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## **MOUNT TAMALPAIS PLACE NAMES**

A sample chapter from:

### **A Visitor's Guide to Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods**

This sample chapter tells the history of the mountain through the origins of names of trails, creeks, meadows, and other features that the hiker will encounter in this beautiful place.

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Much of the human history of Mount Tamalpais can be read in the names of the trails, creeks, meadows, commemorative markers, and other features of the mountain. Here is a directory listing of many of these names, to help hikers and visitors understand the truly profound experience Mount Tamalpais has had on generations of people before us.

#### **Alice Eastwood Trail, Camp**

Alice Eastwood was a legendary botanist and naturalist who was an early pioneer in the preservation of the natural wilderness on Mount Tamalpais. Working as the botanical curator for the California Academy of Sciences, she spent many days on the mountain, collecting and identifying the rich variety of flowers and plants. Today, more than 60 plants from across the country are named after her. For more information, see the [Profile of Alice Eastwood](#) chapter.

#### **Arturo Trail**

Arturo Oetl was a member of the Cross Country Boys Club, which built this trail in the 1920s. Sometimes referred to simply as the Cross Country Club, this hiking group was exclusively for men, with the notable exception of famed botanist Alice Eastwood.

#### **Barth's Retreat**

This area was one of the large popular camping sites on the mountain in the 1920s. The camp, long gone now, was built by Professor Emil Barth, a German musician and composer who had been hiking on the mountain since the late 19th century.

#### **Ben Johnson Trail**

Ben Johnson, who lived in a cabin by Redwood Creek, built this trail that leads up from Muir Woods to the high country of the mountain. He had been a superintendant on the dairy ranches owned by Samuel Throckmorton around southern Marin County, and also was the gamekeeper for the Tamalpais Sportsman's Club.

### **Benstein Trail**

Many hikers are confused by this name, thinking it was named after someone named Ben Stein, and wondering why it is written as one word. It was actually named after Henry Benstein, who along with his son Albert, built this trail in 1921 as a shortcut between Rock Spring and Potrero Meadows (known as Potrero Camp in those days). Originally called the Potrero Camp Trail, it was renamed in 1938 to honor Henry Benstein after his death.

### **Bill Williams Trail**

One of the more colorful and mysterious characters of Mount Tamalpais history, Bill Williams lived in a cabin upstream from Phoenix Lake in the 1860s. Legend has it that he buried a cache of gold in this canyon, although repeated searches have never turned up anything.

### **Bootjack**

The Bootjack picnic area is located at the site of one of the old camps that were popular on Mount Tamalpais in the early 20th century. A bootjack is a V-shaped device used for removing boots, and the connection of the name to this location is uncertain. It can be surmised that campers here made use of such a device before entering their tents.

### **Colier Rock, Spring**

John Munro Colier (spelled Collier on some signs) was an avid hiker on Mount Tamalpais and a member of both the Cross Country Club and the Tamalpais Conservation Club.

### **Cross Country Boys Trail**

The Cross Country Boys Club split off from the Sightseers Club in 1891, with the intention of limiting membership to men who were capable of hiking at a fast pace. They invited Alice Eastwood to accompany them on a map-making hike one year, because of her knowledge of the mountain. She proved herself to be so energetic, outpacing the men at every step, that they invited her to become an associate member.

### **Cushing Memorial Amphitheater**

Sidney B. Cushing was a Mill Valley landowner who was president of the San Rafael Gas & Electric Company and proprietor of the Blithedale Hotel. He was also one of the founders and the first president of the Mill Valley & Mount Tamalpais Scenic Railroad. Cushing became the namesake for the Mountain Theater when it was officially dedicated in 1915, at the insistence of Congressman William Kent, who had donated the land for the theater.

### **Dad O'Rourke's Bench**

A longtime hiker on Mount Tamalpais, Richard Festus "Dad" O'Rourke was one of the founding members of the Tamalpais Conservation Club in 1912. He became the first vice president of the Mountain Play Association in 1914. This bench was dedicated to him on his 76th birthday in 1927. This was one of O'Rourke's favorite places on the mountain, which he referred to as "the Edge of the World." It is easy to see why.

### **Dias Ridge Trail, Fire Road**

The Dias Ranch was one of many cattle ranches that were carved out of the old *Rancho Sausalito*, the Mexican land grant that was obtained by William Richardson in 1838. When the rancho was broken up after Richardson's death in 1856, most of the new owners were Portuguese immigrants from the Azores Islands. The trail and fire road were old ranch roads that were in use up until 1960, when the ranch was purchased by the state of California and added to Mount Tamalpais State Park.

### **Dipsea Trail**

The origin of the name Dipsea is unknown, although Barry Spitz speculates in his *Tamalpais Trails* book that it is possibly derived from "the practice of taking a plunge in the Pacific after trekking the Trail." The Dipsea Race takes place each year in June and is one of the most popular running trails in the country. For more information, see the [Dipsea Race](#) chapter.

### **Eldridge Grade Fire Road**

John Oscar Eldridge was a San Francisco merchant and owner of the San Rafael Gas Works. He bought the right of way to build a road from Ross to the top of Mount Tamalpais for one dollar in 1884. The road was built mostly by Chinese labor and was originally designed to accommodate horse-drawn carriages.

### **Forbes Bench**

This stone bench sits on a hillside above Rock Spring. It is dedicated to John Franklin Forbes, a member of the Cross Country Club (also known as the Cross Country Boys Club). Forbes, along with Alice Eastwood and a few other members, formed a subgroup of the club that came to be known as the “Hill Tribe.” The hillside where the bench sits was a favored locale of the Tribe, who held an annual Thanksgiving Day dinner at Rock Spring and would climb this hill to take in the sweeping views of the City and the Golden Gate.

### **Gravity Car Trail**

Introduced in 1907, the Gravity Car was an innovative addition to the Mount Tamalpais & Muir Woods Railway. Visitors who rode the small steam train to the top of Mount Tamalpais had the option of returning down the mountain in an open railcar that was powered solely by gravity, making the 281 curves of the “Crookedest Railroad in the World” at a steady speed of 10-12 miles per hour (16-19 kilometers per hour). The Gravity Cars were most popular as a way to visit the redwood groves of Muir Woods, and were added to the railroad at the same time that the spur line to Muir Woods opened up. See the [Mount Tamalpais Railway](#) chapter for more information.

### **Helen Markt Trail**

Helen Markt, along with her husband Frank, was a toll taker on Ridgecrest Boulevard, at a time when it was a toll road in the 1930s. The trail was under construction in the early 1950s, at the time of Helen’s death, so it was named in her honor.

### **Hoo-Koo-E-Koo Trail, Fire Road**

Hoo-Koo-E-Koo (also spelled Hukuiku or Hookooeku) refers to a band of Coast Miwok who lived along the coast of northern Marin County and southern Sonoma County, from Tomales Bay to Bodega Bay. Anthropologist Alfred Kroeber describes the Hookooeku as one of three tribes of the Coast Miwok, along with the Olamentko and the Lekahtewut.

### **International Trail**

This trail was built in the 1950s by the Down and Outers Club, a hiking club whose members came from all over the world.

### **Kent Trail**

Congressman William Kent was a major landowner on Mount Tamalpais and donated not only the land for Muir Woods and the Mountain Theater, but also much of the land for Mount Tamalpais State Park.

### **Matt Davis Trail**

Matt Davis had a cabin near the Mountain Theater and was called “the dean of trail workers” by the Tamalpais Conservation Club. He built the Matt Davis Trail and worked on a number of other trails around Mount Tamalpais. He died of a heart attack in 1938.

### **Mickey O’Brian Trail**

Michael Francis “Mickey” O’Brian was a longtime hiker on Mount Tamalpais. He was a member of the Tamalpais Conservation Club for thirty years and served as its president in 1925 - 1926. He worked as editor of the TCC newsletter, *California Out of Doors*, for eight years.

### **Miller Trail**

John Miller was a member of the Tamalpais Conservation Club (TCC) who worked as a trail builder on the mountain for thirty years. Upon his death, he left a sizeable sum of money to the TCC, which was used to purchase additional land for the state park.

### **Miwok Trail**

The Coast Miwok are the native people of Marin and southern Sonoma counties. They lived in the area around Mount Tamalpais for more than a thousand years before the arrival of Europeans and regard the mountain as a sacred place, inhabited by their chief God Coyote. Miwok people still inhabit northern California, and have a small settlement at Graton Rancheria in Sonoma County.

### **Muir Woods**

John Muir is one of the most important figures in the history of wilderness preservation in the United States. Born in Scotland on April 21, 1838, Muir and his family emigrated to the United States in 1849. They started a farm near Portage, Wisconsin, where Muir spent the rest of his childhood. He arrived in San Francisco in 1868 and set off for Yosemite, where he spent many years studying the plant life, geology, and natural world of the Sierra Nevada. When Congressman William Kent donated land to create Muir Woods in 1907, he insisted that it be named for the world's most preeminent naturalist and preservationist.

### **Music Stand Trail**

This small trail connects the Laurel Dell Fire Road with the High Marsh Trail. Midway through is the Music Camp, a small shrine in a clearing dedicated to music. Built in the 1950s by trailbuilder Ben Schmidt, the Music Camp is an eclectic collection of musical instruments, a music stand, wind chimes, and assorted memorials. Bring a small token to leave here and add to the collection.

### **Old Mine Trail**

Mount Tamalpais was home to a short-lived and ultimately unsuccessful mining boom in the 1860s. This trail runs alongside the old Denos Claim, which was one of a number of small gold mines on the mountain. This "gold rush" occurred shortly after the big Gold Rush of 1849, and was ultimately a last gasp of gold fever. No significant amount of gold has ever been found on Mount Tamalpais.

### **Old Stage Road**

This trail was built as a stagecoach road in 1902, starting at West Point and carrying passengers from the Mill Valley & Mount Tamalpais Railway down to Willow Camp, now known as Stinson Beach. Most of the stagecoach route below Pantoll was paved over and became the Panoramic Highway in 1929.

### **Nora Trail**

Nora Stanton, along with her husband Bob, was a caretaker at the West Point Inn during World War I. Together they helped build this trail, which connects West Point to the Matt Davis Trail.

### **Old Railroad Grade Fire Road**

This fire road follows the route of the old Mount Tamalpais Railway, starting off of West Blithedale Avenue in Mill Valley, near the Depot where the steam train would start its ascent up the mountain. It follows a gradual slope up the mountain, going around 281 hairpin curves, giving the old railway the nickname "the Crookedest Railroad in the World." Hikers and bikers sometimes find old railroad spikes along the trail. See the [Mount Tamalpais Railway](#) chapter for more information.

### **Pantoll (sometimes written Pan Toll)**

Short for Panoramic Highway Tollbooth. The Panoramic Highway was built over Mount Tamalpais in 1928-1929. The junction of the Panoramic Highway and Pantoll Road, which is now the site of the headquarters of the state park, had a toll booth on it in the late 1920s, where drivers would stop to pay the toll for access to Ridgecrest Boulevard and the top of the mountain.

### **Potrero Meadows**

This open meadow was the site of one the large camping sites during the 1920s. Previously known as Potrero Camp or simply "the Potrero," this serene spot holds a special place in the hearts of generations of hikers. Potrero is a Spanish word meaning a pasture for ponies.

### **Simmons Trail**

Charles A. Simmons was a donor to the Tamalpais Conservation Club. A colonel in the Spanish-American War, Simmons later became a hike leader on Mount Tamalpais.

### **Stapelveldt Trail**

Wilhelm Stapelfeldt (one of a number of spellings of this name) was a German immigrant who hiked on Mount Tamalpais together with his friends Alice Eastwood, Edward Ziesche, and Emil Barth.

### **Stocking Trail**

Clayton Stocking worked for the Marin Municipal Water District and lived for 42 years at the lake keeper's residence near Phoenix Lake.

### **Swede George Creek, Trail**

Known only by his nickname, Swede George lived in a cabin near Rock Spring in the 1860s. He was a woodcutter who supplied wood to the Pioneer Paper Mill, which was in operation from 1855 until 1915.

### **Table Rock Creek**

The creek takes its name from Table Rock, a large flat rock that lies just off the Matt Davis Trail, about a mile (1.6 kilometers) above Stinson Beach. The rock, which looks like a giant table, has spectacular views of the beach below and the surrounding forest.

### **Tamalpais**

The name of the mountain itself is often mistaken for a Spanish word, although its origin is actually Coast Miwok. Noted anthropologist Alfred Kroeber reported the word to mean *bay mountain*. Ethnographer C. Hart Merriam, who had an elderly Miwok man named Tom Smith as a source, reported the translation as *west hill* or *coast hill*. The various dialects of Coast Miwok may account for the differing translations. Mount Tamalpais was identified on some early Spanish maps as *Sierras de San Francisco*. It has also been known as *Table Hill*.

### **TCC Trail**

The Tamalpais Conservation Club (TCC) was one the early hiking clubs on the mountain and built this trail in 1914. The TCC has been one of the most important organizations in the preservation of Mount Tamalpais as wilderness and in the creation of the state park. Since its inception in 1912, the club has led efforts to build trails and build camaraderie among hikers. It calls itself "the Guardian of the Mountain" - a well-earned moniker. The TCC is still in existence today and has worked on trail building and maintenance over the years. For more information, see the [Hiking Clubs of Mount Tamalpais](#) chapter.

### **Temelpa Trail**

A variation of *Tamalpa*, the name of the sleeping maiden that is said to form the profile of Mount Tamalpais. Mistakenly attributed to the Coast Miwok, this legend is actually recent in origin, popularized by Dan Totheroh in his play *Tamalpa*.

### **Troop 80 Trail**

This trail was built in 1931 by Troop 80, a group of San Francisco Boy Scouts from the Ingleside District.

### **Tucker Trail**

Also known as the Camp Tucker Trail, this trail was named after a woodcutter who lived here in the late 1800s and supplied wood to the Pioneer Paper Mill. Mr. Tucker's first name is unknown.

### **Van Wyck Meadow**

Sydney M. Van Wyck, Jr. was instrumental in the establishment of Mount Tamalpais State Park. He was a lawyer who donated his services to the Tamalpais Conservation Club, in order to prevent the North Coast Water Company from developing a 500-acre parcel of the mountain. After successful condemnation proceedings, the land was purchased by the state in 1927 for \$52,000 and became the original core of the state park.

### **Verna Dunshee Trail**

Verna Dunshee was a crucial figure in the preservation of Mount Tamalpais as a state park. She was president of the Tamalpais Conservation Club from 1950 to 1951. In 1965, she was named Honorary California State Park Ranger, the first year this title was awarded. The trail was originally known as the Race Track Trail, and was renamed in Verna's honor upon her death in 1973.

### **Webb Creek**

Webb Creek runs from the ridge above Pantoll down through the heart of Steep Ravine and flows into the Pacific Ocean just north of Rocky Point. It was named after Jonathan Webb, a member of the Tamalpais Conservation Club.

### **West Point Inn**

Once a station on the Mount Tamalpais Railway, the West Point Inn sits at the furthest west point traversed by the old railroad. It was also the jumping off point for stagecoaches that took passengers from the train down to Stinson Beach. When the railroad was shut down in 1930, the West Point Inn was taken over by the Marin Municipal Water District. Since 1943, it has been operated by the West Point Inn Club, which was renamed the West Point Inn Association in 1977.

### **Willow Camp Fire Road**

Willow Camp was the original name for Stinson Beach. The town was first developed as a resort camp among the willow trees along the beach and was popular with weekend travelers from San Francisco. Willow Camp was renamed in 1916, after Nathan H. Stinson and his wife Rose, the largest landowners in town.

### **Ziesche Creek**

Edward Ziesche was a German immigrant who owned a small tract of land along this creek in the late 19th century. A good friend of Alice Eastwood, he later became secretary for the Tamalpais Club.



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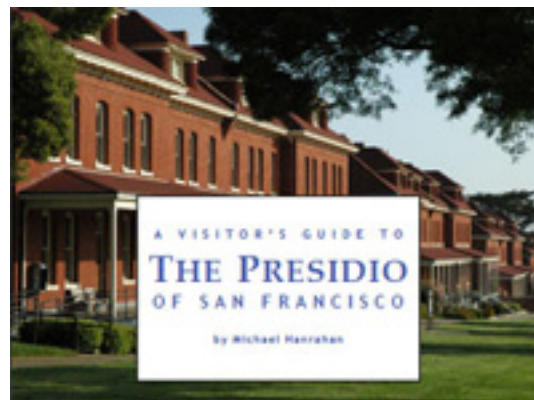
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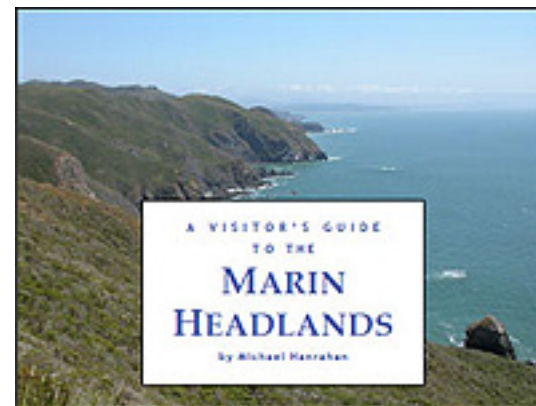
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