

Brief Record of Origin and Activities of Hancock County Trustees of Public Preserves

THE HANCOCK COUNTY TRUSTEES OF PUBLIC PRESERVES
A Brief Record of their origin and activities
by Samuel A. Eliot

For thirty-five years the residents of Mount Desert Island, the summer visitors there and the tourists who traverse the roads and trails have profited by the disinterested and unassuming activities of a company of citizens associated in an endeavor to preserve for public enjoyment the scenic and historic sites of Mount Desert. The origins and development of this organization need to be recorded, its activities summed, its aims enlarged, its methods of working adopted.

In the summer of 1901 Thomas L. Eliot, who had been for twenty years a summer resident of Northeast Harbor, suggested to some of his neighbors and friends that they might form an organization to conserve and maintain the unique natural beauties of Mount Desert. During the preceding winter Dr. Eliot had been engaged in putting together the papers of his son, Herbert Eliot. Here he came across an article printed in 1888 in "Harvard and Forest" describing the wild state of the coast of Maine and pointing out how the increase of private ownership might soon deprive the public of access to many of the beautiful hills, points and beaches. It further suggested how the public might be served by action of the State or by the organization of incorporated bodies to protect and maintain reservations for public use. "To be wise legislative action was taken; and if the State of Maine should by suitable legislation encourage the formation of associations for the purpose of preserving chosen parts of her coast scenery, she would not only do herself honor, but would secure for the future an important element in her natural grandeur."

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