

# RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## **Making the Case for Drake's Landing at Campbell Cove**

*by Adrianus Boudewyn - 2008*

We had a good turnout to our scheduled September speaker event at Campbell Cove, featuring author Brian T. Kelleher whose book "Drake's Bay: Unraveling California's Great Maritime Mystery" places Sir Francis Drake's July 1579 California landing on the shores of Sonoma County rather than at commonly held Drakes Bay in Marin.

Accompanying Mr. Kelleher was Bob Graham, a well respected historical researcher and author of "The Crossing", who demonstrated Drake's land-based latitude reading using recreated period instruments (astrolabe) and navigation tables available to Drake at the time.

Mr. Kelleher said the evidence that Drake chose Campbell Cove inside Bodega Bay is a massive stone wall 40 feet long and five feet high – which he located in nearby shrubbery for those assembled -- that is an intact section of Drake's 400-year-old fort.

He contends that a full-scale archaeological investigation would confirm this finding and its historical significance that the fort would represent British Colonial America's oldest landmark, predating Captain James Smith's fort at Jamestown, Virginia by 28 years. Such a discovery, Mr. Kelleher said, would rewrite the first chapter of the history of the United States.



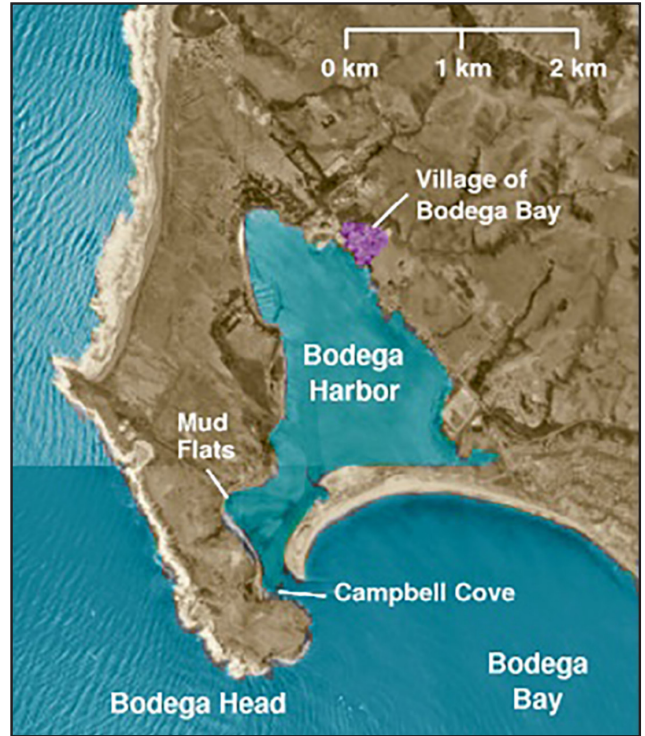
**Campbell Cove**

## CAMPBELL COVE

Using maps and quotes from Drake's writings, Mr. Kelleher recited a list of telltale clues to bolster his case that the most famous seafarer of all time grounded his leaking ship the Golden Hind for five weeks to make repairs.

Among them is his assertion that Drake's fort, buried under centuries of landslide debris at the foot of the steep bluff, was unearthed at Campbell Cove in 1963 when PG&E contractors used bulldozers to tear into the steep bluff forming the rear wall of the cove to make room for the nuclear reactor that had been planned.

Mr. Kelleher says that in addition to the physical ruins, every shred of evidence in the principal contemporary account of Drake's 16th-century circumnavigation of the globe points to a landfall at Bodega Harbor, including the precise geographical coordinate for latitude; the circumstances of approach and departure, and the descriptions of the harbor, its native inhabitants, its flora, its fauna, and the adjacent coastal and inland terrain. He said there is also a contemporary drawing showing Drake's California port of call: the "Portus Nova Albionis" (Portus Plan). Twelve of the thirteen Portus plan shorelines match point-for-point in parallel lines with the thirteen inner and outer shorelines of Campbell Cove. The Portus plan shows Drake's fort as a large three-walled structure.



Mr. Kelleher said the principal contemporary account of the voyage was contained in *The World Encompassed* by Sir Francis Drake, a 108-page book published in London in 1628 that includes 18 pages of minute detail on the California sojourn. In it, Drake writes that the Latitude for the California harbor was located at 38 degrees 30 minutes north latitude. Drake was searching for a port to enter while traveling south. Given the nominal accuracy of 16th century navigational instruments, Bodega Harbor, at 38 degrees 19 minutes, fits this evidence perfectly – it would have been the very first port available in his search. In contrast, the mouth of Drakes Estero, at 38 degrees 2 minutes is well outside the normal range of accuracy for a 16th century latitude reading made on land (plus or minus 15 minutes), and at the outer limits for a reading taken at sea (plus or minutes 30 minutes). Mr. Kelleher said the description of coastal and inland terrain matches the Bodega Harbor environs, but not Drakes Estero. Drake wrote that to defend themselves from possible Indian attack, the English constructed a stone-walled fort at the foot of a steep hill nearby the grounded ship. The account suggest that to reach the fort site, the Indians had to descend a steep trail leading down to the face of a bluff, and that the fort was located near the point where the trail met the beach.

Mr. Kelleher said collectively, the evidence correlates perfectly with Bodega Harbor and no other harbor between here and San Francisco. The accounts of nearly all the early visitors to the Bodega Harbor describe a single Coast Miwok village site at the west shore of the inner harbor, close by the water's edge, three-quarters of a mile north of Campbell Cove, and that the southern Pomo territory overlapped the Bodega Harbor clam flats. The description of dress, certain words, dwellings, basketry, ceremony, and chieftainship, point to contact with the Pomo tribes of southern Sonoma County (which wouldn't have been the case in Marin), including a formal visit from their chief. He said that similarly, available food at the harbor appeared to have been limited to fresh water, seals, sea lions, and shellfish as opposed to deer and grizzly bear meats available at Drakes Estero.