

The Honorable Luere Babson Deasy

DEASY: A MAINE MAN

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On June 4, 1941 the Supreme Court of the State of Maine convened for services and exercises in memory of one of their number who had died at the age of 81 on March 13, 1940. The solemn gathering was called to remember and pay tribute to the life of The Honorable Luere Babson Deasy, former Chief Justice of the Maine Supreme Court. In attendance were six sitting Justices and five colleagues who had been invited to speak.

The Honorable William R. Pattangall, a former Chief Justice himself, said of Deasy,

He moved my admiration, respect and regard as have few men with whom I have come in contact. He possessed the essential qualities of greatness, intellectual honesty, courage, integrity, and a brilliancy of intellect unexcelled by any man of my acquaintance. His broad conception of life, his knowledge of human nature, his innate sense of justice, his power of analysis, the breadth and depth of his philosophy marked him as one who towered above his associates, with whom, nevertheless, he mingled with unaffected modesty on a common plane.

The Honorable John A. Peters, Judge of the District Court of the United States, observed,

Without using the obvious arts of oratory Mr. Deasy always accomplished the purpose of the orator by the lucidity of his statement, the logic of his argument and the earnestness of his address. In his prime there was no more effective user of the public spoken word in Maine. The most striking feature of his speeches was emphasis. Having made a point, sharp and clear cut, he drove it home with the blows of a blacksmith The blows he struck his adversary were hard and painful – but never below the belt I knew him better at home and in the environment where, to his neighbors, the performance of his judicial duties, after his appointment, seemed something apart that should not interfere with his more important functions as leading citizen and public counselor

and friend; for in the community where he resided for nearly fifty-seven years he became an institution – an institution commonly but respectfully and affectionately referred to as “Deasy.”

Who was Luere Babson Deasy? A son of coastal Maine, a common man, a husband and father, a skilled lawyer even without a liberal arts education, a leader in his community and founder of community institutions, a representative of his people in the state capital, an ascendant to the highest judicial appointment in his native state, and the essential bridge between sophisticated summer cottagers and the islanders whose cooperation eventually conserved Acadia, Deasy was, without question, among the most important residents of Mount Desert Island for more than half a century. He was, as well, the calm and eloquent public voice of the place that he chose, loved, and passed on, much improved, to posterity. This essay follows the arc of his life on Mount Desert and listens to the voice through which this remarkable man served and guided his community.

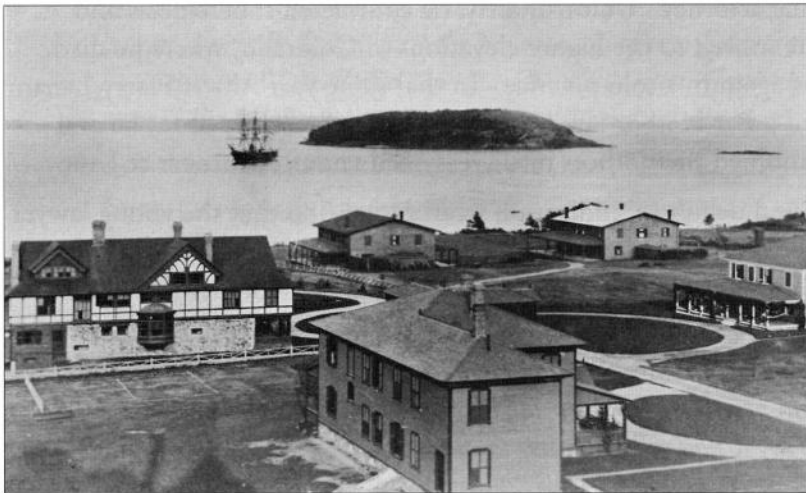


Deasy was born on February 8, 1859 in Prospect Harbor, Maine. He was the only son of Captain Daniel and Emma Moore Deasy. The Captain appears to have been an orphaned Irish immigrant who was raised by the Solomon Pendleton family of nearby Winter Harbor. Married into the old Gouldsboro families of Moore and Cole, Captain Deasy became a Master Mariner and sailed Babson family schooners out of Gloucester, Massachusetts in the early Caribbean banana trade. Following the Civil War, he settled in at Prospect Harbor as a respected merchant and community elder, functions he followed well into his 80s. His son Luere, whose unusual name was selected to honor a John Luere Babson of Pigeon Cove, near Gloucester, chose a different tack. Educated in the common schools of Gouldsboro, he received a degree in education from the State Normal School in Castine in 1881. Seeing the rise of his region and sensing, perhaps, the scope of his personal gifts, he chose to pursue a legal rather than teaching career. He read law at the offices of Hale & Emery in Ellsworth and then graduated from Boston University Law School in 1883. After sitting for the Bar exam in 1884, he immediately began a law practice as the first attorney in the burgeoning town of Bar Harbor.



The village and island to which Deasy came were in the midst of the transformation that would make them known throughout the world. Anchored by Somesville, Mount Desert Island had been a maritime-trades center earlier in the 19th century. Ships were still built, trees taken, and granite quarried throughout the 1800s, but with the influx of summer vacationers following the Civil War, a new era began. When Deasy arrived, the recreation industry was an established fact. Well-known people from the fields of law, politics, business, education, religion and finance flocked to the shores of the island. They were known as “cottage people” or “rusticators”. These tourists were sometimes regarded suspiciously by the locals for their arrogance and conspicuous opulence, but the visitors helped to generate a profitable service economy.

By 1886, the main thoroughfares of Bar Harbor were laid out. The political and business connections of many influential rusticators began to pay handsome commercial and development dividends by the 1880s. Visitors and permanent residents with the purse could choose from vendors of art, jewelry, dry goods, other “fancy” goods, and specialty stores equivalent in quality to the great Eastern emporiums. The Bangor rail connection alone, completed in 1884, soon brought some 15,000 passengers annually. While real estate brokers, contractors, building tradesmen, and gardeners were continually busy with cottages, some 17 hotels were also in operation in 1887.



*Bar
Harbor,
1884*

As important as these visitors were in fostering elegant styles, creating markets, and distributing capital, they served as the catalysts rather than as mainstays of commerce. When the rusticators departed at the end of the summer, the economic superstructure remained vibrant and intact for the year-round residents. Some 124 businesses – bakeries, barbers, blacksmiths, boat builders, coal dealers, fish markets, photographers, butchers, plumbers, a restaurant, sawmills, tailors, dentists, lawyers, doctors, and a fire department – were regularly in operation in Bar Harbor from the mid-1880s.¹



Apparently no local lawyer served this dynamic community until Deasy arrived in early 1884. If advertisements and news commentary in *The Mount Desert Herald* (predecessor of *The Bar Harbor Record/Times*) are an accurate indicator, L. B. Deasy started a solo practice on January 17, 1884. The *Herald* reported:

*L. B. Deasy, Esq. has opened a law office in the Hamor Block, Bar Harbor, as can well be seen by his professional card in another column of this paper. Mr. Deasy is a graduate from the well known office of Hale & Emery, at Ellsworth, as well as of the Harvard Law School [sic] and comes among us with the highest recommendations for integrity and business habits.*²

One year later the legal complement of Bar Harbor expanded to two. Deasy was joined by John T. Higgins, a very promising, some said brilliant, young attorney. Unfortunately, he contracted tuberculosis and in 1896 he moved to the higher elevations of Colorado, where he died. Deasy was again in a solo practice. In that same year Albert Harry Lynam established a Bar Harbor law practice and after five years or so, he and Deasy combined their offices into Deasy & Lynam, Attorneys at Law.

We have a delightful indication from early 1886 that the young lawyer enjoyed the trust of local folk and was confident enough to challenge a leading light of the new Northeast Harbor summer colony:

Dear Sir: Mr. James Clement has placed in my hand two letters from you in answer to his letter enclosing a deed of certain land and privileges at Northeast Harbor. Mr. Clement requests me to say to you that he is not willing to convey the privilege of landing

and bathing in the waters of his beach as appurtenant to using part of his five acre lot.

Thus, three days after his 27th birthday, did L. B. Deasy, Attorney at Law in Bar Harbor, address Professor Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard University, America's preeminent public intellectual and revered leader of the cultured rusticators! The letter goes on to say that Mr. Clement will convey the lot and privileges to Professor Eliot for a consideration of \$2,000. We presume that the matter at hand was resolved, confirming that while the cottagers may have assumed certain rights to locally owned property, the locals were not without competent representation. We know that Deasy and Eliot were destined to collaborate on matters of real estate even more momentous than the right to bathe on Mr. Clement's beach – and that the eminent Eliot would come to respect the young attorney as a peer and his guide to matters of state law and island custom.



Almost from the beginning, L. B. Deasy combined his law practice with banking. In 1887 he joined four other men to create the Bar Harbor Banking and Trust Company: Fred C. Lynam, George H. Grant, Andrew P. Wiswell and Everard H. Greeley. According to Edward Lee Marmon, author of *Taking Care of Business Downeast*,

Lynam and Grant were enterprising and industrious, but lacked the social and business connections needed to expand their exchange house in more ambitious directions. This need was answered by enlisting the support of a local lawyer, Luere B. Deasy, and the partnership of two Ellsworth businessmen, Wiswell and Greeley. These five men effectively created the Bank and were to serve as the original directors.

Marmon commented that,

Deasy was equally comfortable addressing the concerns of summer visitors like the Rockefellers, and serving the needs of permanent residents. Although a number of issues divided the two groups, Deasy believed that a community of interests outweighed the differences – in retrospect, he was usually shown to be right.

He was president of the Bank from 1893 until 1929 and it “basked in the reflection of Deasy's prestige, while his law firm provided valuable legal

assistance.”³

As the Bar Harbor cottager community reached its Gilded Age apogee in the final decade of the 19th century, the town developed rapidly and Deasy’s law and banking activities grew apace. The community looked to Deasy and Fred C. Lynam for leadership in government and civic affairs. Deasy’s involvement deepened with his presidencies of the Bar Harbor Village Improvement Association and Bar Harbor Board of Trade. He was for many years chairman of the Bar Harbor Branch of the American Red Cross and was a charter member and trustee of the Bar Harbor YMCA. When the time came, he was also an incorporator of the Acadia Corporation.



Early in his career Deasy was admired for his public speaking ability. From a fairly basic formal education – teachers college and one year of law school – he was able to assemble the skills of the classic rhetorician. Whether he was trained in rhetoric, that art of persuasion that moves audiences through the use of carefully crafted language, is not clear. But he was extremely well read, both in the law and in the classics of literature and history. His courtroom skills as a trial lawyer were acknowledged by his peers, especially in his ultimate selection as Chief Justice. But in his local community he was frequently called upon to speak as the occasion required, whether to calm the public in a national crisis or to solemnify the dedication of a building or monument. Beyond lawyerly persuasion, Deasy’s artful rhetoric was imbued with a sense of place and community.

A relatively early example of his role and powers was the November, 1897 dedication of Eden’s memorial to her sons who fought and bled in defense of the Union, the great monument which today stands between the Episcopal and Congregational Churches on Mount Desert Street. The dedication was a large gathering and Deasy was the first speaker. After acknowledging General Grant’s honorable Appomattox gesture to the defeated Confederacy – “Confederate officers and cavalymen to retain their horses. They will need them for their spring plowing.” – Deasy said, in part:

The best citizens made the best soldiers – those who left their country homes with tearful eyes, their mothers weeping over the vacant chairs and waiting, how often in vain, for the

return of their loved ones. To soldiers such as these have we this day dedicated that shaft of New England granite. So shall it stand to coming generations. It shall speak of valor, of heroic self-sacrifices, of military prowess that challenged the admiration of the world; and by its teaching it shall help to keep alive that same spirit against the time, which God grant may be far distant, when our country's dire need may call it into action. But it shall also speak, and in the concerted voice of all the heroic dead that it commemorates it shall say, that war is not a nation's true history – that a nation's true history is those homely pursuits of peace which were Grant's first thoughts at Appomattox – the spring plowing, the autumn harvesting, the school, the church, the home, the fireside, and all those conditions making for human progress and human happiness that exist where Peace dwells with Honor.

Such words come from an uncommon mind and noble heart, from one who, belonging to the generation following those whose last full measure of devotion he consecrated here, could remind his townsmen that the true history of a nation, and a village, was in the everyday pursuits of peace made possible by their sacrifice.



Within fewer than four years, we hear Deasy's public voice again, this time seeking to calm a people grieving for a slain leader. On September 18, 1901, in the wake of President William McKinley's assassination, a stunned Bar Harbor community met at the newly built Casino. Deasy, chairman of the meeting, sought to place McKinley's death in context, reassuring the public of their federal government's stability:

He was not shot down for any real or fancied wrong. No man in public life had fewer enemies than he. His sterling worth and rugged integrity even his most bitter opponent was obliged to admit. He was shot because of the position to which he had been raised by the suffrage of the people. I urge upon the proper authority of this country that it take such means, calmly, dispassionately, yet firmly, to root out forever from the country those causes which lead to the committing of such crimes.

To fully appreciate the calm voice here, we should remember that much

of the nation and its press was in a lather of xenophobia driven by the ethnicity of the assassin. Not so in the Eden of L. B. Deasy. He called on his country to seek and eliminate the root causes of such crime. His demeanor was even more remarkable when we realize that during these waning weeks of summer in 1901 he had been summoned to one of the great duties of his long life.



Rapid unplanned development on Mount Desert now troubled both summer colony cottagers and local leaders, such as Deasy, who cherished the natural beauty of the Island and knew that her communities needed sound infrastructure to guide growth. They were called to common purpose by President Eliot who, grieving for his recently deceased son Charles, an early landscape architect and pioneer of public reservation land in Massachusetts, now resolved to honor his offspring's vision of a Mount Desert whose exceptional beauty would be conserved forever and for all. Eliot framed the idea in a letter to George B. Dorr of Boston and Bar Harbor, dated August 12, 1901. He proposed a meeting of the Island village improvement societies to consider "the organization of a board of trustees or commission to hold reservations at points of interest on this Island, for the perpetual use of the public." Later he said, "I approach the undertaking myself from the cottagers' point of view, but I believe it to be a measure on which all persons interested in the preservation of this island as a place for healthful enjoyment could unite."

Eliot, who knew how to lead, began with a small group of wealthy and gifted men, endowed with foresight, intelligence, influence and passion. An informal early gathering secured the support of such essential summer colony luminaries as George Vanderbilt, William Jay Schieffelin and S. D. Sargent, and Bishops William Lawrence and William Doane. From the beginning, Eliot envisioned the resourceful Dorr as the essential man of action. Joining Eliot and Dorr as the original incorporators of the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations were summer colony stalwarts John S. Kennedy, a successful railroad investor; Edward B. Mears, a realtor and lawyer; Lea McIlvaine Luquer, a New York attorney; and George L. Stebbins, a pioneer of the Seal Harbor summer settlement. Two local leaders joined the table: Loren E. Kimball, a year-round resident and hotelier from Northeast Harbor, and Luere B. Deasy, senior

partner of the Deasy & Lynam law firm.

From this vital first incorporators' meeting emerged a mission "to acquire, hold and maintain and improve for free public use lands in Hancock County which by reason of scenic beauty, historical interest, sanitary advantage or for other reasons may be available for the purpose." Shown here is a transcription of the original document requesting what would become the first incorporators' meeting and including signatures of the initial members.

To Bertrand E. Clark, Justice of the Peace, in and for
Hancock County, State of Maine.

The undersigned desire to be incorporated for social, charitable and benevolent purposes including the purpose of acquiring, owning and holding lands and other property in said Hancock County for free public use, and improving the same by laying out and building roads and paths and making other improvements thereon; we therefore apply in writing to you as provided by Section I Chapter 55 of the Revised Statutes of Maine to issue your warrant directed to one of your applicants, requiring him to call a meeting for the purpose of organization at such time and place as you may appoint.

Bar Harbor, Maine
August 29th, 1901

George B. Dorr
L. D. Pierce
John S. Hambley
Gene L. Stubbins
Edward B. Mead
Samuel D. Languein
Charles W. Eliot
L. E. Kimball

Two years later, this initiative coalesced into a corporation confirmed by a special Act of the Maine Legislature. The Act also provided for "the exemption of such lands from state, county or town taxation." The significance of this clause was well understood by George B. Dorr, who in his memoirs writes:

Our counsel was Luere B. Deasy of Bar Harbor, later a Justice, and finally Chief Justice, of the Supreme Judicial Court of Maine. At the next regular session of the State Legislature, convening January 1, 1903, he obtained a charter for our association, incorporated as "The Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations", which made us, as a public service body, free of tax.

Deasy's achievement on behalf of the Trustees required a command of Maine law and considerable diplomacy in managing Eliot, whose hovering concern may at times have slipped from patrician to patronizing. But, to his credit, the President learned. Unpublished correspondence between them from early in 1903 captures the essence:

Dear Mr. Deasy: I have signed the petition to the Maine Legislature which you prepared; and I have also drawn a short preamble which may, or may not, be put at the head of the petition, at your discretion. The case is so very plain that I cannot help hoping that you will succeed with the Legislature. Very truly yours, Charles W. Eliot

Soon enough, Eliot wrote with further concerns:

Dear Mr. Deasy: The draft of the petition to the Legislature of Maine . . . seems to me rather inadequate for our purposes I enclose a copy of the act of the Massachusetts Legislature in regard to the Trustees of Public Reservations I shall be glad to send you later a letter which you could lay before the Legislative Committee. Very truly yours, Charles W. Eliot

Deasy quickly replied, with firm diplomacy:

My Dear Pres. Eliot: I beg to acknowledge your favor, with enclosures. I thank you for the copy of the Mass. Act. I will follow it as closely as the different conditions will permit in drafting an act to be presented to the Legislature, accompanying the petition. The petition, however, does not need to embody all the terms of the Act. Such petitions may be, and usually are, brief and general. The main purpose of the petition is to give notice of intended legislation, the law requiring the petition to be published. I have re-drafted the petition and

herewith enclose the same. Will you please sign and return it, making any changes in the phraseology that you think necessary. I hope to receive this on Tuesday morning, inasmuch as the paper goes to press Tuesday night. Very truly yours, Luere B. Deasy

Harvard President instructed; jurisprudence class dismissed. Eliot came to realize the young lawyer's skills and his value in dealing with a sometimes skeptical Maine populace. With the leadership of Deasy, the Charter of Incorporation was approved by the State Legislature on March 28, 1903.

Despite the successful legislation, Eliot worried to the point of despair about public acceptance, particularly among native Islanders. On August 25, 1903, Eliot wrote to fellow Trustee Lea McI. Luquer:

The damaging of the island roads by the electric light company, and the bad management of the town affairs by the present board of selectmen – which is the poorest one I have ever known to be elected in our town – has somewhat discouraged the summer residents of Seal Harbor and Northeast Harbor with regard to voluntary action looking to the beautification of the island. If the town authorities and the majority of the voters are incapable of learning that the Island of Mount Desert should be treated as a park, there seems little use in the summer residents' trying to preserve the natural beauties of a few spots. I must confess that I share this feeling of discouragement, and yet I doubt that it is reasonable.

Looking to the rapidly developing eastern side of the island, Eliot found little solace:

Have summer people in Bar Harbor never attempted to prevent or remedy the defacing of the roads and streets of Bar Harbor with double lines of poles bearing wires? The treasurer of the electric light company, speaking to several gentlemen from Northeast Harbor and Seal Harbor a few days ago at Bishop Doane's, said that the Bar Harbor people had never complained at all of poles on both sides of the streets, but on the contrary seemed to like them. He alleged, therefore, that his company had no reason to suppose that

anybody would object to double rows of poles on any of the island roads.

In a letter to Deasy four days later Eliot says,

Have you any idea how we can persuade the voters on the island of Mount Desert that the island ought to be treated in every respect like a public park? This is the plain interest of every individual who lives on the island, whether in the summer only or all the year round. Yet the town meetings and the selectmen do not act as if they thought so

Luere B. Deasy, having for two decades now lived as a year-round citizen of an island community, understood the complications of asking several thousand hard working and long established fellow citizens to suddenly begin treating their home island as, in every respect, a public park. It would become a major role for him to navigate the often conflicting, even treacherous, waters separating the interests of summer resident and native.

Nowhere was the confrontation between Trustee and local Islander interests more clearly drawn than in the issue of the public water supply. Bar Harbor had experienced a typhoid fever outbreak in 1873 that had temporarily threatened further development of the summer resort. Eagle Lake and Jordan Pond, supplying water to Bar Harbor and Seal Harbor, were looked upon as bodies of pristine alpine water, highly desirable as Trustee land acquisitions. Both were surrounded by a patchwork of privately held plots, many with buildings intended for seasonal residence, a potential if not actual source of pollution. In early 1911, the Trustees, with support from the Maine State Board of Health, petitioned the Legislature. House Bill #392 begins:

The Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations, a corporation existing under the laws of the State of Maine, is hereby authorized and empowered to take by devise, gift or purchase and to hold, and also to take as for public purposes by eminent domain, any land or any interest therein in the water sheds of Eagle Lake and Jordans Pond or either of them on Mount Desert Island, Hancock County, Maine, which corporation deems necessary to protect the waters thereof from pollution.

The Trustees, in particular George B. Dorr, asked Deasy to communicate this to a skeptical public. In revising a rambling first draft by Mr. Dorr, Deasy came straight to the point with his characteristic emphasis:

To the Citizens of Bar Harbor, Seal Harbor and Asticou: To avoid misunderstanding of the scope and objects of the proposed act of the legislature granting certain powers to the Trustees of Public Reservations, we have caused the full text of the proposed enactment to be published. . . . No subject is more important to the welfare of the Mt. Desert resorts than the preservation of the purity of their public water supply. . . . An outbreak of typhoid fever believed to be traceable to impure water would cause incalculable injury. . . . Nature has provided spring fed reservoirs of purest water. No man should be permitted for his own pleasure or profit to corrupt it or cast doubt upon its wholesomeness. In taking measures to preserve the purity of our water supply all private rights should be fully and carefully protected. A proprietor of land on one of the above named lakes should not be compelled to part with his property or any rights in it without just compensation. But no man should be allowed to compel a whole town full of people to drink his sewage. . . . The Trustees may never wish to acquire any land other than by voluntary purchase. It certainly will not unless it is necessary. But in case any person insists on occupying land on the margin of these lakes in such a manner as to menace the purity of the public water supply and the health and welfare of the community, it asks the right by paying to the owner the fullest compensation, to take such land and hold it for the public benefit.

Here we see the essential issue of 20th century island life, the relationship between the emerging Park and the surrounding communities, captured as only a leader of Deasy's gifts and common touch could. The Trustees will only seek land from willing sellers to whom they will give a fair price, but if a private owner should foul the commons and risk the public health and well-being, the Trustees have and will exercise the rights of the many against the befouler. The issue of eminent domain, clearly implied if not specifically stated in Deasy's public communication, was carefully defined in the final version of the petition and the bill was enacted in

March of 1911.

This legislative victory resulted from a careful preemptive assessment of the opposing forces, typical of Deasy's legal style. As Deasy curtly stated in a January 7, 1911 letter to Dorr,

There will be opposition to this measure even if it is fully understood. The opposition will not be intelligent but may be strenuous.

Much of the opposition was anticipated by Deasy in his advice to Eliot of three weeks later:

After conference with Mr. Dorr I have stricken out the words "Hadlock's Pond" from the bill. This I did because there seems to be a very general and strenuous opposition by the owners around Hadlock's Pond against the passage of the measure. The menace is not so great at the Hadlock's Pond as at Eagle Lake nor does there seem to be a strong feeling in favor of the measure there that exists among people here. We believe that if the bill can be put through for the protection of Eagle Lake and Jordan's Pond that the force of the example and precedent will enable us to later extend the protection to Hadlock's Pond. I have also taken the liberty to change the letter by striking out "Northeast Harbor" and inserting "Asticou", so as to cover and include all places supplied from Eagle Lake and Jordan's Pond.

Knowing perhaps better than anyone the periodic tensions between the noble purposes of the Trustees and the concerns of permanent residents, and having done as much if not more than anyone to resolve them, Deasy must have felt deep satisfaction when, through the good works of George B. Dorr in Washington, the great day came when President Wilson, using the powers given him in the 1906 Antiquities Act, proclaimed the creation of Sieur de Monts National Monument on July 8, 1916. Soon thereafter the public gathered at Kebo's Building of the Arts to hear a series of speeches by Charles W. Eliot, George B. Dorr and, among others, Luere B. Deasy. Eliot introduced Deasy as ". . . identified with the legal work involved in obtaining the great reservations . . . knows the history of the enterprise . . . knows what the meaning of the undertaking

has been in the minds of those who promoted it.” As Deasy spoke, he reviewed the many events leading up to the Proclamation, and then said:

The establishment of this Monument guarantees that it will be perpetually open for the use of the public, under due restrictions, not as a matter of suffrage but as a matter of right; it guarantees that it will be protected against devastation or commercial exploitation; that its animal, bird, and plant life shall be conserved – something that could not be accomplished under private or even corporate ownership. These guarantees are worth far more than the Park has cost.

This great Park lies midway between Northeast Harbor, Seal Harbor and Bar Harbor. It is equally accessible to them all. All have a common interest in it. It reaches out to each of these resorts and binds them together into one community.

But to him who possesses imagination and vision, the opening of this Park has a wider and deeper significance. That these mountains, standing at the very edge of the Continent, looking out across the ocean far beyond our Country’s domain, should remain in private ownership, bought and sold by metes and bounds and used for private gain, is incongruous. That they should be held by the Nation in trust for all its people is their appropriate destiny.

The man who lives in the interior of the country has very little to remind him of the Federal Government under which he lives. But go with me upon the crest of any one of these hills and look seaward; upon every headland a light house; upon every sunken edge a buoy or spindle. The safe channel along the whole coast is clearly marked; and when the fog curtain falls, the Nation does not forget its children upon the water, but guides them to safety by signals.

It is fitting that the Nation should be given this unique post of vantage, these mountains by the sea from which its most beneficent work may be observed. It is fitting it should hold them in trust for the public, because of the lessons they teach of ancient geologic history and Nature’s ways; because of the exceptional variety and interest of the life they shelter, plant and animal; and because of their historic association with the early explora-

tion of our coast and its attempted occupation by the French. For these, alike, and other reasons of which I have no need to speak, so familiar are they to all, we do well to celebrate this occasion.

These were the progressive views of a common man of the Maine coast, seasoned in law and politics, with the hard-won wisdom to entrust a precious part of the commons to the safe stewardship of our collective will acting through the government. He saw a good future for the Park and surrounding communities, sensed that the Park could become a world heritage, and affirmed that this commons had been conserved from the degradation of division and development for profit by private hands.



As Deasy worked with and for the Trustees, he was asked to assume greater responsibilities by the people of his Island and state. In 1906, he was elected to the Maine Senate. He was reelected in 1908 and became Senate President. During this time, his junior partner, Albert Harry Lynam, took on the lion's share of legal work for the Trustees, ultimately becoming Dorr's legal assistant and John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s local legal counsel. While serving as Senator, Deasy was instrumental in drafting workers' compensation laws and was respected widely. Indeed, he gave close consideration to a gubernatorial bid, which many think he could have won. In the end, however, he chose to return to the Island he loved and his law practice and responsibilities at the bank.

Deasy's grace as a public speaker was often evident, as three illustrations will show. In August 1911 the dedication of the Jesup Memorial Library in Bar Harbor gave him an opportunity to reflect on the importance of books:

The gift of a library is the best and most perfect public gift. I say this not forgetting other forms of public benefaction touching more immediate human needs. The greatest and most significant human fact is achievement . . . All the discoveries and inventions of the past, all the pictures that artists and poets have painted, all the principles that patriots have fought for, all the truths that martyrs have died for are ours without money and without price. All this is true

*Judge Deasy, wife
Emma, and daughters
Louise and Blanche*



*The Deasy home
at 16 Prospect
Avenue, Bar
Harbor*

because of books. It is books that bring to and lay at the feet of each new century all the worthwhile wealth of past centuries. Books are the title deeds, the testaments under and by virtue of which a generation has and holds and enjoys the priceless treasures which in all ages of the past the exploring mind has brought from the cave of knowledge

A decade later, a very different occasion gave Deasy an opportunity to reflect again on how we memorialize those lost in war and the enduring good done through public works well built. On Memorial Day of 1920, the people of Mount Desert Island celebrated an end to world conflict and the completion of the new Mount Desert Bridge. It was a festive occasion, attended by an estimated 10,000 citizens. Also present were veterans of the Civil War, the Spanish War and the World War to whom the bridge was dedicated. Deasy delivered the lead address:

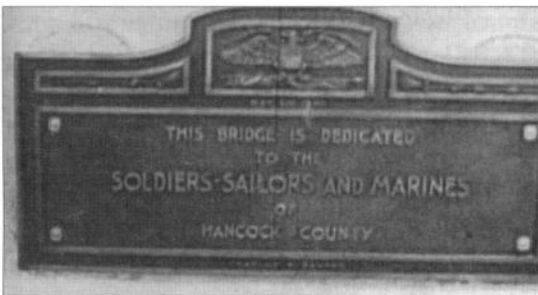
The public that I represent and speak for is not merely you and I I speak for a much wider constituency, for the public that will use it when what is now a new bridge is an old bridge; for men and women who will cross it and see the same tide ebbing and flowing through these same arches a hundred years after all living have crumbled to dust. For this great public I gladly and proudly accept this structure And now we have erected this beautiful bridge and dedicated it to living soldiers and sailors of the great war and to the memory of their dead and have also dedicated it to the use of all the people now and for the future. But some, thinking superficially, I believe, may say that to make a monument a thing of everyday utility betrays a sordid mercenary, unworthy spirit – but not so – not infrequently men and women in performing tasks that seem lowly and commonplace, but done from a sense of duty and for the benefit of others, build better than they know and accomplish great things. He who labors to make more beautiful and better the country that our heroes died for, may be making a fitter and more acceptable offering than he who ostentatiously mourns.

The bridge dedicated that day has now been replaced, but the memorial

plaque from the dedication, designed by then high school student Charles K. Savage, is still proudly affixed to the span that brings the world to the Island and links us to the mainland.

A final Deasy speech, from his 70th year, shows his rhetorical gifts and ability to teach with a common touch undiminished. The occasion was the dedication of the new museum at Sieur de Monts Spring in August 1928. Dr. Robert Abbe, an enthusiastic collector of Stone Age antiquities and long-time summer resident, had died the previous year. The museum would adopt his name several years later.

This dedication will necessarily be brief, because we have very few chairs to offer you. But I do not need to remind you that the people who made and used the articles of stone found in this Museum did not have chairs. One of the lost arts, lost since they lived, is the art of comfortably and gracefully squatting on the ground. Bar Harbor appreciates this Museum because it is a memorial of its loved and gracious founder. It appreciates it also because it will stimulate the study of American archaeology. "But what value," someone asks, "is the study of American archaeology?" No value at all to him who looks only for cash dividends. But to him who believes: "That in all ages every human heart is human"; to him who is interested in the study of the labored steps by which the human race, not here alone but everywhere, has plodded its slow way upward, it is of profound interest These tools and implements and ornaments and weapons which you find in this collection were not made nor used by your ancestors. But do not for this reason assume too great an air of superiority. For there was a time some ages ago when your ancestors and mine used just such tools and implements and ornaments and weapons as these. Indeed, there was a time some eons ago when your ancestors and mine had nothing as good as these. Then, after the passing of many centuries, some prehistoric Edison invented and made a stone axe and people undoubtedly gathered about it and examined it and exclaimed: "Isn't it marvelous?" And they said, just as we say now: "It isn't possible that future centuries will witness as great progress in the arts as we have seen."



*Dedication of
Mount Desert Bridge,
Memorial Day, 1920*





*Judge Deasy
addresses the
huge crowd*

At the height of the Roaring 20s (“him who looks only for cash dividends”), in the infancy of American archaeology, at a time when Native Americans were hardly visible to the wider white world, a Maine man at his three score and ten could celebrate, with eloquence and humility, the true significance of the artifacts entrusted to the museum that day.



No appreciation of Luere Babson Deasy should slight the dry wit and generous humor for which he was revered by high court colleagues and common townsman alike. An example of Deasy’s humor can be found in this account: While serving as a district court trial judge, the defendant’s attorney asked to approach the bench with his client. The rather nervous client said, “Your Honor, my wife is at home and about to become pregnant.” The attorney corrected him with, “Your Honor, I believe he means that his wife is about to be confined.” Judge Deasy returned, “In either case your client is needed at home. Court is recessed.”

A final illustration of Deasy’s good cheer, and his care as the good son of an aging father, was recently discovered by the author in the basement of the old Deasy & Lynam law firm. It is included because one of the joys of original materials research is the discovery of something entirely unexpected, something counter to the gradually perceived impression of the subject’s character. In a thin file lay the following series of letters, labeled “confidential” and written by or addressed to Arthur Whitman, reporter for the Maine Supreme Judicial Court. The dated years of 1921-1922 are significant:

December 30, 1921 My Dear Mr. Rodick: Judge Deasy has just told me that his father, Captain Deasy, of Prospect Harbor, is not very well and has suggested that a small quantity of “spirits” might be very acceptable in his present condition. I have just suggested to the Judge that I thought you might be in a position where you could procure a little of this article, and that you would be glad to make a little effort in this direction for the sake of alleviating the situation. If you could obtain anything and could send it over there to the Captain, the effort would certainly be greatly appreciated

January 23, 1922 My Dear Rodick: I presume by this time Judge D. has seen you and expressed to you his appreciation

of your efforts. It was really in consequence of his mentioning the matter of the need of Captain D. that I made the suggestion that you might be able to do something I don't know what the situation is in your vicinity in the way of a supply of this article, or in fact anything in that line, but if there is a possibility of obtaining anything I would be glad to send you a check and have you salvage something against a rainy day for me

January 24, 1922 My Dear Whitman: I have your letter of January 23. Don't send me any check, simply let me know when you can come to Bar Harbor either coming or going from your trip to Calais. Yours truly, Rodick



Deasy: The Measure of a Maine Man

Luere Babson Deasy was my great-grandfather. It appears that he was also a great man. In writing this essay, I have been conflicted by the dual roles of responsible historian and admiring descendant. By all indications, he was a modest man and as his relative I would hope to be perceived in the same light. I did not seek to canonize him – indeed, my primary motivation stemmed from an intense curiosity to discover and understand his life and times. But the hours of research, especially as they revealed his written and spoken words, provided a window into the workings of what I now see as a broad and noble mind. His rhetorical skills are self-evident, as well as his inner calm, humor and humility. His intellect and motivation allowed him to follow opportunity and become an institution in his town and state. And he was a decent man, a moral man who better than most understood his origins and his townspeople as they were confronted by enormous changes and challenges over the period of his long and accomplished life.

We live in a special place – this Island and its National Park – conserved by the actions of men with great foresight. Implementation of their visionary ideas required the hard and dedicated work of ordinary, but extraordinary, people who cared passionately about this place. Deasy's words and good works provide a beacon by which today we can continue to see the same spirit of caring. That is his legacy. Let us hope not to forget it.



*Four Deasy generations: Luere, daughter Blanche,
grandson Robert and father Daniel*



I would like to thank Douglas Chapman, Esq. for his assistance and generosity. A well-known practicing Bar Harbor attorney since 1964, he is heir to and conservator of the original Deasy & Lynam law firm.

My great friend Jack Russell provided a challenge and insightful editorial assistance in the preparation of this essay. He greased the ways and gave this little literary boat and its skipper a shove. I am deeply grateful.



Bill Horner is a Bar Harbor native, a retired general surgeon, a dreamer and an aspiring writer of Island history. He lives with his wife, Cookie, in the woods just off Norway Drive, where they build trails for their grandchildren and spend time in the cabin telling stories. He thinks that the creation of Acadia National Park was one of mankind's greatest achievements.

NOTES

¹ Marmon, Edward Lee. *Taking Care of Business Downeast: The History of the Bar Harbor Bank & Trust Company, 1887-1987*. Boston: Graphic Chronologies, 1987.

² Deasy had in fact graduated from Boston University Law School in 1883.

³ Marmon, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-11.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Page 6: From the author's collection.

Page 9: From the collections of Mount Desert Island Historical Society.

Page 23: From the author's collection.

Pages 26 and 27: Courtesy of Raymond Strout.

Page 30: From the author's collection.

Page 31: From the author's collection. Thanks are due Roberto Rodriquez, executive director of the Seal Cove Auto Museum, for his help in identifying the make and year of the automobile



Judge Deasy beside his 1922 Nash sedan, series 690