

## Crone Shelter Dedication Poem

*A letter of thanks from the Eloise Butler  
Wildflower Garden on the occasion  
of the dedication of the Martha Crone Shelter  
on May 13, 1970*

by Betty Bridgman (1915 - 1999)  
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You are good people. You mean well.  
You kept the houses off my hill.  
You saved my elm and tamarack.  
You love this place, which loves you back.  
Thank you for sixty years' restraint  
of urge to tidy up and paint,  
to straighten rows or trim a tree.  
Neatness doesn't count to me.  
I feel no pressure to look pretty  
or be your refuge from the city.  
I can't consider it my aim  
to furnish every flower-name.  
I have reasons to exist,  
though not the ones that you would list.  
It took eleven thousand years  
to make this place as it appears.  
When the glacier last withdrew,  
the land it left was brown and blue,  
a lifeless, gravelly moraine. . . .  
and I have turned it all to green.  
The seeds that came by floating, flying,  
I coaxed to root her and keep trying.  
Leaf and husk and stalk would perish  
and give me crumbs of loam to cherish.  
Shrub and moss were my recruits;  
my hillsides twine their reaching roots.  
I have protected all I could  
from winter wind and summer flood.  
My oak tree is a calendar,  
how wet the years, how dry they were.  
I am a widely known location  
on maps the birds use in migration,  
recalled, as seasons come again,  
by warbler, hermit thrush and wren.  
A bird's egg, passive in a nest-

a time bomb under feathered breast-  
bursts into appetite, raw forces,  
pressure on my thin resources.  
From top of ridge to soggy hollow,  
vine and fern, ground cover, mallow,  
where you think is "peace and quiet,"  
is power-play, impending riot,  
and here the competitions rage,  
elbowing for center stage,  
for drop of water, patch of sun-  
barely enough for everyone.  
The towering tree is level-laid. . .  
Saplings are rescued from the shade. . .  
You are shocked and question why  
that "lonesome place against the sky."  
We solve our problems, left alone,  
and never miss you when you're gone,  
yet cowslip, bloodroot, bellwort, fern,  
we thank you for your kind concern.  
Now when you leave here, as you must,  
don't take your cars but let them rust.  
I can cope with, on the trail,  
Carbon dioxide you exhale,  
but in your love for the machine,  
consider how to keep me green.  
I shall survive, at all events,  
but meanwhile, thank you for that fence.