

Captain Alfred Easkoot

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Alfred Derby Easkoot was born in Manchester, Massachusetts on February 3, 1820. At the age of nine he began going to sea on coasting vessels during the summer. At thirteen, he was badly burned, leaving his face disfigured and one hand withered.

By the time he was twenty-six-years-old, he had risen to master of the brig *Retrieve*. For two years he operated canal boats on the Raritan canal from Philadelphia to New York. In 1848, he was made master of the sailing barque *Esther Frances* in the South American trade.



Alfred Derby Easkoot in 1890 - Courtesy of the Anne T. Kent California Room of the Marin County Free Library.

In 1851, he set out for San Francisco to take command of the barque *Asa Packer*. When he arrived in San Francisco in July, he was so ill with Panama fever (Yellow Fever) that he was unable to take charge of her. That August, he moved to Bolinas and worked on the Belvidere ranch, where he built a cabin. In 1853, he was elected the first Marin County Surveyor and served four terms. In 1861, he married Miss Amelia L. Dumas, born at Philadelphia on the 24th of July 1820.

In 1871, Easkoot and Amelia retired to Willow Camp, now known as Stinson Beach. There were other sea captains living in Bolinas at the time, and Easkoot was popular. The children were fascinated by his scarred face and withered hand and liked the firecrackers he passed out on the Fourth of July. He purchased a portion of beach

property and invited friends to come visit. Many took him up on the offer and would come for weeks at a time to bathe, fish, and hunt in the beautiful area. He opened a campground and rented tent cabins in the summer. He made the rounds of his camp three times a day, chatting with people and playing with the children. In October 1877, one of the campers carelessly fired a shot that struck and severely wounded Captain Easkoot. It was many months before he recovered.



Photo courtesy of the Marin History Museum

In 1883, Easkoot built a fine white two-story New England-style house for his wife. The Easkoots were having dinner on April 9, 1886, “when Amelia rose from the table in pain and left the room.” The captain followed her, and according to his account later, “caught her as she fell” dead. Because she hadn’t been ill previously, there were rumors that he had somehow been involved in her death. An

autopsy revealed that Amelia had died of a ruptured heart, clearing her husband of any suspicion.

Amelia’s sudden death changed the captain. He became moody and depressed. He stopped inviting friends to visit and started threatening trespassers with a shotgun. He became a figure of fear to the local children. He lived to be eighty-five-years-old, a sad and bitter man. He died December 10, 1905 and is buried in the Bolinas cemetery.



Source: Brian Elston, FindaGrave.com