

# A hundred years of a spooky good time: The Alton Halloween Parade

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**ALTON** - Big things may be in the works for this year's centennial anniversary of the iconic **Alton Halloween Parade**, but **Alton Township Supervisor and East End Improvement Association member Don Huber** is tight-lipped about what they could be.

"We're going to have a bigger parade than usual, because people are enthused about the 100th anniversary," he said. "We have a couple of high school bands coming that used to participate, but didn't anymore."

Huber said the **East End Improvement Association**, who sponsors and facilitates the parade every year was a "great committee." He said he trusts them to be able to create a great parade for the kids of Alton.

"This parade is for the kids," he said. "The kids may be in their 60s, but it's for kids."

He said the East End Improvement Association's work ethic and "lack of egos" has contributed to a successful Halloween Parade each year, and he said this year's only difference will be that it will be better. He said the main issue, as always, is the weather.

Huber, who is a local historian, has been working on the parade since 1980. He said during Alton's industrial "Golden Days," the parade featured many elaborate floats.

"During the time Alton had industry, it wasn't at all unusual for skilled employees to put lots of work into building floats," Huber said. "There were bicycles in some of them powering the floats. They were really impressive, but we don't have resources like that in it anymore."

Huber said the Alton Halloween Parade has become more float-centric in recent years. He said the parade used to allow anyone to join, which led to a convoluted cluster of advertisers, floats and marching bands. He said the float-centric parade model is also "for the kids."

"We want floats and bands, and kids want firetrucks too," Huber said. "So, we've pushed back on advertising."

Kids have been one of the largest reasons for the parade's popularity. The bright lights, fantastic phantasms and showering of assorted candies were at one point designed to keep children from honoring the spirit of Halloween mischief, Huber said.

"We had it in more modern times so kids wouldn't go out and make mischief," he said. "Back in older times, that mischief meant tipping over outhouses. We think we've accomplished our mission, because we haven't had kids go around and turn over outhouses in recent years."

This year is the anniversary of the first Alton Halloween Parade, not the 100th consecutive march. Huber said the parade was suspended in 1942, due to World War II, and was not reinstated until 1948, due to rationing.

In 1916, the East End Improvement Association was a German athletic organization, which met on the corner of Ridge and Fourth Street. Each year, on Halloween, the group would have a costumed gala. In 1916, the group left their meeting place and had a fanciful and fun costumed march from Ridge Street to Henry. As time passed, that march became longer and larger, eventually becoming the Broadway bash known to everyone in the River Bend.