

He's Stuck On Barbed Wire Collecting

When John Stohlmann, Jr., found some old barbed wire at his grandpa's farm in 1956, he had no idea it was the start of something big. Today, the Omaha, Neb., collector now has 1,965 types of barbed wire, 261 kinds of planter wire (for checking corn), and 880 wire-related tools. He also has 46 post hole diggers and the world's largest fence post and wire splice collections.

"My collection fills a 30 by 50-ft. building," Stohlmann says. "My uncle got interested in this also. We figured it would be an unusual and fun hobby."

His problem is that he likes and collects everything, including: diggers, stretchers, husking hooks, old limestone posts, ornamental gates, fence toppers, barriers, books, cattle guards, wire machines and even staples.

He's president of the Nebraska Barbed Wire Association and one of many collectors who gather regularly at shows to trade, buy and sell antique fence parts and tools (www.antiquebarbedwiresociety.com).

Two U.S. museums are dedicated to preserving the history of wire fencing: the Kansas Barbed Wire Museum in LaCrosse, Kansas, and the Devil's Rope Museum in McLean, Texas. There are collectors throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe.

Sometimes the collections are really unusual, such as canes made of barbed wire.

"Seventy to 80 years ago, if you bought a

lot of barbed wire, they'd give you a barbed wire cane," Stohlmann explains. "Now those canes go for \$1,000 or more."

The first U.S. barbed wire was patented in 1867, so there is a lot of history to tell. Stohlmann thinks it's important to share the information. It takes a couple hours for him to set up his collection displayed on white vinyl boards glued to plywood and 4 by 8-ft. angle iron frames for his posts and diggers. He regularly attends wire collector shows and threshing events.

"I'm the only crazy person into everything," Stohlmann says. "That's why I show a little of everything so people can see a variety and there's more to talk about."

Society members meet each October for a three-day session. Cost for antique barbed wire runs anywhere from 25 cents to \$300 for an 18-in. piece. Tools run from \$5 to \$300.

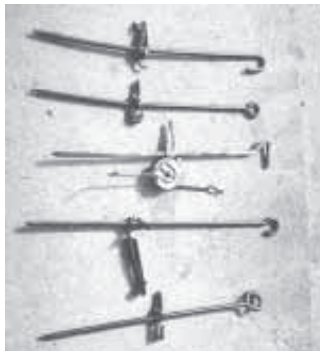
For people interested in learning more, the society has books for sale and member Jim Goedert of Kearney, Neb., edits a newsletter every other month.

Stohlmann invites people interested in barbed wire to contact him. He's willing to put on presentations to groups.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, John Stohlmann, Jr., 6006 N. 168th St., Omaha, Neb. 68116 (ph 402 964-9797); Antique Barbed Wire Society (www.antiquebarbedwiresociety.com).



Collector John Stohlmann, Jr., has 1,965 different types of barbed wire.



He also has many antique fence posts and tools. "My collection fills a 30 by 50-ft. building," he says.



With 10 years of experience building with straw bales, Andrew Morrison has built and consulted for people in all corners of the world.

Expert Shares Straw Bale Building Advice

If you're interested in building with straw bales, Andrew Morrison's website (www.strawbale.com) is a good place to start. With 10 years experience building with straw bales, Morrison, of Jacksonville, Oregon, has built and consulted for people in all corners of the world.

"I've built everything from landscape walls, small studios and garden sheds to million dollar homes," Morrison says. He is a licensed general contractor who built Straw Bale Village, a community of 15 straw bale homes in Jacksonville, Oregon, and watched his website database grow to more than 20,000 members in just two years.

People are interested in "building green" for health benefits and long-term financial savings, he says. Developers also see potential. For example, Morrison is working with a group considering straw bale technology for cabanas at a high-end resort in Mexico.

"Straw bale construction is finding its way into many different markets every day," Morrison says. "I heard recently of a police station that used straw bales as the walls for increased efficiency and protection from projectiles!"

Though one of the lures is that people can do it themselves, Morrison strongly recommends first-timers hire a builder,

or at least a consultant.

"Many people think they will save money if they build their home themselves. This can be true, but only if they don't take forever to complete the job and they avoid making expensive mistakes," he notes.

Morrison offers a lot of free information on his website: a seven-day e-Course; weekly video clips that highlight specific details of the job; blog entries that cover tips, techniques and general information; and podcast shows with question and answer sessions.

He also offers DVDs (slab foundation, load bearing straw bale, post and beam straw bale and plastering) and consultation services for varying fees.

Morrison says he has become a leader in straw bale construction simply because of his experience. "Teaching people how to build with bales and build green is one of my greatest passions. I love it, and so I do whatever I can to make it accessible to as many people as possible."

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Using pvc sewer pipes, Jean Peacock made a floating garden planted to vegetables and flowers. The roots grow down through the pipes to find water.

Floating Garden Livens Up Farm Pond

Building a floating island in his small farm pond was a fun project for Jean Peacock around the top of the pipes and filled it with compost. Then I planted vegetables and flowers. The roots grow down through the pipes to find water."

After first reading about the floating vegetable garden of a Texas FARM SHOW reader (Vol. 26, No. 3), Peacock was inspired by the idea.

"I tried the project on a really small scale to see how it worked and it only took one afternoon to do it," Peacock says.

Using 14, 4-in. dia. by 5-ft. long pvc sewer pipes (lashed together with nylon army surplus rope), he made a 5 by 6-ft. floating base for his 25-ft. dia. pond. The pipes have caps on the ends to make them airtight.

"I built a 3 by 5-ft. wood framework around the top of the pipes and filled it with compost. Then I planted vegetables and flowers. The roots grow down through the pipes to find water."

Peacock connected the island to shore with pulleys, like a clothesline, so he can just pull it over to a little dock he made.

"We don't normally step onto it," he says. "I pull it up on dry land in the winter time."

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