



Coastal Scene - photo by LaRue Spiker

Women Conservationists of Acadia National Park

Caroline M. Pryor

In thinking about the individuals who have indelibly shaped Acadia National Park, many people would conjure an image of a trio or quartet of visionary men who were leaders in the Park's creation and protection. Those who know Acadia's story well may remember a dozen others who have made outstanding contributions during the Park's 100 years of history, perhaps including a woman or two.

History reveals, however, that women have played a major role as stewards of Acadia, adding greatly to its size, configuration and character. Indeed, Acadia would likely be a dramatically different park, and Mount Desert Island (MDI) a different place, had women not been inspired to work for land protection and stewardship. These women's names and many of their contributions are largely unrecognized by the public.

While countless women have worked for the betterment of Acadia and MDI, this article features fourteen women who have made significant contributions to the protection of this place, as journalist, botanist, philanthropist, visionary, naturalist, land conservator, teacher, activist and landscape designer. Some have taken actions that have shaped the Park in a specific way; the accomplishments of others have spanned decades or a lifetime and provided a cumulative benefit.

For this article, "conservation" is broadly defined to include: the permanent protection of land, the founding of non-profit organizations that assist and support Acadia National Park, defense of a special landscape, preservation of a cultural or natural heritage, and education of the public in order to promote greater appreciation and care for wildlife and native plants. Included are women whose work has extended beyond Park boundaries, since the Park and the island are so closely connected that it makes sense from an ecologic or scenic perspective to consider them together.

Genesis of an American Conservation Movement

The original conservators were the Native Americans. Their traditions embodied stewardship of the land, the wildlife, the waters and their culture. Property, including real estate, was not owned by individuals, but used and managed for the benefit of all. Forests were not clear-cut, nor were entire populations of beaver trapped. "In our every decision, we must consider the impact on the next seven generations," reads the well-known Iroquois principle.

The need for a conservation movement in the U.S. arose after more than a century of voracious exploitation of the seemingly limitless American landscape by the settlers and, later, industrialists. Conservation as a movement began humbly, with an awareness instilled by the early naturalists of the mid-to-late 1600s who catalogued the plants, birds and geology of the New World.

In the years 1836-1871, nature writing as an art, craft and expression of personal philosophy evolved rapidly and set the stage for the national movement that followed. During this compact, 35-year period, several of the great early works by American nature writers were published: *Nature* by Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Man and Nature* by George Perkins Marsh, *Wake-Robin* by John Burroughs and Thoreau's *Walden*.

Also during this period, Yosemite received its first protected status, as a California state park in 1864. In 1872, Yellowstone National Park became the first national reserve in the world. The U.S. conservation movement was now underway, and in less than thirty years the initiative to protect MDI's unique landscape would be launched.

Women's National Role

At the time Yellowstone was established, women on Mount Desert Island and across the country were limited by social convention in how they could express their appreciation and concern for nature. It was acceptable for privileged women to paint botanical watercolors and write nature poetry. But women who were outspoken, cause-motivated or worked outside the home were the exception, not the rule.¹ Women did, however, hold title to land and property, even though not permitted access to the polls until 1920.

By the turn of the century when the suffrage movement was gaining visibility, the conservation movement—and women’s role in it—was also flourishing. One of the first national conservation priorities that inspired women to organize was forest preservation in the face of wholesale logging. Mrs. James Pinchot, mother of Gifford Pinchot (first director of the U.S. Forest Service and ardent conservationist), chaired the Conservation Committee of the 77,000-member Daughters of the American Revolution. This group also worked to protect Niagara Falls from water developers, the Palisades of the Hudson River from quarriers, and the Appalachian Mountains from mining and logging.²

Discovering their power as consumers as well as activists, women organized to put an end to the fashion demand for feathers, which was pushing egrets, terns and other birds toward extinction. In the early 1900s, women comprised over half the membership of Audubon societies and the full membership of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. In detailing women’s early work in conservation, wilderness advocate and educator Sally Ann Gumaer Ranney noted,

Women were...active in conservation, but the country didn’t know it.... This early history of women’s activities set a subtle tone to which female leadership in conservation has resonated over the past six decades.³

Decades later, in 1962, a pivotal event for the environmental movement took place. Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* and alerted a largely oblivious nation to the dangers of pesticides. Carson, one of the few women environmentalists widely known today, was personally and professionally attacked for her research and writing; her gender was repeatedly a target in efforts by industry and politicians to discount her work. Nonetheless, her ground-breaking book inspired a bold, new wave of women and men to fight for the environment and public health.

Mary Dorr: A Leader in Local Stewardship

Imagine the year 1881 in Bar Harbor. Women promenaded in long skirts along the Shore Path. Horse-drawn carriages trundle down a dirt Main Street. The town’s Village Improvement Society (VIS) is being organized,⁴ only nine years after Yellowstone National Park was estab-

lished. Still in existence today, the VIS was at that time an important gathering place for a number of pioneering conservationists who had a strong influence on Acadia and MDI. They included George B. Dorr, one of Acadia's founders and its first superintendent, and landscape designer Beatrix (Jones) Farrand.

Mrs. Mary Gray Ward Dorr, mother of George, was a VIS incorporator. The group became a productive outlet for her deep interest in the development and stewardship of Bar Harbor, and she was a leader of the organization for twenty years, until her death in 1901 at the age of 81. Mrs. Dorr served on several VIS committees, including "Trees and Shrubs," and worked to beautify the town's roadways, public places and trails. Following her death, the VIS described Mrs. Dorr as an inspiring and energizing presence.⁵ Given the times and society's views about women, her hands-on commitment to tree planting around town may have raised a few eyebrows as it was uncommon for a woman, especially of means, to dig in the dirt along the roadside.



Mary Gray Ward Dorr

Mrs. Dorr and her husband, Charles H. Dorr, were some of the earliest and best-known summer residents of Bar Harbor. They purchased 100 acres between "Old Farm" and Schooner Head, then added to their holdings.⁶ Their land was bequeathed to George, who subsequently donated it to the Park in a series of gifts.⁷ In 1909, George's first gift of land, near Bear Brook, was in memory of his mother — a clear recognition of how she had inspired his work to establish the Park. Dorr stated, "But now, my mother gone, I wanted to make a gift to the public...of this land in which she had found such happiness."⁸

In addition to her town stewardship contributions, Mrs. Dorr was very deliberate in her son's education about the natural world, especially as it could be observed in European parks and gardens. This had a major influence on George and his lifelong work to protect the best

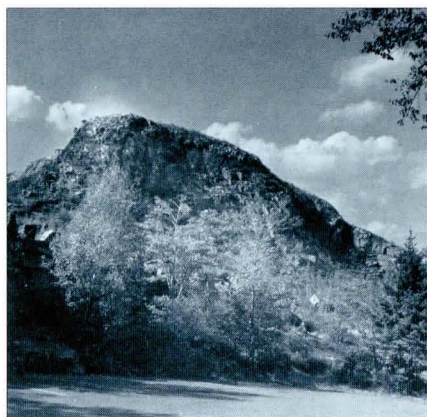
of MDI as a national park. Although historical references about her life are scarce, it seems safe to conclude Mrs. Dorr was “conservation-minded,” as we would define this term today.⁹

Early Donors of Acadia’s Signature Lands

Women were leaders in donating a great many of the early tracts of land to the Park and its early non-profit partner, the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations. Between 1908 and the 1930s, one-third of the land gifts were made by women.¹⁰ The earliest donations were especially notable because these occurred at a time when establishment of a national park was more a vision than a reality.

In 1908, Elizabeth (Mrs. Charles D.) Homans, a Dorr family friend, donated the first significant property that would eventually become part of Acadia.¹¹ Mrs. Homans’ gift encompassed the Bowl and Beehive on Newport (Champlain) Mountain. The Bowl is a mountain lake nestled in a hollow, four hundred feet above the sea; the dome of the Beehive rises up dramatically behind Sand Beach and is one of the classic, postcard views of the Park’s geography and scenery. “It was a gift singularly appropriate to the Trustees’ purpose, beautiful, unique and wild....” wrote Dorr.¹²

Picket Mountain (Huguenot Head), another bold part of Acadia’s scenery, was acquired thanks to the generous efforts of Mrs. John S. Kennedy, of New York. Mr. Kennedy had been working closely with Dorr to underwrite the Hancock County Trustees’ purchase of the land on behalf of the Park. Nothing had been put in writing, but when Mr. Kennedy died suddenly his wife honored his word by sending the Trustees the money for the purchase.



The Beehive

By 1916, the Trustees had assembled 5,000 acres in less than a decade. The collective landscape beauty and the scientific and historical significance of these lands helped persuade President

Woodrow Wilson to accept them on behalf of the United States as “Lafayette National Monument” (the name first given to Acadia National Park in 1914).¹³

Another spectacular property, on the Schoodic peninsula east of Mount Desert Island, was donated by two sisters, Miss Faith Moore and Lady Lee of England. In addition to donating this beautiful property, which stands alone as the Park’s only mainland property, the sisters had an influential role in renaming “Lafayette National Park,” a name they disliked. When an act of Congress was needed to allow their off-island property to be included in the Park, Dorr seized the opportunity to request that the name be changed to “Acadia National Park.” This smoothed the way for the sisters’ gift.¹⁴

Restoration with Native Plants

Cross-country skiing or bicycling today along the carriage roads, it is difficult to envision the immense movement of earth and heavy construction that took place—over 50 miles and in remote areas—to create this now very natural-looking network of roads. Seventy to eighty years after the construction, the forest meets the coping stones without interruption. Roads wind elegantly around mountains, across ravines and under state highways. Acadia’s carriage road system transformed the wilderness to park, and today offers evidence that time and nature, combined with Beatrix Farrand’s careful planning and planting, have healed a landscape that was radically altered.

Farrand is widely acknowledged as one of the great landscape designers. Her gardens at her family home in Bar Harbor, “Reef Point,” have been documented as an exemplary horticultural collection. In the 1920s-30s, when women were just beginning to enter the landscape field, she had already designed famous gardens and public landscapes throughout the mid-Atlantic and Northeast.¹⁵

Farrand’s inclusion here, however, is for her little-known contribution to the conservation and reintegration of native plants into the Park once the carriage roads had been built. She worked very closely with John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and the tradesmen of the carriage road project, and significantly influenced the selection, location, design and extent

to which native plant materials would be used in the restoration of the Park's landscapes.¹⁶

Farrand and Rockefeller corresponded extensively during the carriage road project of the late 1920s and 30s. An excerpt from a 1931 letter from Rockefeller to Farrand captures a sense of how a prominent man, known for his own grand vision and exacting standards, admired her work:



Beatrix Farrand

This is just a note to tell you how pleased I am with the planting in so far as I have seen it. You cannot know what a relief it is to me to have you giving attention to these matters for it had become quite a burden to me to try and keep up with them on all the roads. Then, too, what you do is so much better done than anything I could do. Please accept this renewed assurance of my deep gratitude to you for the very real service you are rendering to the national Park and also to me.¹⁷

Farrand was one of the earliest professionals in the country to recognize the ecological and aesthetic importance of working with native plants. For the mammoth restoration effort on the lands surrounding the carriage roads, she reintegrated balsam fir, spruce, pine and cedar to blend with Acadia's natural forests. She emphasized native maple, birch and the spring-flowering shrubs, such as wild cherry, shad bush, elderberry, winterberry and witch hazel. Blueberries and sweet fern were planted to help heal old road scars and gravel pits.

In supervising the plantings, Farrand specified shrubs and trees be placed as naturally as possible – in clumps of differing size, variety and height to mimic nature's irregular patterns.¹⁸ She observed and worked with site conditions such as slope, sunlight, drainage, nearby

plant communities and geology that would ultimately determine the ecological and visual success of the Park's restoration planting. Today, these choices might seem natural, but 85 years ago they represented a pioneering direction in landscape planting, one subsequently embraced by gardeners and designers around the world.¹⁹ Although Farrand often chose exotic species in gardens and occasionally along the carriage roads, she was ahead of her time in the natural techniques she used to help restore MDI's scenery and ecology.

Forging a New Land Protection Tool

Margaret McGrath Rockefeller (1915-1996) was an avid sailor and spent as much time as she could cruising the Maine coast each summer with her husband, David, and their six children. From Seal Harbor they ranged far to the east and west of MDI, exploring coves and wild islands.

The story of the 1970 founding of Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT), a statewide land conservation organization, began when the Rockefellers were sailing off Stonington. They were struck by the sight of an island, beautiful and undeveloped the year before, that now sprouted a number of prominent houses along the shore. With great foresight, Mrs. Rockefeller recognized that a surge of second-home development could forever change the world-renowned islands and character of the Maine coast.

After consulting with friends about what might be done to protect Maine's islands—the vast majority of which are privately owned—Mrs.



Peggy and David Rockefeller

Rockefeller decided to create a new organization to work with island owners. She joined forces with fellow sailor and island owner Tom Cabot to co-found MCHT. The tool they employed is called the “conservation easement,” a land protection technique that keeps land in private

ownership while limiting future development.²⁰ Conservation easements had been in limited use in other places, but never in Maine.

The Trust's original mission was to promote the easement as a coastal protection tool, specifically for the islands around Acadia National Park. Mrs. Rockefeller took the helm as MCHT's first president and served on its board of directors for twenty-six years. She provided leadership, vision and inspiration for the Trust, which now serves the entire Maine coast. As conservationists across the country learned from Maine's easement experience, the tool's use spread nationwide.

At Acadia, easements helped mollify the long-standing debate among the Park, municipal officers, and property owners over which lands should be included within the fee-acquisition (ownership) boundary of Acadia. They became an effective way for landowners to express their commitment to good land stewardship.²¹

Easements continue to be a popular land protection tool. As of 2005, the Park, working in partnership with MCHT and a great many landowners, holds permanent easements on approximately 12,500 acres, spanning 185 private properties from Penobscot Bay to the Schoodic Peninsula.²² It is interesting to note that of the 388 units in the National Park system, Acadia holds the largest number of easements. While no one (to the author's knowledge) has calculated the cumulative value of the Park's easement gifts, it is safe to estimate that the collective worth of these retired development rights would be tens, perhaps hundreds, of millions of dollars.²³

In addition to co-founding MCHT and bringing the easement tool to Maine, Mrs. Rockefeller joined her husband, David, in granting eight conservation easements to Acadia National Park, conserving 471 acres. These include property on Buckle, Duck and Orono Islands, Swan's Island Head, and Rich's Head (Frenchboro), as well as the Cameron and DeLaittre Farms in Bar Harbor. Additional Rockefeller properties near Acadia and protected by conservation easements to other organizations include 2,500-acre Bartlett Island, the 1,000-acre Long Pond property, Hunter's Beach and Day Mountain in Seal Harbor.

With the easement tool, Rockefeller inspired hundreds of women and men to conserve important properties in the Acadian archipelago.

One gift deserving special mention ensures permanent protection of majestic Ironbound Island in Frenchman Bay. This island-studded bay forms a scenic backdrop for Bar Harbor. In 1986, at the age of 81, Mrs. Elizabeth Cram led her family in granting the largest conservation easement donated in the Park's history.²⁴ At over 800 acres, Ironbound is the largest Frenchman Bay island. Development as a resort with a marina, subdivision or even a few large homes perched on the cliffs, such as those that mar nearby shores, would have been a tragedy. Instead, Ironbound's steep cliffs and wild shores will forever remain a part of Acadia's spectacular scenery. Its tall forests and American bald eagle nesting habitat will endure unspoiled.

For the Love of a Marsh

LaRue Spiker was a feisty and energetic Southwest Harbor resident who combined her writing, photography and politics to protect nature. "She was fearless in where it took her," recounts Earl Brechlin, who worked with her as a journalist. "She put the health of the ecosystem above all even when it angered people. LaRue was an environmentalist before the word was coined and was as true to being a journalist as one can be."²⁵



LaRue Spiker

Referring to Bass Harbor Marsh, Spiker wrote, "The system is...a favorite area for people with small boats who like to get rid of the cobwebs and enjoy the wild unique qualities offered by no other habitat." Time spent there enabled Spiker to notice gradual changes in the marsh as early as the 1970s, then later more dramatic ones, "...great mats of yellow-green algae...threaten to clog the estuary. The trout and eels are gone, although locals still recall with considerable wistfulness catching the bag limit of trout in Marshall Brook not so long ago," she wrote in 1989.²⁶

Spiker set out to identify the source(s) of the marsh's pollution and help put an end to it. From her post as a writer for the *Bar Harbor Times*, she brought the issue to the public's attention in the 1970s and kept it there until her death in 1995, at age 83. While sounding the alarm as a journalist, Spiker also worked as a citizen activist with the League of Women Voters and the town's Conservation Commission. With others, she pressed the Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, Maine Department of Environmental Protection and Town of Southwest Harbor to understand and address the problem, writing:

One of the prime objectives of the...study should be the determination of the source of the phosphorous in the marsh and suggestions for corrective measures. It will also establish what is left of the ecosystem's normal functions after the long years of abuse and begin to establish means by which it can be brought back to a normal, healthy condition.²⁷

In response, a variety of water quality studies were undertaken. Definitive results were elusive at first; eventually, Marshall Brook was identified as having unusually high concentrations of inorganic nitrogen, which was likely to be causing the excessive algal growth. Marshall Brook drained MDI's landfill in Southwest Harbor, a long-suspected source of the pollution. To stop the leaking landfill from generating more contamination would require renewed advocacy, and Spiker, as journalist and activist, maintained a spotlight on the problem. It was an effective campaign. Eventually, for a variety of reasons, the landfill ceased being a dump and became a transfer station.²⁸ Today, additional pollution sources may affect Bass Harbor Marsh, which is still being monitored.

"LaRue had great spirit and vision, qualities we could use more of today," remembers Ann Judd, a fellow Southwest Harbor Conservation Commission member. "The Conservation Commission established the LaRue Spiker Award for outstanding contributions to the community, and she was the first recipient."²⁹ In the center of town is a granite bench dedicated in her memory, a symbol of her steadfast commitment to working in the public interest, often in the face of adversity.

Rallying Volunteers to Support the Park

While millions of visitors love Acadia National Park, Marianne Edwards (1922-2005) and Lois Winter (1954-) turned their love for a place into an everlasting gift. In the early 1980s, Edwards had volunteered in the Park's Visitors Center and on trips to Baker Island. She was troubled by the Park's budget woes and difficulties with funding; when



Marianne Edwards and Lois Winter

someone suggested starting a “friends of the park” group, Edwards seized the concept and sought help to bring the idea to Acadia.

The Park superintendent at the time paired Edwards with Winter, Acadia's Assistant Chief of

Interpretation. Together, they researched what others were doing to support parks around the country. Winter and Edwards took what they had learned and did the “uninteresting but essential groundwork of drafting by-laws and creating organizational structure to make it easier to attract the first group of board members,” recalls Winter.³⁰ In 1986, they were ready to launch a new organization with three goals: to organize and increase volunteerism; raise funds for special projects; and act as liaison between the park and island communities. Edwards contributed \$50 and signed on as one of the incorporators, and Friends of Acadia (FOA) was established.

Their admirable goals took root in ways that far exceeded the two women's hopes. “I couldn't in my wildest dreams have anticipated where it's gone and what it's done,” noted Edwards.³¹ Her humble gift of \$50 has, in the intervening 19 years, inspired \$5.1 million in gifts to Acadia National Park and community partners; another \$16 million is invested in endowments for the carriage roads, trails and special projects. FOA is now the largest and most active group supporting a unit of the national park system.³²

Winter remembers Edwards as energetic, visionary and deeply committed to MDI. She was a seasonal resident of Hulls Cove and a Downeast Outing Club member, recruiting friends to peel logs, groom trails and haul signs up mountains. In the late 1980s, Edwards and others from FOA were honored in Washington, D.C. by President Reagan as one of the nation's "Points of Light," a program that showcased outstanding volunteer and community service efforts.

When she died at age 83, Edwards' obituary included the tribute, "Anyone who knew her would know that she would encourage people to honor her by doing community service and volunteering in the parks."³³ Her legacy lives on today through the many trail, carriage road and other Park stewardship projects that FOA sponsors.

Lois Winter continues her own energetic public service as a professional with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Gulf of Maine Coastal Program. Now based in southern Maine, she retains close ties to MDI and Acadia and visits often.

Instilling a Love of Wildlife and Plants

An educated public is one of the best protections a place can have.

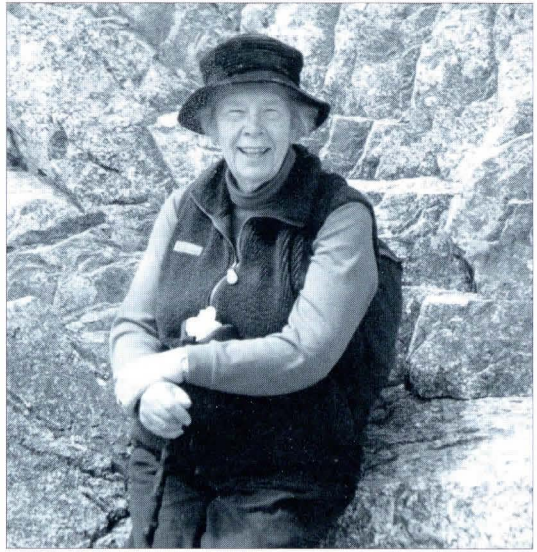
Ruth Gortner Grierson

Perhaps more than anyone else, Ruth Grierson (1927 -) has quietly created a broad public awareness of the plants, birds, mammals, amphibians and insects of the Mount Desert Island region. For 25 years, Grierson has written a regular nature column for local newspapers, 19 years at the *Bar Harbor Times* and 6 at the *Mount Desert Islander*, where she writes today. She has written four popular books about the wildlife and plants that make Acadia and MDI a botanical and ecological gem. She is a passionate naturalist whose weekly words about the natural world have touched residents and visitors alike.

Inspired by her mother's avocation as a naturalist and authorship of a nature column in Connecticut, Grierson grew up loving the outdoors. She was raised during a time, however, when there were few opportunities for a woman to earn a living as a naturalist. "I graduated from college in 1949 and it was a man's world," she recalls. "It was socially acceptable for women to teach, be a secretary or nurse so I pursued a teaching career with my other love, music. This started to change during

the war, when women had to take a leadership role while the men were away. It was a slow transition, but by the mid-1950s, there were more opportunities.”³⁴

Her lifelong career as a naturalist began when she started a nature club for neighborhood children in Connecticut, which was recognized as innovative by the National Audubon Society. She



Ruth Gortner Grierson

then followed her mother’s footsteps by taking over a local nature column for more than 15 years. She and her family moved to MDI in 1972.

Grierson’s knowledge is both vast and intimate. In *Nature Diary*, a gleaning of writings from her weekly MDI columns, she writes, “One January day a snowy owl sat for hours on our porch railing. A carpenter, doing some work for us that day, asked us what kind of pet owl we had. When we investigated... we saw a lovely snowy owl.... Her white feathers flecked generously with black made her look like a ghostly apparition as she peered down at us with a look of curiosity. This winter visitor from the Arctic is a beautiful creature and very tame, for it comes from an area where people are not generally encountered.” After describing its features and habits, she notes, “any beach or woodland clearing on Mt. Desert Island is a possible location to find one.”³⁵

Grierson enjoys interacting with the island residents and visitors who call to report a special wildlife sighting as much as she enjoys being outdoors. “Sometimes the toughest characters will show a kind heart,” she says, recalling a hunter who brought in a tiny, wounded bird or baby skunks whose mother had been shot.

In her soft-spoken and modest way, she shows pride in hearing from young people who have been inspired by her to pursue a career

in conservation or from someone who has protected his or her land. Perhaps her greatest source of pride is her two children who have followed in her and her husband Stan's footsteps. Son Scott writes the nature column for the *Bar Harbor Times* and is an educator setting up a nature center in Bass Harbor. Daughter Heather is also an educator and runs the Acadia Zoological Park.

Managing an Ecological Threat to the Park

Invasive species are a major ecological threat, on MDI and across the world. This is a critical conservation issue, yet one not widely recognized by the public. What makes a plant or animal species invasive are its aggressive habits and non-native origins. These intruders can out-compete local species, and forever change the delicate balance within wetlands, on mountain tops and other fragile communities.

Judy Hazen Connery (1957-), the Park's Natural Resource Specialist, took a leadership role on this issue within the Park and on MDI. "In the 1980s, invasive species were primarily being discussed within the scientific community," reflects Connery.³⁶ "I saw the need and opportunity to step up the Park's efforts and involve the public if the Park was to safeguard its ecological resources." Connery, the first woman in Acadia's science program, framed invasive species as a looming conservation issue and developed a Park management plan. She initiated a program to identify and locate these intruders, as well as to manage or eradicate them.



Judy Hazen Connery

"Purple loosestrife was the first priority because it was the most invasive plant and was choking wetlands, one of our most ecologically-productive habitats. The plant's showy purple spires, which bloom in July and August, are part of an aggressive reproductive system. One

robust plant can produce up to 2.7 million seeds! The long-lived seeds and thick root system enable loosestrife to spread rapidly and displace plants important to wildlife.”³⁷ Connery continues to help educate Park staff, the public and local nurseries (which sell the plant) about the invasive species problem. Loosestrife is one of a “dirty dozen” invasive species now regularly managed by the Park.

Preserving Cultural Heritage

Conservation can also include preservation of our cultural heritage. On MDI, as in many places, the natural resources of land and the cultural heritage of the people are often connected. One of the best examples of this is within the Native American tribes.

In searching for a “notable” Native American woman who is, or was, a conservation leader, it became important to recognize that Native Americans traditionally operated as tightly woven communities and individual strands (people) were not usually apparent.³⁸ However, in the 1970s, one young Micmac distinguished herself as an advocate for cultural preservation who also taught an ethic of land stewardship. Anna Mae Pictou Aquash (1945-1975) born in Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, worked hard to make a difference for the welfare and preservation of traditional cultures. Though her tenure on MDI was brief, her contribution is noteworthy.

During 1970-72, Aquash worked in the Teaching and Research in Bicultural Education School Project (TRIBES), which was based in one of the Park’s buildings in Bar Harbor.³⁹ In teaching the younger native generation, the program combined a cross-cultural classroom curriculum with first peoples history and practices. Aquash knew the native traditions and heritage, and as a teacher she shared with children her knowledge of, and respect for, the land and Native American culture. Although Project TRIBES was reported to be successful, it was discontinued in 1972 when federal funding was cut.⁴⁰ Aquash’s pioneering work is symbolic of the on-going struggle to reconnect the tribes with their history, culture and deep connection to the land.

Much Remains To Be Done

The history of women’s contributions to the conservation of MDI and Acadia National Park’s natural and cultural history is extensive,

dating back more than 100 years. By defining conservation broadly, this article has included Mary Ward Dorr, volunteer land steward at the turn of the 20th century, as well as Anna Mae Aquash, teacher of Native American heritage in the 1970s. While these women may fall outside our traditional definition of conservationists, they approached stewardship and the protection of the place in the context of their times and cultures and made meaningful contributions.

The fourteen women gathered here represent the beginning of a new body of MDI research and writing. No doubt many others have made outstanding contributions; their work is yet to be recognized and celebrated. Perhaps there is more to learn about the leadership of Mrs. Dorr and her contemporaries. There is certainly more to learn about community leaders as well as contemporary women on the Park staff who may work behind the scenes to lead conservation initiatives.

This article is dedicated to all of the women who have helped steward and protect the Acadia National Park and Mount Desert Island we know and love today. I hope this article will spur further research, writing and discussion. May it inspire more men and women, young and old, to protect the extraordinary landscape and heritage of this place.



Caroline M. Pryor lives with her family in village of Sound, Town of Mount Desert. Over the last 24 years, her professional work has centered around land conservation and nonprofit management, including 14 years on the staff of Maine Coast Heritage Trust. She now works as a consultant to community organizations and landowners. This is her first article on women conservationists and she hopes to write more.

ENDNOTES

¹ Sally Ann Gumaer Ranney, "Women and the History of American Conservation," *Women in Natural Resources*, Volume 11, No. 3 (1990): 44-50.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴ Tom St. Germain and Jay Saunders, *Trails of History: The Story of Mount Desert Islands Paths from Norumbega to Acadia* (Bar Harbor: Parkman Publications, 1993).

⁵ Bar Harbor Village Improvement Society annual minutes, September 29, 1902.

⁶ George B. Dorr, *Acadia National Park: Its Origin and Background* (Bangor, Maine: Burr Printing Company, 1942).

⁷ The early land gifts that eventually became part of the Park were made to the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations. This nonprofit organization was incorporated in 1901 to acquire land for conservation before Acadia National Park and its precursor, Lafayette National Monument/Park, were established. Even after Lafayette and Acadia were established and authorized to receive property, it was often quicker and easier for the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations to pre-acquire land on behalf of the Park.

⁸ Dorr, *Acadia National Park: Its Origin and Background*.

⁹ Ronald H. Epp, historian writing a biography of George B. Dorr, conversation with the author, November 2005.

¹⁰ Epp, conversation with the author, November 2005.

¹¹ Dorr, *Acadia National Park: Its Origin and Background*.

¹² See footnote 7 for background on the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations.

¹³ Dorr, *Acadia National Park: Its Origin and Background*.

¹⁴ George B. Dorr, *Acadia National Park: Its Growth and Development* (Bangor, Maine: Burr Printing Company, 1948).

¹⁵ Paula Deitz, in the Introduction to *The Bulletins of Reef Point Gardens by Beatrix Farrand* (Sagaponack, NY: Sagapress, 1997).

¹⁶ Ann Rockefeller Roberts, *Mr. Rockefeller's Roads: The Untold Story of Acadia's Carriage Roads and Their Creator* (Camden, Maine: Down East Books, 1990).

¹⁷ JDR, Jr., Letter to Beatrix Farrand, 7/21/31, Rockefeller Archive Center, *ibid.*, p. 127.

¹⁸ Roberts, *Mr. Rockefeller's Roads*.

¹⁹ Isabel Mancinelli, College of the Atlantic professor of landscape architecture, conversation with the author, October 2005.

²⁰ Robert Kimber, "Saving Maine's Bold Coast," *Downeast Magazine* (April 1991).

²¹ Acadia's fee-simple acquisition boundary was approved by Congress in 1986.

²² Michael Blaney, Land Resources, Acadia National Park, telephone conversation with the author, October 2005.

²³ David MacDonald, Director of Land Protection, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, conversation with the author, December 2005.

²⁴ Michael Blaney, telephone conversation with the author, October 2005. Mr. Blaney is the nephew of Mrs. Cram and the Park's overseer of its conservation easement program.

²⁵ Earl Brechlin, editor, *Mount Desert Islander*, telephone conversation with the author, November 2005.

²⁶ LaRue Spiker, "Bass Harbor Marsh: Biologists still don't know the source of all the pollution," *Bar Harbor Times* (August 17, 1989).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Island towns still transport their garbage to the Southwest Harbor site, where it is held for periodic transfer to a waste incineration facility or recycling.

²⁹ Ann Judd, Southwest Harbor Conservation Commission, telephone conversation with the author, October 2005.

³⁰ Lois Winter, telephone conversation with the author, November 2005.

³¹ Marla Major, "An Interview with Friends of Acadia Founder, Marianne Edwards," *Friends of Acadia Journal*, 2001.

³² Marla Major, telephone conversation with the author, October 2005.

³³ W. Kent Olson, "Remembering Marianne Edwards," remarks at Friends of Acadia Annual Meeting, Bar Harbor, Maine, July 2005.

³⁴ Ruth Gortner Grierson, interview with the author, November 2005.

³⁵ Ruth Gortner Grierson, *Nature Diary*, 1993.

³⁶ Judy Hazen Connery, telephone conversation with the author, February 2006.

³⁷ Connery, telephone conversation with the author, February 2006.

³⁸ Harald Prins, Professor, Kansas State University, Native American researcher and author, telephone conversation with the author, October 2005.

³⁹ Prins, telephone conversation with the author, October 2005.

⁴⁰ For more information, see <http://www.edwardsly.com>.