



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **FAYETTE COUNTY COUPLE RESTORES HISTORIC MAIL POUCH BARN**

**Uniontown, PA** – Along Route 51 near Perryopolis, just south of the Route 201 junction, stands an old barn bearing one of the hand-painted Mail Pouch chewing tobacco advertisements that were once so common across the U.S.

The barn's painted message had faded over time, but it stands as a piece of American history, as those ads have slowly disappeared until they are now something of a rarity. So, when passersby noticed construction underway on the barn this past spring, with boards being torn off, many panicked at the thought of the old landmark being razed.

They needn't have worried. Owners Tim and Becca Kosky were merely repairing and refinishing the old barn, complete with a shiny, new coat of paint – and a shiny, new Mail Pouch ad.

"It was my wife's grandparents' farm, and we had recently bought it off of them about three years ago," Tim Kosky said, admitting the couple originally considered tearing down the structure. "It just got so much attention from people saying, 'No, don't tear it down, it's a landmark ...' So, we decided to go ahead and put some effort into restoring it."

Becca Kosky's grandparents owned the barn since 1963, but it was built back in the early 1800s.

According to an article on the Hagen History Center website, the Wheeling-based Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company, now Swisher International, had close to 22,000 barns in 22 states painted by traveling two-man teams between 1891 and the 1970s. Typically, the company would pay the farmer a dollar or two each month (and provide free Mail Pouch tobacco) for the right to rent the space on the wall of the barn. The entire barn was painted once, and then a sign painter would arrive periodically to repaint the ad.

When it was time for the Koskys to repaint the barn, Tim said, they weren't sure who to contact. Fortunately, someone reached out to them.

"Ironically, a gentleman stopped and knocked on our door one Sunday morning and asked what our plans were for the barn," he said.

The man, John Doemling, told the Koskys that he had begun handpainting barns after traveling to Ohio to meet with Harley Warrick, a man who had painted a great deal of Mail Pouch barns back in the 1960s. As it turned out, Warrick was the last person to paint the Koskys' barn during that same time frame.

Once the barn had been structurally refurbished, Doemling and his wife, Sue, began painting in June. The Koskys posted photos of the project on social media and were amazed at the amount of feedback they received.

Tim Kosky said he and Becca expected their family members to approve, with many of them highlighting the number of years the barn has been in the family.

“Our grandchildren would be the sixth generation that would’ve stepped foot in that barn,” he said.

But the Koskys didn’t expect the restoration project to be such a hit with people outside the family.

“Strangers and the community, I was surprised at the response from them,” Tim Kosky said.

The barn, now freshly painted, is almost completely restored.

“We have a little bit of work to touch up and finish up,” Tim Kosky said. “But the main part of it’s done, and I’m glad we did it.”

To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.fayettecountypa.org](http://www.fayettecountypa.org).

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