

# "Alice Eastwood"

from *Extraordinary Women Scientists*  
by Darlene R. Stille

- 1 The shaking of her bed awakened Alice Eastwood on the morning of April 18, 1906. By the time she dressed and went outside, smoke was hanging heavy over the city of San Francisco. A great earthquake had ruptured gas lines and reduced blocks of buildings to rubble. Fire was spreading everywhere and would soon consume four square miles of San Francisco, including the California Academy of Sciences on Market Street where Eastwood had spent more than twelve years building an extensive collection of California plants. She rushed to the academy, and with a friend, broke through the locked front door. The stairs to her sixth-floor office were gone, shaken loose by the earthquake, but the handrail was still firmly attached to the wall. Using this and fragments of stairs, Eastwood climbed up to her office and rescued almost 1,500 rare plant specimens, which she had earlier separated from the main collection in the herbarium. With the specimens wrapped in a large work apron, she escaped just before flames consumed the building.
- 2 Eastwood was not one to let trouble get her down. In a letter to *Science* magazine describing her experience, she said, "My own destroyed work I do not lament, for it was a joy to me while I did it, and I can still have the same joy in starting it again...." And start again she did. This self-educated botanist<sup>1</sup> created an even better collection of plants at the new California Academy of Sciences and thus ensured her own reputation as one of the greatest botanists in the world.
- 3 Alice Eastwood was born on January 19, 1859, in Toronto, Canada. Her childhood was an unsettling one. Her parents, Colin and Eliza Jane, had emigrated from Ireland....
- 4 When Alice was six years old, her mother died. Her father went off to try his hand at storekeeping and left Alice and her brother and sister in Canada with their Uncle William, a physician. In her uncle's home, Alice's lifelong informal education as a botanist took root.
- 5 She carefully observed each of the plants on her uncle's country estate and learned their difficult Latin names. When she and her sister were sent to school at a nearby convent, Alice learned about gardening.
- 6 Several years later, Alice's father settled in Denver, Colorado, built a house, and brought the family back together again. Alice, now a teenager, attended the new East Denver High School. Because the family was still very poor, Alice had to work as a housekeeper, nursemaid, and even in a hat factory. She was twenty years old when she finally graduated from high school in 1879, the valedictorian<sup>2</sup> of her class. After graduation, she accepted a teaching position at East Denver High School.
- 7 Although Eastwood never attended college, she continued to educate herself, especially about botany. She loved to collect plants. During the summer months, she traveled to the most remote parts of the Rocky Mountains in search of unusual plants. As a result, she amassed a large variety of Colorado plant specimens, which eventually formed the core of the University of Colorado's Herbarium.
- 8 Because of good investments in Denver real estate that she and her father had made over the years, Alice Eastwood was able to quit her teaching job and continue traveling. In 1890, she visited the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco where she met Katharine Brandegee, the curator<sup>3</sup> of botany, and her husband, a biologist. In 1892, they invited her to

join them at the academy as an assistant curator. The following year, when the Brandegees retired, Eastwood took over as curator of botany and editor of the academy's botany journal. Under her guidance, the California botany collection grew—until the tragic earthquake and fire of 1906.

- 9 The California Academy was not rebuilt until 1912. During those six years, Alice Eastwood meticulously studied the plant collections at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., the New York Botanical Garden, and public gardens in London and Paris. When she returned to San Francisco, she expanded the academy's botany collection to more than 340,000 specimens. She was also active in encouraging the efforts of amateur<sup>4</sup> botanists and gardeners and in educating the public about the need to save California's native plants, especially the giant redwoods.
- 10 Although she had no formal higher education, Alice Eastwood gained recognition from the scientific community. She was the only woman with the star for distinction next to her name in every volume of *American Men of Science* published during her lifetime. In 1950, at the age of ninety-two, Alice Eastwood flew to Stockholm, Sweden, to serve as honorary president of the Seventh International Botanical Congress. She remained active until her death on October 30, 1953.

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<sup>1</sup>botanist—expert in the study of plants

<sup>2</sup>valedictorian—student with the highest grades in the graduating class

<sup>3</sup>curator—a person who selects and maintains a collection of items such as plants or art

<sup>4</sup>amateur—participating in activities as hobbies rather than professionally

### Question #7

Which quotation from the passage states a central idea?

- A "This self-educated botanist created an even better collection of plants at the new California Academy of Sciences and thus ensured her own reputation as one of the greatest botanists in the world." (paragraph 2)
- B "She was twenty years old when she finally graduated from high school in 1879, the valedictorian of her class." (paragraph 6)
- C "Because of good investments in Denver real estate that she and her father had made over the years, Alice Eastwood was able to quit her teaching job and continue traveling." (paragraph 8)
- D "In 1950, at the age of ninety-two, Alice Eastwood flew to Stockholm, Sweden, to serve as honorary president of the Seventh International Botanical Congress." (paragraph 10)

**Question #8**

**How does the author first introduce the idea that Alice Eastwood was a passionate and devoted botanist?**

- A The author lists Eastwood's career accomplishments from her childhood in Canada to her adulthood in Sweden.
- B The author details the significant amounts of time and energy Eastwood spent gathering plant specimens for the California Academy of Sciences.
- C The author provides an anecdote of Eastwood rushing into a dangerous situation in order to save 1,500 plant specimens.
- D The author gives examples of the California native plants that Eastwood and amateur botanists have sought to protect.

**Question #9**

**For this item, highlight the answer by hovering over and selecting the underlined text.**

**Part B**

Select one underlined phrase from paragraph 7 that provides support for the answer in Part A.

Although Eastwood never attended college, she continued to educate herself , especially about botany. She loved to collect plants. During the summer months, she traveled to the most remote parts of the Rocky Mountains in search of unusual plants . As a result, she amassed a large variety of Colorado plant specimens, which eventually formed the core of the University of Colorado's Herbarium.

**Question #10**

**What can the reader infer about Alice Eastwood based on the passage?**

- A Eastwood was not discouraged by setbacks, and she viewed challenges as exciting opportunities.
- B Eastwood could not afford to attend college, so she spent her adult life trying to gain international respect.
- C Eastwood saved many rare plant species, and she committed her life to protecting endangered plants in other countries.
- D Eastwood lived in warm climates, so she never had the opportunity to study cold-weather plant species.

**Question #11**

Choose *three* key details that should be included in a summary of the passage.

- A Eastwood enjoyed traveling in other countries.
- B Throughout her life, Eastwood loved studying and collecting plants.
- C Eastwood's father made smart investments in Denver real estate.
- D In the 1906 earthquake, Eastwood risked her life in order to save rare plant specimens.
- E After her father moved to America, Eastwood started to learn about gardening.
- F Eastwood was recognized as a distinguished botanist by the scientific community.

**Question #12**

Which statement reflects a central idea of paragraphs 9 and 10?

- A Alice Eastwood continued to work well past retirement age.
- B Alice Eastwood was regarded as a top botanist in a scientific field of mostly men.
- C Alice Eastwood was persistent in replacing, recovering, and restoring the plants lost in the earthquake.
- D Alice Eastwood dedicated her life to researching, collecting, and protecting plant life around the world.

**Question #13****Part A**

Which claim does the author support with reasons and evidence?

- A Alice Eastwood had an outstanding natural ability as a botanist.
- B Alice Eastwood enjoyed traveling around the world.
- C Alice Eastwood depended on friends to help her collect plant specimens.
- D Alice Eastwood was ready to leave California after the earthquake.

**Question #14****Part B**

Which *two* quotations from the passage support the claim chosen in Part A?

- A “During the summer months, she traveled to the most remote parts of the Rocky Mountains in search of unusual plants.” (paragraph 7)
- B “In 1890, she visited the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco where she met Katharine Brandegee, the curator of botany, and her husband, a biologist. In 1892, they invited her to join them at the academy as an assistant curator.” (paragraph 8)
- C “Under her guidance, the California botany collection grew—until the tragic earthquake and fire of 1906.” (paragraph 8)
- D “During those six years, Alice Eastwood meticulously studied the plant collections at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., the New York Botanical Garden, and public gardens in London and Paris.” (paragraph 9)
- E “She was the only woman with the star for distinction next to her name in every volume of *American Men of Science* published during her lifetime.” (paragraph 10)

**Question #15**

How does the author elaborate on the idea that Alice Eastwood was mostly self-educated?

- A by providing examples of the people in Eastwood’s life who helped teach her about botany
- B by describing occasions when Eastwood learned about plants through traveling and collecting specimens
- C by detailing the difficult childhood Eastwood endured, which resulted in her inability to afford college
- D by emphasizing Eastwood’s devotion to travel, which allowed her to study at celebrated universities

