

# Bethel Rural Community Organization

## Newsletter

www.bethelrural.org

June 2023

### 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



How nice to be able to enjoy our June activities and the beginning of summer fun after a soaking rain—the flowers in the pollinator gardens are beginning to blossom and should be in full bloom by the time that we participate in Blue Ridge Heritage Weekend at Shelton House on Friday, June 16 (11:00 -7:00), and Saturday, June 17 (9:00 – 5:00). The two-day Arts and Crafts Fair will feature many artists and artisans, a variety of demonstrations, several food vendors, and Appalachian music played on the front porch of the historic home. BRCO volunteers will be there sharing space under two adjacent tents with volunteers from the Haywood County Historical and Genealogical Society, the Hugh Rogers Chapter of DAR, and the Canton Area Historical Museum. BRCO members are invited to help greet visitors, answer questions about Haywood County history and heritage, and share with the public the good works of BRCO and the many community service opportunities we have to offer. One such opportunity is helping to maintain the pollinator garden next to the Shelton House barn, which I enjoy doing each year (you can take a look and see if any Monarch butterflies or their caterpillars have made an early appearance—they can usually be found in abundance by mid-July).

BRCO and other Community Clubs across western North Carolina will be completing the 2023 WNC Honors Application during July and August—our annual opportunity to be recognized at a regional level for all that we have accomplished in the past year. I encourage you to tally your BRCO volunteer hours and write down your contributions to BRCO activities (for the period July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023). We will be asking you to submit this information during July so that we may use it to complete our application.

The program for our July 11th Membership Meeting will be presented by Amanda Watson and will focus on education in Bethel. Amanda will share with us the issues that she encountered while serving as Assistant Principal at Bethel Elementary and Bethel Middle Schools, especially during the past three years when the schools were impacted by the pandemic, the flood, and the closing of the mill. Amanda was recently selected to be the new principal at Bethel Elementary School, so we will also get to hear what goals she hopes to accomplish with BES students during the 2023-2024 school year.

I look forward to seeing everyone on July 11th!

Carol Litchfield, President

## DAR History Award Presented to Evelyn Coltman



RECOGNIZED FOR PRESERVING HISTORY – Evelyn Coltman holds her DAR Women in American History medal and certificate presented to her by Chapter Regent Constance Daly.

Constance Daly, Regent of the Hugh Rogers Chapter of DAR, was the guest speaker at the May 9 BRCO Membership Meeting. After presenting a program on the plans for commemorating the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, Daly brought up a new topic—the opportunity to honor Evelyn Coltman with the DAR Women in American History Award.

“Our chapter is very pleased to present this award to Evelyn,” said Daly. “She has exhibited leadership and innovation in preserving the history of Bethel and the Pigeon Valley for many years.”

The Women in American History Award was established by DAR to honor women who have exhibited leadership and innovation in promoting or preserving American History and who have made a difference in their community. Approximately 300 women across the country receive the Women in American History award each year. Their names and accomplishments are entered into DAR’s

national database of award recipients.

Coltman’s efforts in historic preservation include collecting the history of the Pigeon Valley and publishing “Legends, Tales, and History of Cold Mountain – A Pigeon Valley Heritage Collection.” In 2010, Coltman received the North Carolina Society of Historians Barringer Award of Excellence for her efforts in preserving North Carolina history. As Chair of the BRCO Historic Preservation Committee, Coltman has used her vast experience and love of history to convince countless individuals to share their documents, photographs, and knowledge of local history. Under Coltman’s leadership, the Historic Preservation Committee preserves and shares history by producing DVDs, CDs, art prints, historic markers, and digital files and archives.

“We are very proud of all that Evelyn has done to further our historic preservation effort,” said Carol Litchfield, BRCO President. “While it is true that many individuals contribute to the success of that effort, none of the projects would ever be completed without the benefit of Evelyn’s leadership and coordination, her passion for researching the history, and her willingness to record and document the results.”

The Award was a pleasant surprise for Coltman who later wrote in a thank you letter to Daly: “Not many people who know me can say that I am often bereft of words, but this special award truly left me with no words to say, except ‘Thank You’.”

## BRCO Receives Special Thank You from Bethel Middle School FFA

At the May 9 BRCO Membership Meeting, Barclay Taylor, Bethel Middle School FFA instructor, expressed his appreciation for the storage shed that BRCO had purchased and installed at the school for FFA use. As a thank you, the FFA students transferred flowers from the FFA greenhouse into a planter which has been placed in front of the BRCO building. In addition, the FFA students will be weeding the circular garden in front of the BRCO building as a community service project. They weeded it during May before school was out and will keep it weeded beginning in August after the school year resumes.

## Springtime in Bethel



**Your  
Opinion  
Matters**

## We want to hear from our members

The BRCO Officers and Board would like to hear from you. We want to have programs at our general meeting that will be of interest to our members. Let us know what speakers you would like to hear, what topics are of interest to you and any other suggestions you might have for programs. Email your suggestions to ([rsbillings51@gmail.com](mailto:rsbillings51@gmail.com)) and your suggestions will be shared with the BRCO officers and board members.



## BRCO Committee News

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

The Community Pantry is currently moving along to execute the 2023 grant awarded to BRCO from the Community Foundation of Western NC. This Human Services Grant has enabled Arrowood Installation to complete the new pantry floor. Additionally, we have been able to complete the painting of the walls in the hallway, new pantry room, and freezer room. Haywood Appliance provided us with our much needed two new freezers. A big shout out to our members Tom and Karyn Kolaski for loaning us their chest freezer for the past few years. They have just completed the building of a smaller home so they ask that we share the freezer with others. We still have projects to complete. The one most notable task will be to renovate the front ramp to our building. The Community Pantry continues to address the food insecurity in our area. We served 56 families in April and 51 families in May. Bethel Rural volunteers have worked a total of 171 hours to make this contribution successful.



New Floor in progress



Pantry Volunteer Lynne also paints



Brent and Charles keeping everything moving along.



Left: New canopy for use by the Food Pantry with BRCO's name and logo.



Ted Carr (at left) and Glen Garrett (at right) performed the final inspection of the newly installed flooring with Nathan Arrowood (center) on April 21.

### Education - Greg Christopher, Chair

The Education Committee has selected Ms. Lettie Watson as the \$1,000 BRCO scholarship recipient. A resident of Bethel and senior at Pisgah High School, she will be invited to receive the award at BRCO's July 11 meeting.

## BRCO Committee News

### Historic Preservation - Evelyn Coltman, Chair



Hugh K. Terrell, Jr.

Honoring individuals who have contributed to the research, documentation, preservation, and education about Bethel history is the purpose of the Historic Preservation Committee's Pigeon Valley Award for Historic Preservation. Committee members Frances Adamson, Ted Carr, Evelyn Coltman, Zac Guy, Carol Litchfield, and Bill Terrell awarded Hugh K. Terrell, Jr. with the 2023 honorarium at the May 9, BRCO meeting. Terrell is noted for his oversight of the 1978 Bethel Junior High School student book, *Sonoma – Valley of the Moon – Sunburst*. Foxfire-inspired interviews by students of individuals who had resided at the historic Sunburst Logging Village resulted in tremendously valuable documentation of a significant piece of Bethel history. Terrell dedicated hundreds of hours during and after the school day to arranging interviews, typing, overseeing printing, and coordinating distribution of the finished product. The former schoolteacher will also be highlighted in the upcoming *Historic Schools of Bethel* DVD.

Terrell receives the eighth award (ten individuals) that celebrates the legacy of the passenger pigeon that became extinct in 1914. Considered to be the most prolific avian species ever to have inhabited the planet, billions of the birds roosted in Pigeon Valley during the bird's migratory route. The bird's demise makes us mindful of the fact that important components of our existence can be lost if they are not protected. The aim of the Historic Preservation Committee is to salvage and preserve those elements from our past that have contributed to our collective memory

Terrell was unable to attend the ceremony. Son, Mike, and daughter-in-law, Carole Terrell accepted the award. Kaye Riddle and Bill Terrell were other attending family members. Evelyn Coltman was a former student.



Picture above: Scratchboard art print from BRCO's art print collection of the passenger pigeon by artist, Stephanie Grimes.

Picture at right: Carol Litchfield (seated)  
Left to right: Ted Carr, Bill Terrell, Carole Terrell, Mike Terrell, Evelyn Coltman, Kay Riddle, Zac Guy, and Frances Adamson





## BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)

Photo of Virginia Terrell at the original Pigeon Gap Watering Hole from the mid-1900s



Historic Preservation Committee members Ted Carr, Evelyn Coltman, and Carol Litchfield spent an afternoon tending to maintenance needs at Pigeon Gap Watering Hole - a historic site from the 1800s/early-1900s that served as a refreshment stop as individuals, their families, and their horses paused for a break in the journey across the mountain from Bethel into Waynesville and back.

Historic Preservation Committee members with the Historic Marker placed at the site in 2016. (Seated: Carol Litchfield, L to R: Roger Riddle, Evelyn Coltman, Susan Baxley, Bill Terrell, Frances Adamson, LaNae McCrackern, and Carroll Jones. (Photo by Ted Carr)



In 1924, the Community Club of Waynesville placed a commemorative plaque embedded into a stunning rock wall. In 2013, Joey Rolland, assisted by BRCO members Mike McDonald and Bill Terrell, earned his Eagle Scout Award by restoring the site and building a bridge to allow easy access. In 2016, BRCO's Historic Preservation

### BEFORE



Committee installed a local historic highway marker to educate passersby about the significance of the location.

Mowing is performed bi-annually by a local landscaping company, but the ten years since Rolland's work clearing the debris and building the bridge meant that a decade of moss

### AFTER



and ivy were leaving a green hue that threatened to hide the wall and cause the mortar to deteriorate. Armed with brushes, shovels, bags, paper towels, and eco-friendly cleaners, the three workers brushed away the moss, cleared bags filled with ivy, and refreshed the signage so that the place is closer to its original appearance.

Transfer of ownership of the property from its original owner to the current owner included an agreement, crafted by the Haywood County Historical & Genealogical Society, to require maintenance of the historic locale. The agreement, however, failed to mention any "right of visitation." Fortunately, the current owner, while installing a fence to restrict cars from entering, is working with the Historic Preservation Committee to permit walking entry. A yellow chain marks the permitted entrance.

In 2022, the Historic Preservation Committee held a competition for an artist to render a likeness of the Pigeon Gap Watering Hole. The committee selected Stephanie Quis-Garrett's anonymous entry. Quis-Garrett is working on the art piece that will be ready later this year.

## BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)

During the Historic Preservation Committee's research of Bethel cemeteries, the group uses the 1979 publication by George Augustus Miller, Sr.: *Cemeteries & Family Graveyards in Haywood County, N.C.* Miller conducted extensive surveys of every cemetery and graveyard known to him in the entire county. His list included twenty-one cemeteries located in Bethel. The committee has been travelling to a number of cemeteries in order to document the locations for the BRCO website. The committee has discovered five more cemeteries not accounted for in Miller's records.

The BRCO website, to date, includes completed research on Bethel Community Cemetery, Burnette Siding (Old Spruce) Cemetery, Long's Community Cemetery, and Piney Grove United Methodist Church Cemetery.

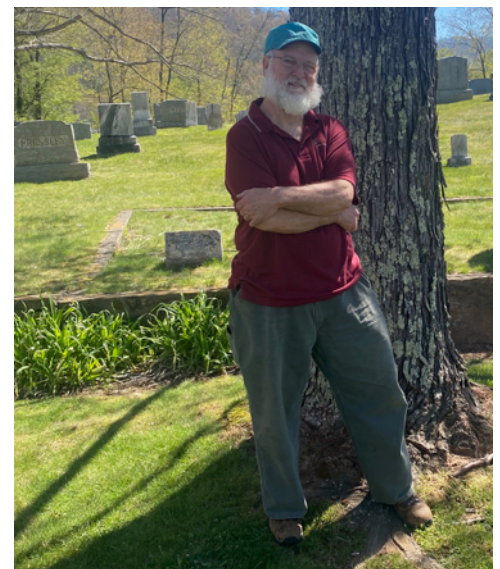
The most recently documented cemetery is Long's Community Cemetery that is situated on Coffey Branch Road. The cemetery and Long's United Methodist Church were both established in 1889, on land purchased in 1886 from Morgan Mease. By 1954, the old cemetery plots filled available space, and the Women's Society of Christian Services, affiliated with the church, began holding benefit suppers so that more land could be acquired. By the 1970s, Jeeter Martin purchased and donated adjacent land in what would become the newer portion of the cemetery.

Hand-written deeds, many lost, dictate ownership of the original burial sites in the older portion of the cemetery. A separate 501(c)(3) cemetery committee, established in the early 1970s, oversees plot purchase and mowing of the new sections of the cemetery but also provides upkeep on the original cemetery grounds. Older sections of the burial area include hand-carved markers made by travelling stonecutters, substantial river rock masonry stones, obelisks, affluent monuments, ledgers, and modern granite stones. The newer cemetery allows for ledger markers only to allow for easier upkeep.



The stone marker designating the cemetery entrance is a commissioned, hand-carved sign.

Pictured right: Charlie Evans, President and Treasurer of the Long's Community Cemetery, provided a cemetery tour as well as documentation about the church and cemetery history from the 1990 church published book, "Golden Memories: Long's United Methodist Church."



**BRCO Board Meeting: Monday July 10 at 6:00 p.m.**  
**Next General Meeting: Tuesday July 11 at 6:30 p.m.**