

Bethel Rural Community Organization (BRCO)

Haywood County Quilt Trail

Pigeon Valley Quilt Block

Submittal

Bethel's Names and Associations:

- The no-longer-used name, "Forks of Pigeon," and current alternate name for the community, "Pigeon Valley," pay homage to an eons-old, now extinct, inhabitant that migrated to the area – the passenger pigeon.
- Dating to 10,000 B.C., Native American ancestors to the Cherokee farmed the area and contributed the original name, "Sonoma," (meaning "valley of the moon") to the area.
- By the mid-1800s, the name changed to reflect the community's association with the numerous religious camp meetings held in the area: Bethel (meaning "house of God").
- Bethel continues to cultivate a natural and agrarian atmosphere with its surrounding mountains, streams and rivers, farmlands, and barns.
- During the early 1900s, logging made its imprint on the area, manifested by a nearby logging community known as "Sunburst" (named for the sun rising over a nearby mountain).

Quilt Block Symbols:

- Native American symbols were chosen for some of the design references to reflect the ten thousand year heritage of native people in the area.
- A passenger pigeon is a central figure.
- The Sunburst in the upper left corner is an apt symbol to reflect the logging heritage of the community.
- The moon symbol accounts for the Sonoma "valley of the moon" Native American reference.
- The chapel represents the "house of God" association with the name "Bethel" as well as the fact that the quilt block is situated on the façade of Bethel Rural Community Organization's home base, Bethel Presbyterian Church.
- The barn and farmlands symbolizes Bethel's affiliation with its agrarian heritage.
- Mountains, including well-known Cold Mountain, provide a backdrop for Bethel's landscape.
- The Pigeon River runs through the heart of Bethel.

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Bethel Rural Community Organization's Historic Preservation Committee narrowed 11 suggested symbols down to 8 in order of preference. The first 5 need to be on the quilt block design:

1. Moon - Bethel's original name was Sonoma, Valley of the Moon.
2. Pigeon - Bethel's previous name was "Forks of Pigeon;" its current alternate name is "Pigeon Valley," named for the passenger pigeons that inhabited the valley until the bird's extinction.
3. Mountains - Primary natural feature surrounding Pigeon Valley
4. Farm/Farmland/Barn - Bethel has been used as farmland since its Native American days, dating back 10,000 years; BRCO's primary focus is on farmland preservation.
5. Chapel - BRCO is housed in the historic Bethel Presbyterian Church; the name "Bethel" means "house of God." The name changed from "Sonoma" to "Bethel" during the camp meetings that were prominent during the early to mid-1800s.

The Historic Preservation Committee is hopeful that the final 3 symbols can also be incorporated into the quilt block:

6. Forks of the Pigeon River - Bethel is situated adjacent to the East and West Forks of the Pigeon River, and Bethel was, in its early days, sometimes referred to as "Forks of Pigeon."
7. Native American - Bethel is home to the earliest Native American settlement in Haywood County, with archaeological excavations occurring four times to uncover artifacts at Garden Creek in Bethel. The Historic Preservation Committee agreed that a separate Native American symbol is not required. Rather, the group would prefer symbols such as the moon, mountains, sun, waters, etc. utilize Native American symbols.
8. Sunburst - The sun rising over Spruce Mountain was referred to by Peter G. Thompson, founder of the paper mill in Canton, as a Sunburst; Sunburst was also the name of a large logging village situated at the West Fork of the Pigeon River during the early 1900s. "Sun," if used with the chapel, is a sound-alike for "Son," referencing Bethel's name as "House of God."