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MASONTOWN: A HISTORIC COMMUNITY ON THE UPSWING

Uniontown, PA – Masontown, like many communities in Fayette County, can trace its history back to the Revolutionary War era. But these days, the town is looking toward the future, with an eye on revitalization and economic development.

Fort Mason was built between 1774 and 1778 by John Mason and his family, and the area around it was dubbed Germantown, a nod to the ethnic heritage of many of its early settlers. The fort became a town in 1798, and Masontown was incorporated as a borough in 1876.

Located in the western part of the county, Masontown borders the Monongahela River, a border it shares with Greene County. It is part of the Albert Gallatin School District.

Like many southwestern Pennsylvania communities, Masontown saw its fortunes rise and fall with those of the coal and coke industry. But now, one resident said members of borough government, along with supervisors from neighboring German and Nicholson townships, are working to bring the town back to life, one step at a time.

Warren Hughes said, "other than when I went to college," he has lived in Masontown for all of his 75 years.

"I grew up right in Sandy Bottom, just down the street from Main Street. It's a nice, little town," he said. "Housing is cheap, and the taxes are reasonable compared to the rest of the state. The local township supervisors do a good job, and the borough does a good job. It's tough on a small town (when) everything is so expensive.

"They just finished a grant to upgrade one of our local parks and playground area. They just put up for bid to basically refurbish Masontown."

Hughes said the "refurbishing" could include park upgrades, new lighting along Main Street, and even new facades on the buildings. German-Masontown Park is owned by Fayette County, he noted, but Masontown also is home to two small parks – Jefferson Avenue Park and Redwood Park – which could use some refurbishing.

"There's a lot of progress starting to happen."

Hughes is the president of a community group called Masontown Matters, which is heavily involved in community events and helping the town to be its best.

"Our organization works with the borough pretty closely," Hughes said. "I started working on that grant and some other grants."

Hughes said the group started an incubator program 10 years ago to help local business owners get off to a good start.

"We got an older building and renovated it via some grant money," he said.

The group then advertised for individuals who were looking for a place to start a business. The building, Hughes said, offers some open areas, as well as some more private spaces. Business owners pay no rent – only their share of the utilities.

Hughes said the borough also is working on eliminating blight.

"They're tearing down dilapidated houses and trying to avoid areas of blight and so forth, and that's working out real well," he said. "We're hoping by Christmas to have the Main Street project completed, which will really be nice. I think that will allow some new businesses to come into town."

Paesano's Cafe is one business that appears to be thriving. The café reopened in 2024, and Hughes said there are plans for expansion.

Hughes said he hopes eventually, young people will want to remain in Masontown, and the community will be more like it was when he was growing up.

"When I was a little kid, if you couldn't find it in Masontown, you didn't need it," he said. "Our goal is to try to get near that."

Masontown Matters also helps coordinate some of the town's holiday celebrations, Hughes said, such as the July 4 fireworks and parade, community yard sales, and Santa on the Square.

"There are usually about 100 to 120 kids that get to visit with Santa one-on-one. He'll sit there all night if he has to," Hughes said. The Christmas celebration also includes music and the lighting of the tree.

Hughes said the town typically holds three fundraisers a year to help offset the cost of such events. One of them is a golf tournament, with all proceeds going toward the incubator project.

"We all have our problems, and we argue our points, but I would say a lot of the people have lived here most of their lives, if not all their lives," Hughes said. "They kind of take pride in the town."

To learn more about Masontown, visit [masontownpa.com](https://www.masontownpa.com) or join "Masontown Matters" on Facebook.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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