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Hanna: *Lost Harbor: The Controversy Over Drake's California Anchorage*

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#### **Author**

Elsasser, Albert B

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The University of Utah must be thanked for the publication, although long delayed, of these data contributions to the anthropological record.



***Lost Harbor: The Controversy Over Drake's California Anchorage.* Warren L. Hanna.**  
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, xvii + 459 pp., 63 illus., \$15.95.

Reviewed by ALBERT B. ELSASSER  
824 Park Way  
El Cerrito, CA 94530

When Samuel Eliot Morison called the plate of brass found on the shore of San Francisco Bay in 1936 (and subsequently referred to as the *Drake's Plate*) "a complete and clumsy hoax," he was surely being excessive. Hanna rightly argues in the book under review that any practical joke or deception that is able to challenge the abilities of some of the world's greatest scientists as to its genuineness for nearly half a century may be 'complete', but certainly is not 'clumsy'. Although the plate is only one link in the chain of evidence that has been used to stir up the controversy over the exact location of Sir Francis Drake's 1579 landing place in California, it might well serve as the best symbol of the heated dispute. Other aspects of the case, mostly based upon accounts of Drake's chaplain, Francis Fletcher, published in 1589 and in 1628, have been interpreted by various scholars, serious and otherwise, as evidence pointing to some favorite location anywhere from San Luis Obispo in the south to the coast of Oregon in the north.

Hanna has eschewed the extremes, and has essentially chosen to discuss the merits of the arguments for Drake's Estero, San Quentin Cove in San Francisco Bay, and Bolinas Lagoon. At times the reader may feel that some of the arguments or counterarguments which he reviews are frivolous, but the whole point

of his presentation is to set forth all of the statements given by the main proponents and treating them in much the same manner that they would perhaps be handled in some enlightened court of law. Hanna's legal experience has served him well here, but there is more to it than that. He is obviously a painstaking, thorough investigator who has spent a great deal of time studying the voluminous literature on Drake's great voyage, especially that part pertaining directly or marginally to the California sojourn. As such, he does not casually neglect small bits of evidence, even if at first blush they seem of doubtful validity.

Unfortunately, much of the evidence, historical, ethnological, botanical, and zoological, bearing upon the location of Drake's California anchorage almost seems to have been deliberately planned to confound the unwary or even the fair-minded. The loss of Drake's log, misunderstandings and omissions in Chaplain Fletcher's accounts, and inexact sketches of the California coast by early cartographers, all contribute to often murky understanding, and allow numbers of alternate explanations.

Nevertheless, Hanna reviews the opinions and counteropinions on the landing spot, dating from 1790 and perhaps coming to a boil in a debate published on the subject by the California Historical Society in 1974. Characteristically, he comes to no positive conclusion on which of the contenders is correct, although a graded assessment at the end seems to favor the Drake's Estero argument over that of the other two leading candidates.

While this volume does not pretend to solve the mystery of the landing place, it should probably be considered the definitive work on the subject. Unless new and undoubted archaeological or archival evidence concerning Drake's California landing is forthcoming, it promises to remain the last word for a long time to come.