years.

Captain Adolf Oko, a hero of the Israeli War of Independence, who organized the Guild.

Captain Raymond Aker, whose work with many nautical disciplines developed much of the evidence for the Drake landing.

Matthew P. Dillingham, who rediscovered Drake's Cove in 1952.

Robert Allen and Robert Parkinson, who followed the natural history evidence in the Drake accounts.

British Admiral Sir Simon Cassels, who explained the navigation of the *Golden Hind's* voyage.

The Asian Art Museum's Clarence Shangraw, who identified Chinese porcelains left here by Francis Drake.

William Duddleson, who, working for Congressman Clem Miller, wrote the legislation which created the Point Reyes National Seashore.

All these, and many, many more, freely contributed time and talents without certainty of success or hope of reward.

Many are no longer with us. Some lived to see and hold the plaque which you will see unveiled here today but are now gone. A few are among you today. Where are you? [*Point into the audience.*]

Why did so many persons devote so much time and energy to this study of our past of four-and-a-half centuries ago?

British scholar Geoffrey Bibby spoke for historians who search old manuscripts and for archaeologists who sift the sands: We work, "in pity and humility, that the dead may live again, that what is past may not be forever lost, that something may be salvaged from the wrack of the ages, that the past may color the present and give heart to the future." Our efforts "are the only payment that we can make against the debt that we all owe to those who, through the millennia, fashioned the world in which we live."

However, it is not only the recovery of the past that matters, but the bringing to new generations of our peoples better understandings of the aspirations, struggles, achievements, frequent failures, accumulated knowledge, and sometimes wisdom, of the peoples of the past as guides toward, we trust, a more enlightened future.

No institution is better suited for this role than the century-old National Park Service through its half-century-old National Historic Landmarks program.

We come here today to commemorate three great strands in our common heritage: the Native American, the English, and the Spanish. But they do not exist in isolation. Into these three strands are woven stories of Portuguese adventurers, such as Captain Sebastian Rodriguez Cermeño, or we should say Sebastião Rodrigues Soromenho of the *San Agustin*, of Black men and women in varied roles in Drake's and Soromenho's ships, of Mexican, Filipino and Chinese voyagers in the Manila ships, and of all the peoples who contributed to the societies which created their ships and their cargos and sent them on their voyages.

Today, I speak of one of these three main strands: the greatest voyage of all time -- Francis Drake's voyage around the world from 1577 through 1580 which is commemorated here for his landing in *Nova Albion* -- a site clearly visible from this podium, just to the right of the nearest white cliff. *[Point]*

Drake's astonishing life is a saga in itself. He rose from childhood poverty living with his parents and eleven siblings in an abandoned hulk. At twelve, he began his apprenticeship at sea, which was followed by participation in trading voyages to Africa and the New World led by his cousin John Hawkins, voyages that tested whether Englishmen would be permitted to enter the newly opened New World markets. The answer came in the treacherous attack on Hawkins's fleet at San Juan de Ullua, Mexico, which Drake escaped by the narrowest of margins.

That debacle led to Drake's taking part in the developing hot-cold war on behalf of his Queen Elizabeth by privateering in the Caribbean where he captured a treasure-laden mule train in the jungles of Panama with the aid of a colony of escaped slaves. Then came the world voyage, one event of which we commemorate here today.

Francis Drake went on to become vice-admiral of England in an open-war attack on the West Indies, in the burning of the Spanish invasion fleet at Cadiz, in the Armada battles of 1588, again in attacks on Spain, and once more in the West Indies and Panama, where he met his death from jungle fever a few miles away from where he first made his mark on history.

There is Drake the person -- daring, brash, energetic, self-promoting, decisive, violent only as seemed necessary in his times, yet caring of his crews and of his captives. His great Pacific raid saw not one loss of a Spanish life.

Drake's nearly three-year-long voyage around the world is a great story within Drake's story. It was the first sailing of Englishmen south of the Equator, followed by passage of the Straits of Magellan, dispersal of his ships by great storms, and discovery of Cape Horn and the Drake Passage south of Tierra del Fuego. Drake sailed north along the west coast of South and Central America, raiding Spanish treasure ports and ships, culminating in his capture of a treasure ship from Peru carrying twenty-six tons of silver valued at half his queen's annual revenues.

Then he sailed far out to sea and searched far to the north and then to the northeast, as far as the southern coast of Oregon, for the elusive Northwest Passage. Finding a forbidding coastline rather than a strait, he turned and sailed three hundred miles down the California coast.

Coming from the north, he saw a great granite headland, *[Point]* rounded it, ran three miles along Point Reyes Head, *[Point]* and found a great bay opening up beyond. In your mind's eye, can you see a tiny square-rigged sailing ship clearing Chimney Rock, followed by the slightly larger *Golden Hind*? *[Point]* A turn of rudders and adjustments of sails, and Drake sailed into this bay and toward the entrance of the Estero. *[Point]* Here, in the cove visible from this spot, he found a haven sheltered by the great white cliffs. *[Point]*

Drake remained here in *Portus Novae Albionis* for thirty-six-days, repairing and resupplying his ship and establishing friendly relations with the Coast Miwok Peoples. On his way into the Pacific, he visited the Farallon Islands, which are visible from this site, *[Point]* survived a grounding in the East Indies, and completed his circumnavigation by way of the Spice Islands, the Cape of Good Hope, and the bulge of Africa, at one point sailing 9,700 miles without touching land.

But, it is the context -- the wider story -- that makes this commemoration so significant.

It is the story of the wrenching changes from the inward-looking Medieval European worldview, through the exhilarating expansion of intellectual as well as geographical knowledge of the Age of Exploration, to the complex decisions by many persons, high and low, in Queen Elizabeth's day which defined so many of the interlinked political, economic, social, and religious issues we live with today which provide the context to Drake's landing in California -- and make the dedication of this marker, which encompasses in so few words so many aspects of this history, so meaningful to our peoples.

Drake's life was shaped by, and helped shape, many of these larger concerns. Prominent among them were the choices between a unitary political and religious world and one in which widely varied societies and creeds would struggle to work out accommodations with each other and vie for leadership by the persuasiveness of their visions for the world's peoples.

In Drake's day, these choices often were disputed by violence rather than debate: The struggle for freedom of the seas in the bloodied waters of San Juan de Ullua in 1568. The desperate struggle for self-determination when England's allies, the people of the Netherlands, cut the great dyke at Rotterdam in 1574, flooded half of the Province of Holland, saved the besieged city of Leyden, created a great university, and established their independent republic. The defiance of the dominant world power in 1588 when the English seamen drummed the Armada up the Channel, into the North Sea, and oblivion.

Later, but linked to their Elizabethan predecessors, would come the political changes embodied in the English Glorious Revolution, the American Declaration of Independence, Constitution and Bill of Rights, and the French Revolution, and, later still, the social changes of labor, minorities, women, and gays. In our own lifetimes, and in the city that is, weather permitting, within view of this gathering, San Francisco, *[Point]* our generation would see the creation of the United Nations as a new effort to establish a better way of ordering our world for the benefit of all. But those are stories for other days and other National Historic Landmarks.

So we commemorate the landing of Francis Drake, who here in *Nova Albion* helped set our ancestors, and all of us, on new, untried, and infinitely complex paths on June 17, 1579. Join us in passing this story on to future generations.