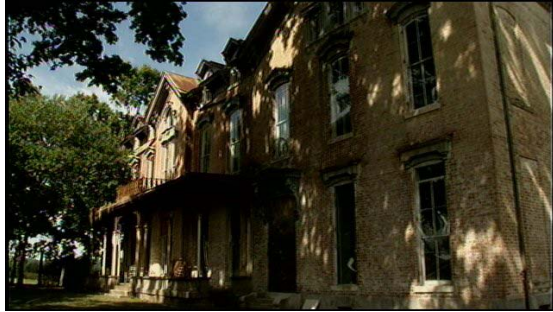


Bernson's Corner: A piece of American heritage

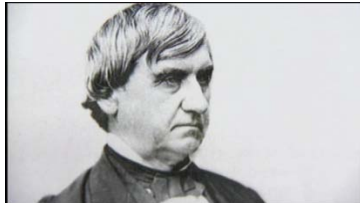
A rural Kentucky community is faced with a big challenge: how to save a historic home.



This unique piece is part of American heritage and has ties to Abraham Lincoln.

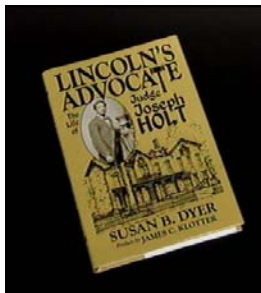
On a back road in Breckinridge County stands a house designated one of Kentucky's most endangered historic sites. Susan Dyer has simply dedicated her life to saving it.

Susan Dyer says, "We didn't want a sign out saying 'this is where the Joseph Holt house used to be.' So we diligently worked, and because of that we have this home."



Joseph Holt - who built the house in the 1850s - was once one of the most famous people in the United States. Before the Civil War he was a staunch Unionist, instrumental in keeping Kentucky from joining the Confederacy. Abraham Lincoln appointed Holt the nation's first judge advocate general. He later presided at the trial of the Lincoln assassins. After that, Judge Holt was largely forgotten

by history. His home would have been forgotten too, except for Susan Dyer. She grew up near there, became a local middle school teacher, and spent 12 years researching and writing this book to keep the place standing and to keep Holt's memory alive.



Dyer explains, "But he would entertain people, and people came from the city, from Louisville and Owensboro, and would stay for weeks at a time, and once they came here they didn't want to leave -- nestled by the Ohio River... he loved this home."

"Can you imagine what this looked like 150 years ago? Mm-hm...the fireplaces have been taken, and we don't know if they've been sold or stripped...and this is a beautiful spiral staircase...and they tell us there's not many like this left," says Dyer.

The structure has been stabilized, thanks to some corporate partners, small contributions, grants from non-profits, and cleanup by volunteers, but time has taken its toll.



Dyer says, "Some of the beautiful trim up high, it's just in the last few years, the moldings are falling off from rot and neglect. Our dream is to bring the home back. And we don't want to see this home in pain. It wants to be what it used to be when it stood as the showplace of Breckinridge County,"

Within sight of the house is the grave of Judge Joseph Holt, orator and statesman. It was here that Susan Dyer was inspired to remember a quote from one of Judge Holt's speeches. 'It is encouraging to know,' he said, 'that behind every cloud the sun still shineth; that if we are patient, every cloud shall see his light again.' Susan Dyer is patient. The sun may yet shine on the Holt House."

However, that will take many years and many, many dollars. Mrs. Dyer is not altogether sure she will live to see the clouds depart from over this historic building, to see it restored to its 19th century glory.

Dyer says, "When you have teamwork and you have compassion and you won't give up, that's how you accomplish things, and if you follow the dream that's put on your heart by God, nothing is impossible."

If you'd like to help out with the renovation of the Holt House send a contribution to:

Friends of the Holt House
Breckinridge County Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 725
Hardinsburg, KY 40143