

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: See Mail Pouch Barn

Other names/site number: MPB/MCB/WOW 48-42-04

Name of related multiple property listing:

Mail Pouch Tobacco Barns of West Virginia

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 21129 Seneca Trail

City or town: Mingo State: West Virginia County: Randolph

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☒

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B X C D

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

**State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒
- Public – Local ☐
- Public – State ☐
- Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
- District ☐
- Site ☐
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding

OTHER/billboard

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: gable roof barn

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Walls: wood; Roof: metal; Foundation:
concrete

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The See Mail Pouch Barn is a simple gable roof barn located along U.S. Route 219 in a rural, predominately agricultural area of Randolph County. The approximately 2,000 square-foot building was constructed at some point prior to 1943 with chestnut wood walls, a metal roof, and cinderblock foundation. The barn features three hand-painted "Chew Mail Pouch Tobacco" advertisements with their standard, iconic design. Though faded, the signs are easily recognizable. Despite some deterioration, the barn meets the integrity requirements for Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association outlined in the "Mail Pouch Tobacco Barns of West Virginia" Multiple Property Documentation Form.

See Mail Pouch Barn

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Narrative Description

The See Mail Pouch Barn is located on a small farm along U.S. Route 219 (also known as WV 55 or Seneca Trail) in rural Randolph County. The setting is dominated by rolling hills of forestland and tracts of flat farmland, with clusters of houses and agricultural buildings thereabouts. The farm on which the barn sits is approximately 24 acres in size and bisected by the road. A driveway, small house, and pond are present on the property.

The building is a simple wood frame, gable roof barn just a short distance from the road. The walls are constructed with vertical chestnut wood planks, and logs are used as pillars on the interior. It has a standing seam metal roof and a foundation made of cinder blocks. Two wood poles (previously three) lean on the barn's west side, providing structural support. A side shed exists on the barn's east side; the construction date of this addition is unknown, but it does not visually intrude upon the Mail Pouch signs. There is no wall or partition separating the shed from the barn on the interior.

The interior consists of a single large, open space. It is accessible through an opening on the barn's south side. At some point, the bottom half of the south wall was removed to expand the size of the opening. This destroyed the bottom half of the south side's Mail Pouch sign, leaving only "Chew Mail Pouch" at the top half.

The age of the barn is unclear but likely dates to the early decades of the twentieth century based on the presence of chestnut wood and cinderblocks. It was at least constructed by the early 1940s, when Mail Pouch Signs were first painted on it.

The barn has three hand painted Mail Pouch tobacco signs – one each on the south, north, and west sides. They are of the standard design, featuring a black background, blue border, yellow and white text, and the phrase "Chew Mail Pouch Tobacco, Treat Yourself to the Best." The "Treat Yourself to the Best" portion on the south side has been lost due to the bottom half of the wall being removed.

The barn suffers from some structural deterioration; the roof is rusting, and part of the cinderblock foundation has collapsed. The Mail Pouch signs are faded due to years of not receiving maintenance. The fading has become so severe that previous versions of the sign have reappeared in the background, forming multi-layered ghost signs on the barn. The destruction of the bottom half of the south facing sign is also a detrimental alteration.

Despite these issues, the barn still possesses historic integrity as an agricultural building utilized for advertising purposes in the mid-twentieth century. The iconic Mail Pouch sign design and the phrase "Chew Mail Pouch Tobacco, Treat Yourself to the Best," are still clearly discernable. The hand-painted nature of the signs is evident, retaining the integrity of workmanship. The barn retains most of its original materials. It remains in its original location, and the setting is largely unchanged from the Period of Significance. The barn maintains association with advertising Mail Pouch tobacco along a major road in a rural community.

See Mail Pouch Barn

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce

Art

Period of Significance

1943-1969

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The See Mail Pouch Barn is eligible for the National Register on a local level of significance under *Criterion A: Commerce* and *Criterion C: Art*, in accordance with the requirements laid out in the Multiple Property Documentation Form “Mail Pouch Tobacco Barns of West Virginia.” The barn is significant under Criterion A for its association with Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company’s iconic barn sign advertising campaign. It is also significant under Criterion C as an important example of American folk art. The Period of Significance begins in 1943, the first year that a Mail Pouch advertisement was painted on the barn, and ends in 1969, when Bloch Brothers discontinued their barn sign advertising program.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Context for the history of Mail Pouch barns is provided in the “Mail Pouch Barns of West Virginia” Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). As established in the document, the Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company embarked on a decades-long, multi-state advertising sign painting campaign. Using teams of painters, the company created thousands of signs, primarily on barns, imploring people to “Chew Mail Pouch Tobacco.” Throughout the mid-twentieth century, this was Bloch Brother’s primary marketing strategy for selling Mail Pouch chewing tobacco. The ubiquity of Mail Pouch barn signs across the rural American landscape and their production by a select few skilled painters led to them being regarded by many as a type of folk art. Of the thousands of Mail Pouch barns that once existed nationwide, very few remain. In West Virginia, less than 100 are believed to be extant.

During the mid-twentieth century, the barn and much of the surrounding farmland belonged to the See family. In 1943, Tucker See signed Lease #1499 to have three sides of his barn painted with Mail Pouch advertisements. This was unusual since Mail Pouch advertisements were usually painted on only one or two sides of a barn. See was paid three dollars a year, presumably one dollar for each side painted.¹

An advertising license tag (No. 004-336) found on the barn had an expiration date of June 30, 1971, indicating that the Mail Pouch sign received maintenance from Bloch Brothers at least until its barn sign advertising program was temporarily discontinued in 1969. The company listed on the tag was Whitehall Products, Inc., one of the entities used by Bloch Brothers to lease barn signs. Barn painter Harley Warrick later repainted the barn on multiple occasions, at least as late as 1987.²

Descendants of the See family continued to own the barn and surrounding farmland for many years. Current owners Kevin and Roberta Hern purchased the property around 2016.³

¹ Mail Pouch Tobacco Barns Lease Records. Helme Tobacco Company. Wheeling, WV.

² “MPB/MCB/WOW 48-42-04,” Mail Pouch Barnstormers, accessed June 23, 2025, https://mailpouchbarnstormers.org/wp/?wpbdp_listing=mpb-mcb-wow-48-42-04; Kevin Hern, phone call with Cody Straley, June 6, 2025.

³ Hern, phone call with Cody Straley.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Hern, Kevin. Phone call with Cody Straley. June 6, 2025.

Mail Pouch Tobacco Barns Lease Records. Helme Tobacco Company. Wheeling, WV.

“MPB/MCB/WOW 48-42-04.” Mail Pouch Barnstormers. Accessed June 23, 2025.
https://mailpouchbarnstormers.org/wp/?wpbdp_listing=mpb-mcb-wow-48-42-04.

Straley, Steven Cody. “Mail Pouch Tobacco Barns of West Virginia.” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2025.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.597500 | Longitude: -80.016667 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 17N | Easting: 585633 | Northing: 4272572 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary consists of a roughly 2,000 square-foot rectangle encompassing the barn and no other land or resources. The boundary is depicted in Figure 2.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The selected boundary encompasses the barn in its entirety and no other resources.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Steven Cody Straley, National Register and Architectural Survey Coordinator
organization: West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office
street & number: 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
city or town: Charleston state: West Virginia zip code: 25305
e-mail: Cody.Straley@wv.gov
telephone: 304-558-0240
date: October 16, 2025

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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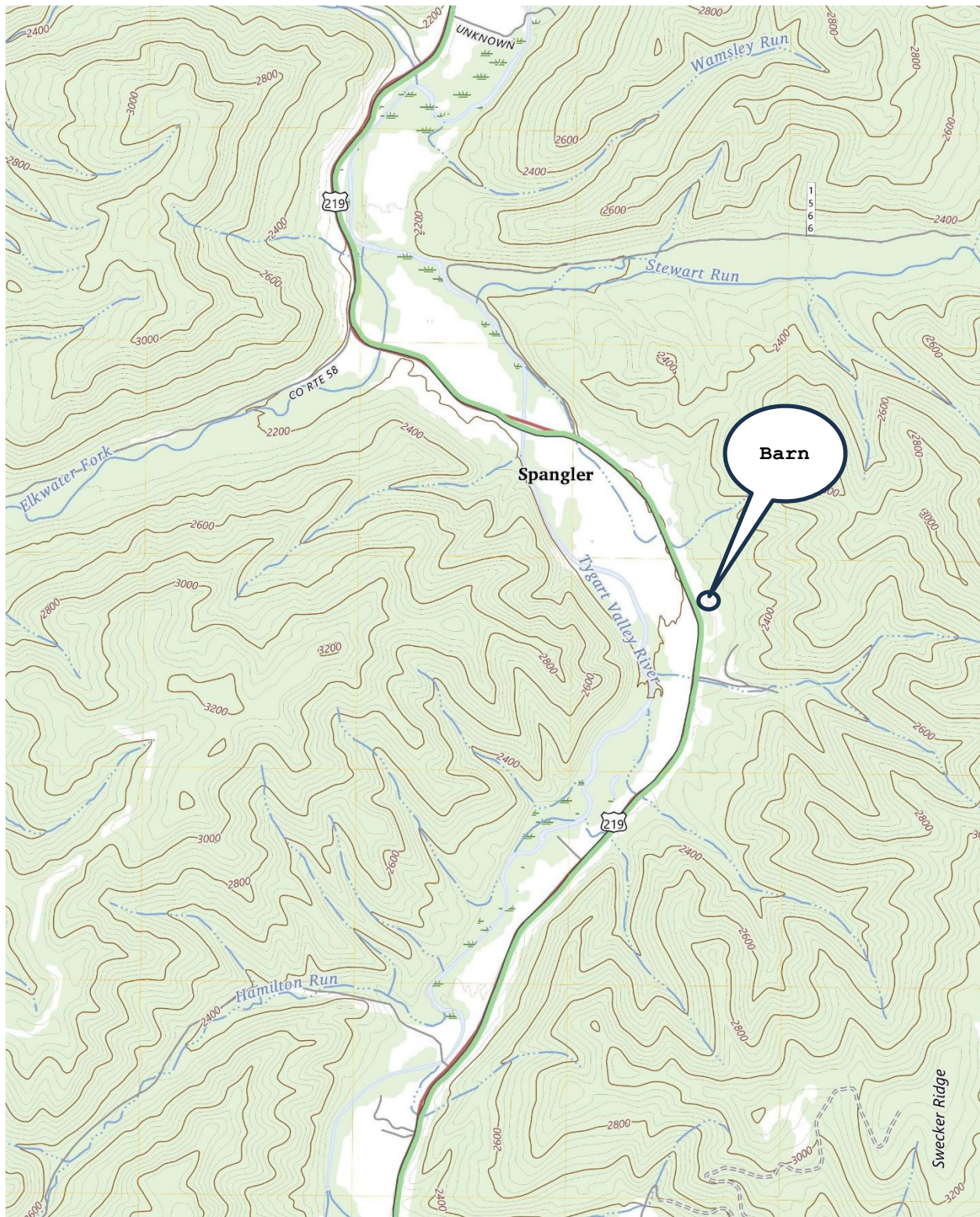


Figure 1 USGS Map - Valley Head Quadrangle, West Virginia - Randolph County - 7.5-Minute Series, 2023

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Figure 2 Boundary Outline and Photo Key

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Elkhorn W. Va
May 24 - 3 miles south
Trickett Sec

north end
west side



Figure 3 Photograph of Barn, circa 1940s. Courtesy of Helme Tobacco Company Archives.

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Figure 4 Barn in 1984. Image obtained from Mail Pouch Barnstormers.



Figure 5 Barn in 1984. Image obtained from Mail Pouch Barnstormers.

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Figure 6 Barn as seen on Google Street View in May 2025.

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Figure 7 Advertising License Tag on Barn.

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: See Mail Pouch Barn

City or Vicinity: Mingo

County: Randolph

State: WV

Photographer: Kevin Hern

Date Photographed: June 6, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 3. WV_RandolphCo_SeeMailPouchBarn_0001
North side of barn, northeast elevation.

2 of 3. WV_RandolphCo_SeeMailPouchBarn_0002
South side of barn, south elevation.

3 of 3. WV_RandolphCo_SeeMailPouchBarn_0003
West side of barn, southwest elevation.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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Photo 1 North side of barn, northeast elevation

See Mail Pouch Barn
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Photo 2 South side of barn, south elevation

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Photo 3 West side of barn, southwest elevation