

# EXPLORE THE RIVER BEND: How Upper Alton received the name 'Pie Town'

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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The question is often asked how did Upper Alton get the nickname “Pie Town?” The answer comes from a tradition that was established in 1846 by neighborhood women in Upper Alton. The women baked pies for soldiers of the Illinois Regiments of the Mexican-American War who were camping near Rock Spring Park.[CLICK HERE TO SEE "Explore the River Bend: Pie Town" VIDEO!](#)

There were many cherry trees in Upper Alton at the time, so many cherry pies were baked. The ladies did the same thing when Civil War soldiers took a break in Alton, so the named continued through that period.

During World War I and World II, many troops passed through Upper Alton with the train station nearby. Many didn't know this but there were a lot of German and Japanese prisoners in the country at this time and many of them were transported by train, and sometimes the troops stopped with them here.

Dale Neudecker to many is "Mr. Upper Alton." He is a past president of the Upper Alton Business Association and had a State Farm Insurance business there for years. His son, Scott, took over his Upper Alton business.

Dale said the nickname "Pie Town" is something that still is accepted with pride in Upper Alton.

"There have been many resurrections of that particular decision to make pies for soldiers over the years," he said. "Ladies have different festivals to make pies and have kept that tradition going

for years and years." Dale was a young boy during World War II, but confirms that ladies did bake for troops being shipped across the country who stopped in Upper Alton.

"I remember the patriotism and all out effort by everybody to support our troops," he said of when he was a young boy during World War II.

"Millions and millions of young people were in service at that time."

Most of the buildings in Upper Alton have been there for more than 100 years, Dale said. He also said today rarely can a person go through Upper Alton without seeing someone stopped taking a picture of themselves in front of the Robert Wadlow Statue. Wadlow lived the final years of his life on Sanford Avenue in Alton and attended

Shurtleff College. John Mason Peck started Shurtleff College and Upper Alton Baptist Church. Joseph Meachum was the first to develop Upper Alton in 1816.

Shurtleff College has since closed, but Loomis Hall still remains and Dale said it is the oldest educational building in Illinois.

Alton has some divisions and they are Upper Alton, Middletown Alton, Downtown Alton and North Alton.

"The areas of Alton have all operated as separate entities, but work together very well,"

Neudecker said. "We try to support each other within the business and community groups."

One good point Dale made was Upper Alton and Alton in general has always had bakers in town, which probably also helped to carry on the tradition. Duke Bakery has been in Alton for years and years on Henry Street and has also helped carry on the tradition of delicious fresh baked pies. Mike Doucleff, one of the present owners of Duke Bakery, said he heard about "Pie Town" from his mother and father, who owned the bakery previously. His parents helped carry on the tradition and now Mike is doing the same thing with his daughter and son-in-law, Amy and Ben Hollis.

Dale had a fairly simple explanation of why the "Pie Town" tradition has continued over the years.

"The bakers always had an annual event called Pie Town Days," he said.

"If you think about it, 'Pie Town' has a nice homey feel to it. Everybody loves a good piece of pie."

