



Richard and Theresa Smith; Jim and Dee Goedert visited the Glidden Homestead while in DeKalb in December.

## Barbed wire collectors tour Homestead

A group of long-time barbed wire collectors received a special tour of the Glidden Homestead on Dec. 28, from board member, Jeff J. Marshall. They made special arrangements in advance to tour the Homestead and other barbed wire related sites while traveling in the area.

Jim and Dee Goedert, from Nebraska, and Richard and Theresa Smith, from Missouri, spend their vacations traveling the country to see barbed wire related sites. The two families became friends many years ago as a direct result of their common interest in collecting barbed wire.

Jim Goedert is editor of the *Barb Wire Collector Magazine* – a worldwide publication available for members of the Antique Barb Wire Society. Richard Smith is author of a special book entitled *Collectors Guide For Fencing Tools*.

## The Glidden Women

*[This is the first in an ongoing series about the Glidden women based on an exhibit created by Sally DeFauw, Homestead volunteer.]*

From hairpins to community leadership and the establishment of park land, Glidden women have played a key role in the making of barbed wire and DeKalb history. Barbed wire would not have been invented without a woman's influence, according to Glidden family lore. Joseph F. Glidden tinkered with his wife Lucinda's hairpins until coming up with his invention that revolutionized the American West and the world.

An exhibit on display at the Glidden Homestead & Historical Center highlights the lives of six women, all who were related by blood or marriage to Joseph F. Glidden. Four of them spent part of their life in the 1861 home, which was built for Joseph and Lucinda Glidden. A wife, niece, sister-in-law, nephew's wife and grand-niece – all were strong independent women. Some had obstacles to overcome. All were conscious of their concern for their fellow man, and were unselfish in the freely given gift of their time and talent.

### Lucinda Warne Glidden

Lucinda Warne Glidden was born Nov. 29, 1826, in Mount Pleasant, NJ. She was one of nine children of Henry Warne and Charity Stires, six of whom survived to adulthood. The Warne family came west to the Elburn, IL, area in 1837, where Henry operated a tavern in the log cabin he built northeast of town. It was called the Half Way House, as it was located half way between Chicago and Oregon, IL.

Henry was the first Postmaster in Elburn, so the Half Way House was also the post office. Joseph Glidden had the contract to carry mail from Elburn to Grand Detour. It is to be assumed that he met and courted Lucinda on his many stops to the Half Way House on his mail route.

Joseph and Lucinda married in Kane County Oct. 6, 1850, and started their married life in DeKalb in a simple log cabin.



Lucinda Glidden

Joseph's first wife, Clarissa Foster, had died in 1844, and their two sons and daughter had died in childhood. Joseph and Lucinda's only child, a daughter, Elva Frances, was born in 1852.

In 1853, when the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad came to DeKalb, Joseph gave the rail line right of way through the south end of his property. The crew of the first train was invited into the Glidden's humble cabin, where Lucinda, as gracious hostess, served them breakfast. The cabin was located in front of the barn that still stands on the property.

When Lucinda complained to her husband about her flower beds being ruined by animals, Joseph looked for a solution. It was Lucinda's wire hairpins that Joseph used to create a prototype for his new fencing made of barbed wire.

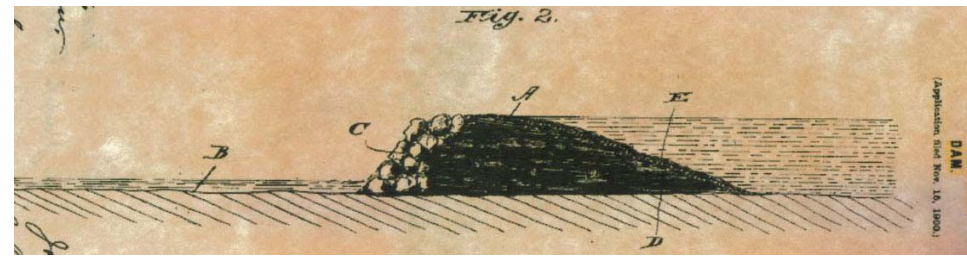
In 1876, Joseph built the Glidden House Hotel, a three story hotel located at the northeast corner of Lincoln Highway and Second Street. In 1877, Joseph and Lucinda left the farm homestead and moved into the city of DeKalb proper.

They were generous benefactors and shared their wealth with the community. When the Congregational Church was building a new church in 1885, and went over budget, the Gliddens and the Isaac Ellwoods came forward with the necessary funds to complete the church.

Perhaps the Gliddens' greatest gift was that of the 64 acres they donated for the Northern Illinois State Normal School in 1895, today's Northern Illinois University.

Lucinda died Oct. 28, 1895, in Chicago, at the home of her daughter, Elva Glidden Bush. At her funeral at the Glidden Hotel, friends remembered her as a kind-hearted woman, especially in her care of the sick. Lucinda was known for her needlework which she bestowed as gifts to her friends. Her name is perpetuated in Lucinda Avenue.

**[Next issue: Mary McConnell Glidden]**



## Buried treasure at Glidden's Dam

By Larry Greer

*[Reprinted with permission from The Barbed Wire Collector magazine-October 2006]*

Joseph Glidden was the proverbial inventor. During his entire life, he confronted each problem with simple logic, never straying far from his practical family experiences. He was set for life with his patent settlement with Isaac Ellwood, and the small percentage retained in the barbed wire business.

By the turn of the century, Glidden had become far more involved in raising horses and ranching. His attention turned to means of efficiently passing through the fence and to corralling water for livestock. By 1901, 10 years after his famous barbed wire patent (*The Winner*) expired, he had been issued several other fence-related patents. One bizarre yet clever invention utilized scrap wires that abounded among the several wire mills in the area. These wires included the factory machine malfunctions, general production errors and failed experimental wires.

In his effort to provide water storage on his DeKalb horse farm and Texas ranch, Glidden set out building dams to harness the small streams to create ponds and small lakes. He recognized the havoc water could do to dams if not properly constructed. In his search for a reliable material, it occurred to him that rather than use stone in the dams entirely, bundled wire might provide a superior anchor for the usual back-fill materials. He proceeded with building dams in this method after observing that his idea had merit. In 1901, he was issued Patent 678,105 for his "DAM" design.

The darker section A in the figure above indicates the tightly packed bundles of wire. The scale of the figure suggests that the wire is of considerable tonnage. Stone is used for the front face of the dam. The backside or upstream face of the dam is covered with the usual cement or earth.

Glidden's patent explains thus: "In constructing a dam in accordance with my invention, I employ as the principal building agent bundles of scrap wire A, which may be the tailings or refuse from wire drawing or wire implement-making mills and factories. These bundles of short wire are piled together in a thick compact mass across the bed of the stream B, the wires all being laid in a direction longitudinally of the current. The height to which the water level is to be raised and the water pressure to be withstood will of course regulate the width and height of this wire bed. Directly behind the wire bed, I erect a banking masonry C, preferably simply a roughly built stone wall of a height at least equal to that of the wire bed. Both the wire bed and stone wall are given a slight dip at their center to provide an overflow. The entire dam will have a gradual slope on its pressure-resisting side from its top to the streambed. This face will be preferably provided with a top covering of cement, or earth, or both.

"By reason of the fact that the ends of the wire, where refuse or strap wire is employed, are more or less bent over in hook form, and when bundles are piled and pressed together form an extremely compact and tenacious mass almost impossible of separation by any pressure that may be brought against it," Glidden's patent states.

Imagine what wire might be buried in one of his dams, especially some of the experimental designs. Surely, most of the wires have long ago corroded into one huge mass of iron oxide. But perhaps not all. It all depends on the placement, soil, water chemistry, and how well covered with the layer of earth and cement. I remember the first find of the Peter Hill four-point that was recovered when tearing up an old highway. It had been buried under dirt and concrete slabs for many years. The wire was quite collectible and I still have a specimen.

Finding a dam that could be identified as Glidden might be possible using a metal detector. Of course, you need to be on an old Glidden land site. A good way to confirm such a site would be to find a Glidden fence gate nearby.



## Homestead Calendar

- April 21:** Student History Fair
  - May 6:** Sunday tours begin, noon-4 p.m.
  - May 20:** "Open House, Open Barn," noon-4 p.m.
  - June 3:** Sunday house tours, noon-4 p.m.
  - June 9:** Uncle Joe's Country Fair, details TBA
  - June 17:** Sunday tours, with "Music on the Porch" – bring your lunch!
  - July 1:** Sunday house tours, noon-4 p.m.
  - July 15:** Sunday tours, with "Music on the Porch" – bring your lunch!
  - Aug. 5:** Sunday house tours, noon-4 p.m.
  - Aug. 19:** Sunday tours, with "Music on the Porch" – bring your lunch!
  - Sept. 2:** Sunday house tours, noon-4 p.m.
  - Sept. 16:** Sunday tours, with "Music on the Porch" – bring your lunch!
  - Oct. 7 & 21:** Sunday tours, noon-4 p.m.
  - Nov. 4 & 18:** Sunday tours, noon-4 p.m.
  - Nov. 8:** Patent Day Dinner
  - Dec. 2:** Holiday Open House with Antique Toy & Doll Show, noon-4 p.m.
- \*\*NEEDED: Musicians interested in playing free for Sunday events. Call Gayle, 899-3237.**

## National Shows

- April 12-14:** Devil's Rope Museum, McLean, TX. Contact Davie, (816) 779-2225 or Delbert, (816) 779-3164
- May 4-5:** Kansas Barbed Wire Collector's Association, La Crosse, KS. Contact Brad, (785) 222-9049 or Mike, (785) 672-4833
- June 8-10:** Northern Rocky Mountain Barbed Wire Collectors, Inc., Buffalo, WY. Contact Kenny, (406) 232-0178
- July 22-23:** "Super Show" – Nebraska Barbed Wire Collector's Association, Minden, NE – Home of Pioneer Village Contact Jim, (308) 236-7673; John, (403) 964-9797; Gary, (308) 754-6371; or Richard, (417) 788-1111
- July 20-21:** New Mexico Barbed Wire Collector's Association, Moriarty, NM. Contact Dan or Nancy, (505) 832-4339
- July 21-22:** Nebraska Barbed Wire Collector's Association, Waverly, NE. Contact Wayne, (402) 642-5876
- Aug. 17-18:** Hawkeye Barbed Wire Collector's Association, Walnut, IA-Antique City of Iowa. Contact Ron, (712) 784-3010
- September:** Colorado Wire Collector's Association, Walsenburg, CO. Contact the Kirscht Family, (719) 738-1365
- October:** The Symposium, La Crosse, KS. Contact Jim, (308) 236-7673



### Glidden Gift Shop

Featuring barbed wire items:

- 18-in. sample wire
- Wreaths
- Ornaments
- Books
- Videos
- Hats
- License plate holders
- Tee-shirts

Pricing details:  
[gliddenhomestead.org](http://gliddenhomestead.org)

A new display case at the Homestead showcases items available for sale.