



1928

History of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden

Winter 1927/1928

This winter Eloise Butler was on the East Coast to visit her relatives, as had been her custom since she retired from teaching in 1911. Her residence was at 20 Murray Hill Rd, Malden, Mass.

On February 29, leap day, Eloise's sister Cora Pease died after her long illness. It is not known if Eloise informed Martha and Bill Crone of this at the time or after she returned to Minneapolis in late March to her rented quarters at the residence of John and Susan Babcock at 227 Xerxes Ave. from where she could walk to the Garden. We have no saved correspondence between Eloise and the Crones from January 1927 until November of this year.

It is known that she wrote an essay about Cora's life that she sent to the Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter for circulation to members.. A copy is in the Minneapolis Collection at the Central Library.

Spring 1928

Eloise Butler's first Garden Log note of the season was on April 1st when she wrote:

"Weather warm and dry. Ground for the most part free from Frost." On the next day she noted: "Skunk cabbage, *Trillium nivale* [Snow Trillium] and a few hepaticas opened this afternoon. All the early birds here."

She began planting on April 4 plants that had been heeled in during the Winter by Martha Crone. They went between the bird bath and the south (now front) gate. All were from Malden MA and included Queen Anne's Lace, Heal-all, St. Johnswort, two goldenrods and an aster. But it began to snow in the evening and her notes for the next



Queen Anne's Lace, planted by Eloise this spring; plants sent from Malden MA.

few days were not full of Spring cheer:

5 April "Snowed all day. Ground covered to a depth of a foot."

12 April "Snow melted, Froze last evening, turned warm today."

13 April "Snowing again. A heavy snowfall." (This one totaled 9.5 inches making it the second largest single event snowfall in April in local weather history, as of 2025. Second only to 1923.)

It was not until April 21 that work could begin again when she made the curious note that "Wild crab on west hillside was grafted with wild roses." Some planting occurred on the 22nd and 23rd but then the log copy I'm working from is missing data until 25 July. (1)

Eloise wrote an essay about the spring of 1928. She described the flow of flowering from the first Trillium to the end of spring which she described in this manner:

"June 15 is expected to usher in the crowning event of the year - our wonderful state flower." The entire essay (2) is on the Friends website.

One new species was listed in the abbreviated spring section of the log. Details below.

Summer 1928

The abbreviated log shows only one new species placed during the summer - details below.

Autumn 1928

In the autumn Eloise obtained 4 new species for the Garden, detailed below. One of those is Scarlet Oak. This is the first note in her log about the species, but in a 1926 essay *Trees in the Wild Garden*, she stated that there was one specimen in the Garden. Did she mis-identify it or plant one earlier without noting it?

There are many notes in recent years in the log about a sand tank near the spring where some species were planted, especially violets. This may have been a bed for keeping young plants, and plants that needed good drainage. The spring would have been the Bubbling Spring located just NE of the current back gate of the Garden, an area that was part of Eloise's Garden at that time.

Her last log entry on October 19 said

planted from Glenwood Park 51 *Aster azureus*
[*Symphyotrichum oolentangiense* ; Sky Blue Aster] on aster
hillside displacing clematis.

Sky Blue is one of several blue asters the Eloise planted continuously and in large quantities. This species is indigenous to the Garden but she planted it every year between 1915 and 1932. In 1917 she said she was "continuing blueing east hillside." The odd count of plants put in indicates they may have been seedlings obtained from the Park Board Nursery which was located across Glenwood Ave. from the Garden at Glenwood Lake.



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Sky Blue Aster, (*Symphyotrichum oolentangiense*)

During the autumn she also recorded planting a number of other species previously in the Garden from sources such as: Ninemile Creek; Kelsey's Nursery, Salem MA; near Lake Independence; Taylor's Falls; Anoka and near the Luce Line Rail Road.

When the Garden closed and the office was locked up she departed for the East Coast to visit her relatives as she has done every winter since 1911. While there she wrote to Martha Crone, informing Martha that she had sent another box of plants to Martha hoping Martha could heel them in until spring (just as she had done the previous year). It is a short note as she writes "my hands are more than full" with a sick niece. and "I can write only a short note." But it is one of the few pieces of correspondence that illuminates where her political leanings were. She added a last paragraph:

But I must add that I am glad to be this winter in one of the few states that supported Governor Smith - - never known to go democratic before. (4)

On November 27th the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reported that Dr. Otto Schussler had originated a petition to the Park Board place an ornamental fence around the old oak on Franklin Terrance (near the Mississippi River and Franklin Avenue) in order to protect its' roots and that the oak be named the "Eloise Butler Oak" in honor of the pioneer teachers of biology in the city. It is uncertain if approval was ever given. Dr. Schussler and his wife Edith were good friends of Eloise Butler.

Weather: Except the April cold and snow, 1928 was not an unusual year. Total precipitation for the year was just below normal.

New 1928 Plants

Eloise brought into the Garden a number of plants that are not listed today on the Garden census. Many of these were native to Minnesota and a few were not. Here is a listing of most of those plants introduced this year to the Garden for the first time - the common and botanical names listed first are names she used followed by other common names for the same plant and the newer botanical classifications, if any; then follows her source for the material. 1928 is the first year the following list of plants occur in her log. "Native" indicates the plant is considered native to Minnesota (here at European Settlement time) or if introduced, long established. "Non-native" indicates it is not known to exist in Minnesota in the wild. "Introduced" means not native to North America. "Extant" indicates the plant is present in the Garden today. **Botanical classification:** Over the years Botanists have reclassified many plants from the classifications in use at the time Eloise Butler wrote her Garden Log or when Martha Crone prepared her census. I have retained the nomenclature that Eloise Butler or Martha Crone used and then provided the more current classification as used by the major listings in use today, particularly *Flora of North America* and the University of Minnesota's *Checklist of the Vascular Flora of Minnesota*.

Spring 1928

- *Dipsacus* [prob. *Dipsacus laciniatus*], Teasel, introduced, from vicinity of Ann Arbor, April 4. Eloise originally sourced the fruit of this plant in 1923 in Indianapolis, but provided it to a Conservation Society co-member, Mrs. W. Dee Rook, who was to save some for Martha Crone. (3) Eloise relates in another note how this Teasel was obtained from Ann Arbor. (5).

Summer 1928

- *Iris cristata*, Dwarf Crested Iris, not native, from Askov, MN. August 29. Martha Crone planted it in 1947, '51 and '56. Cary George in 1994. Photo next page.

Autumn 1928

- *Hybanthus concolor*, Eastern Green Violet, not native, from Delphi Indiana, September 11.

- *Pogonia trianthophora* [*Triphora traanthophora*], Nodding pogonia, Threebirds, not native, from Delphi Indiana, September 11.
- *Quercus coccinea*, Scarlet Oak, not native, from Kelsey's Nursery, Salem Mass. October 6. Cary George reported planting the tree in 1994. Photo below.
- *Viola triloba*, Three-lobed Violet, not native, from Delphi Indiana, September 11.



Dwarf Crested Iris, (*Iris cristata*) New summer planting.



Scarlet Oak, (*Quercus coccinea*). New autumn planting.

Photo top of first page: Eloise Butler (left) and her sister Cora as young women. Photos courtesy Martha Hellander.

Notes:

- (1) The log copy used for this history has 1928 and 1929 mis-arranged. The log has details about the pedometer, received for Christmas in 1928, placed in the 1928 section, but could not be based on when it was received. A large group of planting information that was placed in 1928 from May 9 to Aug. 25 has been treated here as 1929, but it is possible, even probable, that other entries for the end of 1928 are really 1929. In the case of "first plantings" - it only misstates the date by one year.
- (2) *Spring exhibits in the Native Plant Reserve*. Letter to Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter, (Division D) of the Agassiz Association for inclusion in the members circular. The Agassiz Association was founded in the late 1800's to be an association of local chapters that would combine the like interests of individuals and organizations in the study of Nature. However, by this time it was largely defunct and only the Gray Memorial Chapter, with several divisions, was still active. Various contributions from members were grouped and circulated by post from one member to another. Text on Friends Website.
- (3) Letter from Eloise Butler to Martha Crone 16 November 1923
- (4) Letter from Eloise Butler to Martha Crone 16 November 1928
- (5) Letter from Eloise Butler to Martha Crone 29 October 1927

References:

Garden Log - Native Plant Reserve, Glenwood Park, Minneapolis, MN by Eloise Butler.

Martha Crone's *Garden Log* and her 1951 Census of plants in the Garden.

Various papers and correspondence of Eloise Butler in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Historical Climatology of Minneapolis-St. Paul Area by Charles Fisk.

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