



“A hope was again expressed that a more adequate building could be obtained for this lovely setting...we need places to teach the love of Nature.

With those words in the Summer 1968 issue of this newsletter former Garden Curator Martha Crone let out the news that something might be afoot to replace the old Garden office of 1915 that had served Eloise Butler, herself, and currently Ken Avery, who referred to the building as “Miss Butler’s humble little office,” flanked by “little half-tumbled-down shacks that were used for tool buildings.” Indeed, something was about to happen.

A project committee of The Friends was formed that Fall to develop plan ideas for a new shelter. Those ideas were presented to Park Superintendent Robert Ruhe and his staff, the idea being that the Park Board would provide for the funding and construction of the Shelter. But the Park Board lacked funds to allocate, at least until 1976, so Mr. Ruhe and staff suggested that The Friends produce a design of their own, submit it for approval and raise the money. Which was done!

Friends’ president Catherine (Cay) Faragher took charge of the process, with board member Alvin Witt in charge of the building fund, board member Wilber Tusler in charge of building. Tusler, a retired principal of the architectural firm

Magney & Tusler, brought in Hiram Livingston to design a rustic shelter. The Park Board agreed to do the excavation and run in the wiring and water - the Friends were responsible for everything else, from the footings on up. The final design was approved by Mr. Ruhe on March 25, 1969 and construction could begin in the Fall - IF the Friends had the funds.

Cay Faragher wrote to the membership in April 1969: “We can do this, do it right now and do it the way we want to, if we all get in there and pitch. There are only 200 of us; some will be unable to contribute, but those of you who can will be richly rewarded with the knowledge that you have helped to safe-guard and keep for future generations the Eloise Butler Wild Flower and Bird Sanctuary.”

Mr. Tusler hired Joe Peterson Construction of South Minneapolis to do the build but they could not begin until after the Garden closed. On October 23, Martha Crone was present at the building site with her great-grandson, Alan Wander, age 3, to hammer in a “golden nail” but it was not until October 27 that enough funds were available to actually finish the project over the Winter - the final cost being \$25,168.92.

Cay Faragher wrote again to the membership in April 1970: “We have accomplished what seemed impossible. Your Directors hope that you will be as pleased as we are with the “Shelter” as you are the ones who have done this through your enthusiastic

contributions. We are leaving a few of the exciting finish up “frostings on the cake” until the bills are all in and paid.”

On May 13 1970, Friends, Park Board officials and the interested public gathered for the dedication. The dedication plaque mounted on the front pillar reads “The Martha E. Crone Shelter was planned, financed and erected by The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc and it was given to the City of Minneapolis through the Board of Park Commissioners and dedicated May 13, 1970 at 4:30 PM.”

Martha Crone wrote a thank you to the Friends in July 1970:

“I take this opportunity to express my appreciation and extend my heartfelt gratitude to all members and friends who made possible the beautiful shelter building in the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden and Bird Sanctuary and dedicated it to me. I am most grateful to those who have given of their time and effort to make it such a success. This is really the culmination of many years of my life devoted to the Garden.”

After 50 years, the building has stood the test of time. Now, with the addition that the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board has proposed, we look forward to the first major change to the building in 50 years. May it last another 50!



In 1971 Martha Crone ended her work with The Friends and the Wildflower Garden after 53 years of service.