

Mansion Tour

Location: Visitor Center

Welcome the visitors. Introduce the visitors to Isaac Ellwood and family using the Family Tree.

Ellwood Mansion can be called “the house built by barbed wire.” Isaac Ellwood was one of three DeKalb men who became wealthy through the invention and manufacture of barbed wire. Prior to his success in the barbed wire industry, Isaac owned a hardware store and lived a middle class life. However, once he began manufacturing barbed wire, Isaac came to enjoy great wealth. With his newfound wealth, Isaac built the mansion along with many other buildings on the grounds and in the surrounding neighborhood.

Isaac and his wife Harriet lived in the Ellwood House for 30 years from the time it was built in 1879 to 1910, the year they died only weeks apart. They had five children who lived to adulthood. Their younger son, Perry, inherited the house after their deaths in 1910. The Perry Ellwood family lived in the house for more than 50 years. Shortly before May Ellwood’s death in 1964, she and her three children graciously gave the house to the DeKalb Park District and its contents to the Ellwood House Association. We are very fortunate that many additional personal belongings of the Ellwoods have been returned to us over the years. Most of the items you will see belonged to the Ellwood family.

Use the panel to show how the Mansion has changed.

The Ellwoods never seemed satisfied with their homes. They were constantly remodeling and updating their homes. When the mansion was built in 1879, it looked much different than it does today. It was much more gothic in style and lacked several things, including its distinctive front porch. In 1898, only about twenty years after moving in, Isaac and Harriet commissioned the first major renovation. At this time, the front porch was added, the home was expanded, and the newest technology was installed. The second and final big renovation was done in 1910, when Perry and May first inherited the home. At that time, the house was enlarged again and the floor plan we see today was created. As we tour the home, I will point out many of these changes.

Location: Grounds

Point out each structure on the grounds.

Today, the museum owns about 10 acres, but when the Ellwoods lived here, the property totaled nearly 1200 acres. The property extended approximately two miles north of where we are now. At the time the house was built, it was situated on the outskirts of town. In the early 1880s, the Ellwoods began importing Percheron horses from France. They sold these large draft horses to customers from across the U.S., housing hundreds of horses on the property. The water tower kept several stables and horse barns supplied with water. When the automobile came along, the Ellwoods got out of the horse business. The barns were eventually torn down. Today, all that remains of Ellwood Green is the water tower.

Point to Visitor Center. Today's Visitor Center is partially original. The left hand side (where we just were in the exhibit) was built in 1912 as a multi-car garage for Perry's large collection of cars. The garage included a grease pit and a car-washing area. It had doors on each side so that cars could pull through without ever using reverse gear. The Ellwood's chauffeur had his own apartment on the second floor of the building.

Point to the Museum House. The small brick house was built in 1905 for Harriet Ellwood as her private museum or "Curiosity Shop." Harriet had many souvenirs from her travels and collected such things as Native American artifacts, shells and natural history objects. She did china painting as a hobby and the second floor of the building may have been used as a studio for her crafts. Harriet only used the building for five years before her death and most of her treasures had been given away by the time the Ellwood House became a museum. Today, the building is storage but you can view what remains of Harriet's collection in the Visitor Center

Point to the Ellwood-Nehring House. Harriet and Isaac gave each of their children homes when they got married. The house next door was built for their son Perry and his wife May as a wedding gift in 1899. Perry and May inherited the mansion when Harriet and Isaac died and the home was occupied by other Ellwood family members. The house remained in the family until it was sold in the 1940s. In 2011, the home was donated to the museum and is now open on select days.

Before going into the mansion, inform visitors of the rules.

Before we go into the house, I would like to remind you of a few simple rules:

- 1) It is very important that everyone stay together with me
- 2) In order to preserve the contents of the house please not touch anything in the house; this includes furnishings, curtains and wall coverings (*folding chairs are placed throughout for any visitors who need to sit*)
- 3) Please do not take photographs in the mansion

1st Floor

Location: Library

Architect George Garnsey of Chicago designed the Ellwood House. It was built in 1879 for about \$50,000 (the average cost of homes then was under \$1,000). The house was built with central heating (*point out radiators*) and indoor plumbing (only the wealthy could afford these at the time) and gas lighting. There are built-in shutters to keep out the hot sun and to keep light from fading fabrics. Most of the rooms in the house had fireplaces which were primarily decorative. For the most part, the mansion has been restored to the 1910s, when Perry and May were living here.

When Isaac and Harriet were living here, the room was used as a formal parlor for entertaining guests. However, when Perry's family moved in in 1911, they reconfigured the floor plan and made this a library.

Show 1912 picture. This photograph was taken in 1912. As you can see, the room has been restored to the way it looks in the picture including gilt moldings, grasscloth wall coverings and the light fixture. As you can see in the picture, the furnishings of the room are nearly all intact.

Ask if anyone has any questions before you move on to the hallway.

Hallway Description. The ceilings on this floor are 14 feet high and the wood you see is oak, walnut, and rosewood. If you look up to the ceiling, you see beautifully restored stencil work. There are 11 colors in this design which was very fashionable in the 1880s. This part of the house has not changed much from the time of original construction. The hallway is very similar in décor to what much of the main floor would have looked like when the house was built.

Location: Dining Room

I'd like to draw your attention to the two portraits. These show Isaac and Harriet Ellwood in 1879, the year construction of the Ellwood House was completed. These are life-sized photographs that were then colored by hand.

In this room, we can see some of the renovations Isaac and Harriet made. When the home was first built, the dining room was smaller than the room you see today. It also had a dumbwaiter in the corner which brought food up from the basement kitchen. (*Show where the room ended by holding out*

your arms under the crystal covered lights near far end of carpet).

Twenty years after moving into the home, Isaac and Harriet decided it was time for a change. At that time, the room was lengthened and a new kitchen, pantry and a servant's dining hall were built on the main floor (*indicate door that goes to the caretaker's apartment*). The Tiffany-style glass mosaic fireplace was also installed at this time. After remodeling, the Ellwoods had a new dining room set custom-made to match the mahogany paneling of the walls. This is what you see here today. The smaller, informal table was used for family breakfasts and lunch. Dinner was generally eaten at the large table which can be extended by as many as 12 leaves. Many important historical figures were guests of the Ellwoods including Theodore Roosevelt, Jane Addams, U. S. senators and governors of Illinois.

At the same time that this room was enlarged and the kitchen was moved, Isaac and Harriet also had the large front porch added to the home and we believe electricity was likely added at this time. Unfortunately I will not be able to show you the newer first floor kitchen because it was later converted into a caretaker's apartment, but I will show you the original basement kitchen at the end of our tour.

Staffordshire Figurines. These figurines were collected by Perry Ellwood as a hobby, just as other family members collected antiques during their travels. These figurines were made in the Staffordshire area of England and were originally quite inexpensive. Most of the pieces in our collection date from the 1830s to the 1890s. *Ask if there are any questions before you move to the hall and living room.*

Location: Main Hallway

These portraits of Perry and May Ellwood were based on their wedding photographs taken in 1898. May was the daughter of a prominent local dairyman, Henry Gurler, and was an accomplished vocalist. Perry Ellwood was the youngest son of Harriet and Isaac. Perry started his career as an assistant cashier at the First National Bank and eventually worked his way up to Chairman of the Board. After Perry died in the 1940s, May continued to make this her home. In the 1960s, together with her children, May decided to donate the mansion to the DeKalb Park District after her death. Today the home and grounds are owned by the Park District, and the museum is operated by the not-for-profit Ellwood House Association.

As we move forward, we'll begin to see the mansion more as Perry and May's home.

Location: Living Room

What is now the living room was originally two rooms, a library and a sitting room, separated by pocket doors. “Living rooms” became popular in the 20th century replacing the formal Victorian parlors and sitting rooms of the 19th century. When Perry’s family moved into the Mansion, they had this living room created. Perry and May liked all things English so they made a room that looked like it belonged in a 17th century manor house. They installed the oak paneling, the molded plaster ceiling and the enormous stone fireplace in 1911.

Perry and May also had the challenge of making this home work for their young family. Unlike his parents, Perry had very young children when he moved into this home. You can see the two oldest in the marble bust and the painting next to the fireplace. These are Perry and May’s children, I.L. and Patty. The bust was made when they were 3 and 5 years old and the painting a few years later. (Their third child John was born after these were made.)

We can probably all agree that this room is not ideal for young children. In fact, nowhere in the mansion was there any dedicated children’s space. So Perry and May decided they needed to add space for the children. Let’s go into the sunroom to see what they created. *Ask if there are any questions before you move on to the Sunroom.*

Location: The Sunroom

In sharp contrast to the nostalgic look of the living room is the sunroom. This room and the rooms above it were added in 1911 in a modern Arts & Crafts style. The terrace was added at the same time to create outdoor living space as well as a connection with the grounds and gardens. The sunroom was treated like the “family room” of today, a place where the kids could play. We have pictures of the kids climbing on the furniture and playing with their toys. The photo shows this room just after it was completed in 1912.

Point out the photo of I.L., Patty, and John.

This room is also the most recently restored room in the mansion. When we first became a museum in the 1960s, this room looked completely different. To restore it to its 1910s appearance, seven layers of paint were removed and the windows and light fixtures were custom-made to match the originals.

Location: Rotunda *Have your visitors stand in middle of rotunda and look up.*

It is 45 feet to the top of the rotunda. The stained glass dome and oak cantilevered staircase are original to Isaac and Harriet's house. The fireplace had been removed but was reinstalled in the 1960s.

Location: Conservatory

The back of the house originally had an open wooden porch that was replaced with this glassed-in conservatory. Patty Ellwood commented that this was a wonderful place to have breakfast, especially in the winter. The room was heated by the hot water pipes running along the walls. The Ellwood children had many different pets, including birds that were kept in this birdcage. The cage was custom-made by the family's chauffeur.

Continue to the 2nd floor. Visitors are encouraged to use the handrail

2nd Floor

Location: Landing & Hallway

*On 2nd floor landing...*If you would like to see one of the original 1879 bathrooms in the house, please peek down the short hall to your left. The house always had central plumbing which was uncommon for the time. You'll notice the sink has three taps: hot, cold and soft water (piped down from the cistern on the third floor).

The light fixture in this bathroom hallway is interesting in that it was designed for both natural gas and electric light. This was installed at a time when electric service was not always reliable. (Any upward-facing light in the house was likely a gas fixture because flames could only point upwards.)

The two portraits of the children were done the same year that the house was built. One is Perry Ellwood who later inherited the house and the other is his brother Oakley. Oakley died in childhood before the house was built and this portrait was based on a small photograph. It is likely that all of the children had their portraits done that year. These are the only two left in our collection.

Chinese Bedroom

May Ellwood loved Oriental inspired furniture and decor, many examples of which can still be found

throughout the mansion today. In the late 1920s, she bought this set of Chinoiserie furniture and dubbed this room the 'Chinese Bedroom'. The Chinoiserie style often reflects an American or European interpretation of authentic Chinese characters and designs. Before becoming the Chinese Bedroom, the space would have belonged to Perry and May's oldest son, I.L. May also used this set to furnish the first-floor Sunroom when she used that space as her bedroom from the 1940s to the 1960s.

Location: Master Bedroom

This room has been restored as the bedroom of Perry & May Ellwood, ca.1920. The room was enlarged and remodeled in 1911 and the marble bathroom was added. The Oriental touches in the room including the light fixture, the Chinese pictures, and the red lacquered desk reflect May Ellwood's decorating tastes.

The intercom by the bathroom door is one of several still in the house. It was used by the couple to communicate with household staff and with other buildings on the grounds.

Refer to the glassed in display area on the north side of the room. In the 1879 house, this room was a small bedroom which opened to the hallway. Perry's family converted the area into a sitting room or dressing room which would have been open to this bedroom. The glass wall was added after the house became a museum so the area could be used for changing exhibits from the museum's large textile collection.

Location: Patty's Room

This room is restored as the bedroom of Patience (Patty) Ellwood, daughter of Perry & May Ellwood. She lived in the house from her infancy until she married Joseph Towle in 1934.

When the house was built, each of the family bedrooms had its own fireplace and its own sink like this room today. (Sinks and fireplaces were removed over the years as the house was updated.) *This sink also has a separate soft water tap in addition to a hot & cold water tap.*

The furniture was Patty's first "big girl" bedroom set which was purchased for her when she was about 12 years old. The doll in the chair was one of Patty's favorites and was named "Lulu May" after her mother. The gilt mirror, the upholstered rocking chair and the foot stool are pictured in one of Patty's bookplates which helped us to restore this room. The built-in shelves are pictured in another.

The shelves hold books, antique glass and china collected by Patty. The George Washington antique print was one of the first items she purchased with her own money. Patty and her brothers were hugely important to the restoration of the house when it first became a museum. As you can imagine, she was especially invested in her own childhood bedroom.

Location: Nanny's Room and Sleeping Porch

We are now above the sunroom, entering the new wing of the house added in 1911. The nanny of the Perry Ellwood children was named Amy Sickles, known to the children as "Mamie." She lived with the family from 1909 until about 1930. *Point out photo on dresser of Amy with baby Patty.* She traveled with the Ellwoods and was very much considered part of the family. (Amy never married or had any children of her own). Her role included all childcare duties, such as changing diapers and attending to minor injuries, as well as the early education of the three children.

Attached to this room is the sleeping porch, or nursery. The children slept in this space until they were old enough to move into their own bedrooms. It made life much easier for Perry and May, because Amy was always there to comfort a crying baby in the middle of the night. Later, the room became a playroom. *Ask your group if there are any questions before moving to the 3rd floor.*

Climb up the stairs to the 3rd floor.

3rd Floor

Location: Hall

Here on the third floor, we move back in time to the years Isaac and Harriet lived here (1879-1910). Perry's family mostly used the 3rd floor as storage. The first door on your right was always used as storage but also includes a large wooden feature. This large wooden tank collected rainwater which was then piped down to the sinks on the floors below. The water in DeKalb is very hard and the soft rainwater would have been used for washing hair, rinsing linens, etc.

The other two doors on the right are currently used as storage for the museum's collections. However, when Isaac and Harriet lived here, they were used for very different purposes. We believe one of the rooms was used as Isaac's billiards room and the other was used as a sewing (or work) room.

Location: Dancing Hall

This was the largest room in the house when it was built. According to an 1879 newspaper article, this room was called “the dancing hall.” Traditionally, the entertaining season was in the fall and winter. It also would have been much too hot to use this space in the summer. This room was not used very often so the décor was simple and then decorated as needed for special occasions. Musicians would have performed on the stage and you can still see one of the original gas jets there.

Trap Door. Do not open the door. The trap door on the north wall opens to expose a metal trough surrounding the chimney for the library fireplace. We believe this was likely used to heat this space. You will notice there are no radiators in this room.

The idea of dancing halls like this one had gone out of style by the time Perry’s family moved in in 1912. Once they created the large living room on the first floor, all parties were held there. At that time, this became a play area for their three children, a place where they could play dress up, put on plays and set up electric train sets.

Servant Quarters

Location: 3rd Floor Maid’s Room

This room originally would have been used by two live-in maids. They probably would have had two twin size beds in here along with a wash basin for the girls to wash up with. If you have visited other historic homes with servants’ quarters, you may notice that this is very different. The servant bedrooms at the Ellwood House are quite spacious and bright. Typical servant rooms of this period tended to be tiny and dark.

Many of the servants in the DeKalb area were immigrants from Sweden, Norway and Finland. They would have brought all of their possessions to America in trunks (like you see here), frequently joining family members who came to the United States before them.

Take visitors down the back stairs. Remind your group that there is a railing just around the corner and that they should watch their heads.

Location: 2nd Floor Maid’s Room (Cook’s Room)

This room was often used by the Ellwood House cook or head maid. A photo on the wall shows three

Ellwood servants: a laundress (Esther Anderson), a maid (Boda), and a cook (Cora Munson), taken about 1910. The woman on the right once lived in this room. Behind the door there is an intercom similar to the one in the master bedroom. In the corner are tools used by servants such as rug beaters and an early “vacuum” or carpet sweeper.

We are lucky to know a little about some of the individuals who worked here. It is often quite hard to learn much about these people. For instance, Boda we know very little about – not even her real name. However, we do know that Esther left service to marry a young DeKalb man who owned his own lumber business. Their descendants still live in town. Cora started her employment with the Ellwoods as a single young woman. After marrying, she left the Ellwood Mansion. Sadly, her husband died very young and with an infant to care for, Cora returned to the Ellwoods and asked for her job back. She got it, but did not move back into the house.

We’ll now finish our tour in the basement, where the servants would have spent the majority of their time.

Take visitors down the back stairs to the basement.

You can point out the “butler’s sink” on the main floor when you go by. This is an original 1879 feature used during the time when the kitchen was in the basement.

Location: Basement Kitchen

This was the location of the original kitchen prior to the remodeling of the mansion in 1898. Keep in mind that the basement would not have been quite so dreary when people were actually working down here. Over the years, the windows have been covered by upper floor additions, and a greater number of pipes now cover the ceiling. In the laundry room you’ll see that this is a raised basement with half of the floor above ground.

When this area was used as a kitchen, it would have looked much different than it does today. We do not have the original range or kitchen sink. Instead, you see period pieces that are similar to what they had (*the black stove is similar to the 1879 kitchen and the white is similar to the 1898 kitchen*) In one corner you see what remains of the dumbwaiter. It would have appeared upstairs in the dining room where the Staffordshire figurines are now.

There are several gas light jets sticking out of the walls throughout the basement. Another interesting feature is the speaking tubes on the south wall. These were hollow tubes in the walls that

allowed servants to communicate with upper floors, thus avoiding having to run up and down the stairs. This system was replaced by the telephone intercom system you have already seen in several rooms.

As we continue down the hall (*straight ahead towards servant dining table*) we'll pass the large built-in refrigerator or "ice box." When we go around the corner you will see a door up above where large ice blocks were placed. The door is very thick to keep the cool air in.

Location: Servant Dining Room

This room would have had nice views of First Street until the porch was added to the front of the house. In here, the Ellwood servants were able to enjoy some down time. Though not as fancy as the Ellwood's dining room, this is the area where servants were able to relax, entertain friends, and get to know one another.

Location: Basement Hallway

This second wine cellar was added later than the one in the kitchen. According to Perry's children, this cellar was added during the 1920s when Prohibition outlawed alcohol. With the door closed and a few trunks conveniently stacked in front of it, the cellar was hidden.

Although the hallway seems calm today, it is fun to imagine servants rushing around working.

Pass through the original laundry room to the modern space. This awkward space became storage/work space after the new laundry was built.

Location: Laundry Room

This area is the lowest level of the "modern" wing added in 1911. The washtubs along the west wall are original to the room. The other artifacts in the room are representative of what Ellwood servants would have used to wash and iron clothes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This was the most difficult and lowest paying job in the mansion. Try to imagine it in the middle of July, with terrible humidity. It was not a pleasant area to work in. You'll also notice an intercom in this room, so the servants were never out of reach.

Ask for final questions and conclude your tour.

Barbed wire may seem like a simple product, but without it, none of this would have been possible. In this house, we've seen beautiful architecture, changing technology, and the lifestyles of both the upper class and the lower class. I hope you enjoyed your visit. Now, rather than leaving with the basement as your final impression of the Ellwood House, I invite you to join me at the Little House.

Little House

The Little House was built as a contractor's model in 1891. Perry's older brother Will Ellwood saw the model in a parade in town and purchased it so that his two daughters could use it as a play house. After they grew up, it was used by I.L., Patty, and John. When the Ellwood children outgrew the Little House, it was moved and owned by several different DeKalb families over the years.

It was returned to the Ellwood House Association in the 1970s and has been restored to a traditional late Victorian color scheme.

Thank your guests for visiting the Ellwood House and tell them about any upcoming Special Events. Please invite your group to return to the Visitor Center to see the many exhibits there and to visit the gift shop.

Ellcourt Tour

Location: Entry Hall

The Tudor Revival style of architecture was a direct answer to the extremely ornate style of Victorian homes. As you will see when we go into the mansion, this home is much more “homey” and livable than the mansion is. Victorian homes were clearly designed to show a person’s social status and boasted a more compartmentalized floor plan. Tudor Revival homes, on the other hand, embraced open floor plans, an emphasis on family, and a free flowing environment. These changing architectural styles speak to the changing ideals of home and family.

Today we are seeing this home as Will and Jennie’s second home. When Perry and May lived here in the early years of their marriage, the house’s layout was much different. *Point out the photographs from Perry’s time.* As you can see from the photos, this entry hall was initially more closed off. Will and Jennie further enhanced the open floor plan by removing the fireplace and library. Be sure to notice the beautiful stained glass that is original to the home.

Location: Dining Room

As we move into the dining room, we start to notice more changes made by Will and Jennie. *Show photo of Perry’s billiards room.* When the house was first built, this was Perry’s billiards room. At that time, the dining room was located on the other side of the house. When Will and Jennie moved in, they completely changed the floor plan. At that time, the dining room was moved into this space. Will and Jennie also added a new section to the home, creating a kitchen and butler’s pantry. Feel free to peek into the original butler’s pantry. Notice the original Arts and Crafts cabinetry. The pantry’s pantry even features a plate warmer in the cabinet nearest the door! The kitchen beyond has since been updated, but was likely originally designed in the same Arts and Crafts style as the butler’s pantry.

On the walls, we have portraits of all of the owners of this home. First, you have Perry and May; followed by Will and Jennie. After Will and Jennie died, their daughters Jean and Elise inherited the home. By then (1933), the girls were both married and living in Connecticut. They made the home available to a variety of Ellwood family members over the years before finally selling it to Paul Nehring in 1942. During his bachelor years in the home, Paul made very few changes to the home beyond updating the kitchen and bathrooms. In the 1980s, he married Shirley Hamilton. We have Shirley to thank for the beautiful restoration work you see. She was the driving force behind

returning this home to the showpiece it first was. Paul passed away in 1990 and in 2011; Shirley donated the home to the Ellwood House Association and moved to Wisconsin.

Location: Living Room

Across the hall is the main living space of the home. Unlike the more formal parlors original to the mansion, this home was designed with an open living room used by all members of the family and their guests. Again in this room we find examples of the Tudor Revival style of architecture. Take a close look at the fireplace. It features a flattened pointed arch for the firebox opening and heraldic motif tile. When we go into the mansion, be sure to compare this fireplace to the ones you see there.

Location: Library

It may seem hard to believe now, but this small space was built to be the home's dining room. *Point to photograph of Perry's dining room.* It may have been small, but even this room had unique features. You may notice a thin wire dangling from the bottom of the table and ending at the floor. This wire was how Perry and May called their servants. There would have been a button for them to push, signaling they needed the table cleared or the next course served. There was also a door where the bookcases now sit, leading into the kitchen (the room we'll see next).

However, as we have observed before, Will and Jennie chose to make major changes to the home's floor plan. They converted this space into Will's library, adding the bookcases and a nice large desk. We can imagine Will sitting here, answering letters for his various business endeavors while Jennie entertains in the next room. The Tudor Revival emphasis on family is evident in the closeness between these spaces.

Location: Music Room

Our last stop in this house is the Music Room. Originally, this was a smaller space that functioned as the kitchen. But when Will and Jennie changed the home's floor plan, they chose to enlarge this space and create a special room for events. The first major party to be held in this space was the wedding of Will's younger daughter Elise in 1912. *Point out photograph of Elise's wedding above fireplace.* Over the years, this room hosted many family events, including the marriage of Will's older daughter Jean in 1917.

When the Nehrings moved into the home, Shirley kept the spirit of the room alive, using this space to host concerts and recitals. Shirley was extremely active in DeKalb and NIU's music scenes. To this

day, we continue to welcome musicians here for special events. Shirley also allowed students to live in the house over the years – another tradition we continue today.

Ask if there are any questions, then exit through the back door. The second floor is not available for tours because we have resident interns who live there.

Location: Grounds

The beautiful glass dome you see was added by Will and Jennie as well. It's called a porte-cochere and it meant to protect people from the elements when they exit their vehicles. The architectural style of this piece is not Tudor Revival. It is actually Arts and Crafts style. It's simplistic yet sturdy design complements the natural qualities of English Tudor style. The iron and glass structure is reminiscent of the Crystal Palace from the 1851 World's Fair in London.

The coach house was built in 1899, with the house, to be used for horses and carriages. When Will was living here, the building was enlarged to create a garage for cars. It has since been returned to its original 1899 appearance.

Next to the coach house is a recreation of May's Arts and Crafts garden. The idea behind an Arts and Crafts garden is that the lady of the house can manage it by herself, without the help of a professional, full time gardener. It accommodates the amateur gardener due to a freer design and natural plantings. Just like their home, this garden was designed in sharp contrast to the ornate, elaborate designs of the Victorian style.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are there any Ellwood family members still living?

Yes, there are descendants from four of Isaac and Harriet's five children (Will, Harriet, Mary, and Perry. Jessie had no living children.) Perry and May's descendants include the children of Patty and John and their families, and the grandchildren of I.L. and their families. Of the three generations that lived in the Mansion, none are still living. No Ellwood descendants live in this area.

Why didn't any of the family members want to keep the house?

Perry's children – I.L., Patty, and John – had all moved away in the 1930s or 1940s. They had homes and families of their own in other parts of the country.

What's original?

This can be a difficult question to answer because there is so much that it covers. About 90% of our objects are original Ellwood objects, and about 99% of the first floor is original to the Ellwoods.

Which Ellwood each object belonged to varies.

In terms of wall coverings and flooring, the first floor is the most fully restored to the Ellwood years.

For more specific information, please see a staff member.

What is the Ellwood House worth?

We estimate that it would cost \$15-20 million to replace the Ellwood Mansion today (not including its contents.)

How big is the Ellwood House?

The mansion's gross square footage is a whopping 16,147 square feet! The gross square footage measures absolutely everything, including foundations, attic space, etc. However, the net square footage measures all of the usable space in the mansion, including the basement and conservatory but excluding wall space and other masonry. The mansion's net square footage is 12,833 square feet.

How many bedrooms and bathrooms are in the house?

This has changed as the house was renovated and enlarged. When first built, the mansion had 5-7 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. Today, the mansion has 7-8 bedrooms and 6 bathrooms.

Is the house haunted?

We have never personally experienced anything in the house that would suggest that it is haunted.

Did anyone die in the house?

Both Isaac and Harriet died in the house in 1910. Isaac was 77 and Harriet was 73. Both died of natural causes.

Perry Ellwood inherited the Ellwood House. Why did he inherit the house, instead of his older brother? And did the other children receive anything when Harriet and Isaac died in 1910?

It seems that none of the four surviving Ellwood children wanted to inherit the old family home, but Isaac was adamant that it would go to one of them. Ultimately, it was decided that Perry would inherit. Most likely, Perry became the new owner because his business interests were based in DeKalb, while most of Will's were in Texas.

Daughters Jessie and Harriet received \$1,000,000 each and daughter Mary's two children got \$500,000 each (Mary had already died in 1903). Will Ellwood received most of the Texas ranch land. Perry also received a Texas ranch.

Why isn't photography allowed in the mansion?

Taking photographs is disruptive during tours. Bright lights are harmful to fabrics and finishes. And most importantly, photography is not allowed for security reasons.

How many servants did the Ellwoods have?

We don't know for sure. According to the 1880 census, there were 4 people living in the Ellwood House that were not Ellwood family members. Harriet and Isaac likely had gardeners, coachmen/chauffeurs, several maids, a laundress, and a cook. May and Perry had a cook, three maids, a nanny, a gardener, and "the man who took care of the horses and cows." The number of servants fluctuated over the years, depending on who was in residence and the needs of the Ellwood family. This includes both live-in servants and those who lived in town.

In addition to household staff, the Ellwoods employed many different people in their various businesses.

Why does Oakley look so unhappy in the portrait on the 2nd floor?

This image was probably made by copying a photograph taken before Oakley's death years earlier. In most early photos the subjects are not smiling. Due to slow shutter speeds and without today's high-speed film, getting a photographic portrait taken was a long arduous process. The artist of this painting also had the disadvantage of never meeting Oakley which is perhaps why it lacks life.

What are behind the little doors in the walls of the Dancing Hall and the 3rd floor maids' room? (Please do NOT open these doors or allow visitors to open them during tours.)

The door in the Dancing Hall covers a large chimney that runs between the inner and outer walls of the house. A wooden, metal-lined trough runs around the chimney. It is probable that opening the door allowed heat from the chimney bricks to radiate into the rooms and this warm air could be moistened (humidified) by filling the trough with water. Also note that there are no radiators in this room.

The box behind the door in the maids' room probably housed wiring as part of the house's earliest electrical system.

How is the museum funded?

The Ellwood House Museum is managed through a partnership between the DeKalb Park District and the Ellwood House Association. The Ellwood House Association is a not-for-profit organization. The museum is primarily funded through grants, endowments, and donations.

Can we see other buildings on the museum campus?

Besides the mansion and the Visitor Center, visitors have the opportunity to tour the Little House and the first floor of the Ellwood-Nehring House. The 2nd floor of the EN House is used as a private residence for museum interns. The museum building, water tower, and coach house are all used as storage.

If there is a question that visitors often ask you that is not on this list, please let us know.

