

Blacksmiths create new Glidden Homestead sign



Sign designer and builder Lucio Bortolin (on lift) directs Glidden Homestead board members and volunteers as they place the beautiful, but heavy, hand-forged iron sign on the museum's front lawn.



Many of the Glidden Homestead board members were on hand May 18 to celebrate the unveiling of the new sign. From left are: Richard Glidden, Steve "Kepp" Johnson, Svetlana Henrikson, board president, Jim Morel, Lucio Bortolin, sign designer and builder, and Marcia Wilson, executive director of the museum.

A beautiful new sign designed and crafted by blacksmiths at the Joseph F. Glidden Homestead & Historical Center was unveiled May 18, at the museum located at 921 W. Lincoln Hwy., DeKalb.

The ornate hand-forged iron sign frame was designed by Lucio Bortolin, who is a working blacksmith and member of the Glidden Homestead's board of directors. For more than a year, Bortolin donated time and space in the workshop of his business, F2 Industries, Sycamore, where blacksmiths created the sign frame. 3D Designs of Sycamore produced the sign insert at or near wholesale, as another of the Homestead's sponsors.

At the unveiling ceremony May 18, Svetlana Henrikson, board president, thanked everyone for their support of the Glidden Homestead and for making the new signage possible. A reception followed the unveiling. Attending were DeKalb Mayor John Rey, City Council members Dave Baker and Robert Snow, and Anita Zurbrugg, from the DeKalb County Community Foundation. A grant from DCCF helped make the new signage possible.

"This event has great historical significance for our community. The sign will not only improve the Homestead's visibility, drawing many more people to our museum to learn about barbed wire, but also will help us preserve this site for future generations as Joseph Glidden's legacy," she said.

"The frame for the sign was masterfully crafted by our local blacksmiths who showcased artisan skills that carry the great traditions of the craft dating back to Joseph Glidden's time. It was Glidden's good friend the blacksmith Phineas Vaughan, who helped him construct machinery to produce the barbed wire. Today, our local blacksmiths carry on that tradition and spent many long hours creating this beautiful sign. Their work displays tangible proof that this skill still exists," Henrikson said.

The new sign is located in the front yard at the Glidden Homestead, located between Copy Service and Burger King. Additional signage will be placed near the museum's historic brick barn (seen from the Burger King drive-through), as well as at the Homestead's driveway entrance.

The Homestead is the site where Joseph Glidden invented and manufactured "The Winner" barbed wire, for which he received a patent on Nov. 24, 1874. The house and barn built in the 1860s still stand on their original site. Both are listed on the National Register of Historic Sites

Everyone is encouraged to visit the Glidden Homestead this season to see the new sign and many new exhibits within the museum. The Homestead is open for tours on Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., also the second and fourth Sundays each month through October, with special events in November.

For more information, call (815) 756-7904 or visit www.gliddenhomestead.org.