

# Annals of the Wild Life Reserve

## The Writings of Eloise Butler



### The Plateau - 1926

The "Plateau," heretofore mentioned, is a natural terrace of about half an acre in extent that cuts in twain the south hillside. Here in 1915, was erected the Curator's office, a small building subdivided by a partition, serving as a tool house and a reception room for visitors. On the north and east side of the office is a pergola-trellis that supports wild grape, *Vitis vulpina* [*Vitis riparia*]; Virginia creeper, *Psedera quinquefolia* [*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*]; and bittersweet, *Celastrus scandens*. At the right of the entrance on the south wall clammers the common clematis, *C. virginiana*, and on the left an uncommon clematis, *C. verticillaris*. It was procured from northern Wisconsin and was tended assiduously for eight years before it responded by displaying lilac blooms fully four inches in diameter that endured the whole latter half of May. The common bindweed, *Convolvulus sepium* [*Calystegia sepium*], is confined with some difficulty to trellises on the east side of the building, where also are growing wild yam, *Dioscorea villosa*; moonseed, *Menispermum canadense*; wild smilax, *S. hispida*; and climbing nightshade, *Solanum dulcamara*; also occasionally the lovely climbing fumitory, *Adlumia fungosa*. The last named I have some difficulty in establishing. On the north side flourishes a stalwart Dutchman's pipe that loves the shade and is festooned with its curious "pipes" before the leaves attain their splendid maximum size.

Below: The Garden Office from the back side as it looked in 1949 showing part of the pergola and the trellis.  
Photo by former curator Martha Crone.



At the southern rim of the Plateau and on the winding path leading to the south gate, a large granite boulder has been set that has been chiseled out for a bird bath in a series of steps on a half-inch gradient to a depth of five inches. [There is a separate essay on the birdbath] The birds like to step from shallow water into deeper, and the steps are left rough so that their feet will not slip. The bath is partially surrounded by a covert of thickly planted evergreens - white pine, spruce and arbor vitae. Clusters of evergreen exclamation points, *Juniperus virginiana*, stand on each side of the south gate and accentuate the entrance to the "deep, tangled wildwood" to which the primal soul responds. A few other evergreens have also been set near the southeast boundary. No evergreens are endemic in the Reserve. Representatives of all of the Minnesota conifers form a small pinetum on the western bank, and many hemlocks, which have but one stand in the part of the state, have reached a sturdy growth in the vicinity of the garden pool where they are protected from hurtful dry winds of winter. This evergreen with its low-spreading delicately sprayed branches and the blue-berried mats of junipers, *Juniperus communis* and *J. horizontalis*, are not only highly decorative but form ideal shelters for birds.

### Notes:

1. Photo of Eloise Butler, ca. 1920, at top of page courtesy Minneapolis Public Library. Other photos ©as credited
2. The text of this article is one of a number of short essays that Eloise Butler wrote while curator of the Garden that after her death were collected in a series titled *Annals of the Wild Life Reserve*, but most were never published.
3. The Wild Botanic Garden in Wirth Park, became the "Native Plant Reserve" and was then renamed the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden in 1929.
4. A more detailed physical description of the plateau area, and the entire Garden, was published by W.P. Kirkwood in the May 1913 issue of *The Bellman*.
5. Since Eloise Butler's time, the scientific names of plants and the classification of plant families has undergone extensive revision. In brackets within the text, have been added when necessary, the revised scientific name for the references she used in her article. Nomenclature is based on the latest published information from *Flora of North America* and the *Checklist of the Vascular Flora of Minnesota*. Other information in brackets may add clarification to what she is saying.