

Events support Glidden Homestead

Divas dish up awesome family treats at April event



More than 35 chefs offered tasty samplings from long-held family recipes at NIU's Barsema Alumni & Visitors Center.



Sarah Glidden DeMink delighted participants with Glidden family treats.



More than 300 people participated in Divas Dish, raising just over \$10,000 to benefit projects at the Glidden Homestead.

Uncle Joe's Country Faire educates and entertains in June.



Blacksmith, Chris Hubbard, demonstrated his craft.



Old-time children's games were a hit at the Country Faire, held at DeKalb's Hopkins Park.



As part of the weekend's events June 13-14, members of the Glidden family held a mini-reunion at the Homestead.

Elva's history and namesake

By Jeff J. Marshall

Founded in 1884, the tiny town of Elva, Illinois, was named in honor of Elva Frances Glidden, the only daughter of Joseph and Lucinda Glidden. Joseph Glidden was a large landowner in Afton Township (DeKalb County) and coincidentally, his property was in the path of the branch railroad line being built in the 1880s. The town is located in Section 9 of Afton Township, within sight of the town of DeKalb to the north.

Elva was created as the first railroad stop south of DeKalb for the branch line of the Chicago Northwestern Railroad. The town had a railroad station, which still stands today and was originally used as a rather small shipping point and mail station. This branch line was never heavily trafficked by the railroad and thus the town of Elva has never really developed. In 1909, 25 years after Elva was founded, it still only had a population of 32 residents. It had at that time a small group of businesses including the Elva Lumber Co., a blacksmith shop operated by Samuel S. Wheeler, and general store operated by George C. Marston.

Elva Glidden was born in 1852, in DeKalb. She lived her first eight years in the wood log home her parents built prior to the brick structure recognized as the Glidden Homestead at 921 W. Lincoln Hwy., DeKalb. The Glidden Homestead was constructed in 1861, when Elva was about nine. Elva was educated first in DeKalb's public schools and later went to St. Xavier Academy, which the author believes is now recognized as St. Xavier University in Chicago. She received a musical education through the Conservatory of Music in Chicago.

According to the book *Empire Builder*, Elva began to be courted by William H. Bush in DeKalb in about the mid-1870s. William H. was working at the time as salesman for the King Brothers Co., out of Chicago and began to call on Elva at the Glidden home on a regular basis. Elva Glidden married W.H. Feb. 1, 1877, in the west parlor of her parents' homestead, seven years before the town of Elva was named in honor of her. According to the *Chicago Tribune* Feb. 4, 1877 p. 9, Elva wore a white silk wedding dress with train. The Glidden residence was decorated with flowers



MRS. ELVA GLIDDEN BUSH

and draped with Smilax. The wedding party included Miss Mida Warne, Miss Hatie Bush, Walter Goodrich, and H.H. Ragan.

After the marriage ceremony a reception took place in the dining room, with an orchestra stationed in the hall playing "...sweet strains of music." The newspaper wedding announcement even listed the gifts presented to the new couple including: silver service, glove stretcher and a Russian leather box.

Elva and William moved to the expanding metropolis of Chicago. Compared to the tiny town bearing her name, Chicago must have seemed like the opposite end of the world for Elva (Glidden) Bush, despite being the wealthy daughter of Joseph and Lucinda. She and her husband went on an European vacation in the summer of 1895. Their trip was cut short when in about July, the couple received word that Elva's mother was sick. Lucinda stayed with her daughter and son-in-law in Chicago, while seeking medical attention for cancer. She died Oct. 28, 1895.

In 1900, Elva and William were living at 606 N. State St., just south of Lincoln Park. Chicago's house numbering system was redone in 1911, and this address was changed to 1538 N. State Parkway. During Elva's life in Chicago, she was active in the Chicago Woman's Club and the Fourth Presbyterian Church. William and Elva never had children.

Elva died at her home in Chicago at age 54, on May 19, 1906, after a few months of suffering from cancer. Elva and William had been married for almost 30 years. Elva's body was brought back to be interred in the Glidden family Mausoleum, Fairview Cemetery in DeKalb.

Today, as one travels west down Elva Road, off of Rt. 23, one can see on the horizon the distinctive grain elevator that includes six deep brown-glaze tiled grain bins tightly clustered with a wood structure on top that resembles the "Step Pyramid" of Sakkara, Egypt. The town in the distance appears literally encased on all sides by corn fields, except for the railroad tracks which slice down the east side of the tiny village.

The town of Elva reminds this author of childhood vacations traversing abandoned or extremely under populated mining towns of rural Colorado. As you enter the town, you can easily make out the features of the now abandoned railroad station. Once you cross the remaining rarely used railroad tracks, one can still make out the perfect square plotted streets, which creates one complete city block.

The town seems to mimic the vast undeveloped subdivisions of today, which have plotted streets with nothing more than a cluster of model homes. This tiny plotted layout creates a stark contrast against the surrounding cornfields, almost as though time is still waiting for some grand expansion plan that has never come. This small town and others like it with once big dreams seems to have an almost eerie sense of history frozen in time.

Sources:

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- DeKalb Evening Chronicle* May 21, 1906 p.01—Lucinda's obituary
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