

2024 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 Adams
- Carol Litchfield
- Brent McKee
- Will Thompsen, Vice Chair



A Word from Our President, Carol Litchfield



It is springtime once again, a most welcome time of year to enjoy the beauty of the mountains and the resilience of our Bethel community. A year ago, at this time, we were all wondering what impacts would be felt from the closing of the Pactiv Evergreen paper mill. Many Bethel residents had connections to the mill, either through employment at the mill or having relatives or ancestors who worked there at some point during its 115-year existence. The closure came at a time when Haywood Waterways Association was embarking on an assessment of the Upper Pigeon River Watershed to determine the best locations for restoration and flood mitigation projects.

At that time, it was not known the extent to which Lake Logan and the Lake Logan dam would be affected by the mill closure. We now know that several promising initiatives are being discussed in Canton and that we should be hearing more specifics by this summer, according to Mayor Zeb Smathers who answered questions from BRCO members at our January membership meeting. The Mountaineer recently reported that a feasibility study is underway to examine public put-in and take-out points to enhance access and encourage recreation on the Pigeon River. In the March 24 edition of The Mountaineer, an article focused on factors affecting the fate of the Lake Logan dam. Lake Logan and the dam are still owned by Pactiv Evergreen, and Pactiv Evergreen is responsible for addressing the maintenance issues at the dam. The lake was originally created in 1932 to provide a stable flow of water to the mill, especially during dry periods. Now that the mill is closed, the purpose for the lake is being re-visited. As we learn more about the fate of the dam and the lake and the potential for increased recreational activity along the river, we will have a better understanding of the relevant issues and, hopefully, more opportunities as a community organization to contribute to a positive outcome for all involved.

The speaker for our May 14 Membership Meeting will be Dr. Trevor Putnam, Superintendent of Haywood County Schools. Dr. Putnam, who is from Bethel, has been helpful to the BRCO Historic Preservation Committee in providing information for the *Historic Schools of Bethel* DVD. He will describe for us the challenges that Haywood County schools faced this past year, the positive results they were able to achieve, and the types of issues and opportunities that he and school administrators will need to address in the coming months.

I look forward to seeing everyone on May 14th!
Carol Litchfield, President

New Sound System Installed in Fellowship Hall

At our BRCO meetings during 2023, Weogo Reed experimented with various sound system components to create just the right set-up to meet the needs of BRCO members and others who rent our Fellowship Hall. During March, Weogo and Ted Carr installed the new system. The system is easy to operate and will be a welcome addition for anyone using the Fellowship Hall. *(Picture at right: Ted Carr points out to Weogo Reed a suitable spot to install the sound system components.)*



BRCO “Ramps Up” Its Support of Bethel Middle School



BRCO has partnered once again with the Riverside Baptist Church Ramp Building Team to build a ramp for Bethel Middle School-- two ramps, in fact, that happen to be the shortest ramps in the history of Riverside ramp projects. BMS has a firearms safety and shooting team sponsored by NRA and coached by Haywood County Sheriff Deputy Sam Holland. The team has several extremely heavy targets about five feet in diameter and a foot and a half thick that are stored in the upper, seldom used building above the BMS cafeteria.

We learned from Barclay Taylor, the agriculture teacher that we partner with, that the firearms team had great difficulty wheeling the heavy targets on a dolly up two steps to get back into the building. Bumping down the two steps to take the targets to the range was awkward, but getting back up the steps was an even greater challenge.

Materials left over from the 2023 BRCO Fellowship Hall ramp project yielded three 5-foot long boards for the BMS project and a one-foot long 'drop'. The Riverside Team offered a 3-foot 2x4 and a 3-foot 2x6 (pressure treated, of course) for each short ramp to use as underpinning to give it the 3-inch rise. Ted Carr was able to make all of the angle cuts in his shop, screw it all together, and put a short rope handle on it to lift it up. The installed short ramps were much appreciated by Deputy Holland who was very grateful that the BRCO/Riverside Baptist Church partnership was willing to address this community need.



Goodbye Winter!
Hello Spring!



BRCO Committee News

Beautification Committee - Carol Litchfield, Chair

During February, Russell Brockwell and his painting crew power washed the sidewalk, the front of the BRCO facility, under the eaves, and removed the moss that was growing on the roof. They painted under and above the eaves on the north side and west side of the Fellowship Hall and painted the front entrance and two front window frames of the church. In the coming weeks, they will power wash the steeple and paint the frames of the nine remaining church windows and paint under and above the eaves of the church.



Power washing the church entrance



Removing the roof moss



The church doorway receives a fresh coat of paint



The eaves and upper arch frame of the Fellowship Hall are noticeably cleaner and whiter.

Building and Grounds Committee— Gina Valeri, Chair

The malfunctioning lock at the Fellowship Hall front doorway has been replaced. Since it was still under warranty, it was eligible for replacement at no cost. If you have an access code, please see Gina so she can input your code into the replacement system.

BRCO Committee News

Education Committee - Greg Christopher, Chair

The deadline for receipt of applications for the 2024 \$1,000 BRCO Scholarship was Monday, March 25, 2024. The scholarship is offered to a graduating high school senior in the Bethel area who has been a resident of the Bethel Community for the past two years (defined as the area of the Bethel School District); graduating from a certified Haywood County High School with admission acceptance by a college, university, community college or approved technical school.

Benevolence- Greg Christopher, Chair

A request for a \$338 power bill from a local resident was fulfilled through the BRCO Benevolence fund.

Community Pantry - Stephanie Quis-Garrett, Chair

During the months of January and February, 2024, 119 families were served, totaling 370 individuals. 110 volunteer manhours were reported for that time period. In the past two years (2022 to 2023) the number of families BRCO has served increased by 9.61%.

Recently the Bethel Community Pantry had an inspection from its food source, Manna. We passed. During the Manna inspection we learned that there exists a “shared maintenance fee” for “No Choice” pantries. This fee only applies to food that Manna has purchased themselves. Since the pandemic donations are down, most of the food we get has been purchased by Manna. There are no maintenance fees for food that has been donated to Manna.

In 2023 the fee was 19 cents per pound for Manna purchased food. So in 2023 we spent \$1986.57 for the “shared maintenance fee”. There is also a delivery fee of 2 cents per pound. In 2023 we spent, according to their numbers, \$533.60 for delivery of food.

After completing a survey for Manna this year they learned that we also put out tables or boxes when applicable, with items that could be picked by the clients. So now they have put us on the “Limited Choice” tier. This means we get a discount of 25% off of the shared maintenance fee. We still pay a delivery fee.

Also they have a requirement that we have 2 food giveaways a month. We have gotten around that because we do emergency boxes throughout the month. If we add another pantry day, where our clients can pick their own food, we will be considered a “Full Choice” pantry. We then pay no shared maintenance fees on Manna purchase food and no delivery fees.

This information was communicated to the BRCO board and they have agreed to have another pantry day the fourth Wednesday of the month on a trial basis. This opportunity may keep down the waste of food and save some money for the pantry budget.

We welcome additional volunteers to staff our twice a month food distribution community pantry.

BRCO Committee News

Historic Preservation - Evelyn Coltman, Chair



Mack Ledbetter's Sunburst Map

Bethel Rural Community Organization's (BRCO) Historic Preservation Committee, since 2012, has accumulated twenty-eight photographs, paintings, drawings, and etchings that enhance its focus on documenting historic properties, people, and events. In 2019, the group received two NC Society of Historians honors for its art collection. The group was one of forty entries to receive the Multi-Media Award and one of five to garner the Lighthouse Award.

A noted print in that collection, the Sunburst map, came to BRCO via a donation by the family of Mack Ledbetter, renowned expert on the Sunburst village and logging operation that existed on the West Fork of the Pigeon River in the first quarter of the 20th Century. The map documents the twenty-four logging outposts as well as other significant sites in the historic logging community. (Picture at left)



Mack Ledbetter

Ledbetter received the 2022 "Pigeon Valley Award for Historic Preservation" from BRCO's Historic Preservation Committee. His daughter, Verda Davis, accepted the posthumous honor with a speech that celebrated her father's intense interest in local history and his legacy of collecting and documenting his hiking treks that included local waterfalls and Cold Mountain. His trail trimming volunteerism resulted in his receiving a key to the Cradle of Forestry.

The topic that claimed his years-long focus, however, was

his fascination with the historic logging village of Sunburst.

A recent addition of Ledbetter's one-hundred-year-old photograph of Sunburst Village, titled "Sunburst Surround," captures an overview of the village and logging operation. The Sunburst map and the Sunburst Surround photograph prints are on the website and are available for sale

(www.bethelrural.org – Historic Preservation header – Art print sub-heading).



Historic Preservation Committee members with photograph of Sunburst Village (l to r - Roxie Billings, Evelyn Coltman (chair), Carol Litchfield, and Frances Adamson)

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)

In the February BRCO newsletter the Historic Preservation Committee outlined a plan to encourage salvation and restoration of one of the only two remaining historic Pratt through truss bridges in Haywood County; both are located in Bethel. Truss Bridge #79 was saved and restored in 2013, designated as a walking bridge, and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2019, thanks to BRCO's Historic Preservation Committee and to Carroll Jones who wrote the National Register application. Truss Bridge #79 remains under the authority and care of NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT).

The committee's attempts to convince NCDOT to consider the same solution for the second bridge, Truss Bridge #246, did not meet with the same success. Evelyn Coltman and Carol Litchfield participated in a conference call to discuss the upside of treating #246 with a similar solution: save and restore the bridge. DOT highway, bridge, and historic preservation officials met that suggestion with a firm, "No."

They allowed that the bridge is quite rare now with only ten Pratt through metal truss bridges remaining in the state. However, the officials at the top of NCDOT have indicated that saving one historic metal truss bridge is as far as they will go. They are unwilling to expend more funds on bridges that require restoration work. Typically, these bridges are turned over to the local municipal district for maintenance and liability. NCDOT felt certain that Haywood County officials would not be interested in assuming upkeep and liability for the 1920 pin-construction bridge. Thus, even though one historic preservationist has indicated that the bridge is worthy of National Register designation because of its rarity and its unique pin construction, NCDOT has made it clear that it will not save another rare and unique bridge.



Truss Bridge #246

The Historic Schools of Bethel video continued recently as videographer, Doug Chambers, and Evelyn Coltman, Historic Preservation Committee chair, filmed selected students from Bethel Middle School band and chorus, as they played the 1954 "Bethel the Beautiful" song. Robert Mathews, band director at the time, wrote the song, and thousands of Bethel students since that time have the tune embedded in their memories. The tune encapsulates everything that is memorable and positive about attending school in Bethel. Chambers filmed a kindergarten version of the song by students from Bethel Elementary School last year. The song, along with the "A-B-C Song" will serve as segue pieces that intertwine various segments of the video. (See photos on the next page)

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)



Bethel Middle School Band and Chorus



Several years ago, BRCO representatives Mike McLean and Carroll Jones played a role in ensuring the development of a burgeoning community organization in Haywood County: Saunook Community Organization. Mike Mclean is continuing his role of providing leadership and support to the group by delivering a presentation at a recent Saunook meeting about the Historic Preservation Committee's *Sunburst and Other Logging Operations in the Cold Mountain Region* DVD. Evelyn Coltman accompanied Mike to outline the numerous projects of the Historic Preservation Committee: eight books, three DVDs, two CDs, twenty-eight art prints, six local historic highway markers, two National Register of Historic Places designations, eleven Pigeon Valley Awards for Historic Preservation, six NC Society of Historians awards, documentation of six Bethel cemeteries, and discovery of one lost cemetery.



BRCO Board Meeting: Monday, May 6, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
Next General Meeting: Tuesday, May 14, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.