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## **HERSHEY BIOPIC FILMS IN FAYETTE COUNTY**

**Uniontown, PA** – The name Milton S. Hershey is a very well-known one, especially in Pennsylvania. Those who don't know of Hershey for his philanthropic deeds at least have heard of his chocolate. The Hershey Chocolate Company and its iconic, brown-wrapped Hershey's bar are famous throughout the U.S.

Recently, a little bit of Hershey's fame touched Fayette County, as the makers of the forthcoming Hershey biopic shot some of the film's scenes in Brownsville. Shooting took place this past week and included several landmark buildings and businesses, such as Union Station and the Flatiron Building.

Hershey was born in 1857 in central Pennsylvania and was apprenticed to a confectioner in Lancaster before moving to Philadelphia to start his own confectionery business. He and his wife, Catherine "Kitty" Hershey, were married in 1898. The Hersheys were known for their philanthropy, particularly the establishment of the Hershey School in 1909.

The biopic, which is set for release in 2026, stars Finn Wittrock as Hershey and Alexandra Daddario as Kitty.

Hershey Productions, LLC assistant locations manager Shaun McGhen said Brownsville was chosen as one of several southwestern Pennsylvania shooting locations even before he joined the crew.

"My understanding of it was the intersection here at Market Street and (Brownsville Avenue), just the look of that, with the banks and the buildings in between" worked well for the film's setting," McGhen said. He added the layout of the borough, with its multiple storefronts, is similar to the way Lancaster would have looked during Hershey's era.

McGhen said the film crew shot "kind of all around," including at The Sandwich Shop & Deli, Mutt's on Market Street, the park and the public library. "We just kind of took over."

Brownsville mayor Ross Swords said he was happy to have the film crew in his town. "I was excited seeing the town transformed into possibly what it could be, and what it once was," he said.

McGhen said the film crew made some changes to Brownsville so that it would better fit the look of Lancaster and Philadelphia in the late 1800s. Some of those changes included improvements to Union Station and other buildings, and though the changes will be left in place, McGhen said they aren't meant to be permanent.

Fayette County Redevelopment Authority Executive Director Andrew French said several of the properties on which the movie was shot are owned by the authority, including Union Station and the bank building across the street, and the townhouse property. Crews also used some buildings, such as the old freight building behind the station, as work areas.

"I think it's great, the improvements that they did to the town, because it gives Brownsville a lot of attention that it maybe wasn't getting," French said.

Some of the improvements and changes included new facades on certain buildings, cleaning out of locations such as the freight building, and the replacement of window glass at Union Station and other buildings. Union Station's grand entrance was redone as well, and the freight building roof was repaired.

French said the changes to Union Station, in particular, are inspiring in light of recent funding the authority was able to secure for that building.

"Union Station has been, probably, our priority focus for a key anchor building that we want to try and preserve," he said. "It's pretty significant in terms of the amount of investment (that needs to go into it)."

Some of that investment can be offset by a pair of grants. One was awarded a couple of years ago as a result of a Congressionally-Directed Spending Grant during Sen. Bob Casey's tenure. French said that \$1 million grant most likely will go toward a new roof. The building also will benefit from a \$1.8 million Grant through the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Program. French said those funds will be used to focus on removal of hazardous and contaminated materials inside the building, which though structurally sound, may need to be "almost gutted."

In the meantime, French said the film crew's improvements will remain intact, especially with the amount of buzz the movie is generating.

"The movie is getting a lot of attention throughout the region," he said. "We want to capitalize on that."

Swords said the film already has boosted business around Brownsville, as crews bought gas and ate meals locally. Some of the nonprofits, he said, were able to capitalize by renting out space. And the tourism dollars already are rolling in, too.

"We actually had people here from the town of Hershey to see how the town was being transformed," he said.

And though motorists had to deal with a few detours during the week, Swords said notice was put out via social media and other outlets, and everything went smoothly. In fact, the townspeople enjoyed the experience immensely.

Sabina Walters, owner of The Sandwich Shop and Deli, said she would miss the film crew once it had left.

"The crew was fantastic; everyone has been wonderful," she said. "It's been a great experience."

Walters said she had the opportunity to take photos with cast members, and the cast and crew often stopped in for a meal.

“They just loved the breakfast sandwiches, the coffee, the hoagies. They kept us busy,” she said. “I’m going to miss it when it’s gone. It’s going to be real quiet.”

Mutts on Market Street owner Samantha Jenkins said the film crew was very accommodating, and having a movie film in Brownsville has been good for the borough.

“I think it’s been great for the town,” she said. “Anything that brings awareness and brings people into downtown Brownsville, I think is a great thing.”

To learn more about the Hershey movie, visit <https://stories.hersheypa.com/hershey-and-dandelion-media-to-unwrap-founders-story-in-upcoming-major-motion-picture-hershey-set-for-2026-release/>. To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.fayettecountypa.org](http://www.fayettecountypa.org).

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