

I - The Mallard Pool

Eloise Butler's Essay - Where it was located - Why was it abandoned

The Mallard Pool was a creation of Eloise Butler. Her description of it is contained in an article of Oct. 1932 sent to The Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter, (Division D) of the Agassiz Association for inclusion in the members circular. The Agassiz Association was founded in the late 1800's to be an association of local chapters that would combine the like interests of individuals and organizations in the study of Nature. Only the Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter to which Eloise belonged, was still active. First we have Eloise describing the pool.

Eloise Butler's essay text

Ever since the Native Plant Preserve [Eloise's word] was started I have wished to have a pool constructed where two small streams converge in an open meadow, the only pool in the Preserve being too shady for aquatics. The hard times gave this joy to me, for a jobless expert did the work for a sum that could be afforded by the Park Commissioners. The pool is about 35 feet long, several feet narrower, and of irregular outline. Indeed, the contour is beautiful. The excavation was made in a dense growth of cat-tails. While digging, the workman saw a mallard duck wending its way through the meadow with a train of four little ones. Hence the name of the pool, as this duck had never been listed before in the Garden.

The voracious muskrat was also observed, and I began to fear that the roots of my water lilies would be gobbled up. It was thought that stout wire netting at the top and bottom of the pool would prevent the muskrats from entering, but my adviser knew little of their predatory habits. Some white water lilies were planted in the pool. In two days only a fragment of the leaves could be found. Then it was decided to encircle the pool with the netting sinking it two feet in the ground. Before this work was completed, a muskrat preempted the pool with two little ones. We thought we could trap them inside and throw them over the fence but before the circuit was



Eloise Butler around age 80 near the time she wrote this article.

complete, they left on their own accord, probably in search of more food, and the gap was closed against them. It is possible that they will burrow under the fence. Traps must be set next spring.

A rustic fence of unpeeled tamarack poles has been built across the narrow lower end of the pool. Here one at advantage the pool and the border [sic - as written]. Opposite at the upper end, is "The Gurgler," the water entering gently by a short series of low rapids. Here my ingenious bridge-builder will insert a water-wheel made of galvanized tin and about five inches in diameter, designed to throw a mist-like spray over plants like *Pinguicula* that flourish on dripping rock. We call the place Atlantic City because, at each end of the bridge, a plank walk was laid over the cat-tail slough.

Many desirable plants were already established near or on the border of the pool: *Sagittaria latifolia*, *Eupatorium maculatum*, *E. perforatum*, *Verbena hastata*, *Epilobium coloratum*, *Lythrum salicaria*, *Mentha canadensis*, *Rumex brittanica* [britannica], *Solidago canadensis*, *S. uliginosa*, *Aster puniceus*, *A. juncea* [junceus], *A. umbellatus*, *A. paniculatus*,

Asclepias incarnata, *Helianthus tuberosus*, *H. grosseserratus*, *Rudbeckia laciniata*, *Chelone glabra*, *Gallium asprellum*, *Caltha palustris*, *Impatiens biflora*, *Aspidium thelypteris*, [pencil addition] *Onoclea sensibilis*, and an overplus like water cress and cat-tail, and others that must be grubbed out with ruthless hand like *Cuscuta gronovii* and *Bidens cernua*. In the near vicinity are the grandest species of our flora -- *Cypripedium hirsutum*, *C. parviflorum*, *C. pubescens*, *C. candidum*, and far enough distant not to shade the pool *Cornus stolonifera*, *C. paniculata*, *Viburnum lentago*, *V. opulus*, and a few tamaracks.

The soil is a rich peaty loam. Here and there on the border this was mixed with a due proportion of sand to accommodate the plants that will not grow except in wet sand. Large sods of sand-lovers have been contributed by friends of the garden -- packed full of *Polygala sanguinea*, *P. cruciata*, *Viola lanceolata*, *V. sagittata*, *V. arenaria* [pencil change], *Eriocaulon articulatum*, *Gratiola aurea*, *Steironema quadrifolium*, *Kyris* [*Xyris*] *flexuosa*, *Hypericum canadense*. In lesser amount have also been planted *Pogonia ophioglossoides*, *Calopogon pulchellus*, *Lilium superbum*, *L. umbellatum*, *Gerardia tenuifolia*, *Spiranthes gracilis*, *S. romanzoffiana*, *Drosera rotundifolia*, *Spiraea tomentosa*, *Mimulus ringens*, *M. jamesii*, *Gerardia tenuifolia*, *Sagittaria heterophylla*, *Cyperus strigosus*, *Calla palustris*, *Parnassia caroliniana*, *C. palustris*, *Veronica americana*, *Primula farinosa*, *P. mistassinica*, *Saxifraga aizoon*, *Pinguicula vulgaris*, *Gentiana andrewsii*, *Aster novae-angliae*, *A. modestus*, *Lysimachia terrestris*, *Viola incognita*, *Boltonia asteroides*, *Veronia fasciculata*, *Helenium autumnale*, *Hydrocotyle americana*, *Comandra livida* [lividum], *Solidago ridellii*, *Astragalus canadensis*, *Helianthus hirsutus*, *Habenaria ciliaris*, *H. blephariglottis* (the last two a contribution from Mr. Lownes), several clumps of *Lobelia siphilitica* and *L. cardinalis*, sowed seeds of *Cassia chamaecrista*, *Crotalaria sagittalis* and *Strophostyles helvola*, also *Collinsia verna*. This may seem too large a number of plants for a border, but the border is of indefinite width. It comprises nearly an acre and extends across the sunlit area of the marsh. I shall probably think of more desirable plants!



Eloise Butler overlooking the Mallard Pool after its construction. Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.

The small pool is another proposition. Its size will not admit more than one or two specimens of all the species that I wish. I have already planted therein *Castalia tuberosa* [pencil change - see note below], *Nelumbo lutea*, *Pontederia cordata*. I shall also introduce when I can get them -- next spring if not this fall -- *Nymphaea advena*, *N. microphylla*, *Prasenia schreberi*, *Lymphoides lacunosum* [???], *Ranunculus aquatilis* var. *caillaceus*, *R. delphinifolius*, *Lobelia dortmanna*, *Hippuris vulgaris*, *Sparganium simplex*. I should have written above *Castalia odorata*, instead of *tuberosa*, the latter is not a free bloomer and spreads too rapidly. any member of the chapter will confer a great favor by telling me where I can get the *Nymphoides* which is not listed by florists. I find that I have omitted from the margin, *Osmunda regalis*, *Liatris pycnostachya*, *Physostegia virginiana*, *Decodon verticillatus*, *Zygadenum chloranthus*, [next garbled - assume - *Tofieldia pursilla*], *Tanacetum huronense*, *Lobelia Kalmii*, *Hypericum ascyron*,

Prenanthes racemosa, *Gentiana andrewsii*,
Hibiscus militaris, *Stachys palustris*, *Habenaria*
paycodes, *H. fimbriata*, *Myosotis scorpioides*,
Lysimachia quadrifolia, *Lythrum alatum*, *Chelone*
obliqua, *Saururus cernuus*, *Alisma plantago*,
Lilium canadense, *Melanthium virginicum*,
Spiraea salicifolia, *Iris versicolor*, *Pedicularis*
lanceolata.

I intend the fence barring out the muskrats to be concealed by the tall herbaceous perennials.

[The following was an additional note not included in the text for the Bulletin.]

The little water wheel (to be removed during the winter lest the paddles be bent by ice) has been inserted in "The Gurgler," but the name has been changed to "The Jolly Spindrift." It chugs around so merrily, the spray splashing in the sunlight, that everyone smiles audibly when he sees it. I gave it the name at first sight, to find afterward that it is a new coinage, the compound not being in the dictionary. Below the rustic bridge another excavation has been made, continuous with the first, but more like a little pond, while the first is like a winding river emptying into it, increasing the length of the water area to fifty feet. I needed the "pond" for the display of the aquatic buttercup -- white and yellow -- which I hope the muskrats will find too bitter to eat. Otherwise, the pond must be fenced. Some yews, "ground hemlock", have just been contributed to the border, whose bright green foliage will greatly add to the tout ensemble. *Gratiola* continued to blossom for some time after planting and marsh marigold began to bloom for the second time on the border. Even now, at the beginning of work, the place with its setting is truly enchanting and I have to tear myself away from it. I shall dream of it all winter and conjure up the futurity of the plantings.

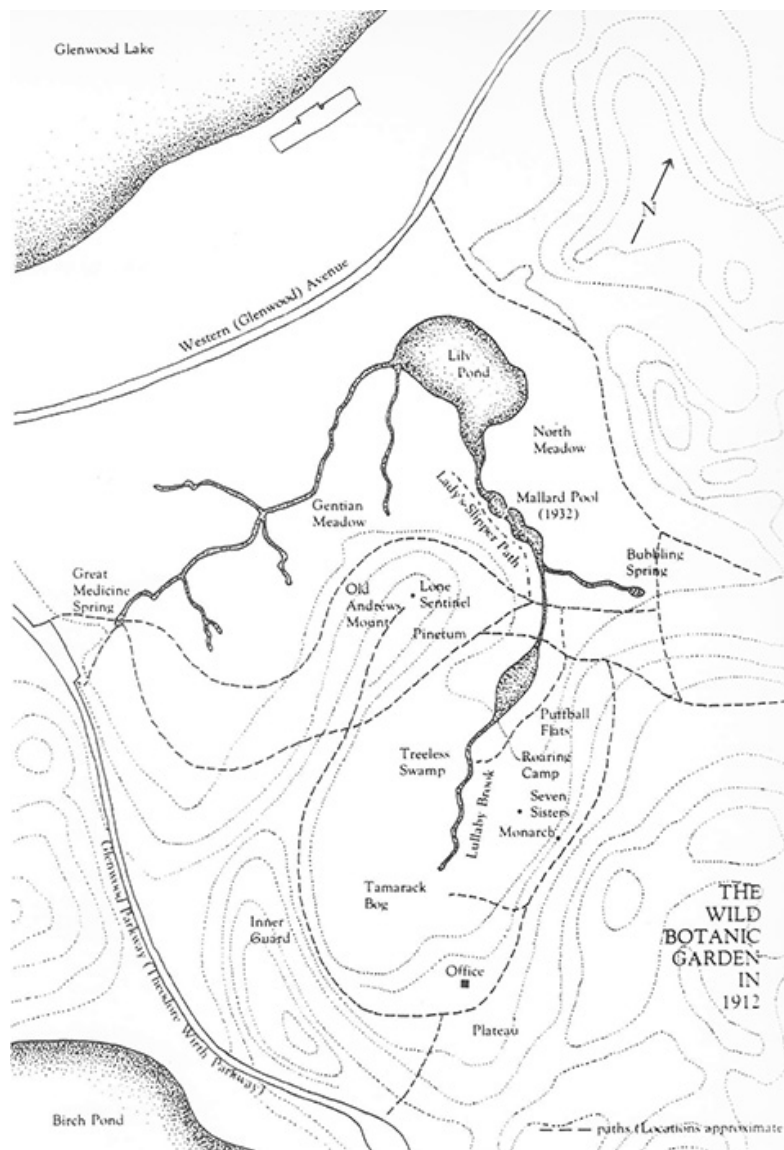
Exactly where was the location of the Pool?

On the next page is the plan of the Wild Botanic Garden ca. 1912. Features noted are names given by Eloise Butler. The location of Mallard Pool, added in 1932, is noted. This spot is within what

Eloise Butler called the "north enclosure" - the name she gave to one of two areas that were fenced in during 1924. Eloise noted in her log on July 7, 1932 "**Mallard Pool completed in north enclosure.**" The bridge she writes about was completed July 29 [Log] and would be at the northern end of Mallard Pool. The bridge was made by Lloyd Teeuwen ⁽¹⁾ who was her helper in the Garden and was with her at the Babcock house just before she went to the Garden on April 10, 1933 and suffered a heart attack. Lloyd returned to the Babcock house as the doctor was administering to Eloise and was present when she died.

She further fixes the location in the opening paragraph of her essay when she writes "**I have wished to have a pool constructed where two small streams converge in an open meadow, the only pool in the Preserve being too shady for aquatics.**" Today, the location of the pool, Bubbling Spring, the North Meadow and the Lily Pond lay outside the North Garden boundary, just north of the back fence. Beyond the Lily Pond to the North is the Wirth Park picnic area and across Glenwood Avenue is the present Wirth Beach area. The dotted line of the path that intersects Lady's-slipper Path, running from near Bubbling Spring westward toward Gentian Meadow, is the approximate location of the existing paved path just outside the back fence of the Garden and the location of what Eloise called "the tarvia road". The dam of 1909 vintage ⁽²⁾, crossing the stream from the Garden, that created the small pool in the Garden was next to this path. A difference today is that prior to 1992 the path and back fence were more to the south and next to the dam. The fence and path were moved northward in a 1991/92 renovation of that part of the Garden. This path (the tarvia road as Eloise called it), bisected the Garden in Eloise Butler's time into the southern portion (today's garden) and the northern portion where the Mallard Pool was located.

In Martha Crone's time Martha would sometimes refer to this also and sometimes Martha would call it the "lower enclosure".



Map above: ©Martha Hellander.

We can deduce from Martha Crone's Garden log that she actively kept up part of that northern meadow at least until 1939. Here are samples - all from her log and diary.

1933: July 2: Bill cut path to Mallard Pool. [We believe this must have been on southern end as Eloise had put in a plank walk on the northern end. Bill is Martha's husband. From her diary.]
 1934, April 9: Woodcock in woods near swamp west of Mallard pool.
 1934, May 25: Found nest of Pheasant on edge of Mallard pool containing 11 eggs.

1934, June 17: Found nest containing young of Green Heron, mother bird flew short distance, in Tamarack on north boundary of lower inclosure.
 1934, July 2: Drinking spring has gone dry - [This would be the first evidence of trouble with the spring that provided water to the pool]
 1934, July 5; planted 18 Christmas fern on east and west border of pool, also at rustic bridge.
 1934, July 12: Planted from Stillwater 12 Bladder Fern on east edge of pool and near foot bridge.
 1935, April 26: Saw woodcock in lower enclosure.
 1936, Aug. 29: Transplanted a number of Showy Lady's Slippers to a new colony in lower enclosure.



The wetland area opposite Wirth Beach parking lot in Winter 1938. As Eloise Butler wrote, it was filled with cattail and other vegetation. The diagonal line across the lower right cattails may well be the plank walkway Eloise Butler wrote about and the pool would be to the lower right. Photo courtesy University of Minnesota.

1937, July 16: 2 *Habenaria fimbriata* in bloom in lower enclosure near book and High-bush Cran.

1938, May 14: Also Autumn Willow in beautiful yellow color along broad path west of North enclosure.

1938, May 27: Planted 2 Valerian (*Valerian exdulis*) in north enclosure below waterfall.

1938, Aug. 30: Warbling Vireo still in song noted near north boundary of lower enclosure.

1939, May 19: Planted 10 American Dog Violet from Cedar swamp in lower enclosure below dam.

1939, May 25: In bloom . . . Blue Delphinium near west gate of lower enclosure

Future events and abandonment

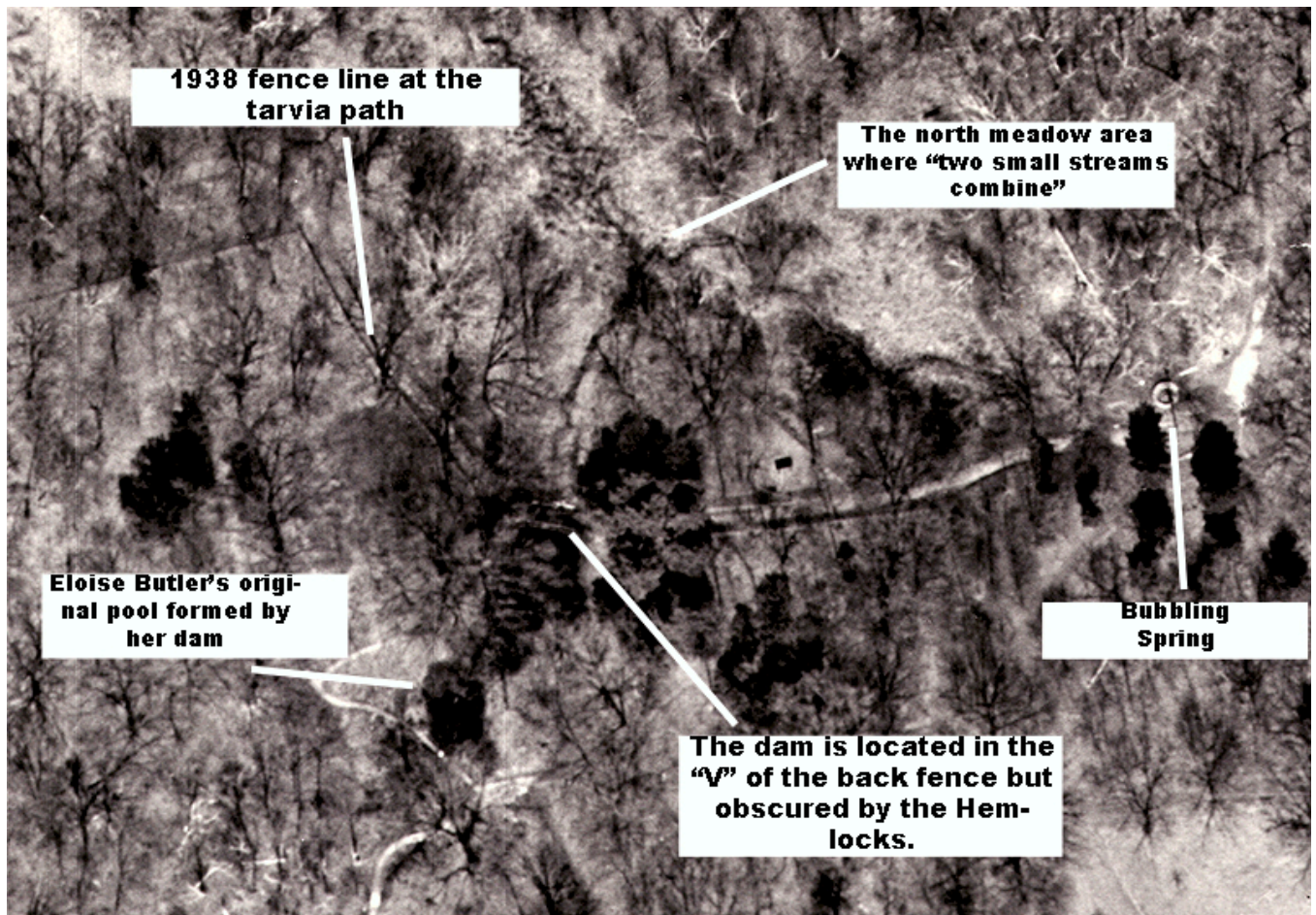
During the summer of 1938 the southern part of the Garden was surrounded by a new fence which was greatly appreciated by Curator Martha Crone and well received by the public. The old fence dated back to 1924 and Martha Crone had made a plea for a new fence in her 1937 report to the Park Board. It was stated that 1,900 linear feet was installed which is hardly enough to enclose about 5-1/2 acres.⁽³⁾ However, aerial photos from late 1938 [Next page] show a new fence, highlighted by a snow line, enclosing what was then the Garden Martha Crone tended, about 9 or 10 acres - that is the portion south of the tarvia road, which was the southern part of Eloise Butler's 25 acres which had also included the northern meadow and adjacent areas. (see photo below) The new fence was six feet high and of wire mesh, with 3 gates for entrance.

As all of what today is the Woodland Garden seems to have been fenced in, the amount of fencing was obviously much more than the 1,900 feet reported. The existing wire mesh fence (2018) is aged and presumably the same one erected in 1938. There is no replacement known.

Martha noted in her diary on January 18, 1939 that Park Board maintenance workers were in working on new fencing in the "lower enclosure", which must have been an area excluded in the 1938 project. Eloise had written in the 1932 article of the possible need for a fence. The "lower enclosure" would seem to be the same area Eloise Butler called the "north enclosure", as that is an area of lower elevation. This all ties in with what happened in 1944.

When the Upland Garden area was added in 1944, Martha Crone said in her 1945 report to the⁽⁴⁾ Park Board that the addition added about 10 acres. This is too high a number. The total acreage before the most recent addition in 1993 was 14 acres. We know that over the years from 1907 to 1993 certain areas expanded from the original 3 acres, including adding in the north

Below: A 1947 aerial photo of the Garden area showing main features of the southern Garden area and a portion of the northern area where the Mallard Pool was located - a place "where two small streams combine." The fence line is the position of the 1938 fence with the tarvia path following the fence line. The Bird Feeding Station is in right center surrounded by a triangular fence. Photo Courtesy University of Minnesota



meadow and the area of the Bubbling Spring. Eloise wrote in 1926⁽⁵⁾ that the entire area was 25 acres at that time including the North Meadow and the Bubbling Spring.

From the late 1930s forward, the north meadow area containing the Mallard Pool apparently became more and more neglected and there are no further plantings noted for the area in Martha Crone's log after 1939. We do know she removed some plants from the area and transferred them to the current garden space. These two log notes refer to that:

1946, June 11: 32 Showy Lady's Slipper from [lower enclosure](#) to violet path.

1947, July 17: 4 Willow Herb from [lower enclosure](#).

When Clinton Odell proposed to the Park Board in 1944 to add the current upland area to the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden, Martha Hellander's research found that Odell said to the Park Board that the northern area (which included the Mallard Pool) should never have been fenced and that it was swampy and should be abandoned in favor of an upland area which the garden did not have at that time⁽⁶⁾. In an exchange of letters in 1944 to Odell from Park Board Secretary Charles Doell and from Superintendent C. A. Bossen, the Park Board agreed with parts of his proposal, including the funding that he proposed. (more details in *The Upland Addition to the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden*, Friends Website, Garden History Archive).

Former Gardener Cary George remembered that the chain link fencing that was used in the northern enclosure was removed and used to fence the new upland addition, because in 1944 wartime shortages of steel precluded new fencing being obtained. Presumably there was a garden record of this, but it may have been related to him by Ken Avery.⁽⁷⁾

So here we have this conclusion: The Mallard Pool area was still being somewhat attended to by Martha Crone until about 1940, then abandoned by 1944. The Bubbling Spring dried up more or less permanently by 1959 (*"Springs in and near the Garden"*, Friends Website, Garden History Archive). The area reverted to the wild area we have today. At the time the Upland Garden was established in 1944, requiring much development work by Martha and the one person she had for help at that time, there was no possibility that the entire north meadow could be cared for as well.

In a strange turn of events all the area that had earlier been abandoned, including the Mallard Pool area, were added back to the control of the Garden staff in 1964. The Park Board had approved the expansion of the area under the Gardener's control. Outside of the fenced area of the Garden proper, this new area was the surrounding wild area west to the Parkway, north to Glenwood Ave. and east to the picnic grounds. Gardener Ken Avery was in favor of this change. In fact he considered it an important milestone -

"... one rivaling, if not exceeding, in importance that of the addition of the Prairie Garden in 1944."

He added -

This quadrupled the area we have to work with and makes it possible to treat the entire area as one integrated unit. We of the Wild Flower Garden are eager to assume this task.....we have always felt that the chief value of this area was for the study and appreciation of nature. Now that the Board has passed the motion dedicating it to this end, we are planning to adjust all maintenance activities toward this goal. It will not require any great change but just that all activities be paced to

show greater respect for the ecological relationship of the area and to exploit all of its possibilities as a natural area.⁽⁸⁾

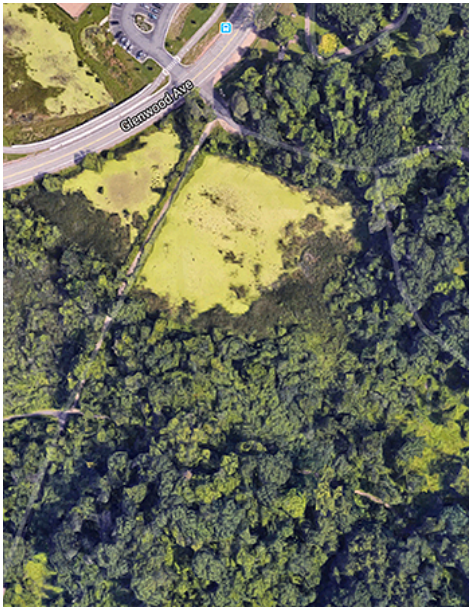


The area within the gray lines became the expanded area tended by the Garden staff in 1964.

This now includes (or re-includes) that "north enclosure" area where the Mallard Pool was located. It did not last long however, as the Park Board budget did not allow Ken to have sufficient staff to care for such a large area and by 1967 it was back to 14 acres and the Mallard Pool area was once again left to grow wild as Eloise Butler had found it in 1907, except that it became the basis of a buffer zone around the garden in later years.

[There is additional detail and photos about the area of the Mallard Pool and all the other pools in the Garden in an article titled "Aquatic Pools in the Garden" - it is found on the website.]

The area today



The old Lily Pond area is now somewhat clear of cattails with open water in the Summer. This area was modified in 1957 when the Park Board put in a large diameter underground pipeline to divert water from Bassett's Creek to Brownie Lake. That line lies beneath the gravel path that now bisects the area Photo-Google



A current view of the water channel leaving the Garden after it has combined with the second stream that Eloise mentions at the beginning of her text. The view is looking to the North toward Wirth Lake. The Mallard Pool would have had its southern end near this spot. Photo G D Bebeau.



Above left: Looking west toward the old Mallard Pool location from the area of the Bubbling Spring. The old stonework of the spring is just visible. The runoff channel, which also drained this part of the wetland, runs vertically up the center of the photo to where it joins the stream coming out of the Garden which is seen in the right hand photo. Photos G D Bebeau, 2020.

Notes and References:

Notes:

- (1) Martha Hellander's book *The Wild Gardener* - 1992, Page 96. Martha Hellander's research was financed by the Friends and by the Minnesota Historical Society.
- (2) An article about the Garden published in *The Bellman* in 1913, described the dam as covered with vegetation as though it had always been there. The dam had to have been put in prior to the Fall of 1909 as on September 12, 1909 Eloise first references the pond and dam in her log planting notes - "in pond"; "by pond"; and "near brook below dam."
- (3) *The Story of W.P.A. in the Minneapolis Parks, Parkways and Playgrounds*, for 1938, Minneapolis, Minnesota pub by Park Board in 1939.
- (4) Annual Report to the Board of Park Commissioners for 1944, dated February 20, 1945 by Martha Crone
- (5) *The Wild Botanic Garden - Early History*, by Eloise Butler, 1926.
- (6) *The Wild Gardener*, page 104.
- (7) Conversation with the author May 18, 2018. Ken Avery was the Gardener preceding Cary George.
- (8) Annual Report to the Board of Park Commissioners for 1964 dated March 12, 1965, by Gardener Ken Avery.

Other references:

- (1) Eloise Butler's Garden Log
- (2) Martha Crone's Garden Log
- (3) Martha Crone's diaries
- (4) Mrs. John. *Our Native Plant Reserve, Glenwood Park, Minneapolis Minn., Now called "Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden"*. This article was written sometime after 1929 but prior to Eloise Butler's death in 1933 and placed in the Park Board Archives. Mrs. Jepson's husband was a parks commissioner at this time. The text was then published in June 1933 in *The Minnesota Clubwoman*, following the last rites ceremony for Eloise in May and including details of that ceremony. That the

article was written no earlier than 1929 is indicated by the subtitle as the Garden was renamed in 1929.

©2020 Friends of the Wild Flower Garden Inc.

Text and research by Gary Bebeau.
Photos as credited.