

Mt. Tamalpais

Profiles:

Alice Eastwood and Matt Davis



Alice Eastwood



Matt Davis

Photos courtesy of
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Alice Eastwood

One of most influential people to contribute to Mount Tamalpais was famous botanist **Alice Eastwood**. She cherished the mountain, and considered it “her lifelong love”. Eastwood, born in 1859, was raised in Toronto, Canada. As a woman at that time, her educational opportunities were limited, so she found that books were the tool by which she achieved

her education. She had an interest in many different sciences, but botany was always her favorite.

After moving to the United States, Alice graduated valedictorian of her Denver High School and immediately returned to the classroom to teach science, math, history, and the arts. In her spare time, Alice collected plant specimens in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. She was an extremely capable self-taught botanist, so much so that she was often sought out by scientists for biological tours of the local area.

Alice moved to San Francisco, California in 1892 to become the Curator of Botany at the **Academy of Sciences**.

Eastwood was determined and eager to collect as many specimens as possible. She greatly expanded the Herbarium with many of her own specimens from California, Utah, and Colorado. She regularly hiked the trails of Mt.



Alice Eastwood
Courtesy of CA
Academy of
Sciences

Tamalpais, collecting flora and sharing her knowledge with other hikers. Eastwood was known for her tremendous hiking skills, averaging **20 miles a day**, carrying heavy plant presses on her back.

Eastwood was the Curator of Botany at the Academy of Sciences for fifty-seven years until 1949. In 1906, a catastrophic **earthquake** hit San Francisco. Fires burned for three days and decimated large parts of the city. As for the Academy of sciences, all but the front door was intact. Eastwood was determined to save the collections from the approaching fire, and managed to rummage through the rubble, fasten baskets made of rope and twine, and collect 1,497 rare specimens that would have been impossible to replace. The fires finally reached the Academy of Sciences and burned most of the other collections. However, Eastwood was known for her incredible memory, as she was able to recall what plants had been lost and where they could be collected again.

Eastwood was also a founding member and president of the **Tamalpais Conservation Club**, an organization formed in 1912 devoted to the conservation of Mt. Tamalpais’ natural

and recreational resources . On Eastwood’s 90th birthday in 1949, “**Camp Alice Eastwood**”, a daytime camp on the Mountain, was dedicated to commemorate the famous botanist.

Eastwood published many popular articles, many about the native plant life in Marin County. Eastwood has been known for her work regarding **Manzanita** identification, of which she has identified and named five different species on Mt. Tamalpais. In fact, there are currently seventeen recognized species named for Eastwood, as well as the genera *Eastwoodia* and *Aliciella*. Alice received many awards in her lifetime and in 1903 was one of only two women listed in the American Men of Science to be denoted as being considered to be among the top 25% of professionals in their field.

Matt Davis

Many people recognize the name by the “Matt Davis trail” that wraps around



Matt Davis: Courtesy of Nancy Skinner Collection

the south and west side of the mountain, but few know the namesake behind the title. Born in 1875, Matt Davis had a great love for



Matt Davis’ Cabin, 1930’s
Courtesy of Nancy Skinner Collection

the natural world his whole life. In his youth, he was a proud Eagle Scout, and as an adult, a dedicated volunteer trail builder on Mt. Tamalpais. Matt Davis took a career as an upholsterer, and once he retired, he built and resided in a cabin near the Cushing Memorial Mountain Theatre. He began building in 1932, but was still working on the cabin at the time of his death in 1938. It was said to be the best-equipped cabin on the mountain, with running water, a shower, heating stove, built-in cabinets, and sliding windows, with room for a dozen weekend visitors.

Matt Davis was considered an honorary member of the Tamalpais Conservation Club, for the countless number of hours of trail work that he contributed to the mountain. Davis,

who was known as the “**Dean of Trail Workers**”, was famous for his expertise in trail building. He was also known as “the old man of the mountain” to friends, and was known for inviting hikers and Civilian Conservation Corps members into his cabin for hot coffee and lively conversation during cold foggy days.

Davis built the popular **Matt Davis Trail**, but he also worked all over the mountain to clear numerous trails, build bridges, and collect litter. While still living on the mountain, Matt Davis died of a heart attack on the Golden Gate Bridge in transit to the hospital on February 25, 1938. His spirit still lives on the beautiful trail that bears his name.

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Mt. Tamalpais State Park

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This brochure was developed with the help of a nonprofit volunteer group that helps park visitors explore and enjoy Mt. Tamalpais. For more information, please visit www.friendsofmonttam.org or call 415.258.2410