

Bethel Rural Community Organization

Newsletter

www.bethelrural.org

February 2024

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



On December 16, we lost yet another devoted member of BRCO, Dick Coltman.

Although Dick had to deal with a number of health concerns for the past few years, he never lost his desire to be there for us, offering advice and wisdom and a helping hand when he was able. In 2019, I remember being at my wit's end when my 40-year-old Zenith color TV finally quit working. It had been hooked up to a cable box in my den, and I had no idea how to set up the brand-new flat screen TV that I was forced to buy. I carefully followed the instructions, to no avail. I thought to myself, "Who can I call who would be able to figure this out and would be willing to come do it?" Dick immediately came to mind. I called him and explained my predicament,

that I could not get the new TV to work, and maybe I did not buy the right kind of TV. Dick assured me that I had purchased a very nice TV and that it would be no problem for him to set it up and that he would be right over. He could have been here in 15 minutes by heading into Waynesville on 276, but that happened to be the day that they started work on repairing 276 at Pigeon Gap, and the road was closed. Undaunted, Dick backtracked and came the long way around, going the extra mile (extra 10 miles?) to help me. When he arrived, he assessed the situation and set about programming the TV. After he got it working, he trained me on how to find and use the various menus and how to troubleshoot if something unanticipated occurred. Then he told me to test it and make sure I could find the channels I was used to. I was delighted to find my favorite channel right away which happened to be playing my favorite show—Gunsmoke. Dick was equally delighted, as he was a big fan of Matt and Miss Kitty and Chester and Doc, and we compared notes on our favorite episodes. By the time he was ready to leave, I had been completely transformed from being at my wit's end to feeling empowered and uplifted. As he turned to leave, he said to me, "Well, Carol, I've trained you on how to operate the TV and how to troubleshoot if something isn't working right. There's nothing more I can do here. If you have problems in the future, you will just have to call Evelyn." Of course, I never did have to call Evelyn. The TV has worked just fine ever since, and whenever I watch Gunsmoke, I think of Dick. To read about Dick's lifelong dedication to helping others, [click here](#)

The speaker for our March 12 Membership Meeting will be Sally Dixon, County Extension Director with the Haywood County Cooperative Extension Service. Sally has served in her Director position for almost two years and will have plenty to share with us regarding the expertise of her staff and how they can help us fulfill our mission "to enhance the quality of rural life in Bethel Community."

I look forward to seeing everyone on March 12th.

Carol Litchfield, President

ATTENTION: HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS It's Scholarship Application Time!

If you know of a High School Senior from the Bethel area, please let them know about the following two Scholarship opportunities:

BRCO Scholarship (\$1000): The applicant must have been a resident of Bethel Community for the past two years. Bethel Community is defined as the area composed of the Bethel School District. The applicant must be graduating from a certified Haywood County High School and must be accepted for college admission by one or more accredited colleges or universities, including community colleges and approved technical schools. The applicant must include a high school transcript that lists the courses (with course grades) that have been completed by the student as of the time of submittal of this application. The application must be postmarked by March 25, 2024.



The George H.V. Cecil Journey Scholarship is administered by WNC Communities and is available to High School Seniors from WNC Honors communities (like Bethel).

There are several scholarships being offered at \$1,250 a year. There is one Premiere scholarship which is given to one student at \$2,500 a year. Each year, an extra \$500 is awarded to one person for their freshman year only. This \$500 is not renewable. The other awards are renewable for up to four years of school. The renewal requirements are simply that they keep a 3.0 or higher GPA and that they send a letter providing an update on their year in school. They will not have to fill out an entire application form to have their award renewed. The deadline to get the initial application submitted is March 18, 2024.

BRCO Secretary Roxie Billings e-mailed the George H.V. Cecil Journey Scholarship application form to BRCO members on January 15 and the BRCO Scholarship application form on January 23. If you would like her to e-mail the forms to you again, contact Roxie at rsbillings51@gmail.com.

Thank You

Dear Friends at BRCO:

Thank you so very much for use of the sanctuary and dining hall for Dick's service and reception. Everything was perfect. You worked with Wells Funeral Home to ensure that everything would be in order, befitting the type of service we wanted. Carol was the liaison who tended to every detail. Ted did a wonderful job with the sound. Kaye, Gina, and Roger decorated the dining hall in a manner appropriate for the service. If others participated in preparing the church and dining hall, we thank you.

Many of you attended the service. Several members spoke eloquently about Dick. Quite a few remained to partake in the meal. Others sent cards of comfort and encouragement. Some of you made generous donations in Dick's memory. Gina even raked our lawn at home so that it would be in shape for family members and friends who visited. The flowers were beautiful and made a lovely altar setting for the service.

The kindness of all of you at this challenging time has been touching and meaningful. Thanks.

*With appreciation,
Evelyn Coltman and the Coltman family*

BRCO Committee News

Beautification Committee - Carol Litchfield, Chair

A big thank you goes out to Ted Carr, Will Thompsen, Weogo Reed, and Charles Rowe for helping to install the new lighting fixtures in the Fellowship Hall during December.

On January 23, Evelyn Coltman and Ted Carr were busy re-hanging our BRCO awards in the hallway of our community center. The awards had been taken down when the walls were painted a few months ago. There is a nice variety of awards including very unique ones like the Impact Award (with inlaid wood pieces) and the 25-year Half Marathon award. Our 2022 and 2023 back-to-back White Oak awards (in recognition of the highest level of achievement awarded by WNC Communities) are hanging side by side.



Building and Grounds Committee— Gina Valeri, Chair

Gina Valeri is BRCO's new Building & Grounds Committee Chair replacing Ted Carr, long time chair who stepped down from that role. During the coming months she will be focusing on promoting rentals for both the Fellowship Hall and Sanctuary to help increase revenue. Information about renting our facility can be found on our website: <https://www.bethelrural.org/community-outreach/facility-rental.html>

Education Committee - Greg Christopher, Chair

BRCO's focus on supporting the youth in our community continues. \$500 was given to each local school to assist students of Bethel Elementary and Bethel Middle School during the December holiday season. Applications for BRCO's \$1000 Education Scholarship will be accepted through March 25, 2024. (see additional information on page 2 about the scholarship)

Benelovence- Greg Christopher, Chair

The Committee paid \$214 from the 2023 benelovence fund to assist a local Bethel resident with her oil bill.

BRCO Committee News

Community Pantry - Stephanie Quis-Garrett, Chair

The Community Pantry had a busy and productive year in 2023. With the pantry expansion provided by the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina and over 1100 volunteer man hours, BRCO was able to provide food for 686 families and 1756 individuals throughout the year. Our Community Pantry has been fortunate in 2023 with 17 volunteers who regularly help with the Manna delivery, stocking of shelves, making boxes and executing pantry day. Every volunteer is essential to our success and is greatly appreciated. We greatly miss Anita (our co-chair) and Polly who really ran the show on pantry day. "Stay in your lane". We will also miss the man who started it all for the Bethel pantry, Ted Carr. Ted's vision and years of dedicated service has brought the Community Pantry to where it is today. Always there with an idea, a work crew and a big smile. Ted gets things done. Ted will be stepping back from pantry work to concentrate on other projects. We will miss him directing traffic (hey who is going to wear the yellow vest?), making the coffee, calling PTL, bringing the coveted food coupons and all the other jobs he has done to make this pantry a success. We are now averaging about 60 families a month and are asking for more volunteers to keep our success going. Thank you volunteers for your dedicated service.



Brent and our man Ted



Anita and Polly trying to make boxes in a small pantry and freezer room



Anita and Charles working comfortable in the new room, new floor, shelving and carts.

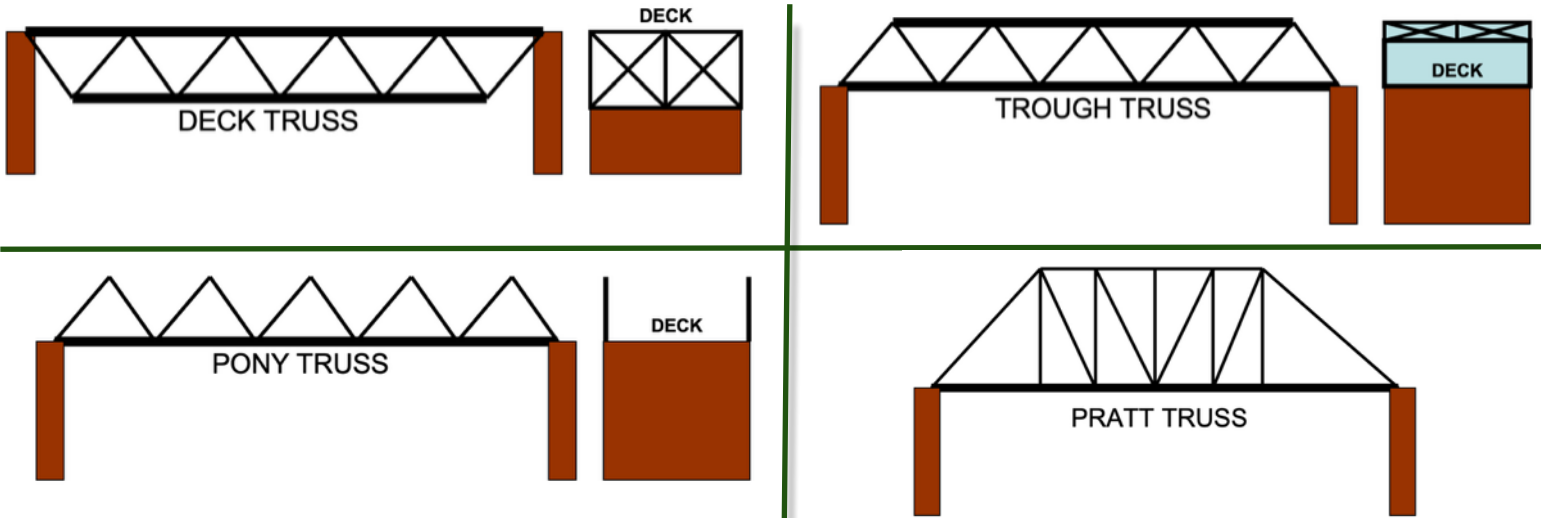
Historic Preservation - Evelyn Coltman, Chair

Earlier historic bridges commonly lacked the load capacity to accommodate growing highway needs that involved more frequent traffic and heavier vehicles. Section 204 of the Federal-aid Highway Act of 1970 sought to rectify this shortcoming by establishing the Special Bridge Replacement Program (SBRP). Under this program, structurally inadequate or functionally obsolete bridges on the federal-aid system were eligible for replacement or rehabilitation. Truss bridges throughout the United States became endangered, however, after the Federal Highway Bridge Replacement Program allotted funds for bridge replacement but provided inadequate money for repair and salvation. The Historic Preservation Office of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History became alarmed at the number of beautifully constructed historic bridges that had fallen with this march toward modernization. At that juncture, in 1979, both historical and highway governmental entities collaborated to compile an inventory of the state's historic bridges. The bulk of the bridges inventoried in the 1979 assessment were truss bridges built between 1830 and 1930.

Bethel Community was home to a number of metal truss bridges. An analysis of the history of truss bridges in *Legends, Tales & History of Cold Mountain*, Book 6, titled "Bridges Across History," describes the three types of truss bridges:

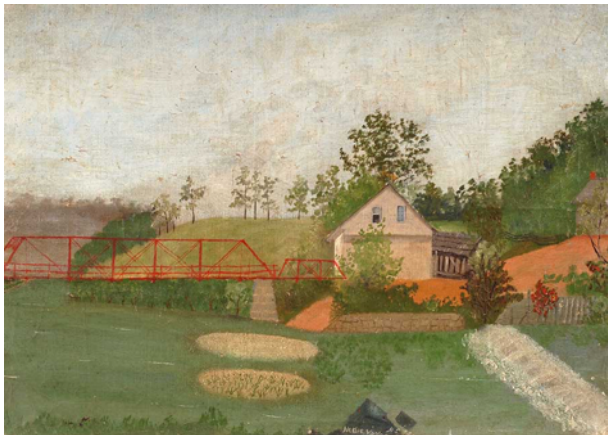
trusses are elements of framework that typically utilize triangles as the primary geometric construction element selected to support a bridge. Beams and buttresses add strength. Truss planks or beams can be either above (through truss), along the sides (pony truss), or below (deck truss), (p. 119)

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)



The article describes the Pratt bridge design and its history:

In 1844, Thomas and Caleb Pratt developed a design, the Pratt Truss (see drawing above right), in which vertical components act in compression, and diagonal parts act in tension. The diagonals slanted inward toward the middle rather than outward toward the end. Hip-shaped incline posts formed the end of Pratt truss bridges. Pratt truss bridges were probably the most frequently built early twentieth century truss bridges. (p.123)



Art Print of Cathey Mill and bridge



Wells Road bridge

In the late 1800s, Bethel was home to a truss bridge that caught the eye of a local artist, Nettie Vance Penland.

Bethel Community's pre-1970 automobile drive would likely include a journey through any number of exquisitely designed river crossings in which the rider would cruise over the Pigeon River on a deck surrounded by a protective structure on sides and top that included impressive triangular geometric architectural displays featuring planks, columns, bolts, pins, and rivets. "Through" truss bridges on Sonoma Road, Max Thompson Road, Wells Road, Lake Logan Road, and Steel Bridge Road reminded the traveler that river crossings did not have to be mundane and boring.

After 1970, however, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) replaced the following exquisite through truss bridges: Wells Road bridge (see photo at left), Sonoma Road bridge, and Max Thompson Road bridge; local people barely had time to ponder the fact that the stunning structural designs would no longer be a part of the landscape.

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)

Two Pratt through truss bridges remained, however: Truss Bridge #79 and Truss Bridge #246. Bethel Rural Community Organization played a significant role in salvaging Truss Bridge #79 on Lake Logan Road by hosting community meetings with NCDOT and requesting that the bridge be saved and restored. NCDOT honored BRCO's request by saving Truss Bridge #79 when it constructed an updated, heavier duty nearby bridge at the intersection of Lake Logan Road and Ideal Way. Truss Bridge #79 was worth saving as a walking bridge because it is the oldest metal truss bridge in NC, the state's only surviving metal truss bridge constructed in the 19th century (1891), the only NC metal truss bridge with decorative elements, and its Phoenix columns are unique nationally. Historic Preservation Committee member, Carroll Jones, wrote the successful application for the National Register of Historic Places for Truss Bridge #79 in 2019.



Truss Bridge #79



Truss Bridge #246

As for Truss Bridge #246, there has been less enthusiasm for saving this slightly younger bridge, though support to salvage this rare gem from the 20th Century is growing. BRCO's archive file library provides a number of documents and emails concerning the history of Truss Bridge #246 that is situated on Steele Bridge Road a few miles beyond Truss Bridge #79 on the West Fork of the Pigeon River.

An August 7, 1997, letter to the Department of Transportation from the State Historic Preservation Officer determined that Truss Bridge #246 was not National Register of Historic Places eligible because it was an example of the relatively common Pratt through truss bridge and lacked special historical significance.

By March 10, 2016, a letter from an architectural historian to the NC Department of Cultural Resources (NCD CR) listed the following details about Truss Bridge #246: Built in 1920, the six-panel pinned connected Pratt truss bridge connects the unimproved, dead-end Steel Bridge Road to NC 215 south of Lake Logan in rural Haywood County. When the original survey was conducted in 1997, there were 25 Pratt through truss bridges still standing in NC – two in Haywood County. At that time, NCDOT recommended that it was not National Register eligible. The bridge remains in its original location and retains its natural setting surrounded by rural mountains. The setting reinforces the aspect of feeling, and the bridge retains its association with the unimproved secondary road. Workmanship is evident in the pinned joints and riveted members.

BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)

The materials are original. However, the bridge is significantly rusted, and the timber superstructure and the approaches have been covered with asphalt. Unfortunately, Bridge #246 is in poor condition, with the majority of the members severely oxidized. Therefore, it is not a likely candidate for relocation and reuse. Given that it is a rare surviving example of a Pratt through truss bridge, particularly with its pinned construction, NCDOT recommends that Haywood County Bridge #246 is eligible for National Register listing under Criterion C:

Criterion C is one of ten criteria used to evaluate the eligibility of properties for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

A property can be considered eligible if it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

(“National Register Bulletin,” p.17).

Two succeeding letters between NCDCR and the architectural historian indicate that the office concurs that Truss Bridge #246 is eligible for National Register designation. That listing will trigger Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. NCDCR questions whether there is a need to revisit and conduct an updated study of Steel Truss Bridges in the state since changes over time or loss of other such bridges may warrant a more comprehensive approach and/or reevaluation of metal truss bridges, in general, or Pratt through truss bridges, in particular.



BRCO Board Meeting: Monday, March 4, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
Next General Meeting: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.