



**1992**

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

### **Winter 1991/1992**

This is the sixth year with Gardener Cary George in charge of the Garden.

During the late winter months Cary George did extensive work on cutting and removing Buckthorn, Tartarian Honeysuckle and weedy Boxelder from the area along the back fence. That area was to have the fence realigned and a new back gate with stonework installed. Landscape architect Sandra Welsh of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) had secured an Open Space Habitat Improvement Grant to realign the walking path outside the fence, dredge the pond, and replace the crumbling concrete dam with a rock outcropping and waterfall in the water channel. The Friends provided \$2,000 toward the water project and would provide money to rebuild the back gate with stonework. Work was expected to begin in April.



The rocky outcrop dam at the pool edge - created in 1992 and seen here in 2008. Photo G D Bebeau

The new dam was a replacement for the concrete dam that was in the same place, going all the way back to Eloise Butler in 1917 and that 1917 dam replaced an older earthen dam that Eloise had created when the Garden was first established. The 1992 re-arrangement of the fencing and dredging the pool created the current outlines of the small pool at the back of the Garden.<sup>(1)</sup> The fence from 1938, angled southward toward the old dam from the two back corners of the Garden. Outside the fence was the old bird feeding station. The new alignment moved the fence northward away from the dam, removing the angle and the bird feeding station. Maps shown below show the before and after.

In the Friends Newsletter, *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM, (2)</sup> Cary George wrote that the back gate used to be the most convenient entrance to the Garden when people arrived by foot or Streetcar.



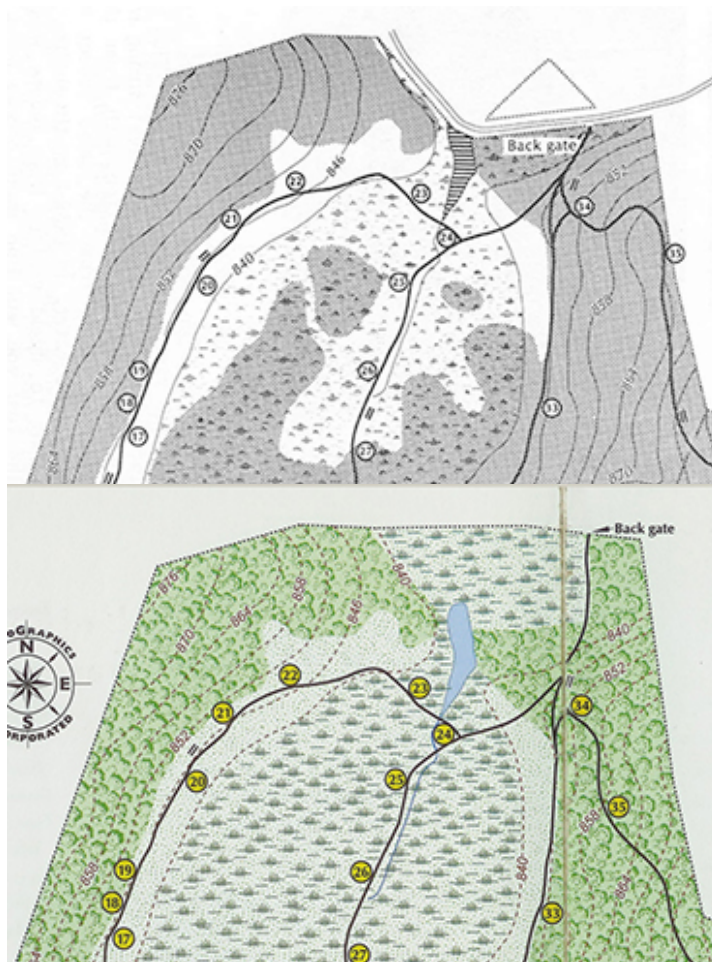
The rocky outcrop in Winter seen from below the pool outlet - seen here in 2008 with the 1990 vintage cedar bridge still in place. The bridge was replaced by a boardwalk bridge in 2015. Photo G D Bebeau

**The realignment of the Garden's back fence.** The maps seen below show the changes at the back of the Garden. In the 1987 map we see that the old fence angled southward to where the dam was before reaching the back gate. The old tarvia path, going back to Eloise Butler's time, is shown following the fence line.

The 2001 map shows the fence realignment with the fence moved northward, creating an open area between the dam and the fence. The old path outside the Garden space was moved to follow the new fence line. It is evident from viewing the texture and condition of the current path along the realigned portion of the fence that it is of newer age. Also there is an abrupt

directional intersect of the old portion of the tarvia path with the newer portion and the difference in pavement age is evident.

Below: 1st photo - the 1987 map section of the north end of the Garden. 2nd photo - the 2001 map showing the realignment of the fence. Maps courtesy Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.



It was also announced in the newsletter that the Friends could now, once again, put on slide shows about the Garden using Martha Crone's slide collection which had been donated to the Friends - something that had not been done since Martha Crone's tenure. President Ann Kessen wrote:

When Eloise Butler founded this Garden, she was inspired by the great botanic gardens of the East, but with a twist of her own. She wanted it to be a wild botanic garden, wild not just in terms of the native plants cultivated in it but also in terms of the setting, the presentation of native plants. Thus it is not simply a wildflower garden, a garden of wildflowers. Rather, it is a wild flower garden, a flower garden that is wild. This is how Eloise viewed the Garden and this is how the Garden persists today.

The Winter of 1991/92 was one of the snowiest with total snowfall around 85 inches, well above the median of 43 inches, but it was all melted by late March with the Garden being able to open on time.

## Spring 1992

The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden held their annual meeting on Saturday May 16, at the Martha Crone Shelter in the Garden. The new front gate to the Garden, installed in 1991, welcomed those who attended. The wooden arbor for the top, was being prepared and over the gate would be written "Let Nature Be Your Teacher", a phrase from Wordsworth.

The Friends had debated what wording should be on the sign. Betty Bryan, a Friends' Board member at the time, reported that at a Board Meeting to decide, there were many suggestions, ranging from a phrase from Betty Bridgman's poetry to simply "Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden," although the Park Board preferred the wording "Wildflower," as they had begun using the combined word in 1970 and had made it official in 1986. Cary George had been silent through the debate but in a lull in the conversation he said he would

like to offer "Let Nature Be Your Teacher." Betty remembers that it was one of Eloise Butler's favored Wordsworth quotations. It was submitted to the MPRB for consideration and was approved. Betty said "It wears well." Back on October 21st, 1989 he had stated at a Friends Board Meeting "I hope enough money can be found to add a wooden archway so that visitors may symbolically enter into the Garden."

Directors elected were: Ken Avery, Geri Benavides, Harriet Betzold, Betty Bryan, Elaine Christenson, Sallie Cole, Mel Duoos, Dale Johnson, Ann Kessen, Connie Bartz-Lavoie, Gloria Miller, Shirley Schultz, Joyce Smeby, Kathryn Stennes.

Elected to their offices at the Board of Directors meeting: Joyce Smeby, President; Harriet Betzold, Vice-President; Ann Kessen, Secretary; and Connie Bartz-LaVoie, Treasurer. Betty Bryan was membership chair, Elaine Christenson was memorials chair, Shirley Schultz was Volunteer coordinator, Dale Johnson was historian, and Kathy Stennes was



The new front gate to Eloise Butler shown in the Fall of 1992 after the upper arbor was installed but before the inscription. Photo ©G D Bebeau



Martha Hellander, author of *The Wild Gardener*. Friends photo

newsletter editor. 41 volunteers were on the active list. 227 on the membership list.

Eloise Butler biographer Martha Hellander attended the meeting and thanked the Friends who had contributed substantially to her expenses in producing her book on the life of Eloise Butler - *The Wild Gardener*. In June she and her family were moving to Chicago.

Cary George made a presentation on the state of the Garden. The spring bloom was about a week behind normal as April was damp and cloudy and then in May so far there had been only 1/4 inch of rain. He had ordered specimens of New Jersey Tea to plant around the main garden sign in the parking lot. Work on the back gate and fence had not yet begun and the completion date was unknown.

*The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup> continued to be printed on re-cycled paper. In the newsletter [Vol. 40 No.2 June - July - August 1992] new Friends President Joyce Smeby noted that 1992 was the 40th Anniversary of the Friends and the 85th of the Garden. Park Naturalist Sarah Christiansen reported that the first male Indigo Bunting was sighted in the Garden on May 11 and the females arrived toward the end of May. Memorial day was 34 degrees.

## Summer 1992

The Showy lady's-slipper bloomed on June 2nd.

On June 9, the Friends hosted a get-together and potluck dinner for Garden Volunteers at the Martha Crone Shelter. The new slide presentation was shown. Martha Hellander was on hand on Saturday June 13 for book signing of her book *The Wild Gardener* which was published in May.



On Sunday August 2, commemorating Eloise Butler's birthday, a special stamp cancellation by the U.S. Post Office, using a wildflower stamp, was held at the Garden. Friends member Dan Miller helped with the envelope design. Martha Hellander returned from Chicago to sign copies of her book on Eloise Butler. Over 200 people attended.

*The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup> had an article on Friends' founder, Clinton Odell. Work on the back gate project was finally underway on August 3rd with dredging for the new pond and moving the fence. The Friends donated \$2,000 to the project. A new roster of Friends members was being readied for publication and release in the winter.

The naturalists discovered the nest of a short-tailed shrew, a venomous mammal, just under the birdfeeder in front of the shelter.

As to the weather, this summer had the 2nd coldest July on record, coolest since 1865, 80+ degrees reached only four times. The entire summer was very cool with lots of rain, which has been attributed to the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in Asia.

## Autumn 1992



In *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM,(3)</sup> Cary George listed the 11 asters and 7 species of goldenrod in the Garden. The re-aligned back fence and new path was mostly finished. The waterfall at the edge of the pool was in and a new path to view it was in place. Park Board carpenters built a new rough-cedar birdfeeder for inside the back gate and for the front gate and Audubon had agreed to continue winter bird feeding - something that had been done for many years, begun by Miss Lulu May Aler in 1932, and

continuing through Martha Crone's tenure. When Miss Aler could no longer do it, the Minneapolis Bird Club took over. They later became affiliated with the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis but in the meanwhile, Ken Avery took over caring for the feeders until his retirement. The back gate reconstruction itself was to wait until 1995.<sup>(4)</sup>

**Below:** The path leading to the newly dredged pool and waterfall - both created in 1992, shown here in 2007. The stone seats from Drake Marble were funded by The Friends in 1993. Photo G D Bebeau.



Friends volunteer and board member Elaine Christenson was awarded Outstanding Volunteer for 1992 by the Park Board. Photo from Park Board Volunteer Banquet: (l to r) Scott Neiman, President, Naomi Loper, Commissioner, and Elaine Christenson. (Friends photo.)

Forty-six volunteers of the season were recognized in the December issue of *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup>. Friend's volunteers

provided 1,050 staffing hours during 1992.

At the end of 1992 the Friends had financial statement assets of \$45,700. Revenue for the year was \$11,800 with \$5,800 from memberships and \$4,700 from sales of Martha Hellander's book. Expenses were \$8,100.

Unlike the previous year the winter of 1992/93 would have a typical amount of snow.

### **The Garden in the Fall of 1992**





Photos of the Upland:-top - front gate with the old cyclone fencing still in place on the left side; bottom - wetland central path. All ©G D Bebeau

Notes:

(1) Background study of the Mallard Pool and other open water in the Garden. This file is available on the Friends website.

(2) *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup> Vol. 40 No.1 March 1992 (all issues mislabeled Vol. 41)

(3) *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup> Vol. 40 No.3 Sept-Oct 1992 and Vol. 40 No.4 December 1992.

(4). Details and photos of the old bird feeding stations and the work of Lulu May Aler are found on the website in a separate article about the historic bird feeding stations.

**Photo top of first page:** The Martha Crone Shelter in the fall of 1992. Photo ©G D Bebeau

References:

Minutes of the Board of Directors and other documents of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc.  
Historical Climatology of Minneapolis-St. Paul Area by Charles Fisk.

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