

Who has the Largest Barbed Wire Collection?

The following editorial by Jim Goedert is reprinted from a previous issue of the "Barbed Wire Collector." Used with permission.

The Marlboro cigarette people are having a contest that pays the winning team \$1,000,000 to correctly answer riddles about the American West.

This past month the Kansas Barbed Wire Museum and the Devils Rope Museum have been deluged with phone calls and emails about which museum has the largest barbed wire collection. It seems that both museums are taking credit for this dubious honor so I think it is time to get to the crux of this matter.

The Devils Rope Museums September newsletter addresses the Marlboro issue. One caller told Davie Gipson, the Curator, that the first prize in the Marlboro contest was a million dollars. Davie replied that We {the Devils Rope Museum} had the largest collection of barbed wire and fencing tools in the world. She went on to tell the caller that we had 1,400 wires in the museum.

I looked on the Kansas Barbed Wire Museums web site and this is what it said, The Spilger Barbed Wire Collection: Now on permanent exhibit, this collection of over 2,100 samples of barbed wire is one of the largest of its kind in existence. I called Gary Spilger who was the donator of the collection and he said the actual number was 2,140 wires.

The next logical place that has an inordinate amount of barbed wire is the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. Here is what their web site had to say. The barbed wire study collection on either side of this room contains 1,300 unique examples drawn from the museum's collection of more than 8,000 different barbed wires. In an article written in the January/February, 2003 Barbed Wire Collector by Autry Brown, Autry states that he cataloged 8,230 pieces of wire, with approximately 1,350 pieces on display, and the rest being located in the archives of the museum.

Maybe I am mistaken, but these three museums have the largest barbed wire collections that I know of. If this is not the case, possibly one of our readers can enlighten me.

As to who actually has the largest barbed wire display, I have done the research. You will have to draw your own conclusions.

