

## **Francis Mill Celebrates National Register of Historic Places Nomination**

A group of supporters, workers, music lovers, tourism agency representatives, and historians attended Sunday's event at Francis Mill in celebration of the mill's designation as a National Register of Historic Places site. Mill tours and Trantham family harmonies of old time music recalled days when people gathered at the local grist mill to socialize and turn the labor involved with growing wheat and corn into staples for family consumption.

The Francis Mill National Register project has truly been an "It Takes a Village" endeavor. Planning committee Evelyn Coltman (Bethel Rural Community Organization - BRCO), Emily Henson (Preservation NC), George Ivey (BRCO), and Tanna Timbes (Francis Mill Preservation Society) engaged Evelyn Coltman of BRCO to file the grant to hire writers, Patrick Willis, who focused on the history of the mill, and Clay Griffith whose expertise as architectural historian provided proper documentation for the nomination. Annie McDonald and Jennifer Cathey with the Department of Cultural Resources provided guidance on architecture and National Register requirements. McDonald successfully presented the mill's case before the state agency charged with delivering the nomination to the national level.

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA) was the major funding agency, with Rob Bell of that organization assisting with implementation of the grant. BRNHA is an agency which promotes tourism related projects connected to the agriculture, crafts, Cherokee, music, and natural heritage of the area.

BRCO's Historic Preservation Committee was overseer of the grant, and BRCO was a funding organization for the project. Also assisting with financing were Francis Mill Preservation Society (FMPS), Haywood County Historical & Genealogical Society (HCH&G), and Mast General Store.