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Remarks Pt Reyes Drake's Commemoration Oct 22 2016

Over four hundred years ago an event of singular significance occurred in the waters off Pt. Reyes influencing the history of California and the native peoples of this region. The Manila galleon, San Agustin was wrecked, the captain and crew suddenly marooned, and for a second time in a scant sixteen years, Europeans and the Coast Miwok came into direct contact here on the edge of the world. Ironically, the ship and crew were engaged in exploration to find a safe and secure harbor along California's unknown and intensely treacherous coast. The wrecking episode also meant that again, the entrance to San Francisco Bay was bypassed, and the outcome of the voyage persuaded navigators to shy away from the coast for more than a century, undoubtedly to the benefit of regional societies. The wreck interests nautical archaeologists because of the rare type of ship, of which little is known, and anthropologists because of the implications and nature of cross-cultural contacts that ensued.

The principle document used by all investigators is the Relation of Sebastian Rodrigues Cermeño (Archivo Generale de Los Indios) dated to 1596. Cermeño was Captain of the ship, but the loss of the ship is mentioned in the relation only a single time, in a non-descript and unenlightening manner. What has long eluded scholars are the precise details surrounding the ship's loss; details which might point towards the location of the vessel's remains. Descriptions of the interactions between the crew and the local inhabitants, which are of particular interest, are also vague. There are, however, other cartas alluding to separate testimony, as well as comments in letters by explorer Sebastian Viscaïno, who sought to recover the ship's cargo in 1602. This matters because within the living memory of people who called this place home, strangers with unusual dress, customs, and language were again on the coast—perhaps three

times within living memory of local populations. There is archaeological evidence that cargo entered the material culture of local populations, likely impacting social relations.

Spain's efforts to expand its empire to the Far East and to capitalize on the riches of the spice trade were the impetus behind astonishing sea voyages from South America and Mexico across the Pacific to the Philippines. The earliest voyages from Mexico to reach the Philippines were met with failure. In 1565, Francisco de Salcedo, and Andreas de Urdaneta, successfully returned to Mexico, sailing in the northern latitudes from the Philippines. With this voyage the Manila trade was born, and with it, nascent globalization. With imperial hubris Spain considered California part of its new world empire, but it was an unknown. Spain managed to establish a fledgling colony at Manila, well situated to become the preeminent entrepôt for the region. From 1565 until 1815 Spain would maintain this commercial route linking the Philippines with Mexico. During that time the crews of Manila ships were of mixed nationalities both European and Asian with cultural influences travelling in each direction. Voyages of the Manila galleons can be viewed as the initial phase of California shifting from being perceived of as the edge of the world, to gateway to the world. That this navigation should continue for so long is all the more remarkable when we consider it is one of the longest and harshest routes ever navigated, often lasting seven months or longer.

It has been calculated that one out of every fifteen ships came to grief. Along the west coast there are known to be at least three galleons wrecked and possibly four, including the San Agustin. Merchant interests in Manila and their agents in Spain argued continuously for the Crown to sponsor a voyage of exploration along California's coast to locate a safe harbor in