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George B. Dorr

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SIEUR DE MONTS PUBLICATIONS

XXII

The Sieur de Monts National Monument and
The Wild Gardens of Acadia: A Reprint
from the Journal of the International
Garden Club



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



PRESIDENT-EMERITUS ELIOT,
PRESIDENT OF THE WILD GARDENS OF ACADIA
ON THE SITE OF THE FRENCH MISSIONARY COLONY OF 1613

The Sieur de Monts National Monument and the Wild Gardens of Acadia

By George B. Dorr



THE Sieur de Monts National Monument is the first National Park, other than military, to be established in the East. In its historic associations it is the oldest in the country, antedating by some years the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers on the Plymouth Shore. It is also the only National Park bordering upon the sea and exhibiting the beauty and the grandeur of the ocean. To all of us who come from eastern stock, that frontage on the sea, that broad outlook on the North Atlantic, has peculiar interest. That sea it was which brought its founders to America, through danger and hardship, and gave their race the spirit of independence and adventure from which our Nation sprang. This Park, also, rising from the ocean front, links itself as none other can, not placed as it upon a harbored coast, with the Nation's greatest possession, the navigable waters that border on its coast within the three mile limit and which in Maine, whose coastline is formed by the flooding of an old land surface worn by streams, are fronted by twenty-five hundred miles of picturesque and broken shore from Portland to St. Croix. These National waters of the ocean border, commercial use apart, constitute the greatest public recreative area on the continent in the summer season, and the most democratic, for on them a man, if he so choose, can, single handed, sail his own boat from port to port along a many-harbored shore, anchoring where no private rights exist and drawing from the sea such food as money cannot buy except along the coast. Between this recreative area with its



CADILLAC'S AND BERNARD'S HARBOR OF MOUNT DESERT
AND THE ENTRANCE TO SOMES SOUND
FROM ACADIA MOUNTAIN

boundless freedom and the National park system stands, sole link as yet, the Sieur de Monts National Monument, accessible by sea from every eastern port and fronting on it with a boldness and a beauty unapproached on our Atlantic Coast and rarely equalled in the world.

De Monts was the founder of Acadia, one of the three great provinces into which France divided its possessions in America, the others being the River of Canada—the lands bordering on the St. Lawrence—and, of later foundation, Louisiana, the whole great territory lying to the westward of the Mississippi and draining into it.

Acadia, like Canada, was a word of Indian origin apparently, used by the early fishermen and traders, which appears for the first time in the Commissions issued to De Monts by Henry of Navarre and his Lord High Admiral, Charles de Montmorenci, in December, 1603. Acadia then included, by the Commissions' terms, the whole vast territory lying between the latitudes of Philadelphia and Montreal to-day, and stretching indefinitely westward. Later it became restricted, by English and Dutch occupations westward, to the country draining to the ocean between the Kennebec and the St. Lawrence—Eastern Maine and Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Cape Breton. These bounds it held, through constant border warfare, for a century and over, and it is this long possession of its coast by a great friendly nation without whose aid our independence never would have been achieved that the Sieur de Monts National Monument commemorates in its historic aspect.

In this aspect three figures stand out beyond others: De Monts, the soldier of ancient noble family, the follower of King Henry in the Huguenot Wars and governor of Pons, a city of refuge for Huguenots in southwestern France; Champlain, the gallant sailor and discoverer to whom Mount Desert Island owes its first description and its name; and—two generations later—Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, the founder of Detroit and first owner of Mount Desert Island, by a royal grant from Louis XIV still on record at Quebec. On it—upon its eastern side—he lived, he and his wife, sole occupants worthy at that time of

mention, according to a census of the people dwelling on the Acadian Coast which Sir Edmund Andros, governor of New England, had prepared in 1688, with intent of conquest. For a like purpose, a hostile expedition against Boston and New York, Cadillac himself four years later drew up a "Memoire" for the French Court describing the coast between the St. Croix and the Hudson, and in it thus describes the harbor at the entrance to Somes Sound.

The harbor of Monts Deserts or Monts Coupés is very good and very beautiful. There is no sea inside, and vessels lie, as it were, in a box. There are four entrances. The northeast one is the best; it has nine fathoms of water. In the eastern one, there are fourteen or fifteen; in the southeast one, there are three and a half, but in the channel there is a rock which is sometimes covered by the tide. In the western entrance there are three fathoms and a half, but to enter safely you must steer west or southwest. Good masts may be got here, and the English formerly used to come here for them.

Years afterward, when engaged in the founding of Detroit, Cadillac still signed himself in his deeds, the lord of Mount Desert seigneur des Monts Deserts, but presently both it and all of eastern Maine were lost to France on the battlefields of Europe and the next owner of Mount Desert Island was an Englishman, Francis Bernard, governor of the province of Massachusetts, to whom it was given by the province in reward for "extraordinary services," of a legal nature.

Governor Bernard made a voyage, in stately fashion with a considerable suite, down the coast from Boston in October, 1762, to view his new possession, and kept a journal, still extant, which brings the Island and whole coast before us very vividly. He entered the harbor described by Cadillac and explored the Southwest Harbor shore, finding a path already trodden to the Bass Harbor Marshes and many haycocks stacked there. Four families were then already settled on one of the Cranberry Islands, and two at the head of Somes Sound, a true glacial fiord which he calls a river:

October 7. Went up the river, a fine channel having several openings and bays of different breadths from a mile to a quarter of a mile. In some places the rocks were almost perpendicular to a great height. The general course of this river is north, 5 degrees east, and it is not less than eight miles long in a straight line. At the end of it we turned into a bay, and there saw a settlement in a lesser bay. We went on shore and into Abraham Somes' log house, found it neat and convenient, though not quite furnished, and in it a notable woman with four pretty girls, clean and orderly. Near it were many fish drying. From there we went to a beaver pond where we had an opportunity to observe the artificialness of their dams and their manner of cutting down trees to make them. We returned to our sloop about four o'clock. The gunners brought in plenty of ducks and partridges.

October 8. We observed sunrising but could not take its amplitude by reason of clouds near the horizon. I went through the woods to the creek of Bass Bay. We went about a mile on the salt meadows, found it fine, the hay remaining there good, and the creek a pretty rivulet capable of receiving considerable vessels. In the evening I received several persons on board proposing to be settlers, and it was resolved to sail the next morning if the wind would permit.

Governor Bernard's possession of the Island was but temporary, for he was a zealous champion of the Crown in the struggle between it and the American colonies and when the break came his American possessions, his mansion house beside Jamaica Pond—where he had received, coming out from Boston in a procession of eleven chaises, a "rebellious" committee that included John Hancock, Joseph Warren, James Otis, Samuel Adams and Josiah Quincy—and his wild island on the coast of Maine, were confiscated by the State of Massachusetts. Later, however, when the war was over, the State gave back to his son, John Bernard, an undivided half-interest in the Island, granting shortly afterward, in a generous impulse, the remaining half-interest to the grand-daughter of Cadillac, Madame de Gregoire, with her husband—French refugees—on receiving a petition from them supported by letters from Lafayette. Finally, in 1794, the Island was divided between them by the Massachusetts Court, the western portion including the Southwest and Bass Harbors region and all else to the westward of Somes Sound, being assigned to John Bernard and those holding

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under him; the eastern portion, which includes Bar Harbor, Seal and Northeast Harbors, and the greater portion of the Park, to the de Gregoires, who made their home on it at Hulls Cove, and died there. Thus not only does the Park commemorate the founding of Acadia and early occupation of its region by the French but the titles by which its lands are held tell their own story, too, of Colonial governors and of the new-born State of Massachusetts' gratitude to France, expressed in the de Gregoire gift, for aid rendered in a time of urgent need, an aid that the United States are now returning in a need yet greater.

The Park's historic aspect is but one, however; another to which special importance was given in the Park's foundation, is that of the value it may be made to have in wild life conservation. In this, the opportunity it offers is extraordinary. The Island's situation midway between sea and land, sharing in both climates; the boldness and variety of its mountain landscape, broken by intervening lakes and meadows and deep wooded valleys; and its position on a great coastal bird-migration route, with a widening continent beyond it to the north, combine to make it a wonderful place for sheltering, preserving, and exhibiting the native life—plant, bird and animal—of the Acadian region, rich in species and representing the whole great eastern section of the continent to the north of Portland.

To coöperate with the Government in this, a corporation has been formed entitled The Wild Gardens of Acadia, to be governed when its organization shall have been completed by a small body of trustees appointed triennially by a few of the leading Universities of the country, by a few Natural History Museums and Biological Associations, by the American Institute of Architects and certain others interested in landscape architectural and gardening education, and by the Secretary of the Interior, head of the National Park System.

The purpose of the Wild Gardens corporation is to provide sanctuaries for the plant and animal life—the flora and fauna—of the Acadian region, places of special fitness where



ENTRANCE TO SIEUR DE MONTS
SPRING AND HONOR CRAG

that life in every valuable or interesting form may dwell securely and perpetuate itself in its natural environment; and to make those sanctuaries useful not only in conservation but as an opportunity for study, a source of pleasure and a means of information.

The Sieur de Monts National Monument is to be looked upon in this respect as its accomplishment, and nowhere in the world perhaps is there an area of like extent better fitted for such purpose. It is the summer heat and winter cold in their extremes that limit, northward and southward, the distribution of plant and animal species, and both are profoundly influenced in the Park by the surrounding ocean with its great sweeping tides. In it, accordingly, plants of the sub-arctic zone grow along with others living in the mountainous portions of Virginia and the Carolinas; and coastal species with those of the interior.

The Park itself is a remarkable piece of topography. A once solid granite mass some fifteen miles in length, facing the sea, has been carved by the greatest of all terrestrial erosive forces, ice and ocean—attacking it from opposite sides—into a dozen mountain groups, separated by deep lakes and valleys and an ocean fiord.

Firm in its resistance as no sea-laid rock—limestone, slate or sandstone—can be, splitting into giant fragments piled like masonry and making wonderful foregrounds to the blue ocean plain beyond, it is an Alpine chain in small, while every frost-rent crack and crevice on it, bottomed with sand and humus from the slow weathering of the surface and the dropping leaves, becomes a miniature rock garden filled with northern plants—blueberries and mountain cranberries, the trailing arbutus, mountain holly, and a host besides, while the bearberry with its shining foliage and brilliant, deep-red berries spreads out great carpets over the rock itself.

At the mountains' northern foot, where the ice-sheet's way was checked, and occupying the dividing valleys, through which it ground its way with concentrated force, there are deep basins, excavated glacial-fashion from the rock. These are partly filled with water, making a series of lakes and mountain tarns;



WOODS BETWEEN SIEUR DE MONTS
SPRING AND TARN

partly with peat and washed-in glacial sands and clays, the fertile detritus from a sea-laid rock more ancient than the granite which is the bed-rock of the country. In them deep-seated springs well up, unfailling, clear and cold, keeping the basins full through summer droughts and creating ideal heaths and meadows for the growth of bog and meadow plants—the rhodora, the northern kalmias, Labrador tea, the native lilies in their different species, the native iris, meadow sweet and meadow rue, the brilliant cardinal flower, wild roses, and a number of wild orchids.

The woods in the Monument are exceedingly interesting, including as they do what are now perhaps the only fragments of primeval forest—untouched but for the early loss of their great pines—along the eastern coast, plundered elsewhere for its ease of transport. There is no forest in the world that has a more delightful floor, rich in the underplants whose home is in its shade and whose soil is the leaf-mould—the accumulation of centuries perhaps in the slow-wasting north—which carpets it. Here a different group of plants displays its beauty: the Clintonia, making great beds beneath the oaks and other hardwood trees, with splendid leaves and the most beautiful blueberries in the world; the Twin Flower, beloved of Linnaeus; the Dwarf Cornel, covering sun-penetrated spaces with its white flowers and red, clustered berries; the Rattlesnake Plantain, quaintest of northern orchids, which forms delightful clumps of mottled foliage spread flat upon the ground; the Fringed Orchid and the Lady's Slippers; the Painted Trillium or Wake Robin, one of the most beautiful of woodland flowers; the Twisted Stalk with its drooping, brick-red berries; the Winter-Green and Partridge Berry; the Ground Yew that haunts the forest depths; the Ferns, the Mosses and the brilliant Fungi.

In shrubs, too, Acadia and the Park are rich. The Blueberry grows so abundantly and fruits so freely on the mountains in the Park that the Government has taken it for its emblem. The Wild Roses form great clumps along the roadsides and the banks of streams, flowering with a grace and beauty scarce any cultivated plant can equal. The Blackberry throws out long,



VIEW WEST FROM SARGENT MOUNTAIN
SHOWING UPPER SOMES SOUND



A TYPICAL ACADIAN SCENE
MOUNT DESERT ISLAND

graceful stems of bloom. The Sumach takes on a habit of singular luxuriance in this northern land and is an object of delight from its first leafing in the spring until it drops its flaming, red and yellow foliage with the late autumn frosts. It is a home of the Viburnums, and the most beautiful species in the world—and the most difficult to cultivate—*V. lantanoides*, grows in it in wild profusion, lighting in June the shade of woodland valleys with its pure white bloom. At no time, from the blossoming of the *Amelanchier* or Wild Pear in spring, along with that of the first Wild Strawberries and Violets, to the strange October flowering of the Witch Hazel and the clustered fruiting of the native Rowan Tree or Mountain Ash, is there a period when flowers or brilliant fruits are lacking to make the wayside beautiful. Each period has its own beauty, too: the awakening of spring with its swift northern progress and rapidly succeeding blossoms; the midsummer period of the Wild Roses' bloom; the autumn beauty of the Goldenrods and Asters, of fruiting Thorns and brilliant *Ilex* berries and the Wild Rose hips. Nor is there any place upon the Continent where the autumnal change of leaf is of richer color or more strikingly set off. The red clumps of Blueberry are glorious then upon the granite ledges, contrasted by the grey rocks and mosses and the dark rich green of the Pitch Pine. The Oaks upon the rocky slopes below, turned to glowing crimson, are splendid against White Pines and Spruces. The Beech leaves' golden brown, the golden yellow of the Birch and Poplar, the warm-toned red of the Swamp Maple and nameless wealth of color in the heaths it borders make wonderful, illuminated foregrounds to the blue sea, the lakes or the enclosing bays as one looks down on them from the mountain paths.

Viewed in this aspect, the Park is like a great Rock Garden set by nature on the ocean verge and needing only to be made accessible by entrance roads and paths; to have its woodlands cared for and protected against disease or fire; to have such injury as men have done repaired, rank growths give place to finer ones, and every spot within its bounds of special interest or beauty given its full value. And to be made, besides, as nature has singularly fitted it to be, a safe refuge for the region's

native life—plant or animal—as the human tide sweeps over, preserving it in every finer form and handing it down—self-perpetuated in its natural environment—to future generations for their delight and profit.

The needs are clear, but the adaptation of a great coastal landscape to the annual refreshment of a multitude of men and women seeking happiness and health and energy—physical and mental uplift—after the confinements and fatigues of city life is a matter calling for the best intelligence and skill that can be given it. Rightly done, the benefit—not only to those who come but to the work they do elsewhere and the communities they serve—multiplied by the years, will be immeasurable; wrongly done, a great opportunity will have been lost, perhaps forever.

The area is unique; there is no other like it. The problem is to preserve in the midst of a great annual flood of summer visitors the wild, primeval beauty and untamed, elemental character which make it so and combine with the cool summer climate and the presence of the sea to draw men to it.

An early description of Mount Desert Island found among the Bernard papers in the Harvard College Library.

Mount Desert is a large mountainous island lying 10 leagues west from the Island of Grand Mannan in the mouth of the Bay of Funday; it is in the Latitude 44, 35 North, and Longitude 67, 20 West. It appears as the continent from the Sea, but is divided from it by an arm running between it and the Main, but at low water may be crossed by a narrow neck near the West end as the Inhabitants report. Its natural Productions are Oak, Beech, Maple, and all sorts of Spruce and Pines to a large Dimention, viz: 34 inches diameter. Ash, Poplar, birch of all sorts, white Cedar of a large size, Sasafress, and many other sorts of wood; we know no name for a very great variety of Shrubbs, among which is the Filbert. Fruits, such as Raspberries, Strawberrys, Cranberrys of two sots, Gooseberrys and Currents. It has all sots of soil, such as dry, wet, rich, poor and barren; with great Quantities of Marsh, a number of Ponds, with runs fit for mills. Quantities of Marble, and its generally thought from the appearance of many Parts of the Land there are Iron and Copper Ore. Its Inhabitants of the Brute Creation are Moose, Deer, fox, Wolf, Otter, Beaver, martin, Wild Cat,

and many other Animals of the fur kind, all kinds of wild fowl, Hares, Partridges brown and black. But the most valuable part of this Island is the extraordinary fine Harbour in it, which is formed by the Islands as described on the annex Sketch of it. Codfish is ever taken in any Quantities with very convenient Beaches for drying and curing them. Shellfish of all sorts except the oyster, none of which we saw, fine Prawns and Shrimps.

There lies from it a rock above Water, about 8 Leagues from the foot of the great Islands, and 5 leagues from the Duck Islands, which is the nearest Land to it; this rock is dangerous from its being deep Water both within and without it, so that sounding is no warning; you will have 40, 45, and 50 fathom within half a mile of it; it is steep to all sides except to the East Point of it, where it runs off foul about Pistol Shot, but dries at low water, the Tide near this rock setts strong in and out the Bay of Funday; its to be seen about 3 Leagues, and appears white from being covered with gannets which breed and roost there. Its length is 500 fathoms from the N. E. Point to the S. W. Point, and by an observation we took on it is in the Latitude 44;08N. I shall say no more of it, than that a good look out is necessary, and without you strike itself, there is little or no danger of being very near it; and the night is the most dangerous time to see it. A Beacon built of Stone of which the rock itself will furnish, about 50 or 60 feet high, would render it of little danger.

The Harbour (of Mount Desert) is very convenient for naval Equipments from the Number of fine anchoring places and Islands, a very fine rendezvous for fleets and Transports in case of an expedition to the West Indies, as each division of men of war and Transports may have different places to wood and water in, and Islands enough for encampment and Refreshments of men, without any danger of desertion or Irregularity. The King's Dock yards might be supplied for many years with Sparrs from 27 inches and downwards to about hook span, Docks may be easily made for Ships of the greatest Draught of Water. The above Island is about 30 miles coastways, and 90 miles Circumference, not including all its lesser Islands within a League of its Shores, which are supposed to be included in the grant of it to Governor Bernard of Massachusetts Bay by that Colony.

N. B. There are great Quantities of Pease sufficient to feed innumerable Number of Herds and Cattle, a great Quantity of Cherries, both which are natural to the Islands.

It ebbs and flows in these Harbours 21 feet at Spring Tides, and about 15 to 16 feet at common tides, which never runs so strong but a boat may be sculled against it. Water is ever to be had in the dryest Seasons conveniently; the best anchoring ground in the world.

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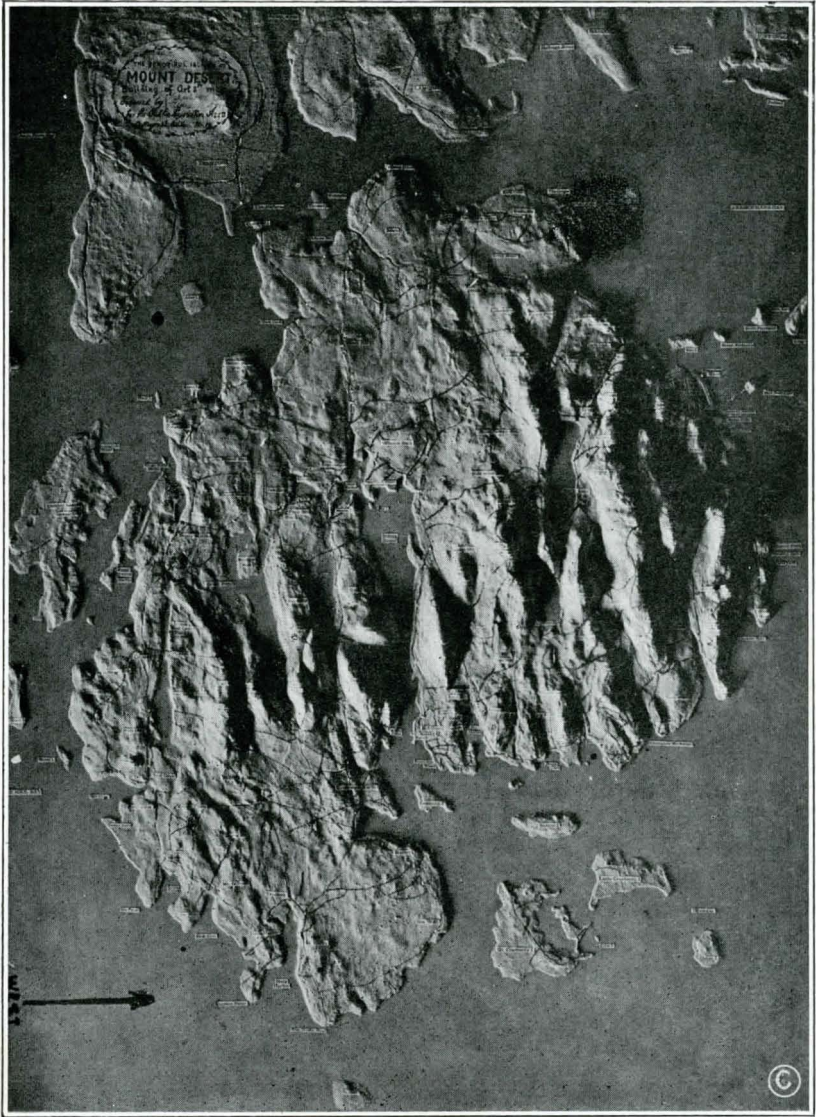
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MOUNT DESERT ISLAND AS IT WOULD
APPEAR FROM AN AEROPLANE
TOWARD SUNDOWN

The Purpose

A deeper purpose has lain behind the formation of the *Sieur de Monts National Monument* and *The Wild Gardens of Acadia*: To quicken interest in the preservation of the beauty and freedom to the people of our great national landscapes from the *Mississippi Valley* eastward, where human occupation is so rapidly extending; to lead the way in providing, in inspiring scenery nationally guarded, means within general reach for the wholesome enjoyment of nature and an out-door life; and to aid, in a critical period when opportunities that cannot come again are swiftly passing, in the conservation of the *Continent's* native life through the establishment of *Wild Garden sanctuaries* wherein it may be handed down to future generations in undiminished wealth of genera and species.

National Parks and Monuments, wherever situated in regard to human centers or on whatever scale, are intended by the Government to represent what is supreme in their own type, and of national interest. Ultimately, no great expression of the *Country's* native life or landscape should fail of representation in them. The time has passed when matters of such kind can be regarded sectionally. But beyond such action by the Nation, States and communities and men of leading should extend the movement until America becomes, as it has so strikingly the opportunity to be, a land where beauty and landscape freedom and the charm of living things shall lie within the reach of all—both rich and poor—who crave them and are responsive to their presence. No greater safeguard for national sanity or more wholesome influence upon the national character can be secured than through a wide-spread love of Nature among the Nation's people, men and women in whatever station. And the time is coming when such a stabilizing influence, nation wide, and opportunity given the intellectual workers of the *Country*, on whom the burden of its business rests, to find occasional relief in Nature and draw fresh inspiration from her unfailing interest and charm will be of priceless value.



Sieur de Monts Publications

- I. Announcement by the Government of the creation of the Sieur de Monts National Monument by proclamation, on July 8, 1916.
- II. Addresses at Meeting held at Bar Harbor on August 22, 1916, to commemorate the establishment of the Sieur de Monts National Monument.
- III. The Sieur de Monts National Monument as a Bird Sanctuary.
- IV. The Coastal Setting, Rocks and Woods of the Sieur de Monts National Monument.
- V. An Acadian Plant Sanctuary.
- VI. Wild Life and Nature Conservation in the Eastern States.
- VII. Man and Nature. Our Duty to the Future.
- VIII. The Acadian Forest.
- IX. The Sieur de Monts National Monument as commemorating Acadia and early French influences of Race and Settlement in the United States.
- X. Acadia: the Closing Scene.
- XI. Purchas translation of de Monts' Commission. De Monts: an Appreciation.
- XII. The de Monts Ancestry in France.
- XIII. The District of Maine and the Character of the People of Boston at the end of the 18th century.
- XIV. Two National Monuments: the Desert and the Ocean Front.
- XV. Natural Bird Gardens on Mount Desert Island.
- XVI. The Blueberry and other characteristic plants of the Acadian Region.
- XVII. The Sieur de Monts National Monument and its Historical Associations. Garden Approaches to the National Monument. The White Mountain National Forest. Crawford Notch in 1797.
- XVIII. An Old Account of Mt. Washington. A Word upon its Insect Life.
A Word on Mt. Katahdin.
- XIX. National Parks and Monuments.
- XX. Early Cod and Haddock Fishery in Acadian Waters.
- XXI. The Birds of Oldfarm: an intimate study of an Acadian Bird Sanctuary.
- XXII. The Sieur de Monts National Monument and The Wild Gardens of Acadia.

These Publications may be obtained by writing to
THE CUSTODIAN

Sieur de Monts National Monument

Bar Harbor, Maine