



Edith L. Moore (1884-1975)

"We bought out in the country, 17 miles from downtown, the loveliest place, where yellow jasmine climbed to the top of the pines. The dogwood and holly were so numerous, and I loved it." - Edith L. Moore

Edith Lotz Moore was born in Stillwater, Minnesota on July 12, 1884. She graduated from the University of Minnesota and began a career in bacteriology and pathology with a passion for medical illustration. Back at the turn of the century when few women acquired a higher education, it was very rare for a woman to work as a bacteriologist. Edith was a woman way ahead of her time.

In 1918 during the Great War (WW1), Edith came to Camp Logan (now Memorial Park) to work on a flu epidemic. She described her arrival in her diary: *"At sundown after a long taxi ride, I arrived at the base hospital at Camp Logan, still sick from inoculations, and was greeted by the officer of the day who placed me in the care of a housekeeper. She was kind and showed me my quarters with a bath and mosquito-netted bed on a screened porch. By the time I bathed, the moon was shining beautifully and full and a mockingbird opened his repertoire. I loved it. The coolness of the night descended and sleep."*

Edith then worked for the Public Health Service in Beaumont researching bubonic plague and malaria. In 1920, she moved to Houston to be the bacteriologist for the City of Houston. There she met her future husband, Jesse Moore, who was a city milk inspector.

When the city of Houston began developing around their home on Park Street, both Edith and Jesse decided they wanted to live a rural life. As a young girl, Edith had a serious illness (pneumonia) which required a long recovery. She spent quiet time in the woods with a friend and came to love the wilderness; while Jesse was a Hallettsville farm boy.

In 1926 and 1927, they purchased 140 acres along Rummel Creek. They set up a sawmill and dairy on the property and began building a log cabin house using the loblolly pine trees on the property. They ran the dairy, sawmill and built a bullfrog pond so they could supply frog legs to local restaurants.

In 1958 when Edith was 75 years old, the Moores divorced and Jesse was no longer associated with the sanctuary property. In her divorce settlement, Edith acquired 75-acres plus the log cabin house. Edith was 90 years old when she passed away and bequeathed 17.5 acres of land and the log house to the Houston Audubon Society. In her Last Will and Testament, it stated that the land and log house was to be used by the Houston Audubon Society for the maintenance, development and operation of a local bird sanctuary in perpetuity.

This amazingly generous gift was the springboard that catapulted Houston Audubon into acquiring additional land to be preserved as nature sanctuaries for birds and other wildlife. Today, Houston Audubon owns and manages 17 nature sanctuaries encompassing over 4,100 acres across the Greater Houston and Upper Texas Coast regions and became an Accredited Land Trust in 2017. Houston Audubon will be forever grateful to Edith L. Moore.

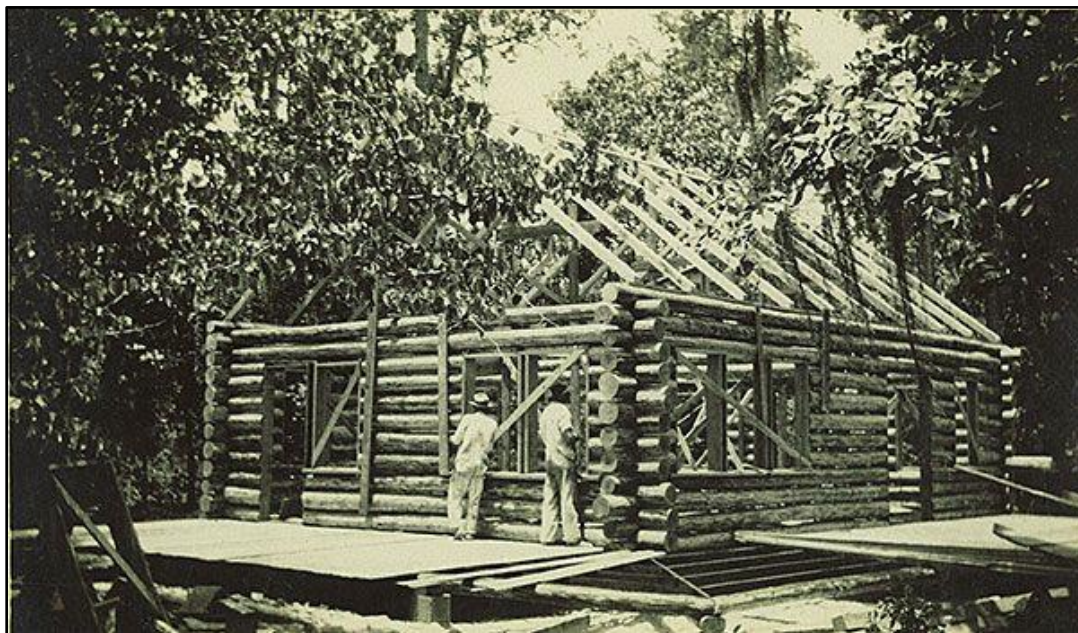
Photo Gallery:



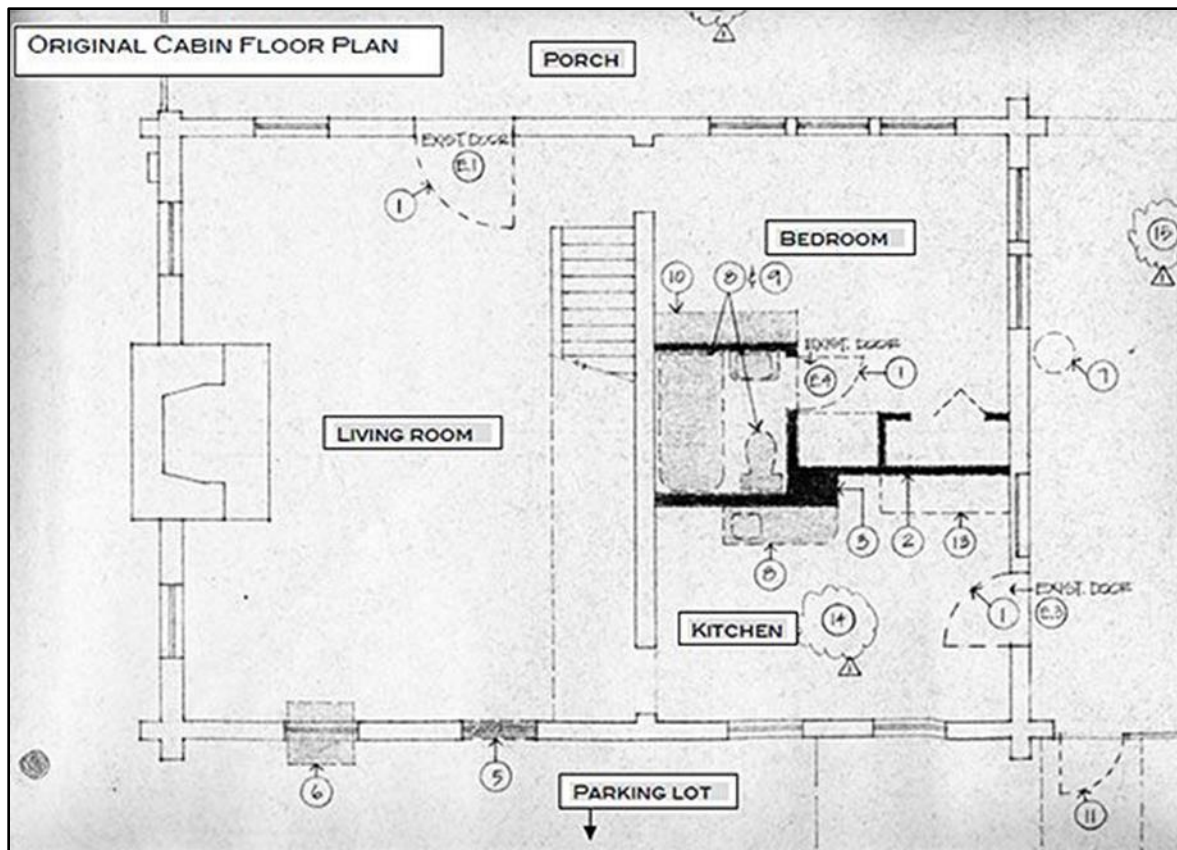
Edith L. Moore – Bacteriologist



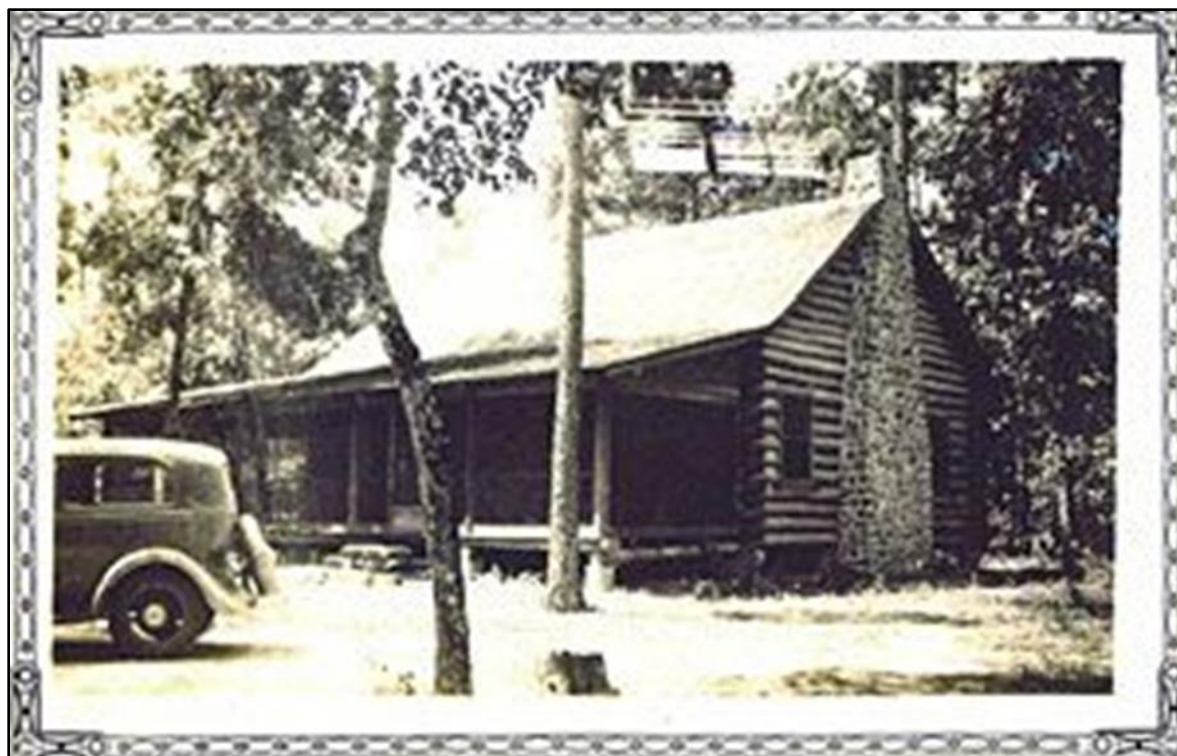
Edith L. Moore's Original Land Purchase = 140.86 acres



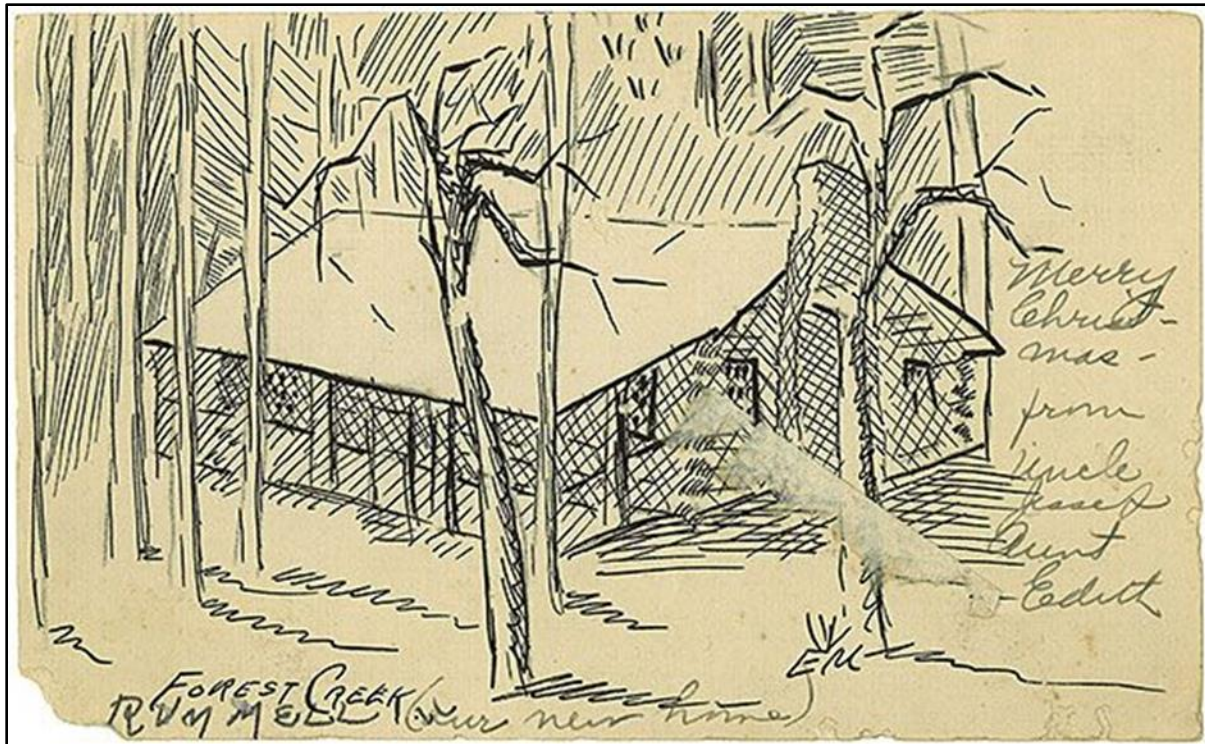
Log House Construction



Original Cabin Floor Plan



Edith L. Moore Log House



Christmas Card – Drawing by Edith L. Moore

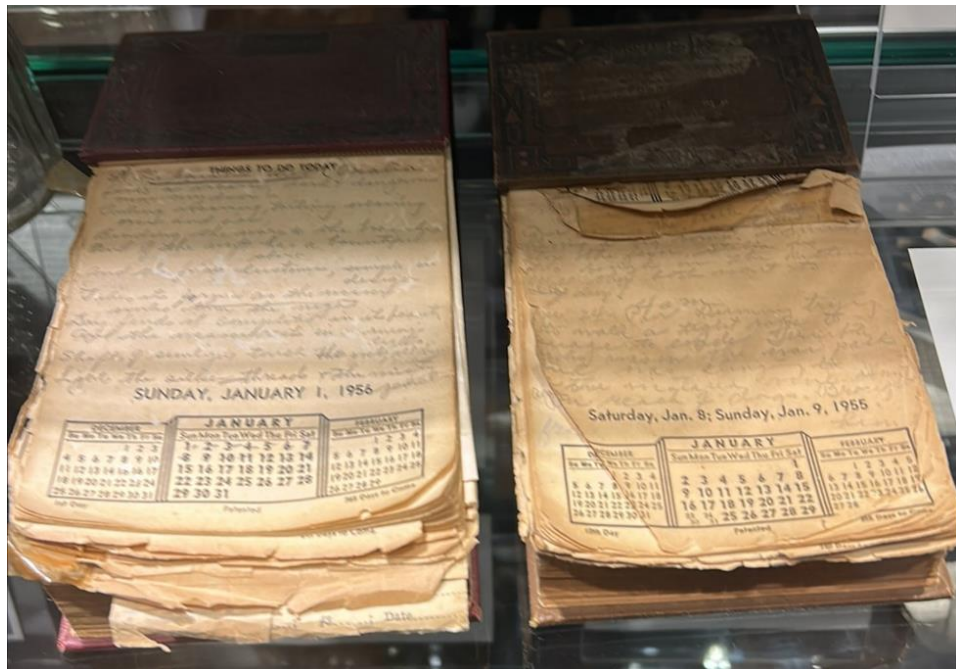


Small Bullfrog Pond



Immortalized Big Bridge (Nov 1978) – photo by Don Gray

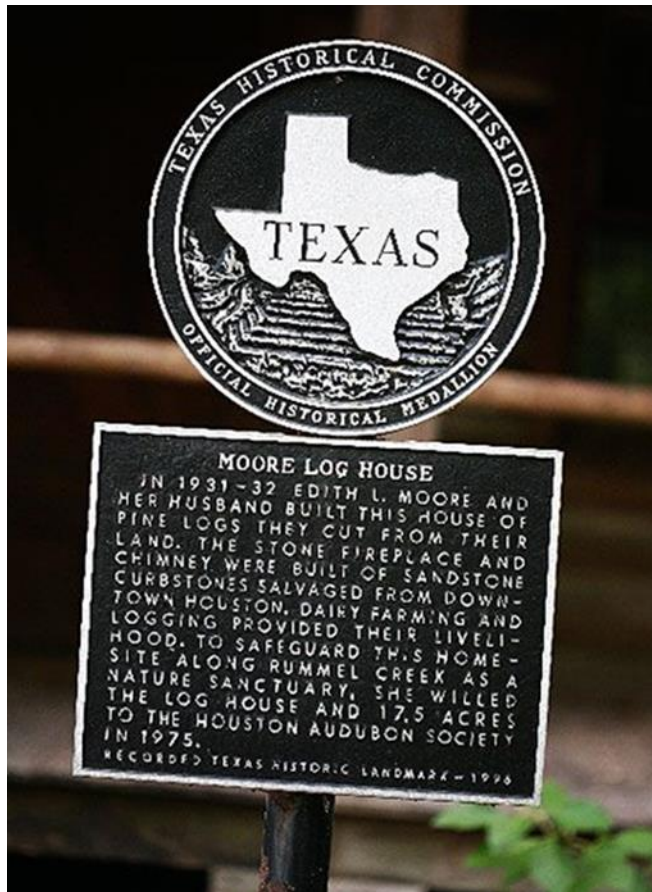
*Texas Historical Commission Landmark Sign
[Only Log House in Texas Still Standing on the Site it was Constructed]*



Edith L. Moore's Journal



Edith L. Moore with Family and Friends at Opening of Nature Sanctuary (September 22, 1973)



*Texas Historical Commission Landmark Sign - 1996
[Only Log House in Texas Still Standing on the Site it was Constructed]*

HAS Heroes - Edith L. Moore

by Joy Hester, Executive Director

January 2003

It is only fitting that we recognize Edith L. Moore as our HAS hero this month because her name is synonymous with the history of Houston Audubon. Readers of this newsletter will immediately recognize her name because our Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary is named for her, but many may not know why.

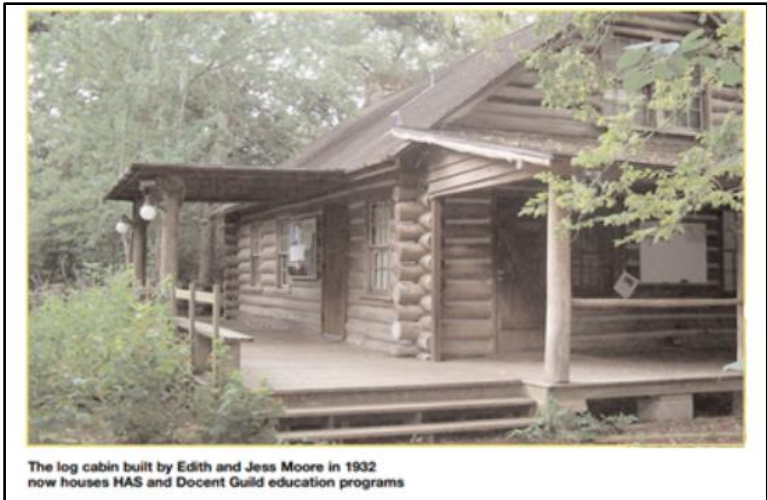
When Edith Moore died in 1975, she bequeathed to Houston Audubon Society the 17.5 acres and cabin on Rummel Creek that became the Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary. Her will stated that Houston Audubon was to own and maintain the land forever as a bird sanctuary. Mrs. Moore was an elderly lady living alone with her six dogs and numerous cats when Houston Audubon members befriended her in 1973. That help came in response to a letter from a concerned neighbor, Holland McCarver, who wrote a letter to Houston Audubon describing her situation: "Mrs. Moore, who lives in a little cabin on the land, is in her eighties and she cannot protect her property from vandals, trash dumpers, wood cutters, hunters, arsonists, and motorbike riders... You cannot conceive how much trash and junk so-called good citizens dump in Rummel Creek and on Mrs. Moore's land." Unfenced, the land was being used freely and thoughtlessly by the public to the distress of its owner. Houston Audubon acted swiftly to help Mrs. Moore and to protect the land they learned she had long wished to save as a wildlife sanctuary.

Edith Lotz Moore was born July 12, 1884, in Minnesota. At a time when few women acquired a higher education, she sang at weddings to earn money for her education at the University of Minnesota. During World War I she moved to Houston to work as a bacteriologist and pathologist at Camp Logan (now Memorial Park), where she described her arrival as follows: "At sundown after a long taxi ride, I arrived at the base hospital at Camp Logan, still sick from inoculations, and was greeted by the officer of the day who placed me in the care of a housekeeper. She was kind and showed me my quarters with a bath and mosquito-netted bed on a screened porch. By the time I bathed, the moon was shining beautifully and full and a mockingbird opened his repertoire. I loved it. The coolness of the night descended and sleep." During and following the years of World War I, Edith worked on experiments at governmental laboratories in Beaumont, primarily in relation to malarial fever and bubonic plague. In 1920 she went to work for the City of Houston, where she met and married Jess Moore, a City Milk Inspector. When the City of Houston started to develop around their home on Park Street, Edith and Jess decided to move to the country. The land that was to become Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary was purchased as part of a larger 180-acre tract in the country west of Houston, and they began their log cabin near Rummel Creek. Edith Moore's diary describes the land as she and her husband found it: "We bought out in the country, 17 miles from downtown, the loveliest place, where yellow jasmine climbed to the top of pines. The dogwood and holly were so numerous..."

Jess and Edith lived together in the cabin, running a dairy and lumbering operation, until they divorced in 1959. Edith lived on alone in the cabin, with the company of her dogs, until her death in 1975.

Edith Moore was a brave and intelligent woman who loved nature. She was a National Audubon Society member for many years, the earliest known member in the Houston area. When Houston Audubon Society was incorporated in 1969, she became a member and remained one for the remainder of her life. In her later years when Houston expanded out and around her log cabin, she hung tenaciously onto her way of life in the woods. Houston Audubon now hangs on for her, taking care of the sanctuary that has become an urban jewel in the middle of West Houston. The sounds of the city penetrate from I-10 and Beltway 8, but the woods are full of birds and other wildlife easily seen and heard in their natural settings.

Fences now mark the boundaries of the sanctuary, and trails are maintained to keep visitors on paths. Birding and nature classes for children and adults are conducted year-round in the log cabin by Houston Audubon staff and Audubon Docent Guild members. Nestled among the trees, a small two-story building houses the Houston Audubon staff and volunteers that take care of Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary and Houston Audubon's 15 other sanctuaries. We think Edith would be pleased and proud.



ELMWOOD GADGET – Audubon Docent Guild Newsletter #202, March 2007

written by Don Gray



BE IT EVER SO HUMBLE: THE LITTLE CABIN IN THE WOODS. Edith Lotz was born in Stillwater, Minnesota, on July 12, 1884. She attended grade school and high school in Stillwater, then learned bacteriological research methods by working in the University of Minnesota's Medical School laboratory, followed by seven years as a bacteriologist, pathologist, and medical illustrator at St. Luke's Hospital in St. Paul. She came to Houston in June, 1918, to serve at the Camp Logan Base Hospital, worked with the U.S. Public Health Service on control of malaria and bubonic plague in Beaumont, and in 1920 accepted a position as Houston's City Bacteriologist (a position she held for 13 years). In 1921, at age 37, she married Jesse More, thus becoming (we note) not just Edith Moore, but Edith Lotz Moore. In 1932, she and Jesse moved into the log cabin they had built in the woods. The marriage ended in divorce 38 years later, in 1959, when she was 75 years old, but she continued to live in the cabin until her death, March 22, 1975, in her 91st year.

Edith Moore was a remarkable woman who led an extraordinary life. Among other things, she left us a series of brief remembrances, hand written over the last fifteen or so 202-4 American Holly (in springtime) "There were foxes." years of her life, on small (6X9") note pads, now in the archives of the sanctuary. Some years ago we transcribed them for inclusion in the Sara Emmott Library where you may find them bound together with a scholarly report by Dorothy (Gregg) Mueller, "The Moore Log House," August 1995. The vignettes presented here are in Edith's own words, just as she wrote them: read enough and you can almost hear her tell the stories. Any comments we make will appear in italics. Note, however, that we did reassemble them in something approaching the order in which the events occurred.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN (THE DEPRESSION YEARS): We bought out in the country 17 mi. from down town the loveliest place where yellow jasmine climbed to the top of pines, the dogwood and holly were so numerous and I loved it. Got acquainted with cattle, little animals, turkeys were pets and we only ate the eggs of chickens. There were foxes. Even little pigs were pets.

Early in 1932 the log cabin was finished. There was no saw mill at this time but the workmen were cutting, skinning off the bark, and polishing off the logs during 1931 at the present site. Eighteen lovely dog wood trees were wonderful blooming early around the site in the spring. Holly trees and the lovely dripping moss was everywhere. The yellow jasmine climbing over the trees, plum blossoms with their fragrance were over all. Grapevines with their fruit tempting the birds & animals. I thought it was heaven. I could forget the worries in town and only see the loveliness.

We had a family to milk the cows etc. – and the place was alive with workmen. A sawmill was making itself heard. We had so many people around. There were camps all around the field, the barn, a house near the barn and one up the street which finally was cut thru. The women were working, one milking,

the other on the saw mill. The woman who did the milking had thirteen children all ages and was going to have another. She seemed happy and never impatient.

So many children were around the place during one winter when the lumber mill was working full time. The milk was prepared for marketing. Some of the milk crew were living in front of the milking barn with a tent attached for cooking & sleeping. Children, one a 16 yr old boy, the others less than that to a baby still nursing. The mother preparing for another not yet born. One was older than the 16 yr old boy. A woman with one of her own was working on the saw mill also. I think she was running the "edger." She seemed at home when working, and enjoyed the "repartee."

The field out behind a barn used for storing feed had tents around the entire space. The campfires lit up the entire area and altho there was snow and ice, the tent flaps were open. It was around Christmas and it was quite a festive place as the voices talked and joked as they ate and drank. A Christmas tree was in the tent Carolina Jessamine 202-5 Freshwater Mussel... "...scallops in the bayou..." "Noah (his name)..." at the milk barn. There were gifts but the prize was a pair of high boots for the 16 year old boy, and it was a gift from the log cutters. He was not going to run the risk of having the boots soiled but held them up high and was walking barefoot in the snow, face shining and eyes aglow, from tent to tent. I do not remember his name but will not forget him.

I believe that was the last winter before the flood of 1935, about the time in Dec. of the next year.

Two dear dogs at that time – one a terrier, dear little "Hie," and Bernice, a Belgium police dog, dear and gentle – went on all my walks thru the woods, day and night. When we had fires, walked the fire lanes at 2 and 4AM. Sometimes they were very long. Kept the fires from crossing the fire lanes. We had quite a few workmen on the place but they slept very well – as well as my husband who never worried about fires. The slash pile would be burning with high winds blowing sparks all around. The men didn't like that and didn't get much rest on windy nights. One night at 2 o'clock it was particularly bad. One negro man was walking around with a baby who couldn't sleep, while his wife slept as well as she could in their house. A man, an ex convict, known as "Whitey" was doing his best to retain the fire and told me to get some sleep which I finally did.

While telling about poor "Whitey", no one knew anything about him. There were so many children around here he would take every one (the children and the parents) and hunt for scallops in the bayou and roast them. One Sunday we were up at my husband's old home & returned and saw a couple of ambulances around. Whitey had drowned in the bayou. He had gone in fully clothed and his clothes caught on a branch and the bayou held him until he drowned. They finally got him out of the water but he was dead. It was very sad. How the children wept.

It was a long time before things became normal. The workers changed, gentle people just glad to do anything came, a lot of them with thin clothing and not looking too well fed.

I think it was in Dec. 1935 that we had our "100 year flood." It was rainy and cold as the water kept coming in. We retreated with as much as we could carry to the second floor with two dogs and I believe four cats. The rains started Saturday after a moderate rain the previous week, and a 20" rain to the west of us sent the bayous & creeks up. I think the water was 10 feet deep outside the house. We saw our pet turkeys, pet chickens floating away. I cried they were pets trained to climb trees following a beam from a flashlight through the dark hours. Often raccoons & opossums would knock them off the branches, all old friends.

We ate canned goods and shivered until Sun. late in the afternoon when my nephew (Lawrence) asked Mr. O'Rourke to bring him out here. He did in a boat that took us off the porch roof, dogs & cats and us to his home in the Heights. A welcome refuge – no fussing about dogs and cats being a nuisance. As we

were leaving home a pig was swimming with no place to land & we took him in and left Noah (his name) at a neighbor's house on the Katy road. Ethel was so kind in taking "all" of us in.

The water went down in a day or two, the house was full of mud, 202-6 Slash pile (not burning). Mexican Plum the furniture ruined, my piano a Fischer upright grand a mess, no salvage. With the help of two boy friends the house was cleared and hosed and when I came home a bright fire in the fire place was a delight and of course no lumber from the saw mill in sight. A lovely jersey calf drowned. The cows had been driven out by a kindly man who had care of them, up to the prairie on the Katy road earlier in the day. He luckily had a better understanding of the climate than we. The saw mill and the logs that were left were taken up to the property in the Katy road, and the place here was just used for cows and horses. I was glad to see the mill go up there. I didn't care for slash fires, especially at night.



"Noah (his Name)..."

After the flood it was much nicer no noise and birds all over the place. Animals of all kinds came back, even the foxes. I became acquainted with the cows, bulls, horses, pigs and found out they were all intelligent and eager to be friends. I could take my sketch book and paint with a delighted audience, a white Brahma bull looking over my shoulder and tasting the green paint on my palette. Such fun My two dogs were constant companions except when they chased rabbits. Bernice the black Belgium police dog died in the 2nd World War – no meat – poor lovely thing sixteen years old.

It is necessary to regress at this point because the pertinent reminiscences are of events both before and after the flood. We resume as Edith's relationship with the City Health Department had reached "burn-out" status, a major reason for leaving her home in the Heights for the little cabin in the woods:

Before leaving town, but aware of the preparations to move out to the "woods." Music in my head (oh, so much). Started studying voice with Mrs. Plunket (director of St. Paul's Meth. Choir) thinking that the absence of music might be what was missing from my life and causing such intense misery to me. After so much music in St. Paul [Minnesota] the absence of both music & painting made life a desert. I think singing at St. Paul's & studying voice again helped bring me back to normal.

Started to compose when we moved out here [several of her compositions were published commercially]. Mrs. Plunket advised me to have Mr. Kidd look it over. He had just retired from a publisher company in Philadelphia and liked them very much but said he wasn't going to try to arrange them for me to see if Bernie Clements would. He was doing quite a bit of arranging for the different orchestras in town. He accepted and so I became acquainted with dear Elizabeth and the five children. Sometimes I'd go to their house in town and often they would come out here. My health improved so much and to see my beloved "tunes" with a real accompaniment was a treat.

Elizabeth would always bring cakes & cookies for her gang to devour. The children loved the sawdust piles and lost many socks. The boys would sometimes bring some of their friends (they had been growing so fast and so big) that it looked as if I was entertaining a football team. In fact the minister of the little 202-7 Muscadine Grape Blossoms Capt. Midnight? church across the creek came over and said "I did not know if you wanted to come over. They look like a football team." I told him it was all right and looked at them. Yes they had grown big and husky without me noticing.

We have always wondered where the site of sawmill and dairy had been. The five sock-losing youngsters were playing somewhere near the cabin in pre-flood sawdust piles; the "football team" was almost certainly no more than ten years post-flood by the time "the little church across the creek" had been built – on the previous site of the sawmill?? We resume in 1958, shortly before her divorce from Jesse:

June 1, 1958. So busy – no idea of writing. Now that the wrens in the dog house have learned to fly feel better. There was quite a commotion.

Dr Fleming was here Fri and we talked of the land Jesse wanted to give to the church – no conclusions – relayed his message to Jesse. [The result was a gift of 5 acres for a new church – see Gregg Mueller's "The Moore Log House" in HAS files]

December 28, 1961. Christmas passed – cool, crisp and beautifully clear. This was a very lovely Christmas. Was to communion at the new little church Christmas eve. It is a lovely little church snuggling among the trees as if it had always been there.

Dear Lord, bless this little church. May it never have the stain of materialism. May all who enter feel thy strength and leave there a new person. May the children who grow up there feel thy presence always.

Well, the first service at the new little church across the creek was Christmas eve, 1961. It later served as a chapel for the present larger church (consecrated in 1977) until it was destroyed by a fire on Palm Sunday, 1979. The church has grown to boast a membership of 6500 – and it no longer snuggles among the trees. Rumor has it that in her later years Edith Moore attended a smaller, African American church with her faithful housekeeper, Alice.

MENAGERIE NOTES: a glimpse of everyday life in the Edith L. Moore household:

April 10, 1955 - Easter rain - good rain - no church. Sister [mother cat] killed a mouse for Captain Midnight [kitten] & old Terrible black cat got it. Little kitten doesn't seem to like mouse meat.

April 11 - Poor Sister Kitten [= Sister] watching the little wrens learning to fly out of the linden knot hole nest. She is behind the screen, the dogs will not let her in the yard even a little while. She has been trying to coax Captain Midnight outside. He doesn't need much coaxing. 202-8 Old Terrible??

April 14 - Stella [dog] & Captain Midnight having a big romp. I must stop the fun, Stella is too rough on the kitten. Well they both went to sleep.

April 24, 4am - Poor Dummy [young cat] trying to walk a tight rope to garage to evade Terrible who was on the war path and was clinging on the wisteria vine almost in the reach of dogs. Brought him in. [Later] Put Dummy out. Dummy was after Silver Tail [another cat] & she was clinging to edge of gutter along the porch & losing her hold. I caught her as she fell & brought her in.

[Never a dull moment!]

June 16 - Little Midnight has not been able to climb down a tree – he backs down a limb & then falls. I wonder if he ever will learn. Yesterday tried to back down a dead limb & it broke under his weight.

Alice fixed the screen up stairs so I could go out on the roof more comfortably. Last night I went out for Midnight after dark & dropped my glasses - had a hard time getting them off the lower part of roof.

An old lady, her faithful companion, and her pets; seems to be someone who would be interesting to have known. Sorry to have missed her.

Links to additional articles about Edith L. Moore and the Moore Log House:

- [The Bulletin Article June 1975](#) – article about Edith’s life (memorial issue) and history about the log cabin
- [ELMWOOD GADGET](#) – *Audubon Docent Guild Newsletter #242, April 2011 written by Don Gray*
- [ELMWOOD GADGET](#) – *Audubon Docent Guild Newsletter #256, Sept 2012 written by Don Gray*
- [ELMWOOD GADGET](#) – *Audubon Docent Guild Newsletter #260, January-February 2013 written by Don Gray*
- [“The Moore Log House”](#) - article written by Dorothy “Gregg” Mueller in August 1995
- [“Little Cabin in the Woods”](#) – article written by Don Gray with excerpts from Dorothy “Gregg” Mueller’s article
- [Edith L. Moore’s Journal](#) transcribed by Don Gray
