

## The Beginning of Wick's Pies

Winchester is a small town located in Randolph County, Indiana. The town was known for its stores and eateries, but one of the most notorious parts of the town is Wick's Pies. Indiana's state pie is the Sugar Cream Pie because of how famously known Wick's Pies is. Many people also knew the founders of Wick's Pies, Duane and Ruby Wickersham, because of their involvement in the community. Wick's Inc. quickly grew year by year, they then started expanding buildings and upgrading their equipment the busier it got. And their name became more and more famous, as well as their story.

Duane E. Wickersham (famously known as Mr. Wick) was born in Union City, Indiana during the year of 1916. When he was four and a half years old, his father died so he was raised by his grandparents, Hazel and Jesse Wickersham. As long as Wick could remember, his grandmother would always be in the kitchen making food and baking pies. Specifically he remembered her always baking her sugar cream pies. She would use her finger to stir the pie, which was the family "secret" of her famous pie. Mr. Wickersham learned how to make his grandma's pie recipes and As he became older, he and his wife Ruby (Headly) Wickersham started to experiment with the pies.

While Duane Wickersham was getting a delivery from Anchor Hocking Company, he noticed there was a commotion. He saw it was caused by an employee that used his required lunch break to go to the local pub to get his lunch, but returned intoxicated and would shut down the line. The manager stated that it was not a rare occurrence that employees of the factory often got drunk during their lunch. After hearing this news, Wick suggested that they open a cafe so the employees wouldn't be forced to eat their lunch at the pub, later on, the factory owners

contacted Wick to see if he would want to open a cantina at Anchor. A year later Wick would sell the restaurant to the factory and start his own restaurant: The Rainbow Restaurant.

The Rainbow Restaurant had its debut in 1943, and Wick was unable to find quality pies for his customers, so Wick decided to make his own. The Anchor Hocking cantina continued to buy pies from Mr. Wick due to the massive popularity of the business. As a way to get extra money, he would also sell around 200 pies a day out of his 1934 Buick Sedan. The pies were selling fast, so Wick paid four women to bake pies in their homes using his grandmother's recipe and their variations. Later on, he opened Mrs. Wick's Restaurant, which was named after his wife, Ruby. The building was made on 217 Greenville Avenue, Winchester, Indiana. They soon had a lot of business on their hands, and it was growing faster than they could keep up with. In 1961, Mr. Wickersham finally bought a building to make their pie production faster and more efficient. Eight people originally worked at Mrs. Wick's, one of them being Ruby Wickersham. They built a new production to deliver frozen pies with nitrogen-freezing technology. With this advancement, in the year of 1962, they acquired the "Old Fashioned Sugar Cream Pie" patent.

With the help of his grandmother's recipes, Wick was successful with the restaurant. He employed his own children to help out in the business. Paulette, his daughter, was hired to work in production in 1983. Once the business begins to grow, they need to expand its production facilities and storage. So, they built a factory across the street from the restaurant to ensure they could make fresh pies daily. They built ovens that could make 20,000 pies every day. Wick's Pies became "one of the largest independent family-run pie-baking companies in the United States."<sup>1</sup> They have sold their pies to more than twenty-four different states across North America and could deliver them on his planes, of which Wick owned three planes of his own. Wick's Pies

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<sup>1</sup> The Historical and Genealogical Society of Randolph County, *The Randolph County Historical Book: 1818-1990 Edition* (Paducah: Turner Publishing Company), page 432.

have a unique building which “Produces pie shells and tops ranging from 3 inches to 10 inches along with seven types of filled pies in their 15,000 square foot factory.”<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Wicks focuses on both quality and quantity, making them a strong and impactful business. Even though Duane Wickersham passed away in 2008, his family still wanted to keep the legacy of Wick’s Inc. They passed the business onto his son and grandson, Michael and Dylan Wickersham, to co-own the company after Mr. Wick died. While still honoring his name, they are highly involved in the community and they have increased over four times the amount of pies they make in a day since 1944.

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<sup>2</sup> The Historical and Genealogical Society of Randolph County, IN, The Randolph County Indiana Book (Paducah, Publishers of America’s History, 1991) Pg. 432