



Friends of the Wild Flower Garden

Martha Crone History

Martha and Eloise



At the left we see a group of friends gathered on August 3, 1931 for Eloise Butler's 80th birthday. Eloise is in the middle with the basket, Martha Crone's husband, William, is directly behind Eloise and Martha is 2nd from the right.
Photo - Minn. Historical Society.

Martha Crone's connection to the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and to her assistance in founding The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden are linked back to her innate loving response to wild things and their place in the environment. Like most people who devote a passionate lifetime to the pursuit of a certain subject or hobby, she was largely self-taught about wild plants and birds. Her first contact with the Garden was as an inquisitive and persistent visitor, extracting information from Eloise Butler and in turn bringing in specimens and providing assistance to Eloise.

Martha was 39 years old when she became Curator following the death of Eloise Butler in 1933. She recalled that she had spent about 15 years helping out in the Garden which would put the start of her volunteer

time around 1918 when she would have been 24 years old - she was born on January 29, 1894.

[Conversation with Pat Deweese, *The Fringed Gentian*TM, Winter 1978]. Her early years of helping Eloise was first noted in an article in the *Minneapolis Star* on Jan 10, 1944 when it was reported she had become acting head of the Minneapolis Public Library's Science Museum during the Winter months. She and her husband William, a dentist, lived at 3723 Lyndale Ave. North in Minneapolis. There was room for a garden in the back yard. They had been married on Sept. 1, 1915. Dr. Crone had his dental office in the house but frequently spent a day doing dental work in small communities outside Minneapolis. Together the Crones were avid explorers of plant habitat and especially mushroom habitat as both were involved with the Minnesota Mycological Society.

Martha was secretary of the Minnesota Mycological Society from 1926 onward for a number of years. Considering the need for large numbers of plants for the developing Wildflower Garden, the Crones were able to provide good assistance to Eloise Butler in finding sources for wild plants and for rescuing plants from areas where the native habitat was soon to be overrun with development.

Becoming Curator

An inference may be drawn that since Martha Crone was helping Eloise Butler in the Garden for those 15 years prior to her being appointed temporary curator that the transition was preordained and automatic. That is far from the case. For example: It is evident from a letter written by Eloise Butler to a Mrs. Pearl Frazer in Grand Forks, North Dakota, that Eloise was ready to retire, but was having great difficulty in finding someone to replace her. Mrs. Frazer had been in correspondence with Superintendent Theodore Wirth about a position in the park system and Mr Wirth, believing she was referring the the Curator position asked Eloise to write to her.



Above: Theodore Wirth - Superintendent of the Minneapolis Park System 1904-1935

Eloise's reply letter to Mrs. Frazer, at the request of Mr. Wirth, laid out what the job of Curator entailed in a somewhat discouraging manner by explaining the difficulties of the job, but ended by saying "If you and Mr. Wirth come to an agreement, he has suggested that I correspond with you during the winter and inform you more fully of the work." (1) As this letter was dated Sept. 29, 1932, it is obvious that Eloise was not considering Martha for the job. It's not that she may not have been recommended for the position by Eloise and others, and it is not that Theodore Wirth was not acquainted with who she was, as the events of 1933 clearly show. It's most likely that Martha Crone did not want a job that tied her down six days a week for \$60 a month, working alone in the vastness of Glenwood Park. Mrs. Frazer ultimately declined interest as she was looking for more of a nature photography position, not full responsibility for a garden.

Mrs. Frazer's correspondence about this with Eloise Butler was included in the last letter that Eloise sent to the Crones from her winter home in Massachusetts on Jan 11, 1933. (copy of letter follows text) In this Jan. 11th letter the wording Eloise uses may indicate she really wanted Martha to take the job and perhaps wanted to put the proposition to her directly in the Spring: "I want also to thank you especially, Mrs. Crone, for what you wrote about the continuance of the wild garden. There's too much of truth in what you say, but I will soon be able to talk with you about the matter in detail."

On April 11 Martha received a phone call from Clara Leavitt that Eloise had passed away the previous day. The funeral service would be at the Lakewood Cemetery Chapel the next day.

On April 23, 1933, following the death of Eloise and the appointment of Martha as temporary Curator, Gertrude S. Cram, longtime friend of Eloise Butler, writes to Martha Crone that "I have heard so much of you from Miss Butler that you seem like an old acquaintance. I am so glad to hear that you are to be in her beloved garden in her stead. - I trust for more than temporarily - for I am sure it is what she would have desired." (2) The wording about "temporary" indicates what happened.

The appointment was indeed, temporary. Martha did not receive written confirmation that her appointment was permanent until 1940 (details below). However, once Eloise had died, the filling of the position went quickly as these notes from Martha's diary indicate:

April 13 - "went down to see Theo Wirth." Wirth stated in his April 18 memo to the Board of Park Commissioners that "Mrs. Crone is willing to undertake the work and I wish to recommend that I be authorized to employ her . . ." Did he talk her into it??

April 19: "Bill received call from Theo Wirth for me to be at garden tomorrow."

April 20 - "Met Wirth (and others named) at garden, opened office, started taking inventory of everything."

May 3 - "Sent letter of acceptance to Wirth."

May 5 - "Received first check \$22.00." (notes 2a)

Details of Martha Crones temporary employment:

In a memo to the Board of Park Commissioners [the official name of the governing body, hereafter referred to simply as the "park board"] dated April 18, 1933 (five days after his meeting with Martha) Theodore Wirth writes of his appointment of Martha as temporary curator of the Garden "during the balance of the season, or such other time thereof as seems advisable and satisfactory, the term of employment to be from date to Oct. 1, 1933...pay to be \$60 per month." On May 20th, she met Wirth and his secretary (among others) at the Garden. The Secretary brought time cards. Some days later Martha received a letter from Mr. Wirth's secretary explaining how and when to complete the time sheets (twice monthly) and who to give them to. The "or such other time as seems advisable" was to last a long time. The \$60 per month was the same amount Eloise Butler had been receiving.

In her files at the History Center are copies of the notifications to the Park Board from the Minneapolis Civil Service Commission confirming that Martha Crone is eligible for the position of curator on a temporary basis. i.e. the one dated March 28, 1936 confirms her salary as \$60 per month. It is only the certification dated April 4, 1940 that lists the position as "permanent" at \$100 per month for a six month term.

Martha was never a Park Board employee until her appointment as Curator was made permanent. The Curator position was unique within the park system, and very seasonal, and thus, was never "highly paid" in terms of salary. For example, even after becoming a Park Board employee Martha's net pay after taxes and after a pension deduction was \$56.42 for the last half of October, 1946. She was expected to be around every day the Garden was open, which was every day except Wednesdays - that was her day off and the gates were locked. Since Eloise had Saturdays off, Wednesdays must have been the day Martha was allowed to chose under the contract.

All documents are in the Martha Crone Collection of papers at the Minnesota Historical Society.

Plant Collecting

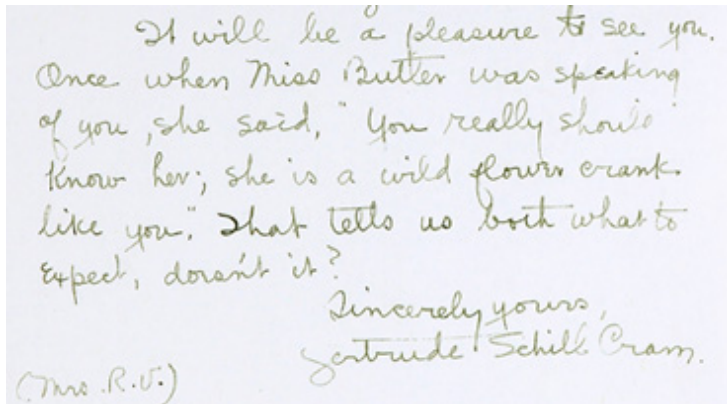


When Eloise Butler was curator, she typically returned to Malden, Massachusetts each fall after the Garden closed to stay with relatives. Martha would be the direct recipient of plant packages from Eloise while she was back in Malden. In a letter of 3 November 1925, Eloise writes to Martha that "I took advantage of the weather to 'Shop' around the neighborhood a bit, and am mailing you a box of the 'finds.' "

Seeds could be stored but for the plants sent to her, Martha was expected to heel them in until Spring when Eloise would return. (3)

Mrs. Cram, in her letter, goes on to talk about certain plants that Eloise had sent to her for heeling in to her garden until Eloise could return to Minneapolis in the Spring of 1933. These

included New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*), (photo at left) Stiff Aster (*Aster linariifolius* now classified as *Ionactis linariifolius*) and Butter and Eggs (*Linaria vulgaris*). Mrs. Cram brought the asters to the Garden on May. 15th, 1933. (2a)



It will be a pleasure to see you.
Once when Miss Butler was speaking
of you, she said, "You really should
know her; she is a wild flower crank
like you." That tells us both what to
expect, doesn't it?
Sincerely yours,
Gertrude Schill Cram.
(Mrs. R.V.)

Letter from Gertrude Cram to Martha Crone, April 23, 1933.

Martha set out large quantities of plants she had grown from seed. Her Garden Logs for the 1950s sometimes run to several hand-written pages of species of seed planted.

When she acquired more plants than needed or when dividing was needed, she would send seeds and plants to various friends around the country. For example: The double bloodroots (photo right) (these were still in the Garden in early 2000s) she sent to friends Gladys Mockford in Blackduck, MN and to Mrs. Eldred (Blanch) C. Mather in Green, Iowa in May 1968.



In the early years of Martha's tenure as Curator the Park Board only allotted \$100 a year for plant purchases and so, throughout her tenure, she personally collected plants from a number of sources. Wednesdays were prime days for botanizing as Wednesday was her only day off from the Garden. These sources may have been 'in the wild' or a rescue of plants about to be destroyed by development (4a). Examples are:

- 'In the wild' from Taylor's Falls, The Gunflint Trail, Anoka, Stillwater, Marine-on-St. Croix, Twin Lake, The North Shore of Lake Superior'
- She maintained a large wild flower garden at her home and frequently brought in plants from there.
- The Crone property at Cedar Creek Forrest produced a large number of marsh plants, such as 24 Ramshead Lady's-slippers in 1936. (detail on the property given below).
- The Mankato/New Ulm area was a well-known source for them. In the late 1940s they rescued several Wild Poinsettia plants from a new building site. This rescue was mentioned in a June 10, 1951 *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* article by Jane Thomas. In 1939 she obtained 325 Snow Trillium from there in similar circumstances.

An article published on June 10, 1951 in *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* highlighted Martha's plant collecting. It included this tidbit:

Mrs. Cram then ends with this comment about Martha:

"She (Eloise) said 'you really should know her; she is a wild flower crank like you'. That tells us both what to expect, doesn't it"? (2)

Martha was well known in the area for her plant collecting efforts. She did what Eloise had done - search the wild for suitable specimens and get permission to retrieve them; rescue them when the habitat was about to be destroyed; receive donations of plants from friends; and plant seeds for new plants.

Mrs. Crone travels an average of 2,000 miles a month. Sometimes she digs up plants and sets them In moist moss and brings them back In the extra big trunk of her car. Often when she returns home late, she plants her wild .flowers after dark. One whole bed of violets was planted one night by the light of the moon and a lantern propped In the path. [Copy follows text]

Until the late 30's there was no piped water source in the garden; at times when the Garden pool was dry, Martha would bring water from home in a milk bucket for the new transplants and always hoped for rain. (4a)

Garden Highlights 1933 to 1944

Here are some of the key Garden events of these years, taken from Martha's Annual Reports to the Superintendent of Parks (4), her Garden Log and her diary. There is more detail *Key Garden Events of the Crone Years*. on the website and in the book referenced in the notes.

In 1933, Martha completed the planting around the Mallard Pool area that had been started by Eloise Butler in 1932. The early 1930s were years of drought. She writes about the losses of plants, but also her planting efforts to replace species. She remarks on how visitors were becoming acquainted with the Garden as a place to study birds, as the birds were unmolested there and one could see as many as 100 different birds. She gets a new fence in 1938 to surround a good part of the Garden to replace the original run down fence of 1924. Martha had made a plea in her 1937 report to the Board of Park Commissioners about the status of the Fence. In 1939 fencing is placed in the Mallard Pool area.

Below: The new fence, reported by the Park Board to be about 1,900, was constructed by workers of the WPA (Works Progress Administration). It was six feet high and of wire mesh, with 3 gates for entrance. As the material lasts for decades, the existing wire mesh fence is presumably the one erected in 1938. The two main gates were been replaced in the 1970s and then in 1990 and 1995 with sturdier and more impressive designs. Photo by Walter B. Dahlberg.



At her request, in 1939, the Garden stays open into October so that visitors can see the fall blooms and colors. The Garden always closed on September 30, but this year the close date is moved to October 15th, where it is again today, after having a period from 1947 to 2002 when it closed on October 31st.

In 1939, a spring is tapped in the wetland, to supply a constant level of water to the small open pool that existed then near what is today the back of the Garden. That water, in turn flowed into the north meadow where the Mallard Pool had been located. This was the same year that a WPA crew built new basins for the three springs that were located just outside the Garden and it is possible, but not clear, that the same crew did the work in the Garden. [Details on all the Springs is in a separate website article]

In the early 1940s there were more varieties of Lady's-slipper blooming in the Garden than exist today - six varieties blooming in 1940. Also that year, the giant white oak named "Monarch", estimated by some people at 700 years of age, was taken down. In her end of year report to the Board of Park Commissioners Martha wrote:

It is with deep regret that I record the passing of the oldest inhabitant of the Reserve, the Giant White Oak, estimated age 700 years. It had become a hazard to passers-by, therefore it was removed in October.

The Upland Garden Addition and Clinton Odell

A large change in the Garden occurred in 1944 when most of what is now the Upland Garden was added to the Wild Flower Garden and fenced in, through the assistance of Clinton Odell. (Photo at right from Odell Family; The Odell page on the website gives more background on Odell's work in the Garden and details of this addition are in a separate document). Martha now had a garden for all seasons. As she states in her *History of the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden*:

"During mid-summer when the spring flowers have gone and the shade of the woodland is so dense that few plants bloom there, then it is that the prairie and upland garden comes into its own. This tract consists of gently rolling hills and prairie, and is fully 75 feet higher than the woodland garden. The contrast is all the more striking between the upland and the woodland gardens, since they are so closely allied." (5)



Martha began work immediately in the new addition. Besides doing whatever clearing work was required on the new land, (removing excess trees and sumac for which she had Park Board maintenance assistance) she set out 210 new plants in the area in 1944. These plants were of 30 different kinds that she had collected on four field trips that summer for which she had approved time off from the Garden. In 1945 she set out another 4,000, again from field trip collections and from the assistance of others. In some instances she reports that native soil was also brought in for certain plants. She also completed 2,000 feet of new trails that year. For the next several years she set out new marker labels (250 alone in 1946) that were obtained courtesy of Clinton Odell.

1944 was historically significant for another reason: It marked the end of time when the Garden included the meadow between the current back gate and the Wirth Picnic Grounds. Eloise Butler has tended this area for years and it was here that the Mallard Pool was created in 1932. Martha worked in the area until 1939 and when fencing was needed for the upland addition, the fence in the north meadow was removed and used in the upland. Clinton Odell had convinced the Park Board that the area had become just too swampy to maintain and that it should be abandoned. (Details on the Mallard Pool are in a separate article)

(Note: The addition of slightly more acreage to the Upland Garden in 1993 brought the Garden to its current configuration.)

Below: Upland Garden May 1948, Photo from a Kodachrome taken by Martha Crone showing some of her new marker labels.

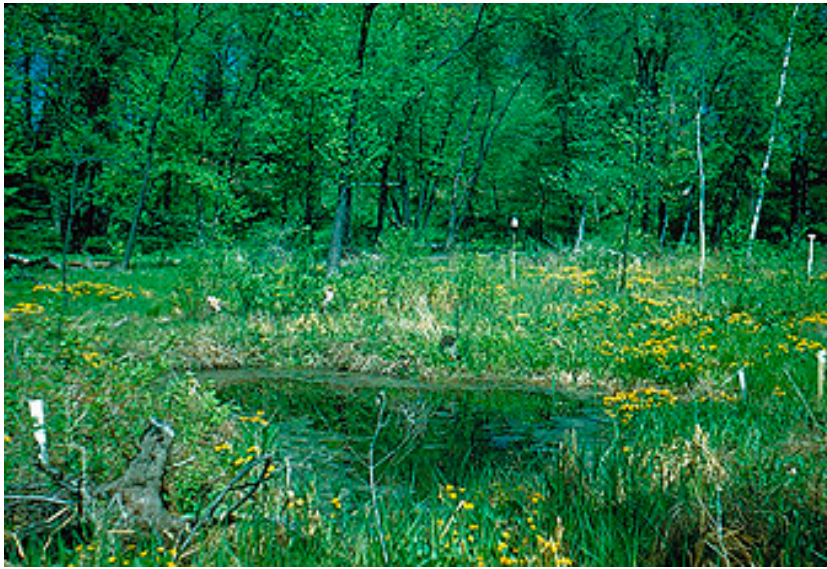


Garden Highlights 1945 to 1959

Here are some of the key Garden events of these years, taken from Martha's Annual Reports to the Board of Park Commissioners.

In 1946, a corduroy lined path was put in by Bill Crone going through the wetland from North to South. Previously there were short stub paths that led to certain parts of the wetland but not a continuous path.

In 1947 Martha had three new pools excavated so she could display more aquatic plants in a more sunny location and visitors could now enjoy aquatic plants close up. In 1948 she had them enlarged. These pools in the wetland subsequently silted in and had to be excavated several times. Ken Avery did the first of several excavations in 1961. Eventually, they were left silted in. While the basins of these new pools still remain hidden in the wetland, the remnant of the original small pool at the north end of the Garden is still there, and today, while there can be standing water in the wetland, there is not a large open pool like the Mallard Pool that Eloise Butler created in 1932 in the meadow north of the current Garden North boundary.



Above, an open pool in the wetland as seen on May 27, 1950.
Martha Crone photo.



Above, the wetland area as it looks today - early spring. The 3 pools were left center. Photo Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc.



Above: Martha Crone inserting a marker for Blazing Star in the new Upland Garden. Photo as published in the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, May 21, 1950.

City water was brought into the Upland Garden via a connection at Chestnut and Xerxes Ave. in 1947 to provide a supplement when rainfall was short. The droughts of the 1930s had been disastrous for a number of plants in the Woodland Garden, and now with the expansion into the Upland Garden, Martha believed that there were just too many special plants to allow the water supply to rely on chancy rainfall in the hot months. The water supply did not reach the Woodland Garden however, until 1964 so hoses had to be strung down to the Woodland Garden when additional water was required.

In 1950 Martha introduced the first free Garden Information Brochure. She references the success of these in several reports. In 1952 she brings out an 8 page Self-Conducted Tour brochure and notes that 10,000 were distributed in 1952. In 1953 there was also available Garden plant lists, which were sold for 10 cents each to visitors. These lists, compiled by her, also included her 4-page 1951 Garden History.[All found on the website] Also in 1948, Martha began to put together a set of color slides of Garden plants that she could use for illustrated lectures about the Garden. She began to give talks in 1951.

In 1955 the Garden received a gift of funds from the Minnetonka Garden Club and the Little Minnetonka Garden Club to create a fern glen in an undeveloped back grove of the new Upland Garden. She began this project in 1956 by setting out 2,160 fern plants followed by 308 the next year

and ending her part of the project in 1958 when the total reached 2,843 fern plants. Ken Avery would complete it in 1960-61 with the total plant count at 3,094.

In 1956 Martha was awarded a Bronze Medal for achievement in horticulture from the Minnesota State Horticultural Society. The first telephone was installed in the Garden in 1957, following Martha's request for one in 1951.

In 1958, Clinton Odell passed away. Martha purchased a memorial "settee" from the Mankato Stone Company with funds contributed by friends of Clinton Odell. The bench, of native Mankato Dolomite, with memorial plaque, was placed on the central hill of the Upland Garden in 1959. (photo at right). In addition, there is a pair of benches made of Kasota stone (limestone) dedicated to Clinton Odell, that sit just off the patio area in front of the Martha Crone Visitors Shelter. These were given by his daughter, Moana Odell Beim.



April Weather

Snow and ice in the Garden in early April was a frequent occurrence. The little cabin Martha used for an office was unheated and did not have electricity so kerosene lamps, and occasionally a kerosene heater were used, both of which Martha brought from home. In 1944 a small wood stove provided by Clinton Odell was installed. Even with the various methods of heat, on cold days the office did not get warm and at times she would run up and down the path a few times to warm up! (4a). If you have lived in the metro area for many years you know it is not unusual for winter to delay the Garden's spring season. That is actually more common than an early spring. Many quotes about opening day and the weather from Martha Crone's log and her diary follow at the end of this article.

Garden Assistants

As Eloise had realized, the task of caring for such a special place was more than could be accomplished by one person, especially considering that plants do not live forever and must be constantly replaced. Martha states in her *History of the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden* that up to 1951 she herself had set out some 42,500 plants. In that history she stated that the garden contained over 1,000 species not including mosses, algae and fungi. She attached a census to her history listing 787 individual species of plants and shrubs. All tools used in the Garden were hand tools, no power equipment, no electrical equipment, nothing but muscle power. [Tool inventory follows]

The only place of protection in the Garden from storms or other adversities was the small office structure in the Woodland Garden that was originally constructed in 1915 for Eloise Butler. A small tool shed that had been moved into the Garden in 1912 was also located nearby the office. Very little was spent on the refurbishment of the office except for adding a wood stove in 1944 and the pergolas and trellis around the outside. It was slowly growing inadequate. It would be 1970, long after her retirement before it would be replaced by the current Martha Crone Visitors Shelter.



Above, the original "office" structure. June 1948 - originally built in the Garden in 1915. Photo - Martha Crone

While Eloise had not been able to secure any paid park staff helpers, she did make use of some local boys for assistance, [including Lloyd Teeuwen who helped her with the Mallard Pool and was present when she died]. Martha had several workers from the Park Board available to her when needed during the late 1940s. There are references in various writings, such as Friends of the Wild Flower Garden President Mrs. Faragher's April 25, 1969 letter that Martha worked virtually alone.⁽⁶⁾ But while that may be true prior to 1946, time records in the Crone files indicate that two workmen were usually available for continuous help in the Garden from 1946 through early 1949. Of those known are Clarence Larson, Eddy Subourin, Bjorne Herland and one, Fred Gau, being continuously employed through 1948. Others, then and in later years, and with longer terms, included Sam Baker, Ed Bruckelmyer Bob Clark and eventually, Ken Avery.

Clinton Odell made donations to the Park Board, beginning in 1945 and for several years thereafter, to partially cover the cost of one workman, while the Park Board paid for the other (*6a*). There is then a period from May 1949 onward, when she apparently lost continuous help, perhaps due to Park board funding restrictions. She references in her 1953 report how help is really needed and that she had received some additional garden help for 50 days in early summer. Ed Bruckelmyer is in her records in 1948 and 1949 and reappears in 1958. He then worked for Ken Avery until he retired in 1970, at which time Sam Baker, who had also worked for Ken in the early 1960s, reappeared and worked until 1976.



Ed Bruckelmyer, ca. 1960s.
Photo Muriel Avery.

Finally, in 1954 she again had the services of two employees, one being Ken Avery, who would be her successor as Curator when she retired in January 1959. (The other being Robert Clark from 1955 into the 1958 season.) Mr. Avery was in fact hired by the Park Board as Mrs. Crone's assistant. (He would have



Ken Avery. News photo.

two assistants working for him in the beginning of his tenure, but eventually it became one assistant and then no assistants.)

Upon her retirement as Curator, Martha made an appeal in the Jan. 1959 issue of *The Fringed Gentian*TM:

"There must be greater support to protect this bit of wild area and keep it in its natural condition. It is really a challenge to keep this Wild Flower Garden since we and the next generation need the beauty of our natural flowers, many of which are disappearing in advance of our civilization."

Martha's Opinion on the Purpose of the Garden

Note on Native Plant Status: Some of the plants obtained by Eloise Butler in the early years of the Garden were not native to Minnesota or if native, may have been difficult to establish in the Garden. Many of the non-native ones are no longer present. Martha Crone was more selective of native plant material but not all have survived either. Her definition of native was not that it was originally present in the area of the Garden but that it was in the same climatic area and thus could have grown there. She wrote in the Jan. 1954 issue of *The Fringed Gentian*TM that non-native plants were used "to make the Garden interesting and more attractive to visitors." From the tenure of Ken Avery to the present, plants selected are those that once were present in the Garden area.

Martha believed the Garden was a necessary place, as these comments indicate, from 1933, her first year as curator:

"Many [Garden visitors] appreciating what a few far seeing people have provided in such a plant and bird sanctuary, not only for future generations, but for ourselves as well. It is indeed an effort well repaid to visit this beautiful spot where the abundance of our native flora has been made still more beautiful and interesting by plantings of other Minnesota wild flowers that are fast becoming exterminated elsewhere." (8a)

Comments from 1943:

"It (The Garden) has been a powerful factor in building an appreciation of Minnesota's native wild flowers. The garden teaches people to observe flowers and enjoy them in their natural environment. It has lessened the tendency to pick flowers and take them home where they wilt



Martha Crone in the Upland Garden, June 1951. Photo - Minn. Historical Society, Martha Crone Collection.

in a few short hours. We invite many more of our citizens to come to know the relaxation and contentment and beauty that can be found just 10 minutes from downtown Minneapolis."

"Once the plants have been introduced and have become established, they are disturbed as little as possible and are not watered or cultivated. If they are crowded out by weeds or other plants, it is just too bad. We believe in keeping our wild flower sanctuary as wild as possible. If we were to attempt to control the flowers carefully, it would mean that the wild aspect of the area would disappear." (7)

(Note: By the time Martha wrote her brief *History of the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden* in 1951 her attitude had changed. Easy growing plants and invasives could rapidly spread and shade out more desirable plants. Some control was needed).

(Note: The spelling at that time of "Wildflower" in the Garden name was as two separate words as stated in the 1929 resolution naming the Garden. It was in the early 1970s that "wildflower" came into use - see notes at end of text..)

Martha's Other Activities

While the Garden activities would be enough for most people, Martha managed to be active in several other ventures. Another long-lived activity would be her affiliation with the Minnesota Mycological Society. Martha maintained her membership until at least 1977. She was Secretary of the Society from 1926 until 1943. Her husband, Dr. Wm. Crone was treasurer from 1926 to 1929, when he became Vice President. He retained that role until 1939. Several highlights gleaned from the minutes of the Societies Annual Meeting are as follows:

1926: The Society displayed 44 varieties of mushrooms at the Minnesota State Fair (the State Fair display would be an annual event for the Group).

1927: A great abundance of Morels.

1927: The Crones gathered 1000 specimens of the deadly *Amanita phalloides* for the University of Minnesota for experimental purposes.

1933: No morels this season at all.

1935: The large quantity of morels to be found was without precedent. (9)

Martha took part in activities at the Minneapolis Public Library's Science Museum. She was a member of the Science Museum Society from about 1940 to 1954. The Society published a small newsletter titled "*Minnesota Naturalist*." Late in 1943 Martha interviewed for a position there. (14). Friends' member J. S. Futchter remembers that as it was the only time he ever saw Martha in a dress. At the Garden she would always be in green or brown slacks and wearing that green beret. Futchter later had the night overseer position. At the beginning of 1944 Martha took on the job acting head of the Science Museum. The museum had been closed for five months, perhaps due to wartime personnel shortages. She would also be editor of the "*Minnesota Naturalist*." In a newspaper report it is stated for the first time we know of that she "worked with Miss Butler for 15 years as unofficial assistant." (10a) It



Martha Crone, ca. 1953. Photo -
Martha Crone Collection, Minn.
Historical Society

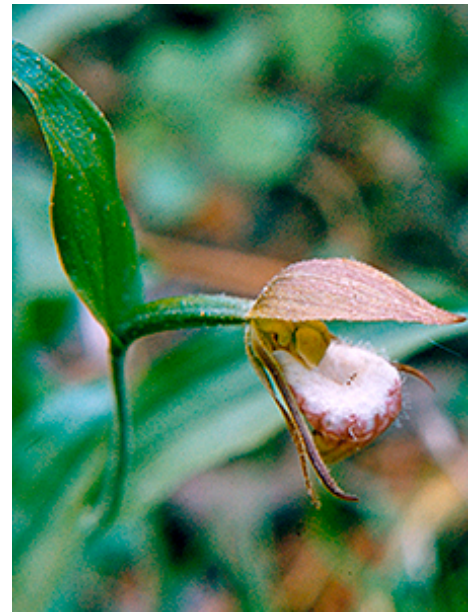
was noted in Vol. 3, No. 1 of the Museum newsletter for March 30, 1944 and in the daily newspaper (10b) that she would be relinquishing those posts in order to resume her duties at the Wild flower Garden. Rhoda Green became the new acting curator. (10c)

For much of her adult life while living in Minneapolis, Martha was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star (O.E.S.). Her diary prior to becoming Curator of the Garden has many activities related to the charitable group, particularly Thimble Bees - which were group sewing get-togethers where the finished items were provided to needy persons by the O.E.S., or they held rummage sales to raise funds for the same purposes. Her local group was the Plymouth Chapter, No. 19 of the O.E.S., of which she served as an officer - we know she was treasurer in 1930 - but Curator duties after 1933 undoubtedly curtailed her work there.

The Cabin at Cedar Creek Forrest

There is an interesting connection between Martha Crone, wild plants and the University of Minnesota. Martha and her husband Dr. William Crone became interested in a parcel of land in Anoka County, in the area of East Bethel, as a source for plant observation and collecting. The area, then known as Cedar Creek Forest, was swamp and bog with upland areas of dense woodland. In her log of plantings at Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden, this is the area referred to when she writes of plants obtained from "Cedar" or "Cedar Swamp" or "North of Anoka". On July 1, 1936 Martha recorded digging up 24 Ramshead Lady's-slippers (*Cypripedium arietinum*) and 3 Ground Junipers (*Juniperus communis*) and transplanting them in Eloise Butler. The Ramshead's had 30 blooms the following year, but unfortunately they died in 1938 from excess moisture.

On December 31st, 1936, the Crone's purchased 40 acres of this area for a total price of \$375 with \$10 down payment. In the middle of this land there was dry upland that resembled an



Above: Ram's Head Lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*). Photo by Martha Crone.



The area of Cedar Creek containing the original Crone property. The view is NE across Norris woods, Crone knoll (in the center of the photo), & Cedar Bog Lake just left of center. Photo by Donald Lawrence, 1966, University of Minnesota

island within the swampland. Here they built a cabin in 1938, carrying the building materials through the swamp to reach the dry land. It was not until 1939 that they finished what could be called a causeway that reached the "island" without getting one's feet wet. The cabin area became known locally as "Crone's Island." In late summer 1938, the cabin was broken into and all there inside possessions were stolen. The county Sheriff was notified and the Crones proceeded to secure the cabin more tightly and over the next year completed the finishing touches.

This swampy bog area was of great interest to those in the botany profession. The first recorded research interest in the area dates back to 1929 when an aerial survey first disclosed the significance of the habitat. In 1947 a large “Study Area” was outlined by the University of Minnesota - the area included the Crone’s land. The purpose of the Study Area was for students of botany and professionals to be able to observe and study the habitat of a natural swamp and bog. On Sept. 14, 1957 the University of Minnesota dedicated the Cedar Creek Forest Laboratory. Martha was invited to attend. (William had passed away in 1951). Access to the lab area was via the Crone land and that of several other property owners.

On May 24, 1961, the University, by letter from University attorney R. Joel Tierney, offered to purchase her land if University funding could be obtained. At that point in time Martha was retired from the position of Curator at Eloise Butler. There is not a record in her papers as to the date of sale but it was sold, presumably within the same year.

The Study Area is now known as Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve with an area of about 2,200 hectares (5,400 acres, or about nine square miles). It is important as a relatively undisturbed area where three biomes meet (tall grass prairie, eastern deciduous forest and boreal coniferous forest), supporting 51 species of mammals and 238 species of birds. It is a nationally and internationally famous research center, recognized as a Registered Natural Landmark in 1975. The land where Martha’s cabin was situated is now known as the Crone Knoll.

The Cabin on the upper North Shore of Lake Superior

With the land and cabin at Cedar Creek sold, sometime in the fall of 1963 or winter of 1963/64 Martha acquired some land with a pleasant cabin on the North Shore of Lake Superior about 15 miles from Canada, at Hoveland. She wrote in *The Fringed Gentian*TM, Vol. 12 No. 2:

“In this world of tension, what a pleasant relief to come to this refuge away from the city noise and bustle. Here is found solace in silence. Having searched for many years for a place where can be seen sunrises and sunsets across the lake. Northern lights, clear cold water and a rock-bound coast similar to the coast of Maine. This was it. The cabin is build on a shelf of rock above the water’s edge, high enough to be safe from the waves. Surrounded by the beauty of sky, water and forest which can be seen from every window of the cabin, also looking across the lake toward the south can be seen the islands stretching away into purple distances. From this, one never tires.”



Crone cabin near Hoveland - this photo as it looked in 2014. Photo - Nick Wander

The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden and retirement from The Friends

On June 18th 1952 Articles of Incorporation were filled with the State of Minnesota for The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc., a non-profit group formed for the purposes of educating the public by enhancing appreciation for and understanding of Minnesota's native plants and their natural

environments; of safeguarding the integrity of the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden; and of aiding in its support with both financial and volunteer assistance.

The founding directors were Clinton M. Odell, Russell H. Bennett, Dorothy Binder, Martha E. Crone, Donald C. Dayton, Leonard F. Ramberg. Martha Crone was Curator of the Wildflower Garden. Russell H. Bennett was Chairman of the Board of Dunwoody Institute; Dorothy Binder was a Twin Cities Journalist; Donald C. Dayton was President of the Dayton Company; Leonard F. Ramberg was affiliated with the American Swedish Institute and Augsburg College where he was later Chairman of the Board of Regents. [Details on the directors follows]

Clinton Odell was a student of Eloise Butler and a frequent visitor to the Wild Flower Garden. When Martha Crone became curator he provided assistance to her. He felt it imperative there always be a group of citizens who would work for the best interests of the Garden. He was concerned the Garden could become expendable if the Park Board had to cut costs. He wrote that the Park Board recognized the possibilities of the garden:

...however much remains to be done and to supplement the Park Board's efforts, we have started Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc. This non-profit corporation has a perpetual charter. None of its officers can draw any salary, or derive any pecuniary benefit from its operation. Its annual dues range from \$3 to \$500. Many of our business and professional leaders, also a number from outside our city, have taken up memberships.

Martha Crone was thus, a founding member of The Friends. From the beginning she was Secretary of the Friends, membership secretary and also editor of the Friend's newsletter, *The Fringed Gentian*[™], the first issue of which came out in January 1953. She became treasurer in 1954 succeeding Leonard Ramberg and continued as Secretary/Treasurer and membership secretary and newsletter editor until May 1971, having, as editor, written and produced 78 4-page issues over 19-1/2 years. She continued to serve on the Friends Board of Directors until May 1973.

Martha used the newsletter to provide informative short articles on plants, birds, and the environment. Rarely did she mention what was going on in the Garden that she cared for. You will rarely learn anything about her daily activities and the state of the Garden. She must not have thought that the membership would be interested in that. Future editors would follow a different course.

The Formation of The Friends allowed Martha to obtain some volunteer help on busy days at the Garden. In addition, The Friends provided certain funds to obtain items she needed in the Garden, such as a mosquito sprayer, seeds, bulbs, etc. The mosquito sprayer and a later mist sprayer acquired by Ken Avery were quite beneficial as the Garden was heaven on earth for mosquitoes. Back in 1933, Theodore Wirth had paid a visit to the Garden on the occasion of the Last Rites Ceremony for Eloise Butler and evidently had written a comment to Martha about the Mosquitoes. She replied "I wish to offer my apologies



The Martha E. Crone Shelter, constructed 1969-70.

for the ill manners of my mosquitoes, they are rather difficult to train as each one lives only a short time.” (8)

From 1948 to 1957 Martha Crone assembled a collection of Kodachrome slides that she took of plants and landscape of the Wild Flower Garden and some plants from other gardens. The assemblage eventually totaled over 4,000 slides. As Secretary of The Friends she used these slides to give illustrated lectures about the Garden to various clubs, groups and organizations, eventually logging over 300 groups.

She also reported these educational activities in her annual report to the Board of Park Commissioners and also in her Secretary's Annual Report to the Friends Board of Directors. After her death in 1989 her daughter Janet, passed the collection to the Friends via Friends member Martha Hellander who was in the process of researching a book about Eloise Butler. The Friends sorted the collection and then for a short time beginning in 1993 used them at lectures about the Garden, then later deposited the collection at the Minnesota Historical Society. Some of those images are shown on these pages.

Martha Crone had written about the need for a new building at the Garden that could be used for “housing an office, Museum and Herbarium of specimens.” The herbarium was another of her creations. Martha Hellander's research indicated there were over 1,000 mounted specimens already by 1937 but they were not ever placed in the new shelter. Hellander indicates they may have gone to the University of Minnesota Herbarium.

After 53 years of service to the Garden and the Friends (38 years after being appointed Curator in 1933 and about 15 years of service to Eloise Butler prior to that), she finally retired from all positions except as a director in May 1971, turning her Friends duties over to Mildred Olson. In honor of her long service to both the Garden and The Friends, the new shelter building, constructed and funded by The Friends in 1969 was dedicated to her on May 13, 1970.



Clinton Odell III, grandson of Clinton Odell and Lynda Wander, granddaughter of Martha Crone, shown here in front of the Martha Crone Visitor Shelter holding images of their grandparents. Mother's Day, May 12, 2002 at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden. Photo - Friends of the Wild Flower Garden.

Martha wrote a thank you to the Friends in July 1970. She said:

"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."

Martha was given a life membership in the Friends on May 12, 1973, the date of her leaving the Friends Board of Directors, to which she responded:

"Please extend to the members of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, my sincere appreciation for being named Honorary Life Member. It means a great deal to me. It has been worth hanging onto this wonderful Reserve, sometimes against great odds. As time goes on its value becomes more apparent. A priceless heritage to leave to those to follow." (noted in *The Fringed Gentian*TM, Vol. 21 #3)

Martha's summation of her life's work.

The following quote is the last that she wrote to members of The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden.

Spring is Alive

"Once again the awaking of Spring, coming after a long time of waiting. How fortunate to have this lovely Reserve to enjoy where Springtime's beauty unfolds in every flower. Flowers are eager to answer the call of the warming sun, even while patches of snow remain. They must make the most of the sunlight before the forest deepens and veils the woodland.

How delightful to hear the first songs of the returning birds. Wildflower and bird sanctuaries that have been established will greatly benefit future generations. How fortunate that this native area was added while still in its unspoiled state.

It's most necessary to meet the demands of our expanding population. I have devoted my life to what I consider this satisfying pursuit."(11)

Her summation reaches back to her first year as curator in 1933 when she wrote these words to Theodore Wirth:

"It has been an honor and a pleasure to have served in the Native Plant Reserve this past season and I wish to thank you for the privilege." (8a)

Martha Crone was born on January 29, 1894, to parents Edward and Amalia Eberlein in Minneapolis; she died in Minneapolis on February 5, 1989, at age 95. Her husband, William has passed away many years previously on January 2, 1951 at age 67. She had one older brother, Richard, who died in 1967 at age 76 and one sister, Henrietta who died in 1918 at age 20. Martha and William are buried in Crystal Lake Cemetery in Minneapolis, MN. Her obituary was published on Feb. 7, 1989. (copy follows)

Martha and Bill Crone had one daughter, Janet, born June 16, 1917. Janet only survived Martha by four months. Janet (Prevey) was killed in a car accident in Canada on May 27, hit by drunk driver. Surviving Janet were her two daughters Linda Prevey Wander and Judy Prevey. A son, David had died previously in a car accident at age 17 on December 14, 1962. Judy died in 1995 and Linda in 2010. Linda and husband Nicholas and their family attended the Friends May 2002 50th anniversary event at the Wildflower Garden as illustrated earlier in this article.

Various Friends have provided some comments on their association with Martha Crone. Here are a few:

Moana Odell Beim:

"Well, I grew up, and soon had a family of my own. Before long I became a Girl Scout Leader and loved bringing my troop of eager-to-learn girls out here to Martha Crone. Her love of the Garden and keen interest in teaching was a great inspiration to us all. As birds too were of special interest to her she had, in the fall and winter months, collected a wide variety of bird nests which she kept on display in the little cabin. What joy it was to see her gently cradle the tiny hummingbird nest in her hand, explaining its structure to the children. And then the wonder of seeing the tiny creatures themselves! They arrived promptly each May 15th and Martha kept a vial of sugar water outside the cabin window so all could watch them feed close at hand." (12)

J.S. Futcher:

"As a young birdwatcher, I became acquainted with the Garden and Mrs. Crone while I was in the eighth and ninth grades in 1946 and 1947. At first I would walk from our home at 14th and Girard Avenues North to the Theodore Wirth golf course and explore the hills, woods and Bassett's Creek. At the same time I started going to the Science Museum on the fourth floor of the old downtown public library. There, in case after case, were all the mounted bird specimens. I started going on nature field trips led from there by the museum director, Milton D. Thompson. It was at this time that I became acquainted with Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. Here Thompson would introduce Mrs. Crone to us, and she would give us an update as to what was occurring in the Garden, plant-wise and bird-wise.

Mrs. Crone seemed so approachable that in my following high school years, while birding by myself in the Garden, I felt bold enough to knock on her cottage door. That was a brown, vine-covered wooden house, or what I called a shack. She could always tell me what birds were in the Garden that day.

One autumn day in the Garden, I remember her telling me where to look for a Winter Wren. I went to that spot, and sure enough, it was still there. That was my first look at a Winter Wren. Mrs. Crone always seemed to be wearing a green woolly beret, or as Hellander in *The Wild Gardener* calls it, a tam-o'-shanter. And always she seemed to be wearing a green or brown slacks outfit. The first time I saw her in a dress was at the Science Museum, where I would attend the Minneapolis Bird Club evening meetings. During the winter months she worked there as the night overseer -- the same job I was to have several years later while attending the University.

Once, after I started to teach school, I made my usual stop at her cottage. In the course of the conversation, she asked whether I was a member of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden. "Noooo," I answered. Emphatically she replied, "Well, you should be!"

In those early years of my teaching career, I had great plans to grow some ginseng as a money crop on a wooded plot up north. So, I asked Mrs. Crone where I could buy some. She said I didn't need to buy it and proceeded to dig up a clump for me, then added a goldenseal plant for good measure.

While courting my wife, I brought her into the Garden, and, of course, we ran into Mrs. Crone. I introduced them. Mrs. Crone became the first of my nature friends to find out that I was soon to be married." (13)

Robert and Betty Dasset:

After school at West High, in the mid to late '30s, Robert would ride out to the Garden on his bike to talk to Martha Crone, early in her tenure as gardener.

The Dassetts both loved the woods and wild places, and Robert had some pals who were very fond of the Garden, too. He liked to remember his friend Whitney Eastman, "a real bird man" and a great baseball fan during the Millers' era. Whitney had his own version of a double-header, Robert recalled; he'd watch the first game, bike to the Garden to eat his sandwich and talk to Martha, and then bike back to see most of the second game.

Robert and Betty were frequent visitors to the Garden during the Martha Crone years. He talked about helping her and Mr. Odell put out a prairie fire before the shelter was built. Once, Robert and Betty were there when Martha's husband Bill discovered a barred owl perched rather close on a tree branch. All four went to gaze at it, and the owl just sat and stared back at them, seemingly curious and unafraid. (13)

On May 18, 1960, Robert wrote to Martha:

"Enclosed is a check for \$5 to enroll me as a Friend. A thousand dollars couldn't even begin to repay for the wonderful hours spent in the Garden. I'll cherish forever those moments spent on the paths in the Garden and also in your little cabin chatting about all sorts of wonderful things, but mostly about birds and flowers."

Notes on the name of the Garden

In Eloise Butler's early years at the Garden, she referred to it as "The Wild Botanic Garden" for two reasons. First, she maintained it in a "wild" state, such as the plants might appear in the natural environment. Second, she wanted to establish which plants would grow well in the climate of the Garden, even if they were not native - hence - it was a 'botanic' Garden. This second reason was slightly contrary to the original stated purpose "to display in miniature the rich and varied flora of Minnesota." (see 1907 documents) The first premise has been maintained to the present day. The second was abandoned at the end of Martha Crone's time when it was established that only plants native to the area should be present.

A second name appeared fairly early in Eloise Butler's time - "native plant reserve." One finds references to that name in 1933. [see Jepson article] Martha Crone and later Ken Avery used the term 'reserve' when speaking of the Garden. In an essay Eloise wrote in 1926 [The Wild Botanic Garden - Early History] she explained why the second name was chosen: "It was soon found that the term "Wild Botanic Garden" was misleading to the popular fancy, so the name was changed to "Native Plant Reserve," even though she was bringing in many non-native species.

On June 19, 1929, the Park Board took official action and renamed the Garden the "Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden," to which was added "and Bird Sanctuary" in 1968 at the request of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden. Note that the Park Commissioners named it "Wild Flower." Most documents found in later years use the name with "wild flower" as two words until 1970 when "wildflower" came into use. That came about as the result of the 1968 addition of "bird sanctuary." The name addition was approved in early 1969 but in the transition when the name was officially changed to add that phrase the name - 'Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden' - became 'Eloise Butler Wild Flower and Bird Sanctuary'. with "wildflower" sometimes substituted, but without the word 'garden.' That was not satisfactory without the word 'garden' so in 1986 the MPRB officially made the name the current 'Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary' but with the two words 'Wild Flower' condensed to 'Wildflower.'

General Reference:

Martha Crone Papers and Friends of the Wild Flower Garden Papers, Minnesota Historical Society Collections.

Specific References:

1. Letter, Eloise Butler to Mrs. Frazer, Sept. 29, 1932. Pearl Frazer was the daughter of Fanny Heath of North Dakota. Mrs. Heath was a wildflower expert and correspondence friend of Eloise Butler. See *The Wild Gardener*, by Martha Hellander, pgs. 94ff.
2. Letter April 23, 1933, from Gertrude Cram to Martha Crone.
- 2a. Martha Crone's Diary, 1933. In the Martha Crone Papers, Minnesota Historical Society
3. Letter from Eloise Butler to Martha Crone 3 November 1925.
4. Annual Report of the Garden Curator to the Superintendent of Parks (until 1945) thereafter to The Board of Park Commissioners. Martha Crone Collection. Minnesota Historical Society.
- 4a. *The Fringed Gentian*TM, Winter 1978, Vol. 26 No. 1.
5. History of the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden, by Martha Crone, April 1951
6. Letter of Catherine Faragher, President of the Friends, to the Membership April 25, 1969.
- 6a. Letters between Clinton Odell and Superintendent C. A. Bossen, 1945, 1946, 1947, in the Martha Crone Collection, Minnesota Historical Society.
7. Transcript of a radio broadcast for "Outdoor Minnesota" on August 11, 1943 (A Wednesday, Martha's day off at the garden)
8. Letter to Theodore Wirth, June 22, 1933. Martha Crone Collection. Minnesota Historical Society.
- 8a. Annual Report to Parks Superintendent Theodore Wirth dated Nov. 19, 1933.
9. Papers and Newsletters of the Minnesota Mycological Society in the Martha Crone Collection. Minnesota Historical Society.
- 10.(a) Minneapolis Star Jan 10, 1944.
- (b) *Minneapolis Star* March 29, 1944.
- (c) Papers and Newsletters of the Minneapolis Science Museum Society in the Martha Crone Collection. Minnesota Historical Society. Also, *Minneapolis Star* Jan 10, 1944 and March 29, 1944.
11. Published in *The Fringed Gentian*TM, April 1976, Vol. 24 No.2
12. Published in *The Fringed Gentian*TM Vol. 30 No. 2, 1982
13. Published in the Collection of Friends Memories, 2003
14. Martha Crone's diary 1943.

Books about Martha Crone.

The Friends have produced two books on Martha Crone's history with the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. Both are found on The Friends website.

Crone, Martha and the Wild Flower Garden: *This Satisfying Pursuit* - A book-length sketch of the Garden's second curator. Downloadable PDF File. (2018)

Crone, Martha - *The Native Plant Reserve in Glenwood Park - 1933-1958*. Details of each year she was Curator. A companion volume to the above book which contains only a summary of each of these years. Downloadable PDF File. (2018)

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How cold and snowy is April? The Joys and Disconcerts of April at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden

- 1934: ---- April 1, "Two inches of snow on the ground." April 5, "paths washed out by heavy rain."
- 1935: ---- April 1, "Patch of Snow Trillium in bloom. 70 blossoms in 1 patch. Snowing all day, Snow trilliums snowed under." April 4, "1/2" ice on pond. Snowing all day until 6 inches fell. Every branch and twig beautifully ridged with snow. April 15, "Bitter cold all day, 16 above, 3/4" ice on pond, pail of water frozen solid in office. Snow Trilliums still in bloom. May 1, "Rain turning to snow, Several inches fell breaking down branches and flowers." May 16, "First warm spring day, many parties thru garden."
- 1936: ---- April 1, "Cold and deep snow everywhere, several feet deep on paths and 6 inches covering location of snow trilliums." April 5, "Bitter cold, garden frozen fast," April 6, "Very cold and snow storm." April 10, "First warm day, 45 degrees. Many visitors thru."
- 1937: ---- April 1, "Deep snow and ice in sheltered places. Birds lacking." April 3, "Heavy snow storm. Garden open all day."
- 1938: ---- April 1, "Turned very cold after 3 weeks of unusual warm weather, not a trace of ice or snow anywhere. Season advanced about 10 days."
- 1939: ---- April 1, "Snow Trillium and Skunk Cabbage in full bloom. Not a trace of snow or ice to be found." April 7, "Snowing and cold. At 4, thousands of Juncos passed thru all singing." April 17, Heavy wet snow falling followed by gale." April 18, "Six inches of snow remaining on ground all day. Snow Trilliums keep in bloom in spite of the heavy snow."
- 1940: ---- April 1, "Deep snow everywhere and nothing up."
- 1941: ---- April 1, "Patches of snow remain in many areas, altho ground not frozen and moisture soaks into ground."
- 1942: ---- April 2, "A few snow trilliums in bloom. Weather very warm. No snow or ice anywhere. This has been the mildest winter in at least 25 years. April 15, "Heat of today and yesterday extreme. Everything advancing very quickly."
- 1943: ---- April 5, "Snow Trillium and Hepatica in bloom."
- 1944: ---- April 1, "Six inches snow covering the ground. Nothing up and very cold." April 6, "Each day has been cold. April 2nd the temperature was 14 above in the morning. Pails of water frozen solid in the office." April 12, "First beautiful warm sunny day. Lakes still ice bound in morning but disappearing during the day." April 16, "Ground covered with snow. Sheet of ice on water."
- 1945: ---- March 22, "Snow Trillium in bloom."
- 1946: ---- March 28, "planted 75 snow trilliums from Mankato."
- 1947: ---- April 1, "Garden still snow and ice bound, no sign of green growth." April 5 & 6, "Heavy snow, Impossible to work anywhere." April 14, "Found first snow trilliums in bud." May 1, "Cold and rainy. 23 days in April it rained."
- 1948: ---- April 1, "Not a trace of snow, altho ice on lakes and ponds. No plant life anywhere." April 6, "Snow Trilliums in fine bloom."
- 1949: ---- April 1, "opened garden after 10 inch snowfall of 2 days ago. Appearance of midwinter, nothing out." April 10, "First snow trilliums are out, also skunk cabbage in bloom." April 14, "Heavy snow storm of 9-1/2" of snow, again we are in midwinter. Snow Trilliums buried under."
- 1950: ---- April 1, "Appearance of mid-winter. Deep snow and ice everywhere, also very cold. Gates still locked. Stove keeps office snug and warm." April 8 & 9 & 10, "More snow, hail, rain and electric storm. Snow melting slowly." April 18, "First snow trillium in bloom, also Skunk Cabbage." April 29, "Heavy snow, ground covered with several inches of snow. Many fox sparrows singing."
- 1951: ---- April 3, "Midwinter, snow several feet deep. Parked at foot of hill, hard task to walk up. Climbed over gate. dug out gate as well as office door. Snow knee deep everywhere. Record year of 88+ inches of snow." April 14, "Skunk Cabbage in bloom. Snow gone from exposed areas, much still remains in lower garden."
- 1952: ---- April 1, "Snow storm March 22. 15 inches of snow. Several feet deep in garden on the 1st." April 6 to 11, "Still deep snow and cold, chopped out gate on the 9th. First trillium cam out April 14."
- 1953: ---- April 1 - 4, "Lovely warm weather. Snow trilliums and Hepaticas budding. Snow gone, no frost heave." April 14, "Thunder storm followed on the 15th by snow, cold and strong wind. Temperature down to 20 until April 20. Snow Trilliums and Hepaticas were in full bloom, froze stiff but came to nicely after thawing out."

1954: ---- April 1, "After a warm Feb & Mar and very little snow all winter, the opening day was very cold with a light snowfall, 20° high." April 12, "First flowers out, Snow Trillium, bloodroot, Hepatica and skunk cabbage." May 1-2, "Heavy snow storm, covering of several inches. 28°. Few plants frozen."

1955: ---- April 1, "Office broken into last week." April 7, "Snow Trillium and Hepatica in bloom, also red maple, skunk cabbage."

1956: ---- April 1, "Snow in Garden 12 to 18" deep. Fresh snowfall of few days ago added to winters accumulation. Looks like deep winter." April 4, "Snow all gone except in sheltered areas after thunderstorm." April 11, "Snow Trillium and Hepaticas in bloom."

1957: ---- April 1, "No snow on ground, frost deep. April 18, "Snow trilliums out."

1958: ---- April 1, "Ground free of snow, Snow Trilliums are budding."

ELOISE BUTLER
20 MURRAY HILL ROAD
MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS
January 11, 1933

Dear Cronies,--

I have been trying in vain for a long time to write to you. The enclosed letter from the aspirant for a position in the wild garden is self-explanatory. Please keep it for me until I see you, for I may wish to show it to Mr. Wirth. I want also to thank you especially, Mrs. Crone, for what you wrote me about the continuance of the wild garden. There's too much of truth in what you say, but I will soon be able to talk with you about the matter in detail. In this time of depression nothing can be done except to hang on by the skin of one's teeth. And what, if there hain't no skin?

I must tell you how much I am pleased with the Crony Xmas package and what a surprise it was. I have found the Magic Slicer a great convenience in preparing salads, the apron just matches a new dress, the Almanac is packed with valuable information, and the lotus seeds came just in time for distribution here, although I have kept some for experiments in Minneapolis. I gave some to one who came to me for advice in starting a large wild flower sanctuary not far from Boston.

Among other gifts I had two books that I would like to share with you-- colored plates of the birds of New England, 86 of them by the noted Fuertes and 2* by Major Allan Brooks who continued the work after Fuertes' death; and a book entitled "WAH'KON-TAH", on the history of the Osage Indians, and written by a native Osage. In it you breath the very air of the western plains.

I hope that you have escaped the prev-

alent flu. We have so far, but I am touching wood! The weather is mild here and sunny for the most part. There has been snow, but it quickly melted away.

Wishing you the Happiest of New Years,

Very truly your friend,

Eloise Butler

Mail Address:
416 5th Ave. So. c/o J.W. Babcock,
Minneapolis, Minn., Sept. 29, '32

My dear Mrs. Frazer:

At the request of Mr. Wirth, Superintendent of Parks, of Minneapolis, I am answering your letter to him.

For several years I have been trying in vain to find an understudy for the Native Plant Preserve, as I have fully realized that I would not always be able to "carry on." A year ago I thought I had found the solution of the problem, but was confronted by an impasse which I still hope can be broken down. I recently wrote for advice to my friends Mrs. C.L. Hutchinson, who is director of a large bird and flower sanctuary on Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. I am anxiously awaiting her reply, for I greatly rely upon her wisdom. My aims are only to secure the preservation and perpetuity of The Preserve, as well as its helpfulness to students of Botany and lovers of wild life. When these aims are assured, I am ready to fade out of the picture and will promise that not even my ghost will return to haunt the premises.

On the first of October The Preserve is closed until the following April. I realize how valuable your assistance might be, but it would be a waste of time and a needless expense unless you could continue as curator; for my successor would require at least one season's training. Are you willing to accept this position for your life work? My salary is \$60.00 a month from April to October. This is not a year's living wage, but I have been able to get along comfortably with the addition of my teacher's pension. Pardon my brutal frankness. You have a child to care for. You are young. If you are a widow, you may marry again, however firm any present determination not to do so. In that case what would be the fate of the Preserve? The hours are long. The place is open Saturdays and Sundays, because then the general public is most free to visit it. Saturday is my off day. Working by yourself in the woods, far from a telephone, you might not be able to endure the loneliness. Guarding the property from the depredations of the thoughtless or lawless is a disagreeable duty. The park in which the Preserve lies, comprises nearly 700 acres. It has but one police officer and I seldom see him, as his services are usually needed elsewhere. The product of years of experiment may be destroyed at one fell swoop. Through all the years I have practiced rigid economy, the chief outlays, outside of my salary, being the building of the office, fencing and repairs. I have done a man's work on the place, although the Park Commissioners have always readily given me all the help that I have asked for.

Of course my successor, subject to the approval of the Superintendent, would carry out his own ideas as to the proper management of the place, but long usage has given to the public certain rights and privileges.

The office equipment, reference library, photographs, lantern slides, etc. (now my personal property) would be turned over to the Park Commissioners for the use of my successor. From the very first I have kept a "Garden Log" and a card catalogue of the plants both indigenous and introduced. If you and Mr. Wirth come to an agreement, he has suggested that I correspond with you during the winter and inform you more fully of the work.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Eloise Butler

City Wild Flower Gardener Rescues Plants From Bulldozers

MINNEAPOLIS SUNDAY TRIBUNE
June 10, 1951 W

By JANE THOMAS

Minneapolis Tribune Staff Writer

For 34 years, Mrs. Martha Crone has been a one-woman rescue squad.

Armed with a garden trowel, she saves Minnesota's precious wild flowers from tractor treads and the teeth of steam shovels.

A few years ago, she found a spot of wild poinsettias growing in New Ulm, Minn., and brought one back to Minneapolis. Since then a building boom has plowed under the New Ulm poinsettias. Hers is the only one left in the state. It blooms securely with other "rescued" plants in the wild flower garden in Theodore Wirth park.

MRS. CRONE has been curator of the wild flower garden for 15 years. Before that she was assistant—rewarded only by the joy of gardening—to Eloise Butler, who founded the garden in 1907.

Broad, bright patches of 1,000 kinds of wild plants native to Minnesota grow in the 13-acre garden—either in the dell around four small ponds or in the upland garden started in 1944 for prairie flowers. Mrs. Crone, who has possibly the greenest thumbs in the state, has coaxed foreigners to bloom there, too—the Great Yellow lily from Montana and azaleas from North Carolina.

There is even a bold clump of poison ivy, set back a ways from the garden path. Mrs. Crone cares for it as tenderly as a wild violet.

"It's educational," she says.

THIS PRETTY piece of wilderness is just one block off highway 12. An original between-the-lakes Indian trail runs through it, and the original hush of the woods hangs over it.

"It's quiet enough sometimes to hear the hummingbirds' wings," says Mrs. Crone, "and the mosquitoes."

Troops of people touring the garden—2,000 come some Sundays—seem quiet, too, except for the children who shout to hear their echoes. Mrs. Crone herself, with her graceful voice and calm eyes, seems to have caught some of the peace of the place.

A tiny house stands in the center of the woods. In this "once upon a time" atmosphere, children might well expect the house to have a candy roof and be surrounded by gingerbread people. Actually it is no fairy-tale hut, but one of the smallest office buildings in town—possibly the only office without electricity or a telephone.

INSIDE THE HOUSE are shelves of birds' nests, wasps' nests and winter bouquets.



MRS. MARTHA CRONE, WILD FLOWER EXPERT
Pounds identifying stake in pet patch of blue lupine

one corner stands a wood stove for cold days. Mrs. Crone, who lives at 3723 Lyndale avenue N., arrives at the garden in early April with the first snow trillium and stays until November when the witch hazel blooms.

Mrs. Crone, considered by plant experts as one of the country's most talented botanists, can remember as a child of four making a home in a vegetable garden for a rue anemone she found in the woods. Clinton Odell, the "motivating spirit" of the garden, whose interest in wild flowers is as faithful as Mrs. Crone's, claims she has a special sixth sense for finding hidden flowers.

"In all my botanizing trips I've never been lost," said Mrs. Crone, but admits she carries a compass in a swamp. "You can't always find a compass flower to guide you," she said, referring to the plant whose leaves point north, east, south and west.

BESIDES RESCUING flowers from steam shovels, Mrs. Crone has saved a lot of human beings from a worse fate. She is one of a few "mushroom experts" who can tell the difference between an edible mushroom and the Death Cap. Distinguishing

Angel. Long ago she disproved the old wife's tale about boiling a questionable mushroom with a dime in the pan to see if the dime turned black.

As well as conducting daily tours in the garden, doing all the necessary planting and bat-

ting weeds which could choke the wild flower garden in the short space of two years, Mrs. Crone, now a widow and grandmother, travels an average of 2,000 miles a month. Sometimes she takes color photographs to add to her collection of 2,200 which she uses for wintertime lectures.

Sometimes she digs up plants sets them in moist moss and brings them back in the extra big trunk of her car. Often when she returns home late, she plants her wild flowers after dark. One whole bed of violets was planted one night by the light of the moon and a lantern propped in the path.

"Wild flowers are my life work," she says. "And they're important. Everything was won once."

June 10th

1951

Inventory of tools in the Wild Flower Garden

November 1950

- 11 Lengths of hose
- 3 Sprinklers
- 1 Wheelbarrow
- 1 10 ft. ladder
- 1 Roller
- 2 Screw drivers
- 1 Wrench
- 4 Files
- 1 Pole saw
- 2 Sprinkling cans
- 1 Grub hoe
- 1 Sledge hammer
- 2 rakes
- 4 Shovels
- 2 Spading forks
- 3 Hand sprays
- 3 Axes
- 1 Hudson Sprayer
- 1 pr. Hip boots
- 1 pr. Knee boots
- 2 Grass hooks
- 1 Hedge clipper
- 2 Pruning saws
- 2 Hand pruners
- 2 Grass Shears
- 1 Hammer
- 1 Scythe
- 1 Two-man saw
- 1 pliers
- 1 Hoe
- 2 Hand cultivators

Martha Crone

The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden



Founding Directors of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden.

The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden was founded on June 18, 1952. There were six founding directors - Clinton Odell, Russell H. Bennett, Mrs. Carroll Binder, Martha Crone, Donald C. Dayton, and Leonard F. Ramberg.

Clinton Odell

Clinton M. Odell, as most readers familiar with the Friends will know, was the instigator of the whole affair. He was a botany student of Eloise Butler, visitor and sometime helper to her in the Garden. His business, the Burma-Vita Company was located just blocks away on Chestnut Avenue. He was also on the State Board of Forestry and a director of the McPhail School of Music. He provided financial assistance to the Garden while Martha Crone was curator prior to founding The Friends. He was President and a director of The Friends until his death in 1958. The others were all acquaintances of Mr. Odell. More details in the Odell article



Clinton Odell with spouse Any and daughter Moana, early 1950s,

Martha Crone

Martha Crone was the curator of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden at that time, having succeeded Eloise Butler upon her death in 1933. She became Secretary of The Friends with membership and newsletter duties, adding treasurer duties in 1954. She served in those roles until 1971, remaining a director until 1973. She retired as Garden Curator in 1959. The Martha E. Crone Visitors Shelter in the Garden is named in her honor.



Martha Crone in the Garden, 1951

Russell H. Bennett

Russell Hoadley Bennett II was born on November 30, 1896. His father was a mining engineer and Mr. Bennett began the same career in 1922 as mine surveyor with the Meriden Iron Company. He held a number of positions in the mining industry including the positions of Chairman of Electro Manganese Corp in Knoxville, TN and of Placer Development Ltd. of Vancouver, BC. He wrote a book well known in mining circles in 1979 - Quest for Ore. For his entrepreneurial and engineering accomplishments in the finding and development of challenging mineral enterprises

throughout the world and his dedication to his fellow man, he was awarded in 1978 the AIME William Lawrence Saunders Gold Medal by the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers.

In the Minneapolis area he was at one time the Mayor of Deephaven, MN, President of Dunwoody Institute from 1937 - 1948 and was Chairman of the Board of Dunwoody 1953 - 1957.



Russell H. Bennett, 1978 photo.

In 1932 he realized a long-cherished dream and bought a ranch in southern Alberta Canada. From his experiences of becoming a rancher he wrote the book The Complete Rancher in 1965.

Mr. Bennett was a founding director of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden in 1952 and remained a director of The Friends until 1968 and was an honorary director until 1980. He and other long-time directors were invited to attend the 1977 25th Annual Meeting of the Friends and say a few words but he was unable to attend as he was on his way to his ranch in Alberta. He then attended the Annual Meeting the following year on May 20, 1978 at which he made a few comments indicating his pleasure at the progress being made in the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. This was his last meeting with the

Friends. He passed away on Dec. 16, 1981 and is buried at Lakewood Cemetery.

Dorothy Walton Binder

Dorothy Walton married Carroll Binder on May 24, 1920, the couple having met while they were serving in the Red Cross, working with Belgian refugees during WWI. They both pursued journalism as a career, and after a few short stints at different newspapers, including the *Minneapolis Daily Star*, they ended up in Chicago in the 1920s where Dorothy wrote articles for *The New Majority*, a labor newspaper and Carroll worked for the *Chicago Daily News* under Frank Knox. One of Dorothy's articles "The Stockwells of Minnesota" appeared in the *New Republic* on Dec. 22, 1937. Dorothy was especially active in the National Council of Jewish Women, of which she was president (1932-1937).



Dorothy Walton Binder (left) with just retired Garden Curator Martha Crone, at the dedication of a memorial in the Wildflower Garden to Clinton Odell. 1959 newspaper photo.

The Binders had four children. Their eldest son Lt. Carroll Binder Jr. died in WWII, lost at sea when his B-17, on which he was navigator, crashed in the English Channel when returning from a Berlin raid. The family was unable to verify his demise for months causing great trauma for the family. After the war it was found that his body had been recovered by a German fisherman and buried in France by the German authorities.

There were three other children, daughter Mary Kelsey Binder, born in 1923 and twins David and Debby born in 1931, in London where the Binders were working for the *Daily News*. They returned to Chicago in late 1931 but after the *Daily News* changed ownership in 1944 with the death of Frank Knox (who was Secretary of the Navy at the time), the Binders moved to Minneapolis in 1945 to work for the *Minneapolis Tribune*, Carroll becoming editorial page editor. Dorothy was a founding Director of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden in 1952 and remained on the Board until 1964 after which she was an ex-officio honorary director until 1976. During her tenure she was Vice-President from 1952 until the death of [Clinton Odell](#) in June 1958, when she became President, serving in that role until January 1962.

In 1974 Friends Past President Cay Faragher received a letter from Dorothy and she informed the Friends as follows:

Mrs. Carroll Binder, past President of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, has maintained her active interest in the "Garden" since its inception. A long letter from her brings us up to date. Mrs. Binder, with daughter, Debby moved to Oakland, Calif., in 1971, where she has successfully battled her Parkinson's disease with the magic drug EeDopa. In spite of other problems plus a cataract operation, she has been finishing her husband's "papers" as well as those of her father for the Minnesota Historical Society. Her daughter Mary Kelsey and husband are in

Oakland, and their four grown children are a great source of pleasure with their brilliant careers. The highlight of this year was a fall trip to Washington, D.C., to see son Dave and family, just the returned from six years in Germany with New York Times. After some moving about, Mrs. Binder is now settled at the Mark Twain Retirement Center, 2438 35th Ave. Oakland California 94601

In 1978, when she was 84, the Friends were still receiving donations from her from California. That is the last record we have of her. Her papers are included with her husbands at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

Donald C. Dayton

Donald Chadwick Dayton was born on Aug. 13, 1914, one of six sons of George N. Dayton and Grace Bliss Dayton.

He suffered from polio as a child, and later helped found the Sister Kenny Institute, which did pioneering work in the rehabilitation of polio victims and those with other disabling conditions.



Donald Dayton (right) with Southdale architect Victor Gruen, 1952.

Mr. Dayton, was a 1937 graduate of Yale University, joined Dayton's Department Stores as a stockboy shortly after graduation. He held positions as buyer, merchandising manager and general manager, and in 1950 was named

president. In 1960 he was elected chief executive officer and when he retired in 1968 he was chairman of the board.

He was a member of the National Alliance of Businessmen, the Urban Coalition and the Metropolitan Council.

Donald Dayton was a founding Director of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden in 1952 and remained on the Board until 1959. He also held the office of Vice-President, along with Dorothy Binder, from 1953 to 1959. At the time of the founding of the Friends he was working with architect Victor Gruen on the design of the nation's first enclosed shopping mall - Southdale Center in Edina MN.

Donald's mother, Grace Bliss Dayton was a member of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden and when she passed away in April 1966, Friends Secretary and Newsletter editor Martha Crone wrote: *"Among her many activities she was a staunch supporter of the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden. Her interest and enthusiasm in furthering the Garden will be greatly missed."*

Donald Dayton died of Cancer on June 22, 1989.

Leonard F. Ramberg

Leonard F. Ramberg was born on January 10, 1906. His career was centered on business and civic affairs. He was elected a Minneapolis Public Schools director in 1948, a City Council Alderman from 1945 to 1949; he was Minneapolis Postmaster 1954 - 57; a founder and President of the Citizens League of Minneapolis and Hennepin County; and at various times Chairman of the Minneapolis YMCA General Board; President of the American Swedish Institute; Chairman of the Augsburg College Board of Regents from 1966 - 1972. In 1988 he received the Minneapolis Rotary "Service above Self" award, even though he was not a member.

In business he was at times Corporate Secretary of the Glenwood-Inglewood Water Company, Treasurer of the Burma-Vita Company and then made a career at Northwestern National Bank from which he retired as Senior Vice President in 1971.



Leonard F. Ramberg, 1972 photo.

He was a founding Director of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden in 1952 and remained on the Board until 1972 after which he was an honorary director until 1976. Mr. Ramberg also served as the Friends Treasurer during the first two years of our organization and as Vice-President in 1960 and 1961. He and other long-time directors were invited to attend the 1977 25th Annual Meeting of the Friends (June 4) and say a few words. Mr. Ramberg stated he became interested in the garden through Mr. Clinton Odell. He stated that the garden was a tribute to the interest and work of Mr. Odell who really believed in the need for it. Mr. Ramberg then expressed his appreciation for the invitation to be with us on this occasion.

That was his last known meeting with the Friends. He passed away on Oct. 22, 1988.

Obituaries

LOVERS OF THE WILDFLOWER GARDEN OWE A GREAT DEBT TO MARTHA CRONE

'Wildflower Lady' Martha Crone dies; made Butler Garden grow

By Ted Jones
Staff Writer

"... Dry flower stalks are crowned with puffs of snow... and the green of pines and hemlocks are sternly etched against a clear blue sky..."

The description of a garden in winter was written more than 30 years ago by Martha Crone, Minneapolis' self-taught "Wildflower Lady," who died Sunday in Minneapolis after a short illness. She was 95.

Crone was an award-winning curator, or head gardener and administrator, at the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden at Theodore Wirth Park from 1933 until 1959. She was editor of the "Fringed Gentian," a newsletter for the Friends of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, from which the quote is taken.

During Crone's tenure, the Butler garden (named after botanist Eloise Butler, who headed the garden from 1911 to 1933) grew to encompass 13 acres and hundreds of species of wildflowers that Crone transplanted.

In 1969, the wildflower garden society donated the garden shelter and named it in Crone's honor.

"She did tremendous work saving flowers from spots in Minnesota that were about to be plowed under," said Kenneth Avery, who followed her as head gardener in 1959.

Crone, who was born in Minneapolis, quit school after the eighth grade to work. Friends and associates say she was largely self-taught in botany, horticulture and writing.

"Gardening was always an interest of hers, fostered from the times when she and my grandfather would take the streetcar out to Anoka and walk back so they could see what was growing alongside the road," said Judith Prevey, Crone's granddaughter. "Her interest was expanded after she met Eloise Butler in 1921." From that point, Prevey said, her grandmother was Butler's first assistant in the garden. Crone, who always wore her trademark tam-o'-shanter while gardening, replaced Butler when she died in 1933.

Crone's achievements included the addition of wild ferns and orchids into the garden, and the transplanting of one of Minnesota's wild poinsettias shortly before the last patch was destroyed near New Ulm in the late 1940s.

"She always had her tools and gunny sacks for transplanting in the car," Prevey said.

Crone's gardening season began each year in March, about a month before the garden opened. She oversaw repair to walkways, transplanted species and planted seeds. Once the garden was open, she was on hand for day-to-day operations, led groups through the garden and answered questions.

When snow covered the garden in winter, Crone worked at the Minneapolis Public Library and gave lectures.

Crone was active with the Cook County Historical Society and was an officer of the Order of the Eastern Star.



Martha Crone

Besides her granddaughter, Judith, of Minneapolis, Crone is survived by her daughter, Janet C. Prevey, of Mankato, Minn.; granddaughter, Lynda Wander of New Brighton, three great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

At her request, no services will be held. Private burial will be held at Crystal Lake Cemetery in Minneapolis.