

This article originally appeared in the Kanata Kourier-Standard October 7, 1994

Park named for pioneer

By Krista Cooney

Staff Reporter

In Beaverbrook on The Parkway there is a woodland conservation area called Alice Wilson Woods. The part was named in June, 1975 in memory of a woman who spent her life contributing to the science of geology and the advancement of women in the scientific world.

The area was named after Wilson as the result of an entry submitted by Russell Reynolds to a contest held by the March Kanata Horticultural Society. They chose to honour the woman who had spent hours studying Kanata and the Ottawa-Carleton area.

In 1911 Wilson became the first woman ever to have been granted a professional position as a museum's assistant for the Canadian Geological Survey of Ottawa.

In 1926, at the age of 45, the Canadian Federation of University Women awarded her a graduate fellowship. She earned her Ph.D from the University of Chicago in 1929.

In 1935 she was honoured as a Member of the Order of the British Empire. Shortly after, Wilson became the first female Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Coming to work in Ottawa in 1909, she spent over 50 years studying the area. A favourite pastime was to take children from Kanata and the surrounding regions and to lead them on tours of the area, explaining its geology. She was the author of a children's book published in 1947 called "The Earth Beneath Our Feet". In 1948 she became a well-loved professor at Carleton University.

It is rumoured that upon her retirement in 1946, the Geological Survey had to hire five men to replace her.

Since the time of her death in 1962 the Royal Society has created an award in memory of this remarkable woman. The award is granted to promising female scientists who excel in and are dedicated to their profession.

In regard to her past achievements and career as a geologist, the part was a fitting way to honour a woman whose excellence should be remembered forever.