

New stops add interest to sold-out 2012 Barbed Wire Bus Tours

The Barbed Wire Bus Tour Nov. 4, 2012, as part of the Patent Day celebration at the Joseph F. Glidden Homestead and Historical Center, attracted more than 50 participants on two separate tours. Patent Day 2012 celebrated the 138th anniversary of the date Glidden received his patent for “The Winner” barbed wire—Nov. 24, 1874. The Barbed Wire Bus Tour was led by local historian, Steve Bigolin, with additional insight from Glidden board member, Jeff Marshall. The Homestead plans to continue to offer the tours each year, varying the sites visited to keep the tour interesting and unique. *[Photos by Kathy Vance Siebrasse]*



Steve Bigolin talks to tour participants, as a video screen behind him displays photos and facts. The video element was introduced this year, built to fit the VAC bus by Glidden board member, Jeff J. Marshall, specifically for the Barbed Wire Tours.



Barbed Wire Sites Tour participants were delighted to visit with Annie Glidden at one of the stops. Portrayed by Glidden descendant Cheryl Johnson (granddaughter of Charles Bradt, whose mother was Joseph F. Glidden's sister), Annie described what life was like on her farm.



The house in which she lived still sits on the road now named for her – Annie Glidden Road. The property is part of the NIU campus now and is primarily used for storage.



The tour stopped at the E.P. Ellwood Home (later Paul & Shirley Nehring), 417 N. First St. This significant 6,000-square-foot building on the corner of Augusta Avenue and First Street was originally a wedding gift from Isaac and Harriet Ellwood to Erwin Perry (E.P.) Ellwood and his wife May (Gurler) Ellwood. Constructed in 1899-1900, this Tudor Revival residence was designed by architect Charles E. Brush. The home was sold to the Nehrings in the 1940s, and in 2012 was donated to the Ellwood House Association.





Mike Mooney (right), owner of the building at 204 N. Fourth St. (sometimes referred to as the Red Shops), said the building was built in 1877. It was used by Isaac Ellwood, in partnership with the Washburn and Moen Company, to produce barbed wire. The last year of major barbed wire production in DeKalb was about 1938.



On the second floor of the massive "Red Shops" building, Glidden board member Jeff J. Marshall points to an old photograph of the "Red Shops" to give tour participants an idea of how the property looked when barbed wire was being manufactured there. An extensive photo exhibit was enjoyed.



The Ivan Williams Family, of DeKalb, has generously donated a beautiful buggy and spring wagon to the J.F. Glidden Homestead. As part of this tour, both were on display at the former I.L. Ellwood Manufacturing Company, with storage space courtesy of Mike Mooney.



Both the spring wagon (left) and the covered buggy are circa 1900. They were used for transportation. In 1939, the spring wagon was completely rebuilt at the DeKalb Wagon Works for E.P. Ellwood. From 1956-74, it was used at the Raewood Farm in Chesterfield, MO, by Patty Ellwood Towle and Joe Towle. It was returned to the Ellwood House Museum in 1974, and was acquired by Ivan Williams when the museum eliminated a good portion of its collection. The buggy is originally from the St. Louis area and has been completely restored.



At Evergreen Cemetery, South Seventh and Taylor streets, Steve Bigolin explained to tour-goers that the large rock bearing the cemetery's name actually sits over the gravesites of several Glidden family members, including Joseph's parents, David and Polly (Hurd) Glidden. The original marker for their graves was moved to Fairview Park Cemetery to be among other family members. The Glidden family is working to place another marker at Evergreen.



Also at Evergreen Cemetery, is the gravesite of Russell Huntley, the cousin who convinced Joseph F. Glidden and his brother, Josiah, to leave New York State for DeKalb, Illinois, back in the late 1840s.