

Picture Perfect in Northeast PA

Hawleywood!

By LA Guzda

Pike County was once a haven for filmmaking in the early 1900's. The first silent movie ever made in the U.S. was filmed in Milford in 1912. Mary Pickford, queen of the silent film, filmed *The Informer* in Milford with producer D.W. Griffith. And, Milford was a favorite location of Charlie Chaplin.

Today, Pike County offers a myriad of backdrops for filmmakers, photographers, and commercial producers. Its close proximity to New York City (75 miles from the Lincoln Tunnel to the Milford Bridge) makes it an ideal location, offering farms, fields, barns, factories, quarries, and several Norman Rockwellish "Main Street USA" venues.

The Pike County Film Commission was established in 2006 by the Pike County Visitors Bureau to renew industry interest. Many residents of the area are writers, directors, cameramen, cinematographers and such that influence production decisions. The Film Commission is intended to assist with production needs, which will hopefully encourage residents and second-home owners to bring their projects to Pike, as well as generate the interest of non-residents.

The Pennsylvania State Film Office offers a competitive tax credit incentive of 25% on eligible Pennsylvania expenses. 60% of the total budget must be spent in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania also offers free use of state-owned properties when available.

Philadelphia and Pittsburgh still produce the giant share of film production in the state. Each has their own film office, as well as Lancaster, Scranton, and Pike. According to Laurie McEvoy, Chairwoman for the Pike County Film Commission, "Most production companies are looking for specific locations and accommodations. Support services, cast and crew are sometimes requested, but additional resources are much needed."

PikeFilm.com is a website where locals can add their services. It's a listing, not an advertising board. Film crews need anything from graphic design to dry cleaning, as well as industry specific talents including actors. It's not always necessary to be a trained actor. Often it is a specific look they seek, and a talented director can pull the appropriate performance. If you have an interest to be in front of the camera, you should post your information.

"Interestingly," says McEvoy, "when production crews start looking for locations, many people think they have a bottomless pit of money to spend. Al-

though some productions do have a healthy budget, they are looking for rock bottom rates to garner the maximum value of their budget. The positive economic impact is in the residual spending from the film and its crew. Also, if a film has successful distribution and is well received, the residual effects can last for years."

Currently in production is a classic horror film, *Mr. Hush*. Directed by Hemlock Farms resident, David Lee Madison, it is scheduled for release in October. Around the same time is the expected release of *Blue Valentine*, starring Ryan Gosling, which was shot throughout the Honesdale area last April and May. Other films in recent years include *Pizza*, *Poker Ru,n* and *Walking to Maryland*.

Pennsylvania Film business is strong. The central part of the state just wrapped an upcoming Denzel Washington film, *Unstoppable*.

The Black Bear Film Festival is now in its eleventh year, attracting filmmakers and film lovers from across the country. The Milford-born festival presents top independent films and speakers and also features area filmmakers including film students to encourage further growth of this great American artform. The Black Bear shares its home with the annual Environfest Film Festival. Pike County is the birthplace of the American Conservation Movement.

The Pike Film commission is looking to expand its reach. Plans are underway to change the name to Pocono Film to encompass the entire northeast Pennsylvania region. That change should be in effect this summer. In the meantime, area folks from Pike, Wayne, and Monroe counties are encouraged to log on to www.PikeFilm.com and upload their information. "The more we have to offer, the more likely we are to attract production," says, McEvoy. "And, it's not just films; we encourage commercial production, photography shoots, and catalogues – creative production that requires stunning and interesting backdrops of which the northeast Pocono lake region offers... in abundance!"

PikeFilm.com