

Barringer Award of Excellence History Book Application

We are nominating Evelyn Coltman for the Barringer Award of Excellence History Book Award for her efforts to collect, document, write, and preserve Haywood County History, in particular the history of Bethel Community, also known as Pigeon Valley. Coltman has written and published 6 books titled *Legends, Tales & History of Cold Mountain, Books 1-6* (621 pages, 191,254 words). Coltman spent **thousands of hours conducting research in libraries, deeds and land records offices, obtaining photographic documentation, conducting oral interviews, ferreting out long-hidden family documents containing valuable historical data. Several of the pieces selected for the books are first-time printings of original sources contributed by family members whose significant information had been hidden away in a closet or trunk until Coltman encouraged them to make their priceless historical piece available for public viewing. For some chapters, she invited guest writers who knew the topic firsthand to contribute their knowledge to the books.**

Coltman went to great lengths to assure accuracy and authenticity of each article by conducting multiple interviews and researching numerous sources on each topic. In order to assure accurate information about architecture and furnishings, Coltman called in individuals with expertise in the field such as architects and restoration specialists, whose constructive comments were meticulously documented by the author. The preface for each guest writer was collected by Coltman and written to assure the reader that these writers were competent to address the topic assigned to them. While Coltman respects the necessity of maintaining accurate recorded history, she also appreciates the contributions and interest afforded by collecting and writing oral history. Oral history accounts collected by Coltman were written as told. The author painstakingly collected and sorted materials and wrote interesting and informative discussions of each topic.

These works document and preserve the grass roots human elements surrounding each topic. The passion of the human element is captured through the close, personal oral interviews sprinkled throughout the body of the text. With this added element Coltman sought to capture and preserve for future generations the fervor of the human essence behind the history in the articles. In addition, the author has enhanced human interest by including a variety of topics selected to ensure diversity of subject matter: architecture, people, land, churches, cemeteries and gravemarkers, death customs, bridges, farms, outbuildings, fences, cattle, country stores, camp meetings, schools, genealogical tracings, military history, settlements, tree, various trades such as logging, milling, and store proprietorship as well as freemasonry and Masonic lodges, letters, diary, and a scrapbook.

The six books have been written and published in conjunction with Bethel Rural Community Organization's (BRCO) Cold Mountain Heritage Tour which occurs each year. Coltman conceived of the idea of the Cold Mountain Heritage Tour and served as Heritage Committee Chair and tour director for three years. She wrote all of the speeches for each tour (as many as 18 to 20 speeches per tour), which relay historical information through tour guides at each site. Coltman wrote and edited the books and allowed BRCO to sell the books and keep all profits from the sale of the books. These profits go to programs sponsored by BRCO that benefit the community. The author also spearheaded efforts to collect and preserve Bethel's history through a DVD titled *Walking in the Footsteps of Those Who Came Before Us*. Coltman drew up the outline, made the selection of participants for filming, and assisted with taping of one segment of the DVD. The tour, the sale of the books, and the sale of the DVD have brought in a great deal of money to BRCO for its farmland and historic preservation efforts. In addition, Coltman heads BRCO's Historic Preservation Committee. This committee's focus is on preserving historic architecture and recorded history in Bethel Community.

Submitted by BRCO Members Steve and Barbara Eaffaldano