

The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden



Martha Hellander and her book about Eloise Butler - *The Wild Gardener*

From 1985 to 1990 Martha Hellander and her family lived near the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. In 1987, when she discovered there were no books about the life of the Garden's namesake and first curator she became interested in writing such a book.

At The Friends' Annual Meeting on May 14th, 1988, Martha was introduced. At that time she was a new member and was already doing research for her book. Several members of The Friends, including former President Moana Beim (daughter of Friends Founder Clinton Odell) would provide information for her.

At the next Annual Meeting on May 20, 1989 Martha made a presentation on the progress of her work. She had contacted 13 descendants of Eloise Butler's siblings, two of whom were named for Eloise Butler and she had visited Malden MA in 1988. It was her intention to travel east in July for continued research (details below). Butler's family was from Maine and Massachusetts.



Martha Hellander signing her book in the Martha Crone Shelter on May 12, 2002.



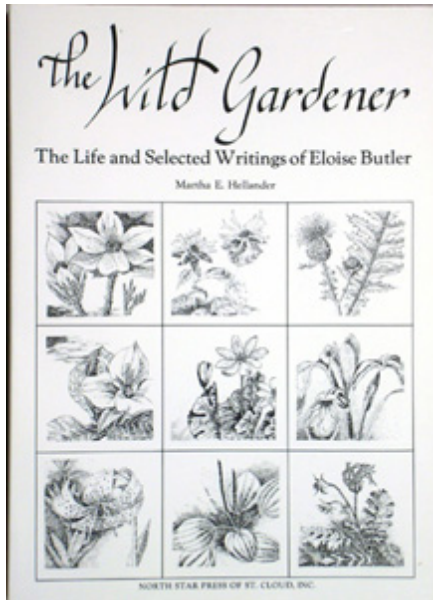
Eloise Butler ca. 1890.
Photo: Branche's Studio,
Minnesota Historical
Society Collection.

During the past year she had also met with former Garden Curator Martha Crone in her nursing home. When Martha Crone passed away in February 1989 her daughter Janet Prevey was preparing to sell the house and Martha Hellander was invited to review the hoard of documents that Martha Crone had stored away, including her slide collection. It was here Hellander found all the notes made for Martha's newsletter issues, her diaries, correspondence between her and Eloise Butler, some of Miss Butler's diaries and Miss Butler's long lost Garden Logs. The circumstances could not have been more fortuitous as Janet was killed in a car accident four months after her mother's death. Janet passed Martha's slide collection to the Friends, who used them for a number of years, and the documents to Hellander. Most of that material, including the slides, is now at the Minnesota Historical Society in the Martha Crone Collection.

At this time it was Martha's intention to produce a book in two parts, the first part, a biography, and the second, a selection of Eloise Butler's writings. It ended up as one book. She read one story by Eloise at the 1989 meeting - "The Quest for the Walking Fern". At this time the Friends provided \$870 in assistance for her expenses.

At the Friends Annual Meeting on May 19, 1990, Martha was back for another report on her progress. She was working on chapters 5 & 6 of the book. The trip to Maine the

previous summer provided much information on Eloise's early years. Martha hoped to finish the draft of the book by the end of the year.



The Wild Gardener received a Minnesota Book Award in 1992.

In the mean time she was also giving talks to groups about Eloise Butler. The Friends provided another \$3,400 to help with her expenses. The Friends applied for a Minnesota Historical Society Grant and Martha was awarded \$3,600 for the project.

By the time of the 1991 Annual Meeting on May 18th, Martha could report that the the book, now titled *The Wild Gardener*, would be published at the end of June 1992 by the North Star Press of St. Cloud, MN.

Her next appearance at an annual meeting was the following year on May 16, 1992 when she spoke about the process of getting the book published. She also announced that she and her family were moving to Chicago in June but she returned after publication to sign books at an event on Sunday August 2, commemorating Eloise Butler's birthday when a special stamp cancellation by the U.S. Post Office.

The Friends promoted her book in our Newsletter, *The Fringed Gentian*TM, with handouts in the Martha Crone Shelter at the Garden

and at various events.

The Wild Gardener received a Minnesota Book Award in 1992, so Martha was back in the Garden on Mother's Day, May 9, 1993 from Noon to 4 PM for a book signing. She made several more appearances at events with her last appearance in 2002 when she appeared for a book signing on May 12, 2002 at the Garden during The Friends' 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Martha also received funding help from the Minneapolis Woman's Club and the Minnesota Historical Society as mentioned above.

Many members of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board helped her with her research as well as archivists, librarians and historians on the east coast where the Butler family lived. Staff at the University of Minnesota and other institutions in the east helped with the scientific text.

In addition there were many individuals who were still alive who had contact with Miss Butler, or their relatives who had information to share.

The Wild Gardener is no longer in print and not available from the Friends.

Details of the east coast trip: In the summer of 1989 Martha went east to do research in the area where Eloise Butler grew up.

Appleton Maine was the original home of the Butler Family. Eloise was born on their first farm in 1851. In 1859 they moved to the second farm up toward the hill known



Martha Hellander in Maine in 1989. Friends photo.

as Appleton Ridge. They attended the Baptist Church. In 1870 having finished High School, she was enrolled in the Eastern State Normal School on the coast in Castine Maine, graduating in 1873. By 1874 she was in Minneapolis.

When Martha returned in the fall she made the following report to the Friends:

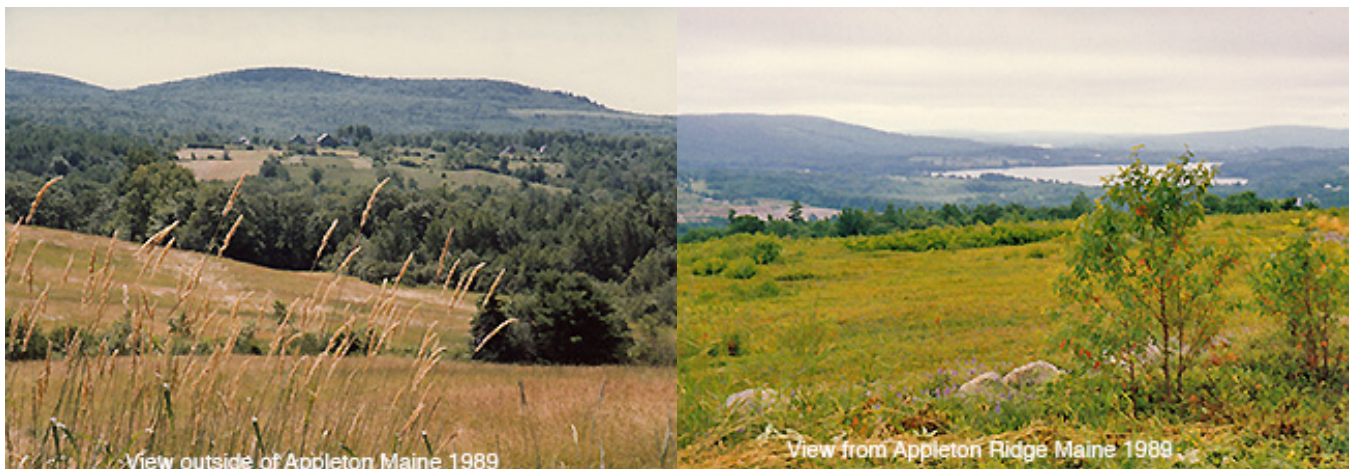
"I had a heavily-scheduled itinerary of historical societies, people and places. I accomplished all my objectives and made contacts for correspondence. In Massachusetts I reviewed an entire (rare) set of the publication *Wildflower*, owned by the Arnold Arboretum library. I have found no evidence of any public wildflower garden in the United States founded prior to Eloise Butler's. I believe it is the oldest. I have found records of Eloise's attendance at summer and extension courses at Harvard University. In Lynn I found records of Eloise's years in high school and her graduation.

In Malden MA I met Mary and Frank Tribble, elderly neighbors of Eloise's sister, Cora Butler Pease; and Leon Cushing, present owner of Cora's house in Malden where Eloise spent winters after retiring from teaching science in Minneapolis High Schools. [Martha wrote "Frank Cushing" as owner but photos provided state "Leon Cushing" as owner.]

In Maine: I spent five days in Appleton, where Eloise was born; and one day in Castine, where she went to Normal School. In Appleton I had the generous assistance of Theodore Brown, former lawyer and now local historian. He has become interested in Eloise Butler and her family, who lived down the road from his own farm. He guided me to the farm where Eloise was born and spent the first eight years, with her grandparents' place just across the road. The owners showed me through both houses, and the fields where Eloise roamed as a child. The "ledgy pasture" through which she walked on her way to school was filled with wild blueberries.



Above: Appleton Ridge on the road where the second Butler farm was located.



View outside of Appleton Maine 1989

View from Appleton Ridge Maine 1989



Appleton Maine main street 1989



Appleton Maine 1989



Baptist Church, Appleton Maine 1989



Front of Currant house on 2nd Butler Farm, Appleton



Rear of house on 2nd Butler Farm



House on original Butler Farm, Appleton ME 1989



Original barn foundation on 1st Butler Farm, Appleton ME

One evening, after I had spent the day searching deeds at the Knox County Recorder's office, Mr. Brown stayed up until 2 A.M. studying the deeds. He determined that in 1959 the Butlers had moved to a second farm, which we visited the next morning. In the door of the barn we found a board inscribed "O. R. Butler - 1863." The present owners had never been able to decipher it."

Here are some photos, courtesy of Martha Hellander, that she took in 1989 while doing research in the east.



Above: The coastline at Castine Maine where Eloise Butler attended Eastern State Normal School. Castine is located across Penobscot Bay from Appleton, except Appleton is 15 miles inland.



Normal School, Castine ME



Coastline, Castine Maine where Eloise attended Eastern State Normal School



Cora Pease house at 20 Murray Hill Road in Malden MA. above left Ethel Moore (left), Eloise M. Riggs (right) at street entrance. At right the dining room

