

*Why we think it should matter*

Brown County doesn't have any Monticellos or Mount Vernons or other nationally known sites. We do have what settlers left behind. Our houses, historic sites and other structures collectively tell the particular story of our home. The pioneers who settled in Brown County beginning in the 1820s and earlier were hardy individuals who valued hard work, faith, and family. They forever etched their names in our story through the deeds, habits, and their homes. We know these sites today as private homes, public buildings, small country churches, bridges, barns, and our cemeteries.

We might ask ourselves, "why care?" that our cultural heritage is slowly being stripped from the hills and hollers of Brown County. The simple truth is that it is our responsibility and privilege to honor the memory of those whose lives were spent making Brown County what it has become today. Brown County's historical story is valuable because without it we become like just so many other places on the map. Brown County is a unique and wonderful place to call home. The truth is if we choose to stand by and watch as more and more of our historic sites are erased from the land, we will lose the sense of who we are and where we came from.

It is easy for a building owner to decide to demolish what might be a valuable resource for telling the story of our people. Individuals and government agencies need to come together to solve this important issue.

At one time there were 76 one-room school houses that dotted the landscape. Today only three survive. The most recent schoolhouse to be torn down was the Cravens School near Sweetwater Lake almost two decades ago. Not all were demolished. Some fell victim to fire, floods, and other unforeseen natural disasters. Clupper's Grove near Bean Blossom, the site of so many neighborly conversations and fun as part of the annual Old Settlers, sits sadly empty and neglected.

Without words, these sites help to illustrate time periods in our history. They speak to us through the simple lines of a building's architecture or its uses. A visit to these sites takes you on a tour of the spectrum of Brown County history. We should be enthusiastic advocates of our collective story.

To this day there are no local history courses in our public schools to tell the story of Brown County's people. Historic buildings in Brown County have been disappearing at an alarming pace for more than 20 years. Other structures are suffering from severe neglect and are being demolished through negligence. We think that the time has come to change this picture.

The proposed plight of the Dennis Calvin house in Nashville is the most recent example of why historical cultural sites should be preserved. The Dennis Calvin house was home to one of the county seat's leading businessmen for almost half a century. He and his brother's success was captured in perhaps what was photographer Frank Hohenberger's most popular print from 1923 entitled "The Liar's Bench."

Thanks to the enthusiastic support of some individuals and organizations, such as Peaceful Valley Heritage, Inc., some progress is being made. One only has to stop by the Bean Blossom Overlook to see the difference. This glaring difference can also be seen in several of Brown County's century-old cemeteries which have been brought back from the brink of neglect. A visit to see the restored surfaces on many of the tombstones created by perhaps Brown County's first artist--Henry Cross is extremely exciting and uplifting.

The responsibility for preserving our history falls upon each of us whether we be young or old We are all Brown Countians proud of our rich heritage. It requires that we take a first step in the direction of preservation.

This statement is a public call for the respect and protection of our heritage and our culture for all time.

Respectfully submitted

Peaceful Valley Heritage and Preservation Society, Inc.

Steve Arnold, Historian