



Naming California

This map, published in the year 1550, shows California as an island. This is because European explorers once thought that a long sliver of the Pacific Ocean separated California from the mainland of North America.

In 1510, Spaniard Garcia Ordóñez de Montalvo wrote a

romantic novel that described the people who lived in this mythical land. He wrote: "Know that to the right hand of the Indies exists an island called California, very near the Terrestrial Paradise. It was populated by black women... who were brave and very strong... their arms were all of gold... without there being any men among them. Their island was the strongest of the World, with its cliffs and rocky shores. And

there ruled over that island a queen of majestic proportions, who accomplished great deeds. She was valiant and courageous and ardent with a brave heart — Queen Califa."

In 1539, explorer Hernándo Cortés sent navigator Francisco de Ulloa north up what is today called the Gulf of California. And while there are no records of anyone actually meeting Queen Califa, the paradise of Spanish imagination is today named after her — California, the Golden State.