

Names Miscellany

More Official and Unofficial English Names of Places, Books, Films, and Television Programs with *alley* or *Alley*

This is a supplement to "Figurative Use of *alley* in English-Language Placenames," *Names* 33:209-210 (1985).

Note: The word *cowboy* appears twice below; it is not a misprint for *cowboy*.

Accident Alley. "It's Accident Alley down here" (a policeman in Paramus, NJ, referring to a certain highway where accidents often occur, quoted on a New York City television news program, 12 May 1994).

Alligator Alley is the name of a bar on Amsterdam Avenue near 83 St., Manhattan, New York, which opened in April 1993. [Editor's note: also an accepted, perhaps official, name for Interstate 75 between Ft.Lauderdale and Naples, Florida. The name appears as an alternate for *Everglades Parkway* on the 1994 Mobil Road Atlas].

Ambush Alley ~ **ambush alley** 'stretch of road made treacherous by enemy fire' is military slang first used during the Korean War and then in the Vietnam War (citations in J.E. Lighter et al., *Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang*, vol. I, A-G, New York, Random House, 1994).

Angel's Alley is the name of a 1948 film by Seward and Ryan.

Antique Alley is the name of an antique shop in Chester, NY.

Armory Alley is the official name of a street in Schenectady, New York.

Asthma Alley. "Asthma alley' could be back" is the title of an article by Michael Finnegan in *Daily News*, New York, July 1993, Queens section, p. 1, which deals with an incinerator in Maspeth, Queens. The first sentence of the article reads: "The city has shut the Maspeth incinerator, responsible for the soot

and smoke that turned western Queens into 'asthma alley,' but officials warn it could reopen if the state nixes the planned Brooklyn Navy Yard incinerator."

Back Alley Road is an official hodonym in Otsego County, New York.

bedpan alley 'hospital' (citations in Lighter et al., op. cit.).

Black Alley was the unofficial name of some sinister place at or near Five Points, New York, New York, around 1856 (Lighter et al. 1994 gives a citation from that year s.v. *cowbay*).

Blood Alley was once the nickname of Charles Lane in New York City (so called because of the gangs who roamed there) and is currently the nickname of the Southern State Parkway, Nassau County, New York, so called because of the many accidents which have occurred there.

Bomb Alley 'the Straits of Messina' (in the slang of the British Royal Navy and Merchant Marine, from mid-1940 to mid-1943); 'the enemy-held strip of coast between Tobruk and the British lines in Egypt' (1941-1943); 'the paths taken to their targets (principally London) by the German Air Force from 1940 to 1942 and by the V1 and V2 rockets in 1944.'

Brick Alley Pub is name of a pub in Newport, Rhode Island.

Broadway Alley is an official name of a street in Manhattan, New York.

Busker's Alley is the name of a musical Tommy Tune was writing in 1994.

Cancer Alley 'any area, especially a heavily industrialized one, having or presumed to have a high rate of cancer' (Lighter et al., op. cit., has five citations, from 1981 to 1992) and 'the nickname of that part of New Jersey around Berry's Creek, a fetid estuary where cancer-causing chemicals have been dumped.'

Change Alley is the nickname (?) or the official name (?) of a street in Singapore, so called because of the moneychangers located there.

Chemical Alley is the nickname of the area near Wallace, Louisiana (where many petrochemical companies have plants) and of the banks of the Niagara River upstream from Niagara Falls (where waste dumped from local factories has polluted it).

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Clown Alley 'dressing tent for clowns' (circus slang reported in H.L. Mencken, *The American Language*, 4 ed., New York, Alfred A. Knopf. 1946, 584). "Members of Clown Alley" is the caption of a photograph showing clowns in *Daily News*, New York, 2 April 1989, p. 22.

Gleason Alley is the official name of a street in Schenectady, New York.

Gumbo Alley is the name of a restaurant in Rockville Centre, New York, specializing in Cajun and Creole dishes (fl. 1994).

Jimmy's Comedy Alley was the name of a comedy club in Queens, New York, till it was renamed *Jimmy's Live Performance Nightclub* in 1993.

Cortlandt Alley is the official name of a street in Manhattan, New York.

Crack Alley is the nickname of the area between the Van Wyck Expressway and Sutphin Blvd., Queens, New York, so called at least since 1987 because of the many crack dealers operating there.

Discount Alley is the name of a ladies' apparel shop in Oakland Gardens, NY (fl. 1994).

Douche Can Alley was the nickname of Palmer Street, Sydney, Australia, from around 1910 to 1960, so called because many brothels were then located there and Australians popularly associate douche cans with prostitutes.

E-Boat Alley 'the World Channel [off the coast of Yorkshire]' and 'the coast between Great Yarmouth and Cromer and The Wash.' In both senses, this was British slang during World War II, *e-boat* being a German torpedo boat, *e* standing for *enemy*.

Elfreth's Alley is the official name of a street off Second St., near Christ Church, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Exchange Alley is the official name of a street in Manhattan, New York.

Film-Can Alley is the title of an article in *Los Angeles* of October 1986 (142 ff.) describing "L.A.'s once notorious Film Row. From the early '20s until the mid '60s...the bustling tricorn of Cordova, Washington and Vermont was a combination flea

market, storage yard and social estuary for anyone involved in the movie business in Southern California."

flak alley 'enemy territory heavily defended by anti-aircraft fire' (the area between Bizerte and Tunis was so called during World War II; Seoul was so called during the Korean War; and during the Vietnam War, several areas in Vietnam and Laos were so called; Lighter et al., op. cit., gives citations).

Frying Pan Alley is the nickname (?) or the official name (?) of a street in the East End of London, England.

Gasoline Alley is the name of a certain syndicated American comic strip, the unofficial name of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway (though unofficial, the name appears on at least one sign at the speedway), and was once the nickname of the Berlin Turnpike (Connecticut), other nicknames of this highway being *the Gold Strip* (likewise obsolete), *Torch Alley* (after the late 1970s), and *Death Valley* (after the late 1970s.) The turnpike's nicknames are given in Nick Ravo, "Highway Strip Recaptures Its Glory Days," *The New York Times*, 16 October 1987, B1, B2).

Gentlemen's Alley is the name of one of the lanes at the Brighton Beach Bath and Racquet Club (Brooklyn, New York) according to an article in *The New York Times* of 25 July 1987 (p. 33); according to an article in *The New York Times* of 29 July 1994 (p. C28), a sign near one of the rows of lockers at the same club proclaims it to be "Gentlemen's Alley — Great Men Only."

Gordon's Alley is the official name of a street in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Grace Court Alley is the official name of a street in Brooklyn, New York.

Gunsel's Alley: Lighter et al., op. cit., has a citation for this apparently nonce form from Herbert's *Fortune & Men's Eyes*, 1966 (13): "He means Gunsel's Alley. Too bad all the queers don't make it there."

Jews' Alley was once the nickname of Old Mill Street, New York, New York, so called because the first synagog in that city was located there. The official name of the street is now *South William Street*).

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Macdougall Alley is the official name of a street in Manhattan, New York.

Manhattan Alley is the official name of a street in Manhattan, New York.

Mig Alley is used in a song in the album "Old Ballads" (VMF-323), issued in 1951, p. 37: "I would rather lay a dollie than be shot up in Mig Alley" (quoted in Lighter et al., op. cit.). *MiG Alley* [sic] is the name of a 1978 book by L. Davis.

Mitre Alley is the nickname (?) or the official name (?) of a street near St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, Ireland, presumably in allusion to the miters worn by ecclesiastics attached to the cathedral.

mugs' alley is British ice and roller skaters' slang for the 'bar along the edge of a skating rink along which beginners feel their way.'

Murderer's Alley was the unofficial name of some sinister place in New York, New York, around 1825. Lighter et al. 1994 gives a citation from 1884 s.v. *cowbay*.

Myers Alley is the official name of a street in Schenectady, New York.

Nightmare Alley is the name of a 1946 book by Gresham and was the name of Dr. Joyce Brothers' newspaper column (18 August 1993) dealing with nightmares. [Editor's note: also a 1947 movie with Tyrone Power and Joan Blondell].

Oak Alley Plantation is the name of a plantation on the Mississippi River, so called because of the double row of oak trees forming a lane between the house and the river.

Pan Alley is the collective name of five excerpts from panning reviews quoted in *Reader's Digest*, October 1992 (114) (a pun on Tin Pan Alley).

Paradise Alley is the name of book by Stallone published in the United States in 1977 or 1978.

Peacock Alley was the name of part of the public area of the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel (New York, New York) and survives as the name of a restaurant in the new Waldorf-Astoria Hotel (at Park Av. and 50 St.).

Pig Alley was once the nickname of Charles Lane, New York, New York, so called because of the wild pigs who snuffled through the garbage there.

Presbyterian Alley is the official name of a street in New Castle, Delaware.

Rats Alley is found in the headline of Michael T. Kaufman's article in *The New York Times* of 27 October 1993 (B2), about a shop in New York City which sells human bones: "About New York: I Dreamed of Rats Alley And Found Collectibles."

Redwood Alley is the official name of a street in San Francisco, California.

Republican Alley is the official name of a street in Manhattan, New York.

Research Alley was coined by Tom Redburn in his article "Spinoffs Giving Research Alley Industrial Base" (*The New York Times*, 15 August 1994 [A1] and [B5]): "Today, what might be called Research Alley — the Route 1 corridor from New Brunswick to Princeton [New Jersey] — is the core of the nation's greatest concentration of corporate research and development" (A1).

Ryder's Alley is the official name of a street in Manhattan, New York.

Shubert Alley is the official name of a street in Manhattan, New York.

Silk Alley is the official name (?) or nickname (?) of a street in Beijing, China, so called because of the many stores there selling silk garments.

Slave Alley was the collective nickname for the employment agencies on the west side of Sixth Av. between 43 and 50 Sts., New York, New York, during the 1920s and 1930s (the agencies offered blue-collar jobs, hence the word *slave*).

Snake Alley is the nickname of Hwai Hsi St., Taipei, Taiwan, so called because it has many shops selling traditional Chinese medicines (snake blood is one of the remedies sold and the street also has some restaurants that put on shows with live cobras). Details in *The New York Times*, 8 February 1987 (4).

Sniper Alley is the nickname of the road from the airport to the city in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, so called by United Nations

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peacekeepers during the war which began in 1992. The earliest mention I know of is in John F. Burns, "Serbs' Campaign for Ethnic Purity Divides Up a Busload of Orphans," *The New York Times*, 3 August 1992 (A1).

Spin Alley is collective nickname for spin doctors, as in "Let's see what people in Spin Alley are saying" (heard on 19 October 1992).

Stuyvesant Alley is the official name of a street in Manhattan, New York.

Sugar Cane Alley is the name of a film.

Suicide Alley was an infelicitous nonce form used on a New York City television program on 22 October 1986 to designate a section of the Hudson River around West 45 and 46 Sts. in Manhattan, so called because a helicopter had crashed there (the name was inappropriate because the crash was not the result of a suicide).

Sun Alley is the name of a road in Riverforest Park, Weedsport, Cayuga County, New York.

Theater Alley is the official name of a street in Manhattan, New York.

Thunder Alley is the name of a 1988 book by M. Maloney and an American television serial which premiered on ABC on 9 March 1994.

Tin Can Alley was the name of a desolate part of Flatbush on which Ebbets Field was erected (1913). It was also called *Crow Hill*, *Goatville*, and *Pigtown*.

Tin Pan Alley emerged in 1903 from a conversation between Harry von Tilzer (a songwriter) and Monroe H. Rosenfeld (a journalist). Tilzer told Rosenfeld that at the request of neighbors he muted his piano by putting strips of newspaper behind the strings, producing a tinny sound; the name was first applied to 28 Street, Manhattan, New York, and later to the Brill Building, erected in 1930 at Broadway and 50 St., Manhattan (all according to Richard F. Shepard, "Words and Music From the Days When Words and Music Reigned," *The New York Times*, 15 March 1987, section 4 [26]). Some people define *Tin Pan Alley* in its second application as not only the Brill Building but also the

area around it, viz., Seventh Avenue between West 48 and West 52 Sts. Figuratively, *Tin Pan Alley* refers to the world of popular-music writing, recording, etc.

Torch Alley (see **Gasoline Alley**).

Tornado Alley is the nickname of any area where many tornados occur, especially "a swath of the Great Plains stretching diagonally from the Texas Panhandle to southern Iowa" (Sam Howe Verhowek, "In 'Tornado Alley,' You Just Wait for the Next One," *The New York Times*, 27 May 1993 [A16]). A headline in *The New York Times* of 2 August 1992 (42) reads "Is New York a Tornado Alley? Storm Reports Are Growing."

Tramp Alley was once the nickname of part of the southeastern side of Washington Square (Manhattan, New York), where tramps used to sleep (now that it is too dangerous to sleep there, the name has fallen into disuse).

Trappers Alley is the official name of a five-story glass-enclosed marketplace, containing ninety retail shops, galleries, and a disco, in Detroit, Michigan, so called because it stands on the site of a fur tannery which operated in the 1800s.

Trump Alley was a nonce form used in *Newsday* of 22 March 1987, (27): "The way things are going, someday soon Central Park South may be called Trump Alley. Megadeveloper Donald Trump owns the posh St. Moritz Hotel...and is developing Trump Parc — the latest in his series of apartment buildings that feature ultraexpensive condominiums."

The Yew Alley is the name of a fictional place in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901).

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