

### 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



Autumn is upon us once again, along with a variety of Fall Festivals and opportunities for celebration. The Festival Season kicks off with a brand new event—Plott-tober Fest which runs from October 5 – October 8. On Friday and Saturday, October 6 and 7, there will be a Community Club tent at Sorrells Street Park in Canton where Plott-tober Fest visitors can learn all about the good works of BRCO and the other 7 community clubs of Haywood County. Several BRCO members have volunteered to help staff the tent. It will be a great opportunity to recruit new members. For more information about Plott-tober Fest events and activities, visit <https://www.nchchgs.org/plott-tober-fest/schedule/>.

Speaking of the community clubs, members of the 8 clubs are invited to attend the Haywood County Community Development Council luncheon beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, November 6, at the USDA Service Center on Raccoon Road (across from the Test Farm). Haywood County Commissioners are expected to be in attendance. They always look forward to hearing about the community clubs' accomplishments from the past year. In late October, we will send out an e-mail reminder about the luncheon in order to get a head count of those who will be attending from BRCO.

Several of us will be representing BRCO at the WNC Communities Honors Awards Luncheon in Asheville on November 11. I look forward to sharing with you at our November 14 membership meeting the results of our Honors Awards application. We will celebrate our accomplishments from the past year and also celebrate the completion of all of the tasks associated with our Community Pantry expansion.

The program for our November 14th Membership Meeting will be presented by Jeff Childers, Co-Chair of the Operations Management Committee for the Museum of Haywood County History at the Historic Shook-Smathers House in Clyde. Jeff will describe how the rooms of the house have specific themes promoting significant aspects of Haywood County history. We will have the opportunity to provide input to Jeff on the type of Museum exhibits that could be used to promote the history of the Bethel area. Information on the Sunburst logging community is already included in one of the exhibits.

I look forward to seeing everyone on November 14th!

Carol Litchfield, President

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### October 5-8 "Plott-Toberfest 2023"

#### Celebration of North Carolina State Dog and Haywood County German Heritage

The Haywood County Historical & Genealogical Society (HCH&GS) announces its recent approval by the Town of Canton to co-sponsor a fundraiser to benefit the Society and the Canton Historical Museum. As part of an increased effort in Haywood County to celebrate our rich history, the HCH&GS will hold a new event called "Plott-Toberfest" which combines the traditional PlottFest UKC Annual Competition, a celebration of our NC State Dog - The Plott Hound, and the rich German history of Haywood County.

Traditional German Heritage to be Featured –The early settlers of Haywood County and their German roots will be celebrated during this four-day festival featuring those who initially resided in the German settlement of Deutsch Cove, now known as Dutch Cove. Among those settlers were the Shooks, Smathers, Rhodarmers, Messers and Plotts (with the first Plott Hounds). Various programs will discuss this history and share some of the family stories.

### November 6, 2023

The County Council of Community Clubs' (HCCDC) Annual luncheon, attended by Commissioners, will be held Monday, November 6, 10:00am. All are welcome to attend. An email will be sent out prior to the luncheon to capture a head count.

### November 11, 2023

The WNC Communities Awards Luncheon will be held Saturday, November 11th. Registration for BRCO attendees has already been submitted.



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.



## NEW RAMP AT ENTRANCE TO BRCO'S FACILITY

Following several years of heavy use resulting from MANNA deliveries and monthly carting of food boxes, the old boards in the BRCO entrance ramp were in need of replacement. After durable, low maintenance Trex boards were purchased, Ted Carr let it be known that BRCO volunteers would be needed "for a little project" on September 18.



← The ramp project got underway as BRCO volunteers began removing the old boards.

Greg Christopher, Charles Rowe, and Will Thompsen pried loose and removed all of the boards from the ramp within an hour. →



On September 19, Ted's ramp-building buddies from Riverside Baptist Church began installing the Trex boards. →



As each board was removed, it was handed off to Gina Valeri and Ted Carr. Gina and Ted removed the old nails and placed the boards in stacks.

Fresh coats of paint were added to the railing and trim by Russell Brockwell and his painting crew. On September 23, the ramp and Fellowship Hall were ready for use by a family hosting a baby shower who found the new entrance very welcoming. Their words of appreciation capped off a very productive week: "We can't wait to use this place again—it's wonderful!" →



Ted and the crew made sure that each board was measured and installed with patience and precision.



**To all who helped with this project--  
Thank You and Congratulations on a Job Well Done!**

## BRCO Committee News

### **Beautification Committee - Carol Litchfield, Chair**

Special thanks to Ted Carr and Evelyn Coltman for overseeing the improvements in the church classroom. The framed Bible maps are up on the wall, and a new white board has replaced the old chalk board. The Beautification Committee will be working closely with the Community Pantry Committee as the Pantry expansion efforts wrap up over the next couple of months.

### **Building and Grounds Committee - Ted Carr, Chair**

On Monday, Sept. 18, the outside entrance ramp to Fellowship Hall was removed. After clearing the boards of nails, they were donated to Inman Chapel in Canton and the Bethel Middle School's Future Farmers of America (FAA) for their use. Replacement of the wooden ramp with TREX composite materials was completed on Tuesday, Sept. 19 by the Riverside Baptist Church ramp-building crew. A paint crew sanded and painted the wooden railings white.

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

Ninety-five families were served during the months of July and August, 2023. To date, 438 families have been assisted. The food pantry is averaging 29 volunteer hours per month. The plan is to apply for a Food Lion grant to supplement our community's food needs.

### **Benevolence - Greg Christopher, Chair**

During one of the monthly BRCO Food Pantry this summer a local resident voiced her concern about how she could get a ramp built for her home, as due to husband's foot surgery he was unable to manage the stairs. BRCO provided the \$900 cost for materials and Riverside Baptist Church offered their ramp-building volunteers, which solved the problem. A good example of two organizations working together. Picture at right shows the completed ramp.



### **Rural Preservation Committee– Carol Litchfield, Chair**

Earlier this year, BRCO members learned about Blue Ridge Rising, an initiative of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation. Blue Ridge Rising is focused on strengthening cross-jurisdictional relationships, fostering economic development within the region's gateway communities, and establishing a unified regional voice. After conducting listening sessions in all 29 parkway communities, the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation hosted a series of Regional Meetings to invite review and feedback on the key themes and action steps suggested during the county meetings. Several BRCO members attended the Blue Ridge Rising Regional Meeting held at Lake Junaluska on August 15 and participated in prioritizing the actions that will be taken in the coming months.

## BRCO Committee News

### Historic Preservation - Evelyn Coltman, Chair

The NC Department of Transportation is studying the proposed replacement of Bridge # 169 on Sonoma Road over the West Fork of the Pigeon River and Bridge #170 on Max Thompson Road over the East Fork of the Pigeon River. Historic Preservation Committee members, Evelyn Coltman and Carol Litchfield, met with Debbie Bevin, Senior Architectural Historian, and her assistant, Pofue Yang, with Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc., a firm that services NCDOT's requirement for historic preservation research. NCDOT must document historic sites that could be affected by bridge replacement.

The historians toured the grounds of the James Henry and Nancy Louisa Cathey Blaylock House on Shay Lane which is adjacent to the Max Thompson Road bridge. The kitchen area of the Blaylock house surrounds an 1835 two-room log cabin. The Blaylock family completed the bulk of the main house over a twenty-two-year span (1868 to 1890), and the family remained in the house through five generations. Architecturally, the house features two distinct opulent styles: Queen Anne and Italian Villa. Current owners, Jerry and Nancy McFall, have completed most of the restoration of the remainder of the house, including the three-story turret. Several notable buildings adjacent to the house remain, lending historic integrity to the site. The Reverend Jesse Stalcup, noted builder and furniture maker, built the house. Books 1, 2, & 4 of *Legends, Tales & History of Cold Mountain* detail stories of the people connected to the house: buried treasure, a murder, ghostly voices, and a lonely child's Christmas letter from the NC School for the Deaf.



Art Print of the Blaylock House which pictures the house as it appeared in 1899.



The Blaylock House as it appears today.



Debbie Bevin, Evelyn Coltman, and Pofue Yang at the Blaylock House.

Another historic structure is in the vicinity of both bridges, also built by the Reverend Jesse Stalcup: the historic Bethel Presbyterian Church, houses BRCO's community center. Bevin and Yang were impressed with the 1885 sold chestnut narrow matchboard tongue-and-groove sanctuary that BRCO continues to maintain in pristine condition. Bevin was particularly impressed with the curved decorative trimmed windowsills which she considered to be a unique stylistic feature. She was also appreciative of the fact that BRCO has retained the 4/4 sash cord windows, even though some of the ropes are broken.



Interior of the sanctuary by Gary Woollard.

## BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)

After the visit to the two historic buildings, Bevin and Yang accompanied Coltman and Litchfield to the state's most historic metal truss bridge: Truss Bridge #79 on Lake Logan Road. At that location they met three men who are descendants of the gentlemen who, in 1925, moved the historic bridge from its



Photo from the James Hentry and Flora Kinsland Plott Collection showing young ladies crossing Truss Bridge #79

original location on Highway #110 near today's Jukebox Junction. Prior to the bridge's second installation, people in the Lake Logan community either had to ford the river or else travel a distance to cross another bridge to transport farm goods, attend school, or perform duties connected with daily existence. Thus, when the 1891 bridge was to be dismantled, these men accepted the challenge to transport bridge components to the current location via horse-drawn wagons and erect it as a community cross-over.

The bridge has gained notoriety for its unique architectural construction that entitled historian Carroll Jones to submit its successful application to the National Register of Historic Places in 2019. At that time, Bethel Rural Community Organization, local officials, state preservation representatives,

and community members celebrated the bridge's special place of Bethel, state, and national historical relevance. In 2022, BRCO's Historic Preservation Committee enlisted Josh, Lucas, and Brock Sorrells to install the local historical marker to commemorate the bridge's history and the role Josh and Lucas' great grandfather and Brock's great, great grandfather had played in installing the bridge almost one hundred years prior.

Carroll Jones accompanied the three grandsons and the architectural historians to remember, pay homage, and admire the spirit of community that enabled the bridge's 1925 relocation. Danny Barrett (grandson of Cleve Chambers) has fond memories of waiting with several neighborhood children at the end of the bridge for the school bus to transport them to Bethel Elementary, Bethel Junior High, and Bethel High Schools. He was eager to clarify a long-held misconception - he is not the one who tossed Shirley Grant's books into the river. Barrett remembers being in a photo on the bridge that made its way into the Asheville newspaper. His mother, Ava Barrett's recollections of the social scene at the bridge are encapsulated in BRCO's *Walking in the Footsteps of Those Who Came Before Us* DVD.



Left to Right: Carroll Jones, Steve Sorrells, Danny Barrett, and Tracy Hargrove

## BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)

Tracy Hargrove (grandson of Rufus Hargrove) has a deep love and respect for the bridge, engrained in his psyche by his grandfather who stated every time they passed by or through the bridge that he had helped to move it so that local people had a place to cross the river. Hargrove's father, Troy, enumerated details about the bridge and its history in BRCO's 2008 *Walking in the Footsteps* DVD.

Steve Sorrells (grandson of Frank Sorrells, Sr.) has similar reverence for the bridge and for the role his grandfather and other community men played working together on a massive project that would secure a safe space for driving, transporting farm goods, and serving the community as a conduit across the river. He is especially pleased that the bridge is a symbol of community spirit of coming together to enable a positive purpose for the good of the community.

Carroll Jones is the perfect combination of talent and expertise to have submitted the National Register application. As a civil engineer, he understood the unique design of the bridge. As a historian, he was able to capture the special relevance the bridge has to the community but also its significance in the state and nation. The West Fork Pigeon River Pratt Truss Bridge is not only the state's oldest metal truss, but it is the only NC metal truss bridge with decorative elements (finials and starbursts). Its Phoenix columns make it unique nationally. Phoenix columns are made of wrought iron bars that are bent and flanged together with rivets and bolts into hollow shafts. Those technical aspects required patience on Jones' part as the application compelled him to research detailed technical information as well as precise historical data. The application states: "No more than two dozen of these bridges are thought to survive

today. Haywood County's West Fork Pigeon River Pratt Truss Bridge is the only remaining example of the Phoenix column truss bridge technology in North Carolina. It is the only known survivor of the nineteenth century in the United States" (Jones, 2019)\*.



Pofue Yang and Debbie Bevin in front of the sign at Truss Bridge #79



Ribbon cutting ceremony at the 2019 Truss Bridge #79 National Register Celebration

## BRCO Committee News (Historic Preservation Committee Continued)



Truss Bridge #79 painted by artist Gary Woollard, which is in the BRCO Art Print Collection



Truss Bridge #79 Historic Marker

Truss Bridge #79 has survived numerous adverse weather events as well as potential dismantling. The bridge is a survivor, however, and BRCO's historic marker commemorates its distinctiveness, its importance to the community, and its spirit of endurance.

\*United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration for West Fork Pigeon River Pratt Truss Bridge, (Carroll Jones writer, 2019).

BRCO's Historic Preservation Committee is continuing to research the cemeteries in the community. Updated commentary about the County Home Cemetery will be discussed in the upcoming newsletter.

## OTHER NEWS

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE RE-ELECTED

The term is coming to a close in December for all three of the current Nominating Committee members - Frances Adamson, Ted Carr and Evelyn Coltman. However, all three have agreed to continue. At the September general meeting there were no new nominations from the floor; therefore, the current committee was re-elected by acclamation.

### NEW BRCO VICE CHAIRMAN ELECTED

Eleanor Porter, Board Member and Vice Chair relocated and resigned her position. Board member Will Thompsen has been elected to serve as Vice-Chair through 2023. Congratulations Will!

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