

# HISTORY OF THE FOREST

International Forest of Friendship  
1 Allingham Drive, Atchison, KS 66002



The International Forest of Friendship was a gift to America for her 200<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1976 as a living memorial to the world history of aerospace and aviation. The Forest was donated by the City of Atchison, The Ninety-Nines (International Organization of Women Pilots), and the Kansas State University Forestry Extension. The Forest was officially dedicated in 1976 on July 24—Amelia Earhart's birthday. Co-chairs Joe Carrigan and Fay Gillis Wells oversaw the Forest from its inception until their deaths.

The Forest shows off its beauty by displaying trees from 38 territories and countries where there are honorees, and it is home to a tree from all 50 states of the United States! You can explore the Forest yourself by walking on pathways lined with the names of those who have contributed, or are still contributing, to all facets of aerospace and aviation.

On your stroll through the Forest, you might notice:

1. **The Tree Poem.** Did you know the author of this poem—Joyce Kilmer—was a man?
2. The **Waterfall** (near the entrance to the Forest) dedicated to co-founder Joe Carrigan; *biography:*
  - a. Born in Atchison, Kansas, on December 29, 1916.
  - b. Vital member of the Atchison community. He served on the Atchison City Commission from 1961-67 and served as Mayor from 1966-67.
  - c. Honoree in the Forest in 1983.
  - d. Died June 14, 1996.
3. **Memory Lane**, a special portion of the Forest's pathways containing memorials to the early inductees. Many are charter members of The 99s, founded in 1929. Special names to note are Amelia Earhart, born in Atchison, Kansas, and Neta Snook, Amelia's flight instructor.
4. A tree from **President George Washington's** Mt. Vernon estate.
5. The **Moon Tree**, an American Sycamore grown from a seed taken to the moon by Apollo 14! The tree also honors 17 astronauts who gave their lives pioneering space exploration up to 2001.

6. **Space Shuttle Columbia** monument, dedicated to those men and women who perished on this mission in 2003.
7. **Gazebo** dedicated to Fay Gillis Wells; *biography*:
  - a. Born October 15, 1908, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and grew up in various towns in the United States and Canada. Fay was an American pioneer aviator, globetrotting journalist, and broadcaster. In August 1929, she began flying. On September 1, 1929, she became the first woman pilot to become a member of the Caterpillar Club (bailing out of an airplane to save her life) when her plane disintegrated during aerobatics over Long Island.
  - b. From 1930-1934 while in the Soviet Union with her father, she traveled as a correspondent covering aviation activities for the *New York Herald Tribune*, and as a special reporter for the *New York Times* and *Associated Press*.
  - c. In 1935 she was planning to accompany Wiley Post on another round-the-world flight when she eloped with the distinguished foreign correspondent, Linton Wells. Wiley took Will Rogers in her place and both were killed on the flight.
  - d. Fay Gillis Wells was a charter member of The Ninety-Nines which was formed on November 2, 1929, and served as secretary until the first election in 1931 when Amelia Earhart was elected the first president of The Ninety-Nines.
  - e. Fay died on December 2, 2002, but not before leaving her mark on aviation history!
8. **President Dwight D. Eisenhower's** rosebud tree. He was the first President to receive a pilot's license (in 1936).
9. The bronze **Amelia Earhart statue** donated to the Forest by The Arnold and Marie Schwartz Fund.
10. The white oak **tree from Amelia Earhart's grandfather's farm**.
11. **Kansas Forest Service** tree, the same kind of Swamp White Oak as in the 9/11 memorial at Ground Zero in New York.
12. The addition of the **Putnam Forest** to protect the boundaries of the Forest.
13. **Special Notes:**
  - a. While on your walk, notice the names of the World War II **Tuskegee Airmen** and **WASP** (Women Airforce Service Pilots).
  - b. One of the traditions started by Betty Gillies (99s President 1939-41) when charter members visited the Forest was to all go to the Atchison drugstore for a chocolate soda—with chocolate ice cream. You can continue the tradition—it's now part of Gateway to Kansas Shops & Old Fashion Soda Fountain & Grill at 504 Commercial Street.
  - c. Visit the Forest during "Aviation Weekend" in Atchison (generally the 3rd weekend in September) and enjoy our partners: The Amelia Earhart Birthplace Museum, young people's activities at the Amelia Earhart Airport, and the new Amelia Earhart Hangar.

*"You've never seen a tree until you've seen its shadow from the air."* – Amelia Earhart

*"A smile is the same in any language."* – Fay Gillis Wells

## International Forest of Friendship

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