

# Illinois born, built and made: Alton celebrates 200 years of statehood

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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ALTON - Alton was one of many cities across the State of Illinois starting the celebration of the state's bicentennial.

Illinois was made a state on Dec. 3, 1818 - exactly 199 years ago. Because of that, the state is celebrating its 200th birthday all year. The conclusion of this celebration will occur on Dec. 3, 2018, the actual 200th anniversary of Illinois's statehood. Cities across the state, including Alton, celebrated this historic event with the ceremonial raising of the Illinois bicentennial flag Monday.

Alton's celebration began with an address from Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) President Brett Stawar. Before the ceremony's beginning, Stawar said Altonians in particular would have a lot to anticipate in the coming year. Besides the state's bicentennial, this year also marks 200 years since Alton was platted as a city by its founder, Rufus Easton.

"The city was platted, but not incorporated, a few months before Illinois was event a state," Stawar said before the ceremony.

The raising of the newly-christened Illinois Bicentennial Flag was conducted by Alton Fire Chief Bernie Sebold and Alton Deputy Police Chief Terry Buhs after the presentation of colors by the Alton High School Air Force ROTC and the singing of *The Star-Spangled Banner* by the Marquette Catholic High School Choir.

A proclamation was also offered by Alton Mayor Brant Walker, who asked everyone to celebrate everything "born, built and grown in Illinois." He asked people to follow events on the state's official bicentennial website, [www.Illinois200.com](http://www.Illinois200.com), and utilize the hashtag "#IllinoisProud" when talking about future events.

Prior to the flag-raising, both Walker and Stawar said Robert Wadlow's 100th birthday would have occurred this coming February if the world's tallest man had not tragically perished in his early 20s. They said to be sure to stay tuned for more information regarding possible celebrations in his honor.

