

### 2023 BRCO Officers and Board Members

#### Officers

- President: Carol Litchfield
- Vice President: Greg Christopher
- Secretary: Roxie Billings
- Treasurer: Mike McLean

#### Board Members:

- Frances Adamson, Chair
- Carol Litchfield
- Eleanor Porter, Vice Chair
- Brent McKee
- Will Thompsen



### A Word from Our President, Carol Litchfield



A lot has happened since our last newsletter came out in February. In early March, we learned that Canton's Pactiv-Evergreen paper mill would be closing. Many Bethel residents have connections to the paper mill, either as an employee at the mill or having relatives or ancestors who worked there at some point during its 115-year operation. Preston Jacobsen, the Executive Director of Haywood Waterways Association, was the speaker at our March 14 BRCO Membership Meeting. Preston explained how the impact of the mill closing would be taken into account as HWA assesses the Upper Pigeon River Watershed to determine the best locations for restoration and flood mitigation projects. At the present time, the extent to which Lake Logan and the Lake Logan dam will be affected by the mill closing is not known. Preston will keep us updated in the coming weeks as more information becomes available.

Our members who have been assisting Stephanie Quis-Garrett in planning the implementation of our Food Pantry Grant have been very busy since January. They have researched each aspect of the Food Pantry expansion and gathered information that has been used to prepare an implementation plan. During April, the plan will get underway with electrical work, the replacement of lights, and the installation of dent-resistant flooring in the hall and Food Pantry rooms. In the weeks thereafter, tasks will include painting, installation of shelves, and the addition of freezers, etc.

The program for our May 9th Membership Meeting will be a Historic Preservation double feature. For the first feature, the BRCO Pigeon Valley Award for Historic Preservation will be presented to Hugh K. Terrell for his efforts in preserving the history of Sunburst. In 1978, Terrell worked with eighth grade students from Bethel Junior High School to gather "living history" about Sunburst. The result was a book (still popular today) entitled "Sonoma--Valley of the Moon--Sunburst." For the second feature, Constance Daly (Regent of the Hugh Rogers DAR Chapter) will describe how the Daughters of the American Revolution plan to commemorate the 250th anniversary of our country's founding. Planning the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of Griffith Rutherford's 1776 march through the Pigeon River Valley will be a wonderful opportunity for BRCO to partner with DAR, SAR, and other groups as we look ahead to 2026.

Carol Litchfield, President

## BRCO Members Elect New Board Director

At the March 14th BRCO Membership Meeting, BRCO members elected Will Thompsen to complete the remainder of the term of the BRCO Board Director position previously held by Lucas Sorrells. The term expires at the end of 2023. Congratulations, Will, and thank you for your willingness to serve!

## Support Bethel Elementary School (and Have Fun!) at the Spring Fling on April 21

BRCO members are encouraged to attend the Bethel Elementary School Spring Fling fundraiser on Friday, April 21, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. The school needs to raise \$40,000 to fund their Computer Lab Teacher position for 2023-2024. They have already raised \$17,000 and need to raise \$23,000 more by July. The Spring Fling fundraiser will include entertainment, inflatables, food trucks, games, vendors, 50-50 tickets, and a silent auction.



On February 20th, Carol Litchfield and Evelyn Coltman met with Jack Thomson from Preservation NC so that he could assess whether BRCO's facility is suitable for protective covenants under the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina. Evelyn showed Jack the files in the BRCO Library and also gave him a tour of the historic church sanctuary.



## BRCO Committee News

### Rural Preservation - Carol Litchfield, Chair

The "Buy Haywood Agritourism Guide for 2023-2024" is newly published and now available. BRCO contributed \$500 to help cover publishing costs and is credited in the Guide for providing "vital support" to agritourism efforts. Many of the farms and produce stands listed in the Guide are located in the Bethel area. The Guide can be viewed online at <https://www.buyhaywood.com>.



### Beautification Committee - Carol Litchfield, Acting Chair

Members of the BRCO Beautification Committee have been assisting with the beautification aspects of the Food Pantry expansion. On March 20th, Frances Adamson and Evelyn Coltman evaluated all of the light fixtures on display at Lowes and selected three of one style for installation in the hallway that connects the BRCO Food Pantry freezer room and work room.



## BRCO Committee News

### Food Pantry - Stephanie Quis-Garrett and Anita Montanile, Co-Chairs

The Community Pantry is pleased to announce that our volunteer, Anita Montanile, has agreed to be co-chair with Stephanie Quis-Garrett. We are also fortunate to have established the Community Pantry Advisory Committee who has been tasked with executing the \$20,000 Community Foundation of Western NC Human Services Grant. Thank you pantry volunteers Glen Garrett, Will Thompsen, Gina Valeri, Mike Graham and Ted Carr. Many thanks also to our Beautification volunteers Carol Litchfield, Francis Adamson and Evelyn Coltman. We have purchased new tires for the two old hand trucks and bought two new hand trucks to add to our fleet. Additionally two new utility carts have been purchased to assist on work days. A 10X10 tent to be used on pantry day has been ordered and will have the BRCO logo. New lights have been purchased for the work room, freezer room and hallway.



Polly and Anita making boxes in the crowded freezer room.

The electrician hired to put up the new lights and complete the electrical work needed to accommodate new freezers had to cancel at the last minute. Volunteers Glen Garrett, Ted Carr, Will Thompsen, Charles Rowe, Brent McKee, and Weogo Reed completed the electrical work. They installed three ceiling lights in the hall way; eight feet of LED fixture lighting in the pantry room; switched (not pull chain) ceiling light in the closet; a new receptacle to handle 2 more freezers and a receptacle for a window AC unit. Way to go men! Pat Carr was also on hand and served a delicious lunch of grilled hot dogs, doctored potato salad, southern baked beans and Little Debbie desserts. Arrowood Installation has been hired to put new floors down in the storage closet, work room, freezer room and the hallway. This will occur April 17-23. A painter has been hired to paint the walls after the floor job is complete. There is still much work to be done. Stay tuned.

The Community Pantry has served 56 families in January, 68 families in February and 64 families in March. In 2020 we averaged 25 families per month (pandemic). In 2021 we averaged 46 families per month (flood). In 2022 we averaged 52 families a month (increased food 16%) So far in 2023 we are averaging 62 families a month (SNAP COVID 19 Emergency Allotments ended in February.) Since the closing of the Pactiv-Evergreen mill announcement in March we are preparing for an increase of need.

### Education - Greg Christopher, Chair

Greg will be checking in with committee members from 2022 to confirm their commitment in the coming year. The scholarship applications for the \$1,000 BRCO scholarship award for a graduating high school senior residing in the Bethel community are due March 31st. BRCO's Education Committee members will be reviewing applications in the next two months.

Greg will present the BRCO STEM Award to the fifth-grade students from Bethel Elementary School who achieve the highest scores on the end-of-year testing in reading and math, as well as the annual BRCO David Curphey Citizenship Award, chosen by eighth grade teachers, based on attitude, behavior, civic mindedness and treating others with care and respect, to a Bethel Middle School graduating 8th grader.



## BRCO Committee News

### Historic Preservation - Evelyn Coltman, Chair

In 2010, prior to the Historic Preservation Committee's oversight of two successful National Register of Historic Places applications, the committee engaged the services of the Western Regional Office of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources in Asheville to investigate the potential for four sites in Bethel regarding their National Register potential: Bethel Presbyterian Church (home to BRCO's community center) on Sonoma Road, Inman Chapel on Lake Logan Road (1902), the Joseph Turner and Martha Anna Iva Killian Cathey House on Pisgah Drive (1860), and Truss Bridge #79 on Lake Logan Road (1891). The Cultural Resources consultants indicated that the church/community center could not comply with National Registry standards because too many architectural changes had occurred since its white chapel/chestnut sanctuary inception. While the 1885 sanctuary and original white clapboard structure would be deserving of the honor, the 1964 additions and bricking of the facade would disqualify the building from consideration. While the other three sites certainly have potential for National Register consideration, some issues would complicate the process. Recent minor alterations to the rockwork entry would cause difficulties for Inman Chapel's designation. Decades-old changes to the veneer of the Cathey House could pose some application problems. These deviations would make for a more complicated application process but would not disqualify either structure from achieving National Register designation. The cost of hiring an application writer who typically should have an architectural historian background is frequently an insurmountable obstacle for some worthy sites.

#### NATIONAL REGISTER SITE NUMBER ONE:

Francis Mill had been one of the most popular sites on BRCO's Cold Mountain Heritage Tours (2005-2011). Tanna Timbes, mill owner, and her brother, Sandy Boone, had worked with the Historic Preservation Committee to contribute valuable interviews for the committee's 2012 *Walking in the Footsteps of Those Who Came Before Us* DVD. Timbes and her husband, Tim, relayed data to contribute to Books 1 and 4 of *Legends,*



*Tales & History of Cold Mountain* that the committee produced to accompany the tours. After Timbes' oversight of the restoration of the mill, BRCO nominated her and Francis Mill Preservation Society for the Gertrude S. Carraway Award from Preservation NC which was granted in 2010. Timbes then decided to seek National Register status for Francis Grist Mill. The mill had not been on the committee's National Register consideration list since it is not located in Bethel. However, because of the ongoing positive relation between the mill and the committee, BRCO's members George Ivey and Evelyn Coltman offered to help Timbes with her National Register quest. Ivey, a professional at securing grants, offered

valuable insight into which grants would forward the National Register mission. Coltman secured a grant from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area, and the Haywood County Historical & Genealogical Society, MAST General Store, and Francis Mill Preservation Society also funded the project. Also assisting were Emily Henson with Preservation NC. Historian Patrick Willis conducted initial research, and Architectural Historian Clay Griffith completed the successful 2013 National Register application. *(Photo above is from the Tanna Timbes collection.)*



## BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)



Inman Chapel - painting by F. Seymore

### NATIONAL REGISTER SITE NUMBER TWO:

The remaining site on the original research list conducted by the Historic Preservation Committee regarding National Registry potential, Truss Bridge #79, came into focus when Carroll Jones, former President of BRCO and member of the Historic Preservation Committee, local historian and recipient of numerous awards from the NC Society of Historians, utilized his civil engineering background and his writing and historical research skills to



Bethel Presbyterian Church - painting by Nick De Paolo

complete the application with the resultant designation granted in 2019.

Even though the BRCO community center is ineligible for National Register designation, the Historic Preservation Committee is keenly aware that the building is a significant historical structure that is deserving of protection. An even more protective status for the building than the National Register title can be conveyed by Preservation North Carolina (PNC). Jack Thomson (Western Regional Officer with PNC), Carol Litchfield (BRCO President), and Evelyn Coltman (Historic Preservation Committee Chair), met at the community center recently to assess eligibility for PNC's protective covenants. Thomson was pleased that the committee has amassed an important file library of



Truss Bridge 79 - painting by Gary Woolard

families and sites in Bethel. He was impressed that the church/ community center is in a state of good repair and serves numerous positive functions in the community. He determined that the building is eligible for protective status as a site of significant community importance. There are only two other locations in Haywood County that enjoy



Joseph Turner Cathey House painting by Jason Hawkins

conservation agreements with PNC: the Museum of Haywood County History at the Shook-Smathers House in Clyde and the Bascombe and Anna Cathey Justice House in Bethel (owned by BRCO members Will and Lori Thompsen). Thomson will relay details about what PNC's protective covenants may entail for BRCO's facility.

In the February BRCO Newsletter, we discussed an inquiry from Charles Leighton of Newfane, Vermont, whose grandparents, Stephen Rawson and Marion Bodwell Leshar, migrated to the Little East Fork area of Bethel where they built a lovely cabin and resided there after their marriage on June 22, 1921. A picture of the cabin hung in Leighton's grandmother's home in Square Pond, Maine, and was inherited by his mother. He is now the owner. His curiosity about the origin of the photo led him to the BRCO website and eventually to a series of questions to the Historic Preservation Committee.

## BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)

An abbreviated article written to “The Gazette” by Leighton’s grandfather included the following information:

I am a farmer and stock-raiser...Two and a half years ago, I graduated from Harvard College, intending to go into medicine. My college course was broken up with two years’ service in the army in France....I found that I had studied myself out. Accordingly, I took up a little farming and stock-raising on my father’s boundary here in North Carolina...and chose what really suited me better: the real life of a farmer. ..I now have a flock of 50 sheep, between 30 and 49 hogs, a number of cattle, and some fine land in cultivation. STEPHEN R. LESHER. HAYWOOD COUNTY, NC. – “THE GAZETTE.”

Stephen Rawson Lesher was a rich city boy from Rye, New York whose father, Arthur, was a mover and shaker in the textile industry that was located on Broadway in New York City. Marion Bodwell was the daughter of the mill foreman at Sanford Mills where the couple met.

Armed with Leighton’s photo of the camp and a general location, Carol Litchfield, Historic Preservation Committee member, traced deed and site locations involving the Lesher family as well as researched news



articles of that era about the family. Her investigation turned up a notice about land postings against hunting, cutting of timber, ginseng digging, and other trespass notices on Lesher land as early as 1909. Another news article from 1925 indicated that Stephen Lesher was selling his buggy. Most important, however, was analysis of the Lesher deed that mentions Sorrell Creek, Chestnut Flat Branch, and Black Mountain (not the one East of Asheville). Litchfield even traveled to the site listed on deed maps and photographed the area where the cabin was formerly located. But the cabin was no longer visible.



Historic Preservation Committee member, Cheryl Haney, added details about the history of Cecil Township which included Little East Fork. Another committee member, Zac Guy, after conversations with Charles Leighton, solved the mystery. The field in Litchfield’s photograph with Black Mountain in the distance is now a development. The old Lesher cabin sat on the right-hand side of that property at the top of the field where the tree line exists, with Sorrell Creek on the left. Zac recalls seeing the cabin many times as a child. Although the cabin no longer exists, at least its original location is now known.

Looking south on Little East Fork Road, there is a clear view of the mountains in the distance where Black Mountain is located. The area beyond the big tree encompasses the site where Sorrell Creek is located to the left and Chestnut Flat Branch is located to the right.

While Mr. Leighton’s intended trip to visit the cabin depicted in the photo that has, for three generations, been a visible reminder of his family’s history in the WNC mountains is no longer possible, he is thankful to know the precise site on which it was located and to have

some finality to his quest. Leighton was complimentary of the exhaustive work of the Historic Preservation Committee in helping to solve a family mystery.

**BRCO Board Meeting: Monday May 1 at 6:00 p.m.**

**Next General Meeting: Tuesday May 9 at 6:30 p.m.**