

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



A Word from Our President, Carol Litchfield



On November 11, I had the pleasure of attending the WNC Honors Awards Luncheon with nine other BRCO members. BRCO once again received the highest honor award, achieving Best in Class at the White Oak level. While each of the 67 community clubs that submitted an honors application received \$730, BRCO received an additional \$2000 for our White Oak Best in Class Award. We were recognized for our use of committees to meet our objectives; for our collaboration with other community clubs to improve broadband access; for our impressive historic preservation accomplishments; and for our special projects including the installation of a storage unit for use by Bethel Middle School FFA students and the steps we took to improve our community pantry.

Speaking of our pantry, the improvements are now being fully utilized, thanks to our implementation of the \$20,000 grant that we received a year ago from The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina. We certainly were blessed to have so many talented, dedicated volunteers who were willing to help out every step of the way.

On November 14, we lost one of our most beloved members, Bill Terrell. I will never forget the way Bill always spoke from the heart, and even sang from the heart. In 2015, Evelyn Coltman got together a small group of us in Bethel Community Cemetery to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War. As we gathered around the graves of those lost in the war, Bill told us the story of Confederate soldier William Pinkney Inman coming home from war, eager to see his wife once again, only to be killed by the Home Guard as he was making his way down Big Stomp Mountain. Then Bill sang a song (one that he had written) that perfectly embodied Inman's love for his wife and the sorrow he felt as he lay dying, unable to return to her. Bill will be dearly missed.

I recently spoke with Canton Mayor Zeb Smathers to see if he would be willing to update us on the actions being taken in response to the mill closing. He said he would "absolutely" be willing to do that and agreed to be our speaker at our January 9th meeting. That will be a perfect time for us to ask him how we, as a community organization, can lend support to him as he pursues strategic initiatives in the coming year.

I look forward to seeing everyone on January 9th.

Carol Litchfield, President

BRCO Achieves Top Honors for Second Year in a Row

This year's WNC Honors Awards luncheon took place on November 11th in Asheville. Honors Award applications had been submitted from 67 community organizations, including BRCO. All participating communities received \$730 to support their efforts. Additionally, communities were assessed across six different competencies and awarded a designation of Trillium, Mountain Laurel, Redbud, or White Oak level according to their demonstrated capacity to lead and serve.

BRCO achieved the White Oak level for the second year in a row. At this top level, communities have significant board training, an annual budget of at least \$50,000, active committees with Chairs, a high level of excellence in their program offerings, and have helped another community develop a program or capacity. BRCO was also recognized as Best in Class and was awarded an additional \$2000. The WNC Communities staff praised BRCO at the luncheon for our collaboration with other Haywood County community clubs to improve broadband access; for our efforts to preserve Sunburst and Canton mill history especially in the wake of the mill closing; and for our special projects including the installation of a storage unit for use by Bethel Middle School FFA students and the steps we took to improve our community pantry.

None of this recognition would have been possible without the many long hours that Evelyn Coltman spent on gathering, organizing, and entering all of the information that was needed to complete the BRCO Honors Award application.

Thank you to Evelyn for preparing the application, and congratulations to everyone who contributed to BRCO's outstanding accomplishments during the past year!



BRCO wins the White Oak Best in Class Award at the 74th Annual WNC Honors Awards.

Tinsel Trail



The Shelton House in Waynesville is once again hosting its annual Tinsel Trail of Christmas Trees for a month-long opportunity to get outside and enjoy the holiday lights and decorations. Frances Adamson and Carol Litchfield decorated the BRCO tree on November 30th using the BRCO ornaments from past years, as well as some new hand-made ornaments

provided by Kaye Riddle (thank you, Kaye!). Please stop by during the month of December and vote for BRCO's "Joys of Bethel" tree! A box is located on the porch of the Shelton House to deposit ballots.

Welcome to our new Members

Welcome to new BRCO members Josie Mesa and Mike and Carole Terrell.



Josie Mesa



Mike and Carole Terrell

BRCO Community Pantry Much Improved Thanks to Foundation Grant

The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina (CFWNC) inspires philanthropy and mobilizes resources (\$29 million in charitable giving last year) to enrich lives and communities in eighteen Western North Carolina counties. Last fall, BRCO applied for and received a \$20,000 grant from CFWNC.

"We were very grateful to be able to use those funds to improve our Pantry operation," said Stephanie Quis-Garrett, Chair of the BRCO Community Pantry Committee. "We provided food boxes to 12 families each month initially, but that number more than



Pantry volunteers Stephanie Quis-Garrett and Ted Carr inventory the food supply in the newly renovated pantry storage room in the BRCO Community Center.

doubled during the pandemic. Following the flood of 2021, we were serving 46 families each month. The need continued to rise during 2022. Our volunteers had limited space in which to operate, and they could barely keep up with the demand."

After receiving the grant, BRCO utilized volunteers and local businesses to help implement the following improvements: renovating an interior room to accommodate more efficient storage of greater



BRCO volunteers swing into action when Pantry patrons arrive in the parking lot.

volumes of food; installing new flooring, improving the lighting and HVAC system, installing three new freezers; replacing the food delivery entrance ramp (with the help of the Riverside Baptist Church ramp-builders);

and enhancing the food box pick-up area in the parking lot. Thanks to these improvements, BRCO volunteers are now able to prepare and provide food boxes for 55 to 60 families each month.

BRCO Committee News

Beautification Committee - Carol Litchfield, Chair

The Beautification Committee has worked closely with the Community Pantry Committee and the Building and Grounds Committee to complete the Pantry improvements funded by the \$20,000 grant. Special thanks go out to Evelyn Coltman for her recent efforts in organizing the library and organizing and cleaning other areas in the facility.

Building and Grounds Committee - Ted Carr, Chair

At the November BRCO general meeting Ted announced that after sixteen years he was stepping down as chair of the committee. BRCO member Gina Valeri has agreed to assume the position in January, 2024. Gina became a member May, 2022 and has worked diligently with Ted and his team of volunteers for the past eighteen months on several renovation projects.

Community Pantry - Stephanie Quis-Garrett, Chair

The expenditure of the \$20,000 grant has had a positive impact on the operation of BRCO's monthly community pantry. The finishing touches on improvements to the storage area and fellowship hall are almost complete. Sixty-two families were served at BRCO's monthly Community Food Pantry last Wed, November 8th. Stephanie announced that her Co-Chair, Anita Montanile, who has been extremely helpful this past year receiving and organizing food products for the pantry, as well as donating all the cat food distributed monthly, moved out of state this week. Both she and her partner Polly Edwards have been stellar volunteers of BRCO's Community Food Pantry and will be missed. Stephanie is looking to fill this important volunteer position.

Education Committee - Greg Christopher, Chair

There is \$1,000 budgeted for underprivileged children. \$500 will be offered to Bethel Elementary and \$500 to Bethel Middle School. Both checks will be delivered to the schools the week after Thanksgiving.

Greg is requesting an increase of \$300 in the education budget for next year to be divided between a Bethel elementary student (\$150) and a Bethel Middle School student (\$150) to support the Haywood County Law Enforcement's 'Shop with a Cop' program for 2024.

Rural Preservation Committee– Carol Litchfield, Chair

Carol Litchfield and Evelyn Coltman have been participating in Zoom sessions hosted by Blue Ridge Rising on specific topics that had been identified in the regional listening sessions. Recommendations and proposals coming out of all of the Zoom sessions will be presented at the Blue Ridge Rising Summit in Blowing Rock on December 5-6. The Action Plan that comes out of the Summit will be used by communities and organizations (including BRCO) to determine how best to support the Blue Ridge Rising initiative in the future.

BRCO Committee News

Historic Preservation - Evelyn Coltman, Chair

Bill Terrell Memorial

<https://www.wellsfuneralhome.com/obituaries/bill-terrell>



The Reverend Bill Terrell has been a member of BRCO and the Historic Preservation Committee for several years. He regularly attended BRCO meetings and loved to reminisce about history. We are thankful that we were able to capture a small part of his knowledge about Bethel's past when we filmed him last year as he discussed one of the two earliest schools in Bethel - the one that was started by Bethel Presbyterian Church in the 1830s. He is the only person who could point to the precise location of that school. He was also knowledgeable about Bethel Academy that existed until the early 1920s, and we filmed him at that location.

Bill was proud of his Terrell heritage, and he gave us a photo of his grandfather's house and store that existed next to today's Jukebox Junction. We met at that site a couple of years ago so that he could make us privy to his love of his heritage in connection with the old Terrell Store and his family's legacy in Bethel. He put us in touch with a cousin who had collected details about Terrell family history, and we happily included that information in Book 6 of *Legends, Tales & History of Cold Mountain*. When learning about our dedication to restoring and maintaining Pigeon Gap Watering Hole, Bill sent us a decades-old photo of his mother at the location. During a presentation by the Historic Preservation Committee to Bethel Middle School's history classes, Bill gave his speech and went beyond the written message to elaborate on his unique memories of his community, relaying details that only he could know.



W.S. TERRELL STORE

Bill had a lovely voice, honed by years of singing at numerous churches in the area, and he penned his own song about Cold Mountain Inman's story. How we wish we had recorded him singing that song. He has been participating for years in our Pigeon Valley Award for Historic Preservation programs, lending his own strong voice to honor others who preserved Bethel history. He was extremely proud that one of his grandfathers had donated the land for Bethel Presbyterian Church and the other grandfather had built the structure that includes the lovely historic sanctuary. We are honoring their legacy today since the church is now BRCO's community center. We honor Bill by including his obituary and by attaching several photos and stories he gave us about the Terrell family.

How sad our next BRCO meeting will be without Bill's positive presence. Bill was our go-to man for difficult-to-recall tidbits about local history, so his presence on the Historic Preservation Committee is irreplaceable.

As a memorial for Bill's family, Doug Chambers, videographer, is compiling the video session we filmed of Bill. No doubt, they will receive comfort when they hear his voice and watch as he masterfully guides the viewer to the roots of the community where he and his ancestors played a pivotal role in Bethel history.

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)

The County Home Cemetery

BRCO's website listing of Cemeteries, Churchyards, and Graveyards contains research about six cemeteries in Bethel. The sixth, the County Home Cemetery, has provided unique challenges that transformed what would be a mundane documentation of a burial area into a historical journey edged with mystery that required the Historic Preservation Committee's best sleuthing techniques. Little did we know when we began researching the twenty-plus cemeteries in Bethel that committee members would become involved in solving 90% of a seventy-year-old mystery involving the County Home Cemetery.

To understand the obscure nature of the cemetery quest, a bit of background information about the County Home is necessary. The concept of housing the homeless and indigent population came into existence in North Carolina in the early 1900s when the government passed a law requiring each county to build a home for the poor. In 1911, the Haywood County government built the structure in Bethel and called it "The County Home." Since its inception, however, Haywood County has maintained a humane stance regarding homelessness and impoverishment. In the 1800s, the County enacted steps to fulfill its governmental benevolence duty by appointing Wardens of the Poor who were overseers of a tax-derived indigent fund that allowed for room, board, and clothing in exchange for poor and homeless people working on the "poor farm." The twentieth century County Home concept enhanced this approach to caring for the homeless and poverty-stricken population in the county by housing them in a single facility. Haywood County funded the County Home from 1911 until 1952 when the county sold the

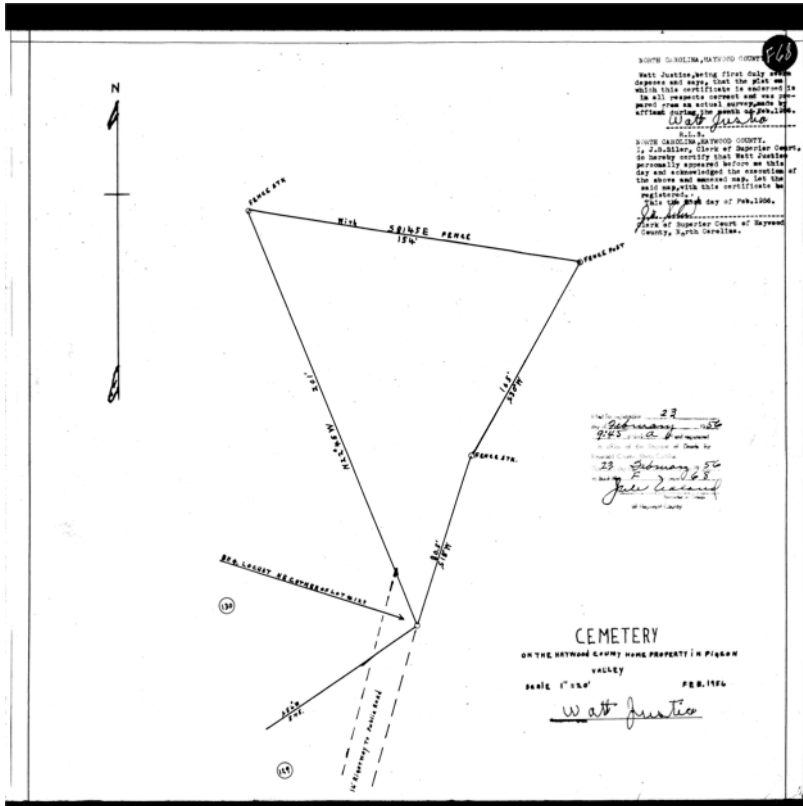


property to a private rest home (Pigeon Valley Rest Home), and the government instead paid for indigent individuals to receive respite in rest and nursing homes throughout the county. During the County Home's existence, a twelve-acre adjacent farm that was a part of the County Home complex provided labor opportunities for residents, and farm produce provided food.

Deaths occurred among County Home residents. According to Find a Grave, there were memorial tributes to twenty-eight individuals at the County Home Cemetery. Interment at this cemetery indicated that no one claimed the remains or provided funds for the burials, thereby relegating that obligation to the county. The earliest grave at the County Home Cemetery was 1914; the last was 1948. Time elapsed; decades passed; memories faded. No one in recent times seems to know where the cemetery was located. For decades, people have attempted to track down individuals buried at the cemetery. Fruitless searches via the Haywood County Historical & Genealogical Society, Pigeon Valley Rest Home (part of Silver Bluff Village), and BRCO's Historic Preservation Committee left those searching for a place to honor the deceased bereft of any location to visit or place flowers on the graves.

Since the Historic Preservation Committee had made the decision to document all known cemeteries in Bethel, the group embarked upon the task of finding the location of the County Home Cemetery. We consulted with Jennifer Cathey (Department of Natural and Cultural Resources - NCDNCR), Lisa Leatherwood (administrator of Silver Bluff Village), and Kevin Ensley (county commissioner/surveyor). An NCDNCR map provided an outline of the cemetery, but location context was missing. (See copy of map on the next page)

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)



Ensley printed a massive map that gave location context to the cemetery map and extended the area of consideration much further than had been previously presumed. Frances Adamson, Evelyn Coltman, and Carol Litchfield followed the map that led to one hundred plus acres of private land that houses a large plantation-style home that serves as a bed and breakfast inn. The inn is a distance uphill from the original County Home.

We contacted the inn's owner, Lora Jones Holcombe, who knew precisely where the cemetery was located. We realized, therefore, that all previous efforts to locate the cemetery had been seeking the answer in the wrong places. Holcombe traced her family's ownership of the property from her ancestors (Murray, Stamey, Jones).

Her grandparents, Wayne and Jane Stamey, had reached an agreement with Haywood County to cordon off a section of their one-hundred-acre property to accommodate unfortunate County Home residents who died but had no one responsible for their remains. Jones informed us, however, that all remains had been removed forty years prior in the 1980s. Her mother, Judy Jones, was fearful of the graves sinking and called county officials to oversee removal of the graves.

Holcombe drove Adamson, Coltman, Litchfield with BRCO and Lisa Leatherwood with Silver Bluff to the former graveyard whose fencing bears witness to its age. So, the mystery surrounding the site of the County Home Cemetery has been solved – after seventy years of searching for its location. However, the whereabouts of the remains of the deceased is the other 10% of the mystery. Research into the topic by the Haywood County Register of Deeds office uncovered no information. The committee is continuing its research to determine the final resting place of individuals whose remains were removed from the County Home Cemetery. The Department of Natural and Cultural



Resources and NC State University are assisting with attempts to locate records of the removal and transfer of the remains. We hope someday to lay to rest the remainder of the mystery.

The County Home building continues to serve the community - as it has for 113 years – but now as the Pigeon Valley Assisted Living facility on the Silver Bluff Village campus. The former County Home Cemetery has regressed into an untended fenced wildlife habitat that buffers a graveyard for the Jones family animals on its front entrance. Massive trees on the property make it easy to locate the space from a distance.

OTHER NEWS



NEW BENCH AT OUR BRCO FACILITY

BRCO and Barclay Taylor's classes at Bethel Middle School continue to partner on projects that are mutually beneficial. The bench beside the new ramp had seen it's last days and certainly was out of character with the new ramp. BRCO supplied the material and Barclay used it as a project for teaching the students to design the bench and use shop tools to build it. It is certainly well built. Perhaps when the wood has aged for 6 or 7 months we will stain it.

HAYWOOD COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The Haywood County Community Development Council (HCCDC) held its annual luncheon on Monday, November 6, 10:00am, at the Test Farm Lodge in Waynesville. Six BRCO members attended. The seven Haywood County Community clubs each received a \$2000 check from the County Commissioners. BRCO received an additional \$50 from the Council for most members attending.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE NEWS

At the November BRCO general meeting the Nominating Committee of Frances Adamson, Ted Carr and Evelyn Coltman reported that Will Thompsen, who was elected in March of this year to fill the remainder of Lucas Sorrells' term ending December, 2023, has agreed to serve on the Board for another three years. President Carol Litchfield called for other nominations from the floor. Seeing none, Will Thompsen was elected by acclamation to continue on BRCO's Board of Directors through 2026.

President Carol Litchfield reported that Frances Adamson, who was this year's Presidential appointee to the Board, has agreed to continue through 2024.

BRCO Board Meeting: Monday, January 8, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
Next General Meeting: Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.



Wishing all our BRCO members and friends a wonderful holiday season and a very Happy New Year!

