

MARY'S GARDENS JOURNAL of John S. Stokes Jr.

Entry of August 24, 1954 meeting with Rev. Thomas J. Stapleton in Woods Hole.

Visited Father Stapleton, Administrator, St. Joseph's Church, Woods Hole. He had a bouquet of flowers from the Mary Garden, including Our Lady's Eardrops. He asked how Mary's Gardens was coming along. "Very well, thank you". I told him about the Philippines and about Father Knott's proposed Marian Year exhibition in Baltimore. He remarked that it seemed more people than ever were visiting the Tower and Garden.

He mentioned that after the BOSTON POST article of August 30, 1953 appeared, he received a letter from the Bishop of Fall River with the salutation, "Dear Sweeper". He said that Mrs. Lillie was much better this year, and had come to visit the Tower and Garden. She objected to the fact that the willow tree detracted from the line of the Tower, and from the view of the laboratories in the background.

Father Stapleton spoke of the prank (vandalism) of three Harvard freshmen who - after rigging the job in advance - started the Angelus bells ringing at 2:00 A.M. one morning and woke up the whole town of Woods Hole. After opening the Tower door with some difficulty - it had been jammed shut with wedges - Father Stapleton and his Assistant from Worcester finally stopped the ringing mechanism by removing a fuse. He did not fall into the trap of turning on the light, which had been replaced with a photo-flash bulb, because he spotted this substitution with his flashlight. But Mr. Butler did get a photo-flash in the face when he turned on the other light at the upper chamber of the Tower the next day.

The boys had also wired a light to shine from the top of the Tower when the bells started ringing. The bells were started by pulling a wire extending several hundred feet up the street. Father Stapleton said that the mother of one of the boys suspected this boy and obtained a confession from him. Father Stapleton was informed through a parishioner.

August 27, 1954 meeting with Mrs. Frank R. Lillie (two days before her birthday)

Today it was our privilege to have tea with Mrs. Frank R. Lillie of Chicago, founder of the first public Mary Garden in the United States at St. Joseph's Church, Woods Hole, Massachusetts.

As Mrs. Lillie, who is in her eighties, is able to receive very few visitors, this meeting was something we had hoped and waited for since the founding of Mary's Gardens in Philadelphia in 1951.

Upon arrival at her summer home in Woods Hole, we were told by members of her family that the day after next was to be her birthday. Happily we had come bearing gifts, including a colored Swiss postcard we had found the day before in Falmouth: an illustration of the flower commonly known in the U. S. as Bleeding Heart, but known in Germany as Our Lady's Heart (Frauenherz) and in France as Mary's Heart (Coeur de Marie), according to the legend on the card. We were overjoyed to see her face light up as she asked: "Can I keep this? Are you sure you can let me have it?"

When we thanked her for the vision and her love of Mary which went into the making of the first Mary Garden, at St. Joseph's Church, she insisted, "It never occurred to me that I was doing anything unusual." As we pressed our thanks - telling her of the growth of the Mary Garden movement - she replied with equal humility, "Each of us has his opportunities."

She then reported her historical understanding that before the invention of printing the people of the countryside had no books or pictures telling of Mary. "The flowers were all they had." She believed, as our Mary's Gardens experience has borne out, that today, too, the Mary-named flowers could be a potent means of instruction . . . "especially for the children."

After a parting "God bless you" an hour later, we left with the joyous knowledge that the last gap of continuity between the founding of the first U. S. Mary Garden and the founding of the Mary's Gardens movement had been closed. Once again we turned to the future.

Undated note added later

While it was with a sense of regret that we learned the Woods Hole Garden of Our Lady was destroyed three days later by the hurricane "Cora" - the third such destruction in the 22 years since the Garden was laid out in 1932 - we were nevertheless reassured by the knowledge that the idea behind it was bearing fruit in other Mary Gardens throughout the world.

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The purpose of the Woods Hole Angelus Tower and Garden of Our Lady is to confront the average individual of the modern, secular world, who visits Woods Hole, with the impact of Tradition and the teaching in such a manner as to still him and bring him to heart, mind and soul in the hope that he will be naturally predisposed to receive, and that God will be pleased to give, the supernatural grace of conversion which will move him to visit St. Joseph's Church across the street as a first step to dedicating his life to the greater glory of God and the restoration of all things in Christ.