



1967

## History of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc.

### Winter 1965/1966

Ken Avery began his ninth year as Gardener. He was no longer entitled to use the term "curator" in his title. He was now officially "gardener II" in the Park Board hierarchy.

In the Friend's Newsletter, *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup> Vol 15 No.1 Jan 1967, Martha Crone wrote:

"When the first snowflakes begin to fall, silent and soft, is a time to be brought together around the open fireside for relaxation."

"Indoors the frosty landscapes on the window panes are much enjoyed, while outside snowdrifts like white tents are heaped everywhere. Winter in its deepest snow speaks always of the spring not far behind. The door swings shut on another year and it opens again on a new year. Each season seems to reach a peak and end."

She also wrote of the strange antics of the Fox Sparrow:

"Your editor had the rare occasion of observing a flock of Fox Sparrows along the North Shore of Superior. During the middle of October, they had just arrived from further north and were stopping to feed for a few days. They were very timid and easily disturbed; a slight rustle and they were gone. However, watching them from my window, they little suspected that anyone was near. During their feeding they hop from the ground and while still in the air kick the leaves and debris backward with both feet. No other sparrow can equal it in scratching away the dead leaves and even snow in search of seeds and insects.



The Garden Office in Winter. Photo from a Kodachrome taken by Martha Crone on March 9, 1953.



Fox Sparrow. Photo ©G D Bebeau

There had been a six inch snowfall which was frozen and, in spite of the hard crust, they scratched each time they hopped forward. Fox Sparrows are birds of the wild and in October and November they pass through the northern states on the way from their Canadian breeding grounds to their winter range in the southern states. They remain mostly in the woods and secluded areas rather than around human habitations. They are very alert and this quickness of their reactions apparently accounts for the great numbers that remain. When a hawk soared overhead, in a twinkling they seemed to fade away. During the short days they were eagerly feeding from before sunrise and until after sunset after it had become very dark.

This large sparrow has a reddish brown tail and there is a tinge of this same fox-like color on back and wings, and heavily striped underparts which are very distinctive. In the early spring on their way back to their nesting sites, they occasionally sing their flute-like song. To hear their full song of clear, melodious notes, richer than those of any other sparrow, is a delight never to be forgotten."

## Spring 1967

Martha Crone wrote in the spring issue of *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup> Vol. 15 No 2 April 1967:

"The swift unchaining of ice-locked brooks and lakes, the smell of leaf smoke, the pale green of lawns and tender shoots of early plants are all signs of spring. April days bring cheering rain to melt the snow."

"Spring moves up to us from the south where early bloom has been enjoyed for some weeks. Soon the freshness of bloom has reached its peak and the early spring flowers are forgotten in the splendor of summer flowers. Many plants have become dormant and vanished completely."

"Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc., is an organization that is truly working for conservation of our native flowers. No investment is too great to perpetuate the resources we have in this unique native plant Reserve. A quiet, leisurely stroll through the garden at any time of the growing season is a rewarding experience."

Martha Crone also wrote about the passing of Amy (Mrs. Clinton) Odell last Dec. 7th. (photo next page)

"She was known for her work and interest in the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc., an organization her late husband helped found in 1952. She was a devoted and enthusiastic member and will be greatly missed."



Martha Crone in 1953, Friends secretary, membership chair and editor of the newsletter. Former Garden Curator 1933-1958. Photo Martha Crone Collection, MHS

The Annual Meeting of The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden was held in the Garden, on Saturday May 20th, 1967. Martha Crone wrote in the Summer newsletter:

“The weather was ideal with many spring flowers in lovely bloom everywhere. Large-flowered Trilliums, Purple Trilliums, Yellow Trilliums, Violets, Mertensia, Columbine, Anemones and countless others. The meeting, held outside the garden office in this beautiful setting, was greatly enjoyed with the added pleasure of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak coming to the feeder overhead unafraid of the gathering. Also the first Hummingbird of the season came to the Mertensia.”



Amy Odell, center, with husband Clinton on the right and daughter Moana on the left - Friends photo.

Directors elected were: Russell Bennett, Kenneth Avery, Elizabeth Carpenter, Miss Marion Cross, Martha Crone, Whitney Eastman, Mrs. George (Jessie) Ludcke Sr., Walter Lehnert, Alice Martin, Leonard Odell, Elizabeth Reed, Leonard Ramberg, Carl Rawson, Mary Simmons, Hazel Solhaug, Mrs. Clarence (Ebba) Tolg, and Alvin Witt.

Officers elected at the board meeting following the annual meeting were: Kenneth Avery, President; Alvin Witt, Vice-president; Martha Crone, Secretary-Treasurer.

A garden tour was then conducted. A \$500 donation was approved to the Park Board for Garden maintenance.

## Summer 1967

Martha Crone wrote in the summer issue of *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup> (Vol. 15 No.3 July 1967):

“July is a period of the seasons changing cycle. The glories of May and June have passed and there is a bit of relaxing and waiting for the splendors of fall. The garden was spectacular in spring. A scene to be enjoyed only once a year. The many blooming flowers presented a sight never to be forgotten.”

In her "Bird notes" column she wrote:

“On the 5th of June a pair of Whistling Swans were noted feeding in a large pool of shallow water adjacent to the shore of Lake Superior, about 10 miles east of Grand Marais, Cook County, Minnesota. Only a few feet from the busy highway 61 and the traffic didn't seem to disturb them in the least. They had been there several weeks and appeared to be at home. They are spring and fall migrants through Minnesota but have never been known to nest in the state. It seemed very late for them to be this far south, since they nest in the far north.”

## Autumn 1967

Martha Crone wrote in the fall issue of *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup> (Vol. 15 No. 4 October 1967):

“When Summer days suddenly withdraw and their dazzle is gone, there is a pause before the hardy fall flowers take over. There are many that prefer this late season and consequently their beauty is enhanced by their blooming when others are past. What is more lovely than the golden flood of an autumn day? Soon the birds will be gone and it will seem silent and empty. ”



False Dragonhead, (*Physostegia virginiana*). Photo ©G D Bebeau

She reports on the beauty by invasiveness of certain plants: "There are a number of perennial plants brought into gardens which unfortunately have aggressive characteristics. They tend to spread rapidly and might become serious pests and crowd out more desirable plants. Yet some of these plants are attractive and can be kept in check. One of these is the False Dragon-head (*Physostegia virginiana*) of the Mint family, which blooms late in the fall. The brilliant rose spikes enliven the late fall garden. Another is the Bugle-weed (*Ajuga reptans*) also of the Mint family. The blue variety blooms early in spring and is very attractive. The pink variety comes into bloom somewhat later. They make a good ground cover. Some others are Creeping Blue Bellflower (*Campanula rapunculoides*), Bouncing Bet (*Saponaria officinalis*) and Stringy Stonecrop (*Sedum sarmentosum*). It is well to recognize some of these plants and to undertake immediate measures of control."

Garden activities got summed up this way:

"To provide facilities for the outdoor education of interested persons and to preserve our native landscape, this Wild Flower Reserve has drawn thousands of visitors from all over the nation as well as abroad. Among them this past summer were distinguished world-famous actress Dame Sybil Thorndike and actor Sir Lewis Casson of London, England. They were

accompanied by their daughter, Mrs. Douglas Campbell of the Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis, and Lady Judith Guthrie, wife of Sir Tyrone Guthrie. They were conducted by our member, Mrs. Clarence Tolg. They enjoyed this place of natural beauty and tranquility.

Gardener Ken Avery reported

"110 groups visited the garden with the greatest number of these being grade school classes from the third grade up which I guided. The remainder were Brownies, Bluebirds, Scouts, Garden Clubs, Kindergarten classes, High School or College classes, etc., and there were probably as many unscheduled groups. This number has increased each year."

Martha summed up the years weather this way:

"It has been a year of most unusual weather. A late, cold spring following the heavy snowfalls in February. Then the devastating tornado in June. Although the tornado did great damage in this area, the Wild Flower Garden was spared much destruction having only slight damage.

More than 2,000 trees were uprooted on streets and



Bouncing Bet (Soapwort), (*Saponaria officinalis*). Photo ©G D Bebeau

lawns. These were removed as quickly as possible to avoid any possible spread of Dutch Elm disease. Plants were stripped of their foliage by the heavy hail. In spite of these upsets, the autumn has been beautiful with many plants blooming after recovering from the early damage."

For the Friends, 14 new members were added, 2 from outside the metro. (corrected list in Jan 1968 newsletter.) 180 was the membership total.

In the Friends Annual Secretary's Report for 1967 Martha Crone stated

"The assistance of an organization like the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden is a great factor in sponsoring the growth and perpetuation of the Wild Flower Garden. May the interest always continue. It is earnestly needed in this day of native places disappearing." "We look forward to some day having an administration building housing an office, Museum and Herbarium of specimens."

One of the new members who joined the Friends this year was Goodrich Lowry, perhaps invited by Whitney Eastman as together they worked on building nature centers in the regional parks of Hennepin county. 1967 was the same year in which Lowry organized the Metropolitan Nature Centers Corporation.<sup>(1)</sup> Eastman accepted the chairmanship of the fund-raising committee. The first project was to build a nature center in the new Carver Park Reserve. The goal was one half million dollars. The committee raised that in six months and construction began but the money kept coming in which, with a little more fund raising, then led to building the Hyland Lake Nature Center. With \$40,000 still leftover, the Corporation asked the Hennepin County Park Reserve District which had taken over the nature centers as planned, that if they had more funds could a center be built at Elm Creek. It was raised and on Eastman's 85th birthday in 1973 the District voted to name the Elm Creek center after Eastman.<sup>(2)</sup>

**Photo top of first page:** Woodland Garden, May 29, 1951, showing part of the office and the bird feeds in front; from a Kodachrome taken by Martha Crone.

Notes:

(1) The purpose for the nature centers was to create a place where elementary school children and their teachers could learn about nature and the environment and begin to develop an ecological conscience. Lowry and his wife Louise joined the Friends in 1967. He passed away in 1988; Louise was a member until her death in 2002. The Friends have a program to subsidize transportation to the Wildflower Garden for elementary students for the similar reasons. How interesting that both Lowry and Eastman have nature centers named for them and both were associated with the Friends.

(2) Jim Kimball column, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Nov. 18, 1973.

References:

Meeting Minutes and correspondence of Friends of the Wild Flower Garden

Historical Climatology of Minneapolis-St. Paul Area by Charles Fisk.

Photos by Martha Crone are from her collection of Kodachromes that was given to the Friends by her daughter Janet following Martha's death in 1989.

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