

# Bethel Rural Community Organization

## Newsletter

www.bethelrural.org

October 2022

### 2022 BRCO Officers and Board Members

#### Officers

- President: Carol Litchfield
- Vice President : Greg Christopher
- Secretary: Beth Cook
- Treasurer: Mike McLean

#### Board Members:

- Pat Carr, Chair
- Frances Adamson, Vice Chair
- Carol Litchfield
- Lucas Sorrells
- Eleanor Porter



### A Word from Our President, Carol Litchfield



As we welcome autumn to the mountains, let us also be grateful that we can once again enjoy the beauty of the season without being overwhelmed by the devastating aftermath of mountain flooding. While it appeared that Tropical Storm Ian was headed our way on September 30th, thankfully, the storm's impact in our area proved to be minimal.

In late August, Billy Adamson (husband of our BRCO Vice Chair Frances Adamson) passed away after an extended illness. Billy was an Army veteran of the Vietnam era who proudly served his country. He enjoyed attending our BRCO meetings and was an active member of Bethel Baptist Church, where he sang in the choir. Our hearts go out to Frances and the rest of Billy's family.

In September, BRCO received donations to cover the cost of maintenance of the Osborne Boundary Oak which had been in need of fertilization and fungicide treatment to enhance its health. The donations included memorials to Billy and also to Ruth Shipman who passed away in August at the age of 101. Ruth taught school in Haywood County for 32 years and was a faithful member of Bethel Baptist church.

In addition, donations were received to cover the cost of the purchase and installation of the new entrance door for the Fellowship Hall. Our organization has been blessed with members and partners who love to give back, either by providing financial support or by contributing their considerable skills and talents to whatever needs doing. We welcome the support and involvement of *all* of our members—please e-mail me at [CLTCHFLD@aol.com](mailto:CLTCHFLD@aol.com) if you would like more information on how you can make a difference as we continue to serve the needs of the Bethel community.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our November 8th meeting. Past BRCO member George Ivey will be presenting a program on the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and the role that Bethel can play as a Gateway Community.

Carol Litchfield, President

## 2022 General Meetings

- Tuesday, January 11, 2022
- Tuesday, March 8, 2022
- Tuesday, May 10, 2022
- Tuesday, July 12, 2022
- Tuesday, September 13, 2022
- Tuesday, November 8, 2022



## New Entrance Door Installed at BRCO Fellowship Hall



BRCO members Brent McKee and Gina Valeri brought their portable table saw and all of the necessary tools and materials.

After many months of anticipation, the new door for the BRCO Fellowship Hall finally arrived. The completed project will be available for all to admire at the next BRCO membership meeting on November 8th. Our thanks and appreciation go out to Brent, Gina, and Ted for the many hours of skilled craftsmanship and creative talent that they contributed to this project.

*(Photos by Carol Litchfield)*



The outer frame of the entrance had to be re-worked to fit the dimensions of the door.



Ted Carr, Chair of the Building and Grounds Maintenance Committee, took measurements and helped Brent secure the door frame.



After much preparation, the door was installed and ready for the finishing touches.

## HAYWOOD EMC Representative Visits BRCO

Several months ago, Ted Carr invited Mitch Bearden, Manager of Marketing and Economic Development, from Haywood Electrical Membership Cooperative (HEMC) to visit Bethel and learn about BRCO. Haywood EMC is the electric supplier for most of the Bethel community. The electric company was founded in 1938 when it started supplying power in Cruso and to homes and farms along the East Fork of the Pigeon River. Mr. Bearden toured the Fellowship Hall, the Pantry, the sanctuary, and the library. In the process, he learned about all of the good community work that BRCO accomplishes and our sterling recognition as a WNC Community. As a result, Mr. Bearden recently had lunch with Ted Carr at our favorite local restaurant and presented BRCO with an extremely generous donation to support our community activities. BRCO is very grateful to Haywood EMC for their continuing support of the work that we do for the Bethel community.



Mitch Bearden (right) from Haywood EMC presents donation to Ted Carr for BRCO.

## Osborne Boundary Oak



During August, the following individuals gathered beneath the Osborne Boundary Oak to discuss the tree's maintenance needs: Nicholas Johnson (arborist/owner of Element Arbor), Jeff Teague (county foreman over roads and maintenance with NCDOT), Evelyn Coltman (Chair of the BRCO Historic Preservation Committee), and Sara Pendergrass (office administrator with Element Arbor).



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

NCDOT agreed to do the pruning of the dead limbs which can be seen in the "Before" photo. The "After" photo shows the tree after the pruning was complete. Thanks to generous donations from BRCO members, BRCO arranged for Element Arbor to provide additional treatment to enhance the health of the tree. (photos by Carol Litchfield)

*See additional information on page 5 (Historic Preservation Committee report)*

## BRCO Committee News

### Historic Preservation - Evelyn Coltman, Chair

Bethel Rural Community Organization's Historic Preservation Committee is appreciative of the preservation and restoration work of individuals who have focused their efforts on Bethel. In 2014, the committee established the Pigeon Valley Award for Historic Preservation in honor of the extinct passenger pigeon whose likely message would be, "preserve those things that are valuable, or they will be lost to future generations."

Since the award's inception, the committee has recognized preservation efforts of ten individuals: Charles Cathey (2014) Norman Long (2015), Dick Alexander (2016), Ted Darrell Inman (2017), Charles and Martha Trantham (2018), Cheryl Haney (2019), Bob and Phyllis Barnette (2020-2021), and Mack Ledbetter (2022).

Accepting the award for her father at BRCO's September meeting, Verda Davis relayed a fascinating narrative (created by Verda and sister Lorna) about her father's intense interest in history, dating from age fourteen with his treks up Cold Mountain to examine the aftermath of the Cold Mountain bomber crash that occurred on September 13, 1946. Ledbetter traveled and studied the mountains throughout the region, honing his expertise of the area with an undying love of the terrain. He volunteered for the U.S. Forest Service, trimmed trails, led visitors on hikes, and had his own key to the Cradle of Forestry. Former newscaster, Bob Caldwell, featured Ledbetter in his special about waterfalls in the mountains. Kathy Ross with *The Mountaineer* featured him in an article in 1997 while he was creating his map.

A craftsman and collector, Ledbetter's detailed map is the primary reason he is revered in local historical circles. Ledbetter's years-long attention to the history of Sunburst, logging camps, rail lines, and logging memorabilia culminated in his meticulously drawn map that the family donated to BRCO's art collection. The Sunburst map details a key location that existed on the West Fork of the Pigeon River from the early 1900s through 1925 when a massive fire decimated the historic location. The prized Sunburst map is the most requested art print in the BRCO collection.



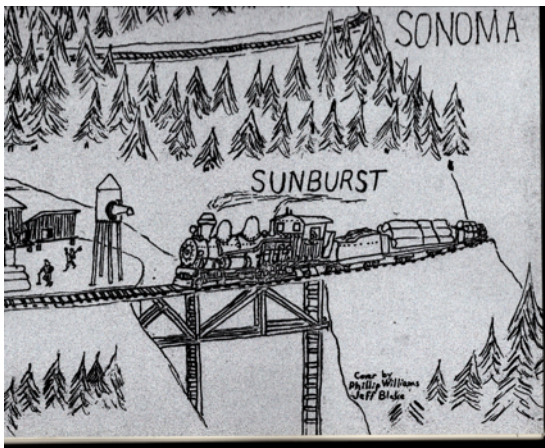
Above: Mack Ledbetter looking out over Mt. Pisgah

Below: Sunburst Map drawn by Mack Ledbetter



Verda Davis accepting the Pigeon Valley Award on behalf of her father. L to R: Ted Carr, Carol Litchfied, Evelyn Coltman, Verda Davis, Frances Adamson and Bill Terrell

## BRCO Committee News ( Historic Preservation continued)

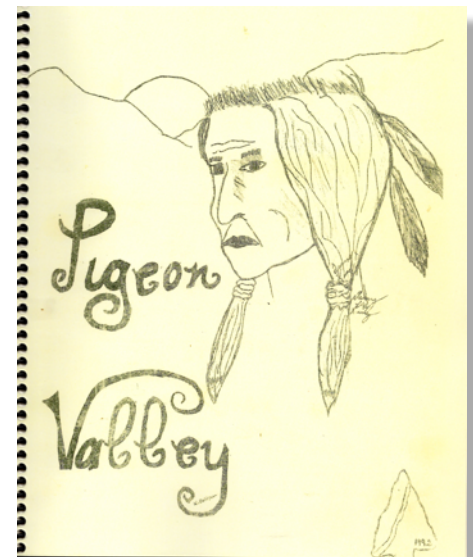


Even though Sunburst's existence ceased a century ago, local people continue their fascination with the Sunburst legacy. The Historic Preservation Committee received permission from the Haywood County School Board to reprint the 1978 book by Hugh K. Terrell's eighth grade classes at Bethel Junior High School that featured interviews and firsthand accounts of the history of Sunburst: *Sonoma-Valley of the Moon-Sunburst*. The book aligned in style and concept with Rabun Gap Nacoochee School's *Foxfire* publications. Subsequent interviews, discussions, photographs, and drawings resulted in an example of high quality investigative historical journalism. BRCO's reprints sell for \$25 plus tax and shipping.

The legacy of the passenger pigeon that inhabited the valley for eons, before its demise in 1914, casts an enduring influence on the area.

Bethel Community's alternate name is "Pigeon Valley," its river is "Pigeon River," the mountain on the route to Waynesville is referred to as "Pigeon Gap."

In 1992, Cheryl Haney's eighth grade class at Bethel Junior High School published another student-researched project, referencing Bethel's alternate name, *Pigeon Valley*. Via a series of interviews, document searches, and visits to locations of historical interest, twenty-seven students researched information about churches, schools, stores, post offices, mills, mines, individuals, families, houses, diaries, buildings, geographical and geological sites, and events. In 2008, for the Haywood County Bicentennial, BRCO's Historic Preservation Committee, with permission from Haywood County School Board, republished the book with an updated table of contents provided by Pat Carr. BRCO has reprinted the book which sells for \$25 plus tax and shipping. The Historic Preservation Committee will direct a portion of the proceeds from the sale of both books to Bethel Middle School.



The Osborne Boundary Oak on Highway #110 is the location of BRCO's first local historic marker. We have, in 2013 and in 2016, hired two arborists to trim the historic tree. This year, NCDOT trimmed dead limbs, A local arborist, Nicholas Johnson who is also a BRCO member, determined that the tree that served as a boundary marker in 1792 has the potential for several more years of continuum. Thanks to donations from BRCO members, we have hired Element Arbor to provide fungal and fertilizer treatment to prolong its life.

The community rallied to save the tree in 1978 when an expanded highway threatened its demise. In 2010, BRCO's Historic Preservation Committee initiated efforts to recognize the tree with the historic marker. Cold Mountain Nursery nurtured seedlings from the tree that the committee distributed for planting to several locations. In Book 6 of *Legends, Tales & History of Cold Mountain*, a Historic Preservation Committee project consisting of six books, Ernestine Upchurch details the history of the tree, as well as the Native American and Osborne family connection to the tree. The DAR designates this tree as a "Witness Tree" that recognizes that General Griffith Rutherford's troops that marched against the Cherokee in 1776 passed by this tree. Oral history dates this tree to the Native American settlement era when a buffalo and Native American trail, as well as a trading post, flanked the tree's border. (see photos on page 3)

## BRCO Committee News (continued)

### Food Pantry Co-Chairs – Julie Green and Stephanie Quis-Garrett

127 families have been served to date and over 170 volunteer hours has been recorded. The committee is always needing more volunteers to assist with the Food Pantry. If you would like to volunteer contact Stephanie at [smallshells56@gmail.com](mailto:smallshells56@gmail.com) The food party is held on the second Wednesday of each month beginning at 9:00 a.m.

### Benelovence Committee – Lucas Sorrells, Chair

There is still money available in the Flood Relief Fund. If you know of anyone needing assistance as a result of the flood, please get in touch with Lucas at [lucas@jerue.com](mailto:lucas@jerue.com)

### Building and Grounds Maintenance Committee– Ted Carr - (see article on page

### Rural Preservation – Carol Litchfield, Chair

At the BRCO membership meeting on November 8th, BRCO members will have the opportunity to learn more about the role that Bethel can play as a Gateway Community to the Blue Ridge Parkway. The program will be presented by George Ivey, who used to be a BRCO member and Rural Preservation Committee Chair. George currently serves as the N. C. Development Director of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation in Asheville. George will explain how the Parkway serves as a unifying element for the 17 counties through which it passes and how it contributes to the economic vitality of adjacent communities.

## Photos from the September BRCO General Meeting



At the general meeting in September, our speaker, Verda Davis brought some of the items crafted by her father, the late Mack Ledbetter. Pictured are a few of the items displayed at the meeting.



Picture at the left: BRCO members Frances Adamson and Phyllis Vance looking over some of the items displayed at the meeting.