Map lovers' delight

NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN THOROUGHLY EXPLORED

Historical Atlas of the North Pacific Ocean by Derek Hayes; Douglas 
McIntyre; 224 pps.; $75.

By DAVID A. BROWN

Two years ago, Derek Hayes brought forth his historical atlas of our neighbour-
hood, the Pacific Northwest. To the reviewer, a lifelong cartophile (not in the
dictionary, but it sounds right) with an equal love of history, it was richly rewar-
ding to both mind and eye.

Now Hayes has expanded his horizon to the full reach of the North Pacific
Ocean for his latest atlas, which draws on archived charts and accounts originating
in Asia as well as from more familiar characters in Northwest waters, such as
Cook, Vancouver, Drake, Pérez, Malaspina, La Perouse and Chirikov.

While his first volume was devoted to reproducing and placing in context the
charts, drawings and maps of explorers, surveyors and even natives, on both land and sea, the
latest atlas adds the dimension of scientific discovery, a graphic history of how the ocean bottom was
first mapped, how the courses of winds and currents and warm temperatures were first plotted
and accurately plotted on charts of this vast sea we on the West Coast share.

The Historical Atlas of the North Pacific Ocean was commissioned by the
North Pacific Marine Science Organization, which goes under the acronym
PICES, a decade-old international and intergovernmental organiza-
tion whose members include Canada, Russia, the United States,
Japan, Korea and China.

The first annual meeting of the organization was held in Victoria in

There is, of course, an unanswerable overlap in coverage of sea-borne explorations
in Hayes's two volumes.

Yet, amazingly, there are few duplications in maps.

Hayes has restored many fresh entries in his tireless pursuit of archives, libraries
and museums from Europe, Canada, the U.S. and Japan, with drafts of old
charts revised, the corresponding descriptive notes rewritten or re-edited, some
times with vital new information.

For example, the maps carrying the name Jessco, Eso or Lesco are described
in the earlier atlas as mythical lands showing up on maps at the start of the 19th
century.

In this new volume, the Jessco mystery is sorted out as a "confusion with
Hokaido, the northernmost large island of Japan."

Then there is the Drake controversy. Hayes, in his newest work, sees no clear
evidence Drake sailed further north than 48 degrees, just short of the latitude of
the mouth of Juan de Fuca Strait, despite ambiguities in the over-scrubbed latitude figures in a document called "The Anon-
ymous Narrative," ostensibly the earliest written account of Drake's voyage; an
account found in the British Library.

The suggestion Drake might have reached as far north as the mouth of the
Sitkine in the Alaska panhandle, with the
details suppressed or altered to insure secrecy from enemies
under Elizabethan-era edict, was made
by former B.C. cabinet minister and Vic-
toria developer Sam Bawlf, following
his own detailed research in articles appearing a year ago.

Without naming Bawlf, Hayes states that an analysis of the infamous written
"48" revealed "it had been altered from
50, being changed to 53 along the way. Unsub-
stantiated, however, was the fact that
alteration had been made before the ink

dried, making later deliberate change unlikely.

Hayes also contends that the silence for extraordinarily cold temperatures
reported by Drake might have been that
the voyage was made during a particu-
larly cold climatic period, as born out by
tree-ring evidence, rather than
Drake's ship being much
further north than his
records indicated.

Why would
Drake, asks Hayes, "or his chaplain, who was
responsible for the book, make a point of
complaining about the cold if it showed they were farther north than they were
allowed to say, unless they were trying to circumvent the official roundabout way?"

The fun with old maps is the imagination of some cartographers, who devise,
without evidence of any kind, impressively huge lands, islands, rivers that inexplicably
cross mountain ranges, Northwest Passages, and islands, so
many islands, that never
existed.

There, on map following map from the 16th to 18th centuries, are the
eldorado land of Quivira in mid-continent North America and the
hopeful but elusive Strait of Aniak, leading from the Pacific to the Atlan-
tic through Canada.

A "virtual massacre" of doubtful
Pacific islands resulted from a purge
of primary Admiralty charts as late as 1875, Hayes notes. "With a single stroke of a pen no less than 123 islands were
removed, including, hilariously, three that were real and had to be restored later.

Among the 243 maps in this atlas, the jacket points out, are the first sonar map of the
Pacific, "artistic physiographic diagrams depicting undersea topography in three dimensions," maps illustrating the
theory of plate tectonics and maps plotting
the risk of tsunamis.

Hayes' descriptive accompanying his maps betrays his enthusiasm for what they
tell us, the often artful way they do the job, and his appreciation of the
clever dodging when they are on unsure
ground.

For ocean scientist, for history buff, for map-lover, Harris's book is a
worthy stand-alone volume, or even a
companion to the first.

Geographer Hayes is not only a map-
hound. He is the author of the illustrated
biography First Crossing: Alexander
Mackenzie, His Expedition Across North
America, and the Discovery of the Conti-
inent. He is also working on a historical
atlas of Canada.

David A. Brown is a former managing
editor of the Times Colonist.