



Perthite – named in honour of the Ontario town where it was first described. Cut and rough stones are from Dr. James Wilson’s original discovery location near Perth.

Custom jewelry by Stephen Clark, 9.5cm wide; Perth Museum Collection; Michael Bainbridge photo.

Local Artist helps to Celebrate Geoheritage in Perth

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Perth-area jewelry and lapidary artist, Stephen Clark of Small Wonder Jewelry, has delivered the first of two custom creations that feature the discoveries of Dr. James Wilson for a new permanent exhibit at Matheson House which will showcase the amateur contribution to science.

Dr. Wilson, a medical doctor from Scotland, came to Canada to start his practice in 1818. With a keen eye for the unusual, but without formal training in the then-new science of geology, he was intrigued by the variety he saw in the rock outcroppings near his new hometown of Perth, Ontario as he travelled by horse-drawn buggy between housecalls.

He ultimately became such an expert in local geology that when William E. Logan was charged with establishing the Geological Survey of Canada in 1841, Wilson was one of the first he called upon to give him the lay of the land. One of Wilson’s discoveries – an enormous sandstone slab featuring the fossilized tracks of one of the earliest land animals (*Climactichnites*) – even adorned the wall behind Logan’s desk in his Montreal office. Wilson also recognized the local abundance of the ore minerals

apatite (a phosphate used in fertilizer), and phlogopite (a type of mica used as an insulator) that would later result in a thriving industry; now remembered at Murphys Point Provincial Park – home of the Silver Queen Mine underground tour – and brought to life through the annual Heritage Mica Festival.

Wilson's most notable contribution, however, was probably his description of the striking laminated texture he observed in the granitic rocks of the area (as can be seen in the photo above). Rocks of this texture are now known by geologists all over the world as *perthite*, named in honour of its discovery location near the town of Perth, where the material for this necklace was collected. In 1853, Wilson was himself immortalized by the Geological Survey of Canada when they named another of his discoveries after him.

Wilsonite is often used in jewelry because of its beautiful rose-red, or deep purple colour. Both the necklace pictured here, and a second piece by Clark (featuring locally-sourced wilsonite), will become the centerpieces of a newly re-mounted display of Dr. Wilson's original rock and mineral collection at the Perth Museum this fall. Assisted by the Ottawa-Gatineau Geoheritage Project, staff of the Geological Survey of Canada and Carleton University, and members of the local mineral collecting community, the efforts to restore the collection are being coordinated as part of the Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization's Recreational Geology Project (ontarioshighlands.ca/things-to-do/geology/).

Other, similar projects are being undertaken across the region in places like Bancroft (Mineral Capital of Canada), and Eganville (Ordovician Fossil Capital of Canada) as part of this larger effort to highlight the area's unique geology, and celebrate our *uncommon* geoheritage.

Are you related to Dr. Wilson (1798-1891), William Lees McLaren (1880-1932), or Archibald M. Campbell (first curator of the museum ca. 1936)? Do you have any information about the mineral occurrences and mining heritage of the Perth area, or anything related to the history of the collection?

Please contact the Perth Museum at (613) 267-1947, 7 days a week.