

The Friends of the Wildflower Garden



Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden Fencing - Historical Details

The 1924 Fence

In order to really secure the Garden from large animals, vandals and people that just wandered in from all directions, it had to be securely fence and equipped with gates that could be locked. Eloise Butler even resorted to the newspaper on three occasions to state her case for a fence. Prior to 1924 the Park Board could not allocate funds to add fencing. A fence for the original 3 acres was required by the 1907 Board action creating the Garden. In Martha Hellander's book *The Wild Gardener*, she, at one point says the Garden was unfenced (1, pg. 79) but on another page (1, pg. 85) says there was an original enclosure of 3 acres. Although Hellander gives no reference for her "unfenced" statement, the original 1907 fence around the 3 acres would have been south of the tarvia path (sometimes referred to as a road) in what is now the current Garden space and what was then the original 1907 part of the Garden.



This winter view on Christmas Day 1932 shows part of Eloise Butler's original fence in the hemlock grove.
Photo taken by Martha Crone.

As early as 1912, Eloise Butler saw the need for more fencing. She wrote for the 1912 Annual Report of the Board of Park Commissioners: *The labor of the curator would be materially brightened if the garden were fenced and more warning signs posted.* She reported that her work consisted of conducting visitors, exterminating pestilent weeds and protecting the property from marauders. For 'tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis, 'tis true' that a small proportion of our citizens have not yet learned to name the birds without a gun, or to love the wood rose and leave it on its stalk.

Ms. Butler's worst menace was "spooners". A headline in the *Minneapolis Tribune* on September 18, 1921 read: "*Glenwood Park Wants Wire Fence to Keep Out Spooners.*" The article explained Ms. Butler's thoughts that cats and dogs may leave a trail in the vegetation but spooners were the real problem. The full text read as follows:

It's not the wild, voracious mosquito-
It's not the snooping vagabond dog -
Nor is it the pussy-footing feline -

But it's the demon surreptitious spooner that's brought the need for an encircling barbed wire fence around the wild flower garden in Glenwood Park to save plants of incalculable scientific value from destruction. A stray cat will pitter patter into the garden and leave a narrow trail. A dog seeking food perhaps in the shape of a ribbit (sic) will snoop through and leave a wider wallow -
But the spooning couple -

(Eloise Butler quote) "For destructive properties the army of tussock worms is a piker when compared with the Spooner." (2)

On June 22, 1924 the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* published a short article titled "Flower Garden Director Urges Fence be Built." Eloise stated that the collection will be ruined unless a fence is built around the

property at once. Theodore Wirth was quoted as saying that the approximate expense would be \$600 but there were no funds available. Eloise said "I will pay for the building of a fence myself, if necessary to save the collection. Later in 1924 while the fence work was in process, in the *Minneapolis Journal* (copy follows) Eloise was quoted saying "The fence is needed to keep our the few vandals who destroy in a few minutes the work of years and spoil the garden for the rest of the visitors." The article concluded - "Tired of waiting years for it to be built, she finally is having it put up herself." (3)

Thus, in 1924 Eloise contracted, at her own expense, to have the fencing completed for a sum of \$696.10. She paid \$400 down, gave a note for \$200 to be paid within a month or when the fence was completed, and the final amount by a note to be paid in the spring of 1925. Eloise wrote that the fence was not completed prior to her annual Winter return to Malden Massachusetts in October. (4)

One set of fences or two?

Written evidence for two fences: Eloise could not afford to fence the entire area of the Garden as it totaled about 25 acres at that time (1, page 155)(5). Based on Butler's log notes, after 1924 she had two enclosures which she referred to as the North Enclosure and the South Enclosure, the north protecting the wetland orchids, both referenced with a "brook" running through them. These enclosures would have been on the north and south sides of the tarvia path that bisected the area from east to west. (See Garden Pools article for path detail). She wrote on July 16, 1924 "Lady Slipper meadow enclosed today, fence not yet completely braced." That meadow was in the northern part of the Garden below the outlet channel for the dam that was built by Eloise, that formed a small open pool in the original southern part of the Garden. On July 20 she began planting near that fence; she wrote "Planted from Glenwood Park, 51 *Aster azureus* near southeast gate of lady slipper enclosure." She noted on August 1st planting in the "north enclosure." This would imply that there was another enclosure, more southern, but she does not mention actually planting anything in this "south enclosure" by name until October 8, 1925, although there are numerous entries in the log prior to that of planting "near fence" without stating which fence. (4)

Hellander further states (1 pg. 85) that Eloise enclosed 5 acres in the north meadow area of the Lady's-slippers in 1924 but she does not give a source for that statement, so we are left with this conclusion: The original 1907 3 acre fence, if there was one, would have been in the southern enclosure, south of the tarvia path that bisected Butler's Garden of 1924. It was only after 1907 that the area of the north meadow was added to the Garden. So, Eloise had two enclosures built in 1924 - the one in the north meadow, north of the tarvia path and one south of the tarvia path - perhaps adding to the original 1907 fence, if there was one, or completely replacing it, but still concentrated in the wetland part of the Garden based on Butler's statement about a brook running through both areas. Further confirmation that there were two Garden areas separated by the tarvia path is contained in Butler's 1926 submission to the bulletin circular of the Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter. This article discussed the trees of the Garden and she states in one section about a Balsam Poplar that "It is planted near the gate on the south side of the tarvia road that divides the precincts."

It would be within the "north enclosure" that the Mallard Pool was constructed in 1932. She noted in her log on July 7, 1932 "Mallard Pool completed in north enclosure." That places the "north enclosure" north of the current back fence of the Garden in the wetland area that was once part of the Garden and has now grown wild. Back in Malden, Eloise wrote to the Crones (Martha and William) that she had informed Park Superintendent Wirth about what she did and never asked for reimbursement. She was pleasantly surprised to receive a note from him promising a check for the full amount by early December. Thus she says "You may believe that I am very happy." (6)

Photo and map evidence for two fences: Several photos are available from the 1930s that show two sets of fences. In addition both the site plan blueprint and the survey drawn by the Park Board for the addition of the Upland Garden in 1944 clearly outline a fence on both sides of the bisecting tarvia path. (see site plan adaptation below.



Above: A group of visitors looking over the fence into the lower enclosure in Summer 1937. Photo Martha Crone Papers,



Above: 1936 - The path in the hemlocks with fencing on both sides and the bird feeding station on one side. This is in the same area as the photo on page 1 and indicates that the fencing in the southern enclosure was split by this path from the fencing in the northern enclosure. Photo Martha Crone Papers, MHS.

1938 and Later:

Some of the Eloise Butler's 1924 fencing may have been of a temporary nature or just worn out because in 1937 Martha Crone added this to her annual report to the board of park commissioners:

Greatly lacking is an adequate fence enclosing the reserve, as the present one is so run down and time worn as to be of little service. (December 10, 1937).

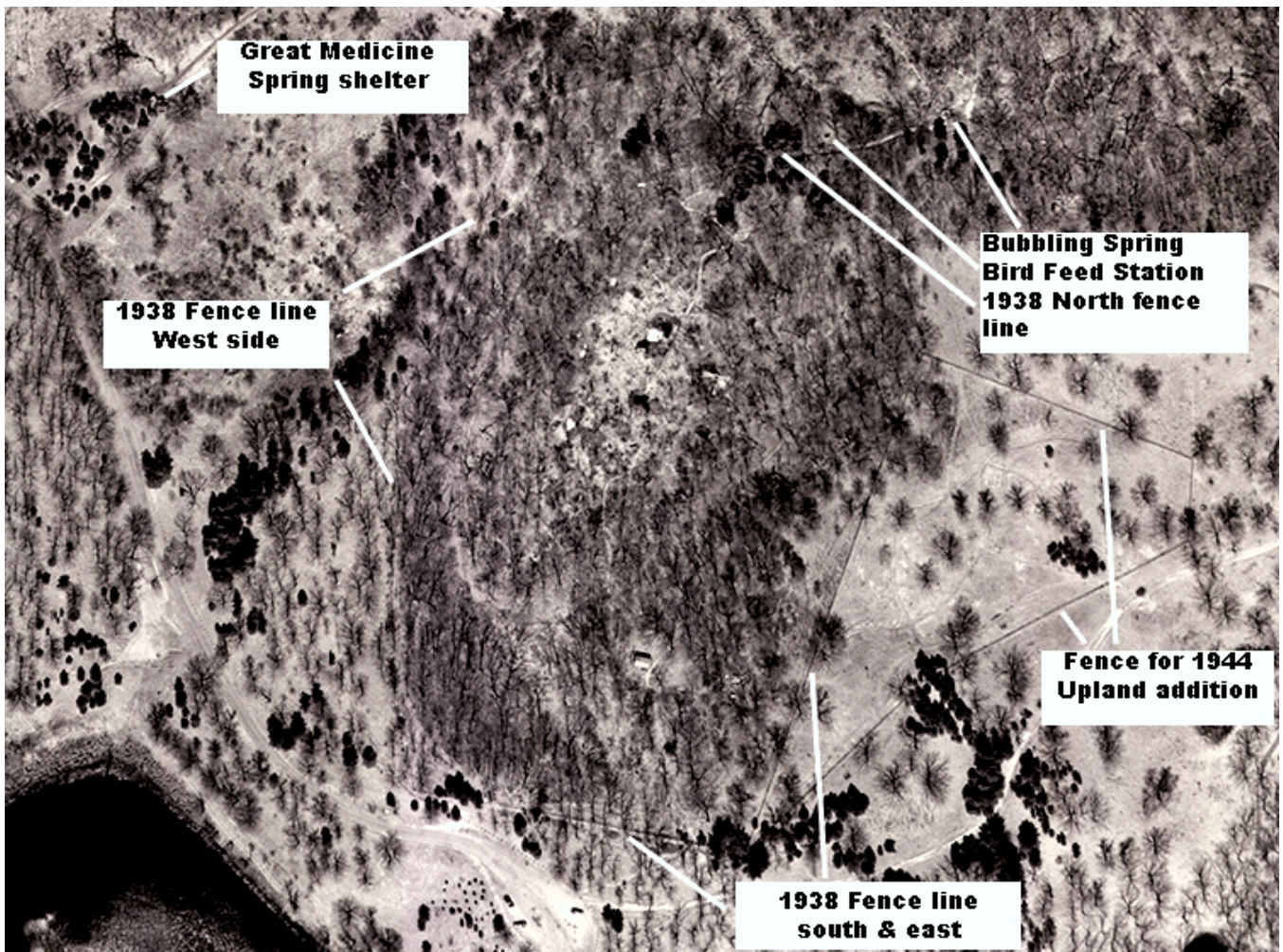
In quick response, in 1938 a permanent chain-link fence was built by a WPA crew in the southern part of the Garden. It was stated that 1,900 linear feet was installed which is hardly enough to enclose about 5-1/2 acres.⁽⁷⁾ However, aerial photos from 1938 partially show a fence line, highlighted by a snow line, enclosing what was then the Garden Martha Crone tended, about 9 or 10 acres - that is the portion south of the tarvia path, which was the southern part of Eloise Butler's 25 acres which had also included the northern meadow and adjacent areas. A 1947 photo shows this more clearly. (see photo below) The new fence was six feet high and of wire mesh, with 3 gates for entrance.

Below: The 1938 Fence, just completed, erected by a WPA crew. Photo ©Walter Dahlberg.



All that today constitutes the Woodland Garden was fenced in, the amount of fencing was obviously much more than the 1,900 feet reported. The existing parts of the wire mesh fence (2025) is aged and perhaps the same one erected in 1938. There is no record yet found that speaks to a later replacement until the expansion of the east side boundary in 2022 and 2024. On January 18 1939, Martha Crone wrote that the Park Board workers were in putting in a new fence in the "lower enclosure" which would seem to be the "North enclosure" as the North section of the Garden is of lower elevation. ⁽⁸⁾ That 1939 fencing was then a replacement for the old fencing on the north side of the tarvia path along the back of the Garden and at each end included a projection that extended into the north meadow but did not form a complete enclosure (see survey and site plan).

Below: This spring 1947 aerial photo of the Garden area shows the main features of the area and the fence lines of the 1938 fence and the new Upland Garden fence. Detail of the northern area is shown in another image on the next page. North is up in the photo. Photo Courtesy University of Minnesota.



The Upland Garden

In 1944 Clinton Odell proposed to the Park Board to add an upland area to the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden, Martha Hellander's research found that Odell said to the Park Board that the northern area (which included the Mallard Pool) should never have been fenced and that it was swampy and should be abandoned in favor of an upland area which the garden did not have at that time (1, page 104).

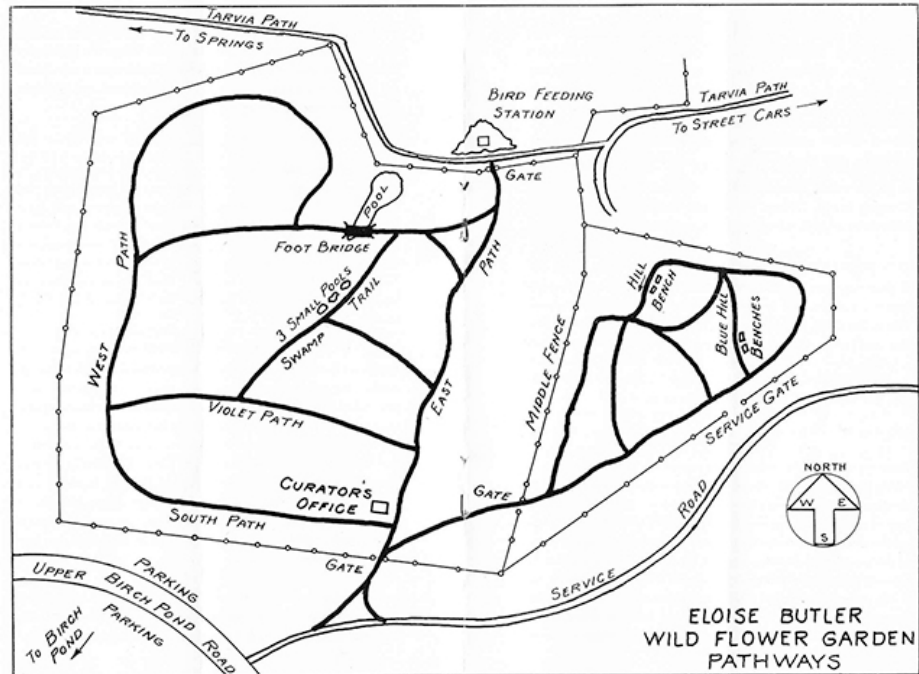
In her Annual Report to the Park Board for 1944 [February 20, 1945], Martha Crone Wrote

The proposed extension of the fence enclosure, made possible through the efforts and contributions of Mr. Clinton Odell, to accommodate native upland and prairie plants will fill a long needed want. It is greatly appreciated and further development of this project is looked forward to with great interest.

The 1939 fencing in the lower (northern) enclosure is the fence that is partially shown on Martha Crone's 1952 map that was part of her Self-Conducted Tour brochure (map on next page) and on the 1944 site plan and survey for the addition. Her map shows the bird feeding station at the back gate with a fence around it. The bird feeding station that was on the north side of a long fence which paralleled the tarvia path (see 1936 photo above and aerial photos above and below) now becomes

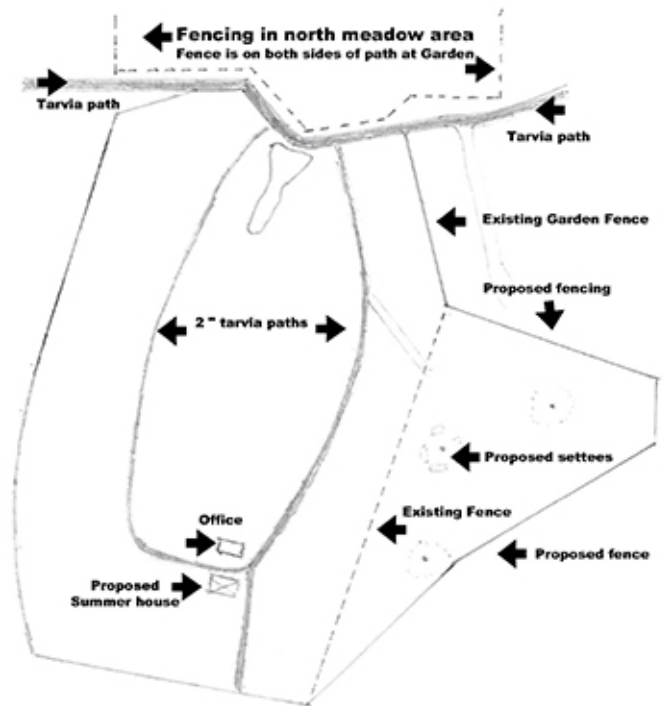
separately fenced in. The aerial photo from 1947 shows this arrangement. A person knowledgeable about that bird feeding station and the area in the 1950s, Mr. J. S. Futcher, wrote that the bird feeding station was fenced separately and that there was also a large birch swale in that area that was fenced.⁽⁹⁾ Later he states, the birch swale fencing was removed, he believes in the 1950s, leading to the deterioration of the area. We have photos by Martha Crone from 1948 and 1951 showing an extensive grove of birches. The map and drawing

Below: Martha Crone's 1952 map showing the bird feeding station and a partial



indicates he is speaking of the northern area sometimes referred to as the "lower enclosure" or the "north meadow" - the area where Eloise Butler constructed the Mallard Pool.

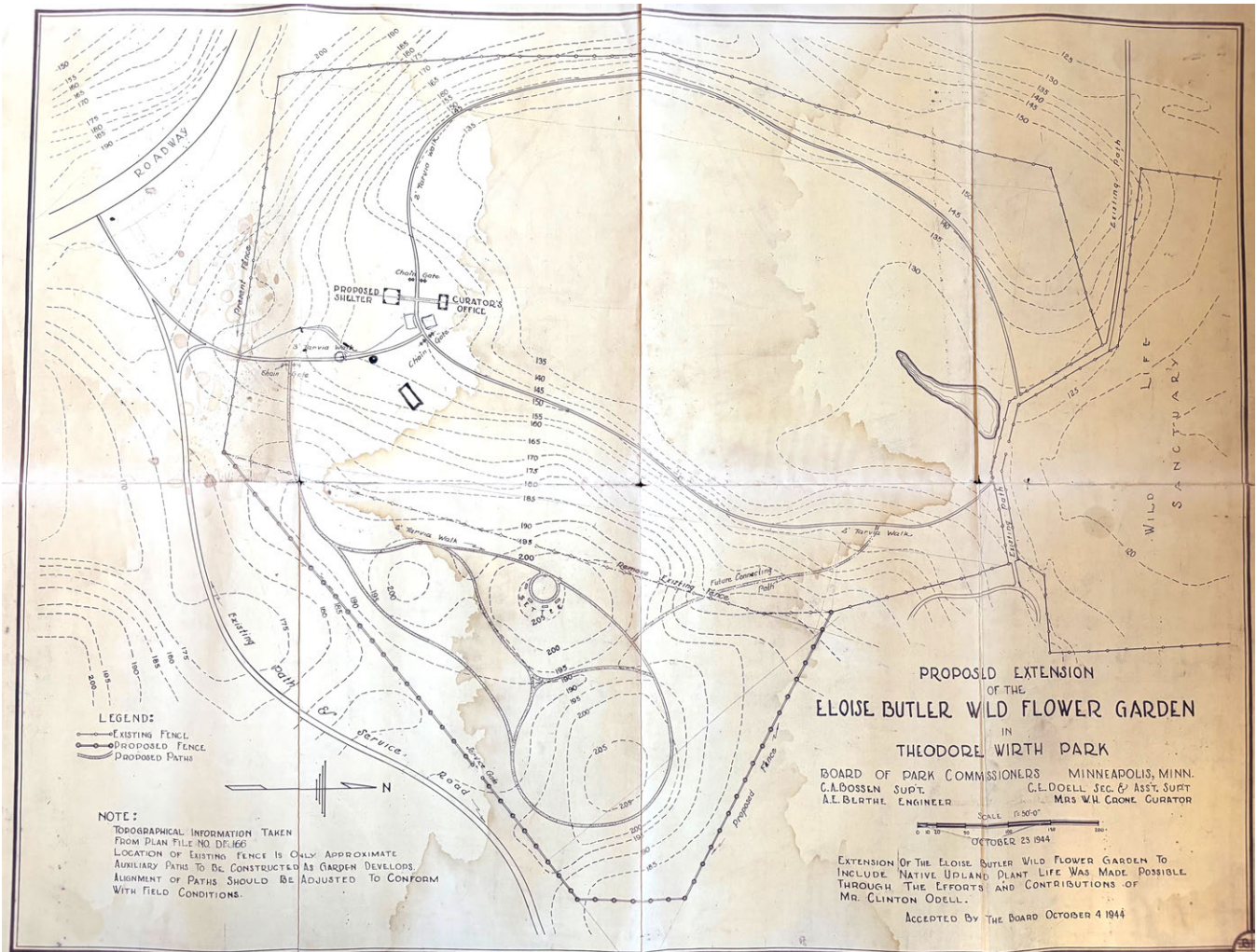
Gardener Cary George remembered that at least some of the chain link fencing that was used in the northern enclosure was removed at some point in time and used to fence the new upland addition, because in 1944 wartime shortages of steel precluded new fencing being obtained (Conversation with author on May 18, 2018). Presumably there was a garden record of this, but it may have been related to him by his predecessor Ken Avery who worked for Martha Crone for 4 years before taking over from her. It is clear though from Martha Crone's map that some of the fencing was not removed until the early 1950s as Mr. Futcher remembers (see above notes). We do know that no fencing was done in the Upland until after the war in Europe was over in 1945 but by the time of a 1947 aerial photo it was fenced.



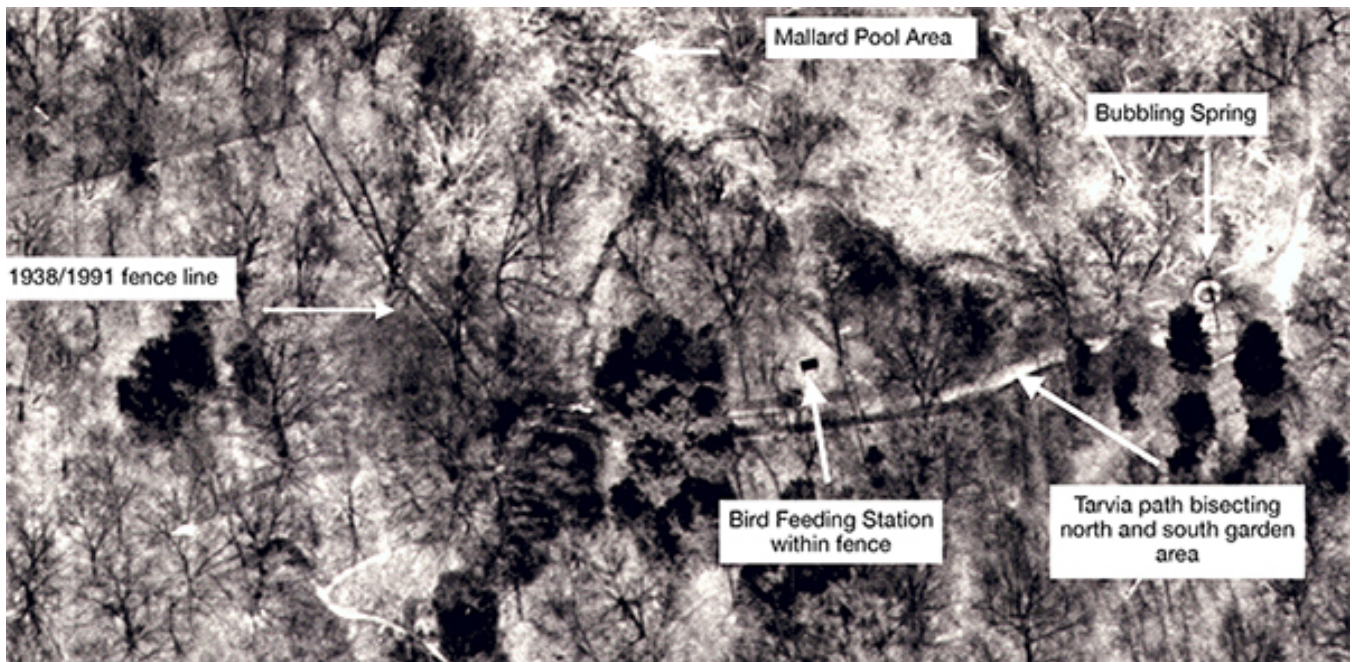
1944 Proposed addition and changes at Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden.
 Accepted by Park Board on Oct. 4, 1944
 Hand-drawing based on Park Board Blueprint in Martha Crone Papers at MHS

The drawing is taken from the 1944 Park Board site plan for the proposed Upland Garden addition. Note at that time the northern enclosure still had a fence with the southern part of it paralleling the

Below: The actual 1944 survey map of the existing Wildflower Garden and proposed changes for the upland addition. North direction is to the right side of the survey. You can see illustrated the existing fence line in the northern (or "lower") enclosure. There is a notation in the lower right corner referencing Clinton Odell. Some of the proposed infrastructure was never built. Map courtesy MPRB archives.



Below: Aerial photo detail from 1947 showing the fence line at the northern end of the southern enclosure,

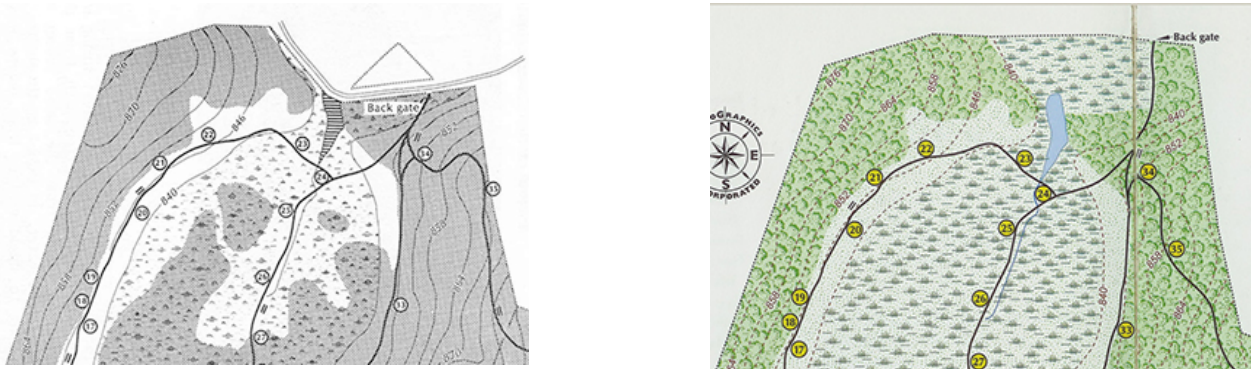


Later changes:

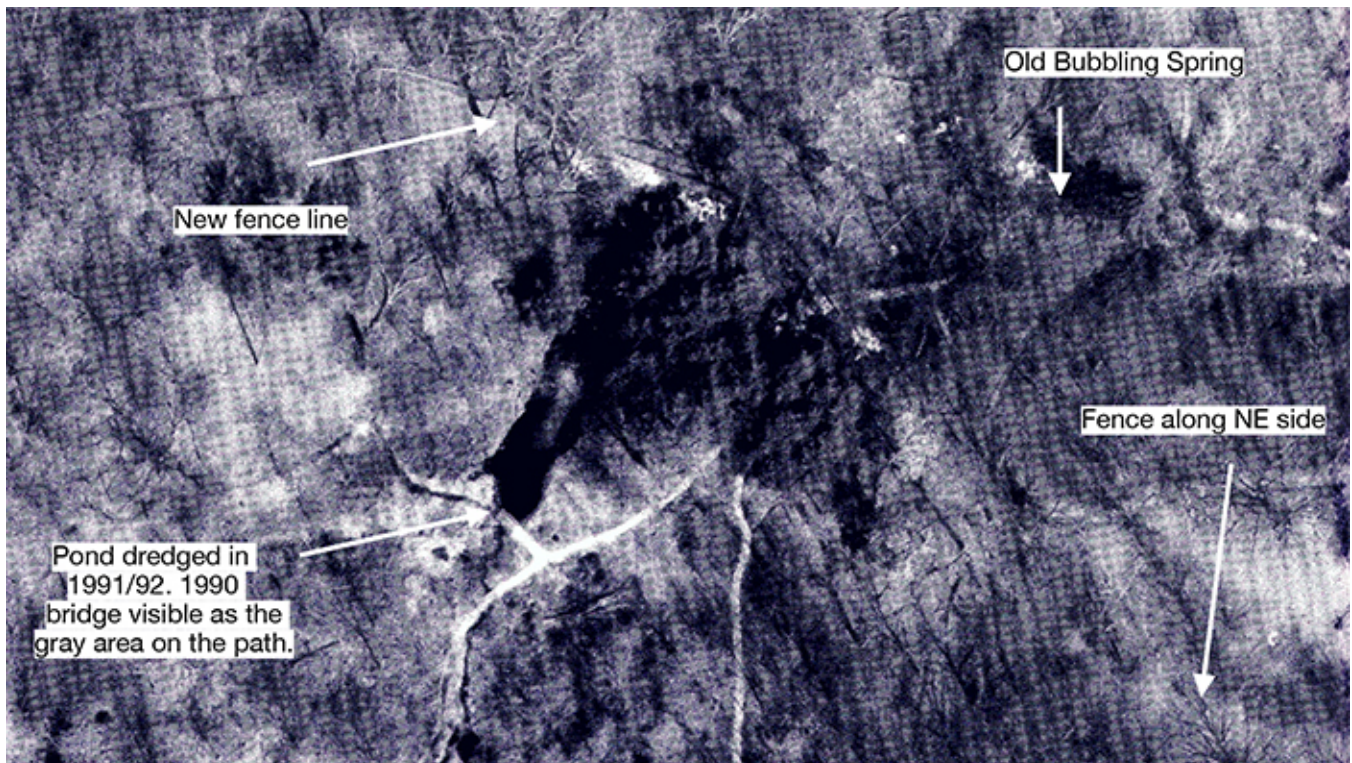
The barbed wire at the top of the current fence was added in 1989 to prevent deer from jumping over. (10) Some of that chain link fencing has been replaced - principally in the area in the front (south) of the Garden where wrought iron fencing was added in 1990 when the front gate was redesigned, then more along the front approach to the gate in 1995. Also when the back gate area was reconstructed between 1991 and 1995, The Friends funded this wrought iron fencing and the construction of the front and back gates. Then the expansion of the east side in 2022 and 2024 added new taller fencing.

A realignment of the Garden's back fence was completed in 1992 when a new back gate design was conceived. The maps shown below show the changes at the back of the Garden. In the 1987 map we still see that the old fence angled southward to where the dam was before reaching the back gate. The old tarvia path, going back to Eloise Butler's time, is shown following the fence line. The old dam dating back to Eloise Butler's time was kept in the same place but the old concrete was replaced with a natural looking rock dam.

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



Below: This aerial photo from 1993 shows the re-aligned back fence with water in the newly dredged pool. The back gate has not yet been reconstructed to the current configuration - that was done in 1995. Photo courtesy University of Minnesota.



In 1993, the Friends petitioned to have an additional acre added to the Upland Garden. This was approved and enough fencing to enclose that was obtained by removing the old chain link fence that still ran across the hillside forming the separation between the old Garden and new 1944 upland addition. The fence work was done by Able Fence Co, hired by the Friends for a net cost of \$3,695.

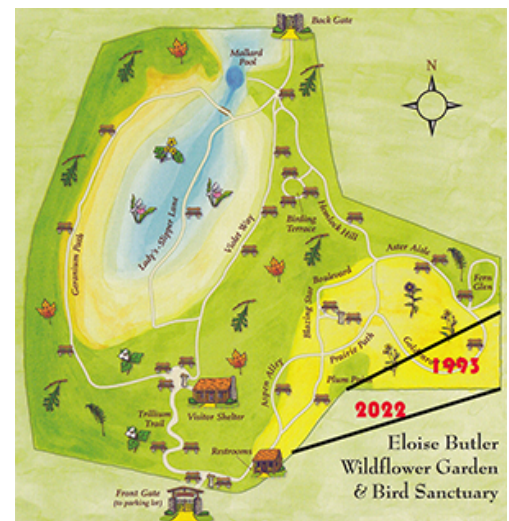
The 2001 map shows the fence realignment with the fence moved northward, creating an open area between the dam and the fence. The old path outside the Garden space was moved to follow the new fence line. It is evident from viewing the texture and condition of the current path along the realigned portion of the fence that it is of newer age. Also there is an abrupt directional intersect of the old tarvia path, coming from the northeast toward the back gate, with the newer portion and the difference in pavement age is evident. The bird feeding station now under goes its third iteration - it was removed from the north side of the tarvia path and a new elevated bird feeder was placed inside the Garden fence.

Once the fence was realigned and the the new back gate completed in 1995, some of the same wrought iron fencing was used near the gate and finally the entire back side (north) was replaced with wrought iron in 2005 - all funded by The Friends.

2022 Expansion:

During the fall and winter of 2022 the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board moved the perimeter of a section of upland fence eastward, enclosing a heavily wooded area in the Volunteer Stewardship Area that had been cleared of invasives by volunteers of the Friends Invasive Plant Action Group (FIPAG) and Garden Legacy Stewards. This added almost another acre to the upland. The new fence was built higher, at eight feet, to deter deer from jumping into the Garden. New shrubs were added near the fence by the volunteer crews. These were surrounded with metal cages to prevent browsing damage.

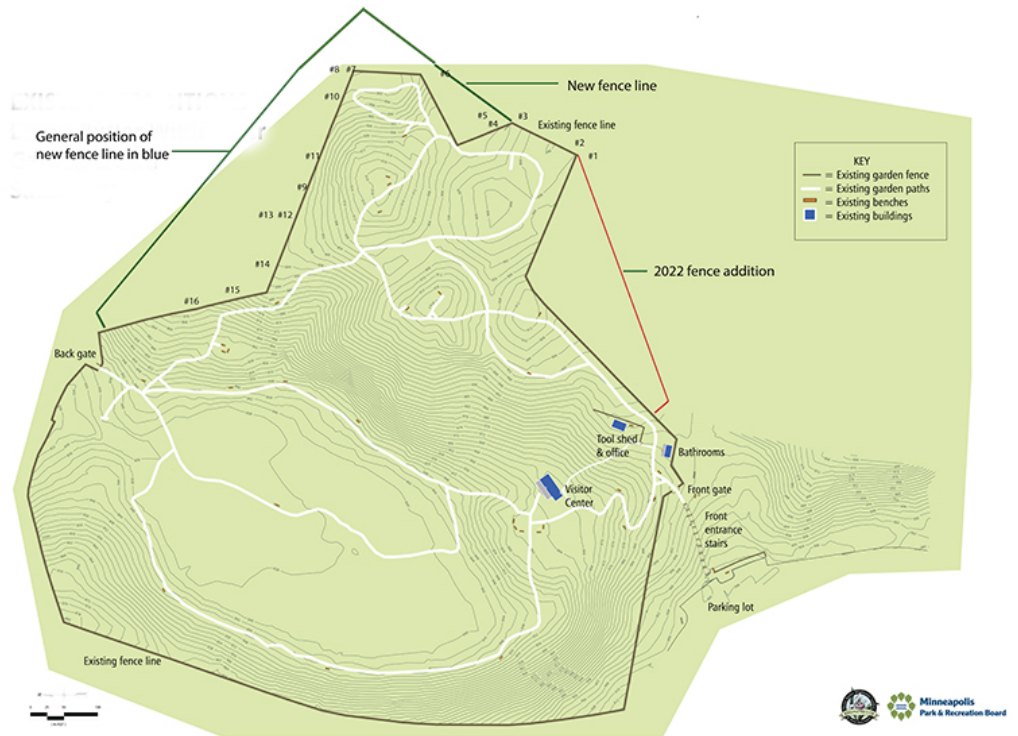
Below: Left - A section of the new eight foot high east fence of the upland garden. Right - Garden plan noting 1993 and 2022 additions.



2024 Expansion:

The most costly project for the Friends since Phase II of the wetland boardwalk in 2019 was completed in November. The new fencing in the upland replaced all the old 1946 cyclone fence on the upland side of the Garden from the point where the MPRB fence work ended in 2022 all the way to the back gate

path. In the process, the perimeter of the Garden was extended outward to incorporate an area that had been cleared of invasives over the past 15 years, adding several acres to the Garden. The diagram map indicates the approximate new perimeter. Total cost - \$95,533.



2024 fence construction, funded by the Friends.



References:

- (1) *The Wild Gardener* by Martha Hellander.
- (2) *Minneapolis Tribune* article, September 18, 1921. Eloise had first mentioned the desire for a fence in her 1912 report to the Park Board, which was incorporated in the Park Board's annual report.
- (3) *Minneapolis Journal* article, 1924. Minnesota Historical Society, Martha Crone Papers.
- (4) Eloise Butler's Garden Log.
- (5) *The Wild Botanic Garden - Early History* by Eloise Butler, 1926
- (6) Letter to the Crones, November 29, 1924 from Malden, Massachusetts Also Ken Avery notes April 1973.
- (7) *The Story of W.P.A. in the Minneapolis Parks, Parkways and Playgrounds* for 1938, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.
- (8) Martha Crone's Diary - 1939. The costs incurred for the the 1938 fencing were paid by Clinton Odell (*Minneapolis Tribune* May 12, 1949).
- (9) J. S. Futcher, "A Birdwatcher's Eloise Butler," 1994 in *50 Years of Friends*, published by the Friends of the Wildflower Garden.
- (10) Report by Cary George on July 20, 1989 at Board meeting of the Friends of the Wildflower Garden.

Friends of the Wildflower Garden, Inc. Text by Gary Bebeau

Neighbors Don't Know She Exists, but Botanic Garden Curator Is Famous Over America



MISS ELOISE BUTLER IN HER BOTANICAL GARDENS

Eloise Butler Braves Bugs, Hoboes, Quicksands and Even "Old Andrew's" Ghost to Produce 1,100 Varieties of Flowers at Glenwood for School Study

"I think the men are afraid of the mosquitoes; I can't get them to start building my fence."

That is the plaint of Miss Eloise Butler, who is afraid of nothing on earth—bugs or hoboes or quicksands or even "Old Andrew's ghost"—whose next door neighbors don't know she exists but who is well known in the West Indies for her scientific expeditions there and whose love for flowers has spread the fame of Minnesota's Glenwood park botanical gardens all across the United States.

Ask a resident of the Glenwood park district where the "wild botanic garden" is and he probably will say that he doesn't believe there is such a place. But ask a professor of any large university in the country and he will know all about it and Miss Butler too. Hardly a day passes without a distinguished visitor from some part of the country.

Begins Work with First Buds

Armed with a large garden knife and a park policeman's star, Miss Butler works in the garden from early morning till late at night, from the day the first leaf shows green until after the frosts come in the fall. The winters she spends with her relatives in Malden, Mass.

A descendant of the British Duke of Ormond, she made three expeditions to the West Indies in search of algae before she started teaching botany.

Every plant in the garden has a history, from the "turtle head" and the white snake root to the "lizard tail" from Kentucky and the pink "false dragon head," violets, asters of 37 varieties, dark purple iron weed and white "ghost flower."

Tales Make Hearers Shiver

Last night Miss Butler sat in her little curator's office in the depths of the garden, designed by herself and covered outside with "Dutchman's pipe"—a large leaved vine—and inside with pictures of birds and flowers. She was persuaded to reminisce about the starting of the garden 17 years ago.

As she told of the hoboes and the quicksand and the "ghosts of the garden," the shadows lengthened into night, little shivers ran up and down the spines of her hearers and they almost expected to see "Old Andrew the Hermit" stalk out of the dense undergrowth. The fragrance of ferns and flowers was in the air and the hush

and Greek in Minneapolis schools, and then turned to botany which she loved best and taught in South high school for 35 years. The wild botanic garden was started at the request of botany teachers, to have specimens of all Minnesota flowers in one accessible place. Now there are more than 1,000 different varieties in the garden.

Doesn't Believe in Ghosts

"Of course, being New England born, I don't believe in ghosts," Miss Butler said. "But, years ago, when Glenwood lake was 'Keegan's lake,' an old hermit lived in a cave in the woods. Suddenly he disappeared. Three months later a body was discovered which was believed to be his. Anyway he was never heard of again.

"One day I was working in the garden and heard the sound of an ax chopping down trees. This is not allowed here and I made for the sound. As I approached it, it ceased, and I could find no one. This continued all day at intervals.

"So the next day I went up and cleared out old Andrew's cave, and planted it with ferns. At the bottom of the rubbish I found a big old boot. I buried it deep and planted violets and trillium on top. And, whatever the reason, the sound of the ax was heard no more."

Sinks Into Quicksand

Miss Butler used to hunt plants in the tamarack swamp years before the garden was started, and one day she stepped right off into a quicksand and sank up to her armpits.

"It was no use shouting because nobody was within hearing distance," she said. "So I finally managed to wiggle myself out like an inch worm, all dripping wet and covered with mud. Next day I went back and measured it with a stick and it was 27 feet deep. No one every would have known what happened to me, as I had meant to go to St. Paul that day, and had told my friends so before I left the house."

A bird bath, scooped out of a huge stone, with little inch steps terraced out for all sizes of birds, attracts the feathered tribe. The birds give regular concerts there early each day as they bathe and sing to their heart's content.

Putting Up Fence Herself

Thousands of people every summer are shown through the gardens, and introduced to "puff ball flats," "fern gulch" and "aster hill" by Miss Butler.

"The fence is needed to keep out the few vandals who destroy in a few minutes the work of years and spoil the garden for the rest of the visitors," she said. Tiring of waiting years for it to be built, she finally is having it put up herself.