

The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden



Report of the Last Rites Ceremony for Eloise Butler

At 4:00 o'clock on the afternoon of May 5, 1933, Park Board members, together with approximately a hundred friends and former students of Miss Eloise Butler, gathered at the Wild Botanic Garden to pay last tribute to the memory of the founder of the Garden at Glenwood Park, who died April 10. The newspaper reported "Curiosity seekers there were none." They "had come to pay a last tribute to the woman they had admired." (note)

Superintendent Theodore Wirth opened the ceremony, standing beside a Pin Oak that had already been set into the ground as a memorial to her. He asked each Board member to put a few shovels of dirt around the tree and then introduced the speaker:

"Friends and Associates of Miss Eloise Butler" (The Honorable A. F. Pillsbury, President of Minneapolis Park Board, speaking):

"We have gathered here today to do honor to one who was the moving spirit in the establishment and care of this unique and interesting garden.

"Being a great lover of nature, an especially of wild flowers and plant life, it was her desire that one part of our park system should be left in its natural condition and devoted to the wild flowers and birds of our state. Under her loving care for many years, this garden has become famous and given pleasure to many. In the presence of friends and to her memory we have planted this rare tree, and in accordance with her wishes we now, with respect and admiration, distribute the ashes of Miss Eloise Butler over the ground she loved so well."

President Pillsbury was then given by Martha Crone, the cardboard box holding the ashes of Miss Butler and he then began to spread the ashes first around the base of the tree and then in the area on all sides of the little office building. Some of the ash was wafted farther by the breeze. The audience looked on in silence. The only sound was that of Mr. Pillsbury moving through the growths.

Martha Crone and Theodore Wirth spoke last. Martha Crone read Eloise Butler's last report to the Park Board. General Superintendent Wirth in a few brief remarks called attention to the fact that the pin oak had long been a favorite of Miss Butler's and for this reason had been chosen as the tree to be dedicated in her services. He suggested that a year from today this same group of friends gather to place a bronze tablet on a boulder near the tree to perpetuate the dedication, and the friends made preparation to raise the funds necessary for this purpose.



Above: Planting the Pin Oak: (l to r) Alfred F. Pillsbury, President of the Park Board; Theodore Wirth, Superintendent of Parks; Francis A. Gross, Vice President of the Board.

Parts of the text of the memorial service are found in several places - Minnesota Historical Society, Martha Crone Collection; the *Minneapolis Tribune* which printed the photo on Sat. May 6, 1933; and in an article in the *Minnesota Clubwoman* of June 1933. Text by Gary Bebeau, Friends.

Photo Below - Old Garden Office - front view, SE side, 1935. Note: The settees the gentlemen on the left are sitting on were replaced in 1960 by a pair of limestone benches donated by Moana Odell Beim in honor of her father, Clinton Odell. The large stone at the right bears the memorial tablet to Eloise Butler.



In the photo below from October 2008, we see the current arrangement of the site of the old Garden Office. The boulder with the memorial table is at bottom right. At bottom left are a pair of limestone benches donated by Moana Odell Beim in honor of her father, Clinton Odell. They replaced the old settees in 1960. The old office would have been in the flat area where the patio benches are in the center of the photo. That area, now covered with a thick layer of cedar shavings is underlain with a paver surface. It was around this area that the ashes of Eloise Butler were spread during her memorial service. The new shelter sits up a path to the right from just behind the boulder and the large Leatherwood Shrub that guards it. The original Pin Oak died and was replaced and that also died as they are not native to our climate.

