

BIG ELI FERRIS WHEEL



Take a Spin

BIG ELI WHEEL

No visit to Jacksonville is complete without a visit to a Big Eli Ferris Wheel! Our city has been home to fun for more than 100 years – and you can ride a bit of history in Community Park. In 1893, W.E. Sullivan visited the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where he marveled at the original Ferris Wheel. Mr. Sullivan owned a bridge-building business, the Eli Bridge Co., but remained fascinated by the engineering wonder he'd seen in Chicago and was determined to build one of his own. Sullivan's first Big Eli Wheel debuted in Jacksonville's Central Park on May 23, 1900.

In 1919, a new factory building was erected at 800 Case Ave. in Jacksonville and has been home to the company ever since. The first wheel, Big Eli Wheel #1, now proudly stands in the front of the factory. Today, the Eli Bridge Co. produces wheel and non-wheel amusement rides. Their products can be found in amusement parks around the world. The Eli Bridge Co. remains a family-owned company with Sullivan's great-granddaughter, Patty Sullivan, running the company today.



MORE THAN A CENTURY OF FUN

In 2007, Big Eli #17 celebrated 100 years! In 1957, #17 returned home to the Eli Bridge Co. for renovation. Originally built with 10 seats, #17 was converted to a 12-seater and was sold to the Jacksonville Rotary Club, which in turn installed it in Nichols Park and operated it there until 1985. In 1986, the Rotary Club donated the Big Eli #17 to the City of Jacksonville. With the assistance of Eli Bridge Co. and private donations, the structure was renovated and re-erected at its present site in Community Park.

FACTORY & WHEEL LOCATIONS

The factory is not open for tours, but you can catch a ride on an authentic Big Eli Wheel in Community Park at the corner of South Main Street and Morton Avenue.

WHEEL HOURS

4-6 p.m. Sundays from Memorial Day to Labor Day and holidays (weather permitting). Available for private parties; contact Gina Hayes, 618.946.3773.

VISITORS CENTER

310 E. State Street
Jacksonville, IL 62650
217.243-5678 or 800.593.5678
jacksonvilleil.org



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