

Center Places and Cherokee Towns

Archaeological Perspectives on Native
American Architecture and Landscape in
the Southern Appalachians

Christopher B. Rodning

CENTER PLACES AND CHEROKEE TOWNS

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Native American Architecture and
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for Hope, Henry, Erik, and Leif

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Acknowledgments

This book derives from my study of the Cherokee community situated at the Coweeta Creek archaeological site (31MA34), near the confluence of Coweeta Creek and the Little Tennessee River, in southwestern North Carolina. Early settlement at Coweeta Creek dates to the late prehistoric period, sometime between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries A.D., and perhaps even earlier. Later stages in native settlement at the site date to the protohistoric period, from the seventeenth through the early eighteenth centuries A.D. Archaeologists affiliated with the Research Laboratories of Anthropology (RLA, now the Research Laboratories of Archaeology) at the University of North Carolina (UNC) in Chapel Hill conducted fieldwork at Coweeta Creek and dozens of other sites in southwestern North Carolina during the 1960s and 1970s as part of the Cherokee Archaeological Project (Dickens 1967, 1970, 1976, 1978, 1979, 1986; Keel 1974, 1976, 2002; Ward 1985, 1986, 2002), and the present study is one of several recent efforts to revisit and reconsider archaeological collections from the site, which are curated by the RLA, and the records of fieldwork that are housed at UNC (Davis et al. 1996; Keel et al. 2002 Rodning and VanDerwarker 2002).

This book builds upon my study of related topics in the archaeology of Cherokee towns and publications from the past several years. I have generated some new data and have reconsidered some old data, and I have changed my mind about some of the interpretations I have put forth in previous publications (Rodning 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). In addition to my own reconsiderations of the Coweeta Creek site itself, I have new ideas about the site based on other investigations in Cherokee archaeology in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee, including Jon Marcoux's (2008, 2010a, 2012a) research on the Tuckaleechee towns in eastern Tennessee; Tasha Benyshek and Paul Webb's (2008, 2009; Webb 2002; Webb et al. 2005) excavations for TRC Solutions, Incorporated, at the Ravensford Tract (near the Nununyi mound) and Macon County Airport (Joree) sites in southwestern North Carolina (see also Keel 2007; Trinkley 2000); other CRM investigations in the vicinity of the Coweeta Creek site (Ayers 1987; Baker 1982); John Cable and New South Associates' investigations in the Brasstown Valley in Georgia (Cable 2000; Cable et al. 1997; Cable and Reed 2000); investigations by Jane

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Eastman (2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) and others at Spike Buck, the Cullowhee mound, and other sites in the upper Hiwassee Valley (Dorwin 1991; Riggs and Kimball 1996; Skowronek 1991); investigations by Brett Riggs, Scott Shumate, Lance Greene, and others at Kituhwa, Nununyi, and other sites in the area of the Cherokee Out towns in the Tuckasegee Valley (Greene 1995, 1996, 1999; Riggs et al. 1996, 1997, 1998; Riggs and Shumate 2003); excavations at the Alarka farmstead (Shumate et al. 2005; Shumate and Kimball 1997); and investigations of mounds and Cherokee town sites in western North Carolina conducted by Ben Steere (2011) for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. I therefore set out to write a book that represents a significant statement about an important and interesting archaeological site and that may generate further interest in the site and its interpretive potential, as well as further study of other Cherokee sites in the upper Little Tennessee Valley and surrounding areas. Meanwhile, historians interested in Native American societies have recently begun to focus on the biographies of individual towns, situating these towns within broader regional developments and dynamic regional identities within colonial North America (Boulware 2011; Piker 2003, 2004), and archaeology can contribute positively to this perspective on Native American cultural history. As Tyler Boulware (2011:19) has recently written, the “localism and regionalism” within Cherokee towns and Cherokee town areas “looked very different” in 1750 than it did in 1800. Boulware is right, and community dynamics within towns and social relations between towns were also different in 1540, when Spanish colonists first reached the southern Appalachians, than they were in 1670, when Charlestown was founded, and in 1715. Archaeology has much to contribute to the study of history at points when documentary evidence is scarce, including the sites of specific towns, such as the Coweeta Creek site, one of the most extensively excavated Native American sites in western North Carolina.

Many people deserve thanks and acknowledgment. I first would like to note the talented people who participated in UNC fieldwork at Coweeta Creek and other sites in southwestern North Carolina and who have sorted, labeled, recorded, packaged, catalogued, and curated the vast amount of artifacts, field notes, maps, photographs, and other records of fieldwork kept at the RLA. With a grant from the National Science Foundation, the late Joffre Lanning Coe (1961, 1983; Keel 2002; Ward and Davis 1999:17–18) started the Cherokee Archaeological Project to study the development of Cherokee culture in west-

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ern North Carolina. Excavations at sites such as Garden Creek and Warren Wilson offered insight into late prehistoric lifeways in western North Carolina, and excavations at the Tuckasegee and Townson sites yielded clues about the nature of Cherokee settlement during the eighteenth century (Dickens 1967; Keel 1976; Ward 2002). The Coweeta Creek site was chosen because it is thought to date to that time between the end of the prehistoric period and the beginning of the historic period. Brian Egloff and Bennie Keel both directed excavations at Coweeta Creek and other sites (Keel and Egloff 1985; Keel et al. 2002), and Bennie has been very generous with his encouragement and guidance ever since I began studying what they found. Brian Egloff (1967) wrote his Master's thesis at UNC about Cherokee pottery, providing the first major description of the Qualla ceramic series, and ceramic assemblage from the Coweeta Creek site. Keith Egloff (1971) wrote his Master's thesis at UNC about methods of and problems in excavating mounds at Coweeta Creek and other sites. I appreciate their efforts and their encouragement of my analyses of what they found at Coweeta Creek. RLA staff and associates, including the late Roy Dickens, the late Trawick Ward, Steve Davis, Vin Steponaitis, and Brett Riggs, have been good stewards of the material and archives related to the Coweeta Creek excavations. Several UNC graduate students, including Patricia Samford and Tom Maher (Davis et al. 1996), participated in creating an inventory of RLA collections from Coweeta Creek and other sites in North Carolina, in compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). That NAGPRA inventory includes age and sex determinations by Patricia Lambert (2000, 2001, 2002) of the individuals found in burials at sites throughout North Carolina, and those determinations are followed here and elsewhere (Davis et al. 1996; Rodning 2001a, 2011a). I hope this book about Coweeta Creek lives up to the efforts and expertise of these people and everything they have done to make it possible, from the early days of the Cherokee Archaeological Project.

My involvement in the study of archaeology at Coweeta Creek began during my first year of graduate school, with the encouragement of Vin Steponaitis, Trawick Ward, and Steve Davis. I offer thanks to all of them for their unflagging support of my continuing interests in the archaeology of this and other sites in North Carolina. Thanks also go to Brett Riggs for generously sharing his considerable knowledge about Cherokee archaeology and history. I consider myself lucky to have had them as teachers and role models in graduate school, as well

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Of course, although this book is better for the contributions from these many people and sources, any problems or shortcomings are my responsibility.

Last but not least—and, truthfully, first and foremost—thanks to my wife, Hope Spencer, and our sons, Henry, Erik, and Leif Rodning, for all of their love, encouragement, guidance, and inspiration. Hope has been steadfast in her support from the beginning of my effort to write this book, and I could not do what I have done in archaeology without her help. Nothing can compare to coming home to my family, and this book is dedicated to them.

CENTER PLACES AND CHEROKEE TOWNS

1

The Middle Cherokee Town at Coweeta Creek

My beloved towns people I have been absent this 4 days from you and has [*sic*] been in one of the finest places that is not known to any in this world, All things comes [*sic*] naturally without any trouble. The people never dies there nor never grows old like but are always in the same as they were when they entered that country. There is all sorts of merry making there. The light never fails. In the midst of winter there is green corn. There is but all sorts that can be imagined; therefore all of you that will be councilled and ruled by me come join with me in fasting 4 days both young and old and be sure that you eat nothing whatsoever in that space; for if you do you will not be able to follow me. The 4th day at night you shall see plainly that I do not impose on you for you shall see what a vast quantity of victual shall be brought unto this temple by these people. You see this great turn pool [whirlpool] in the river where you have brought water and drank thereof this many days. You think that it is a river; but I know to the contrary. It is one of the finest towns that I ever saw and speaks Cherokee as we do. You cannot see them as I do now, and here be some of them sitting by me now at this present.

—Alexander Longe (Corkran 1969:40), 1725

Colonial trader Alexander Longe lived in Cherokee towns in the southern Appalachians for much of the period from sometime before 1710 through 1724 (Corkran 1969; Hatley 1993). Longe wrote a journal—thought to have been 74 pages long—about his life in Cherokee towns. The journal is presumed to have been lost, but the postscript to his journal, written after a visit to Charles Town, South Carolina, in 1725, has survived (Corkran 1969:3–5). As quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, Longe wrote in his postscript of a tale told by

an elder about an enchanted Cherokee town—named “Agustoghe”—that was hidden in a whirlpool in a river, where many people from an abandoned town had gone after four days of fasting in a darkened public structure, or townhouse (Corkran 1969:40–45). After the period of fasting a feast was set out for all the people in the townhouse, and those who had kept the fast were invited to the enchanted town within the whirlpool. News of this enchanted town spread to other Cherokee towns, and when leaders of those towns visited the whirlpool in the river, they saw remnants of the abandoned settlement on the ground. According to the tale Longe recorded, people nearby could hear the sounds of singing, whooping, dancing, and drumming. These events were said to have taken place “about 10 years” before English traders became a major presence in Cherokee towns. The elder relating this tale to Longe referred to the posts and other visible remnants of a townhouse and dwellings in a nearby abandoned settlement as proof that such a mythical event took place, and he also said that there were “three white men” who had visited this settlement and could verify the sounds of dancing and drumming coming from the whirlpool.

By the early 1700s, Cherokee towns had experienced the indirect effects of Spanish explorations of southeastern North America during the sixteenth century, the effects of the colonial slave trade during the 1600s, and the beginning of the English deerskin trade at the end of the seventeenth century (Figure 1.1; Harmon 1986; J. W. Martin 1994; Snyder 2007, 2010). Native peoples of the Southeast experienced dramatic changes in the aftermath of Spanish contact, and there were more changes to come. It makes some sense that Cherokee elders and storytellers of the early eighteenth century would have told tales about a better place, where traditional Cherokee culture could and did thrive.

Other interesting aspects of this story, as recorded by Longe, are the location of the mythical town in a whirlpool in a river, and the ruins of houses and an abandoned public structure (or townhouse). There are countless rivers and streams in the historic Cherokee town areas of the southern Appalachians, and there are whirlpools in many places. The tale Longe recorded may refer to a particular place, but its symbolism could be applied to many sites in the Cherokee landscape. A whirlpool, of course, forms a spiral, like the concentric scrolls seen on late prehistoric and postcontact pottery in the southern Appalachians (Hally 1986a, 1994a, 2008; Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008:7–8) and like concentric spiral motifs seen on engraved shell gorgets from the late prehistoric and protohistoric Southeast (Hally 2008:263, 397,

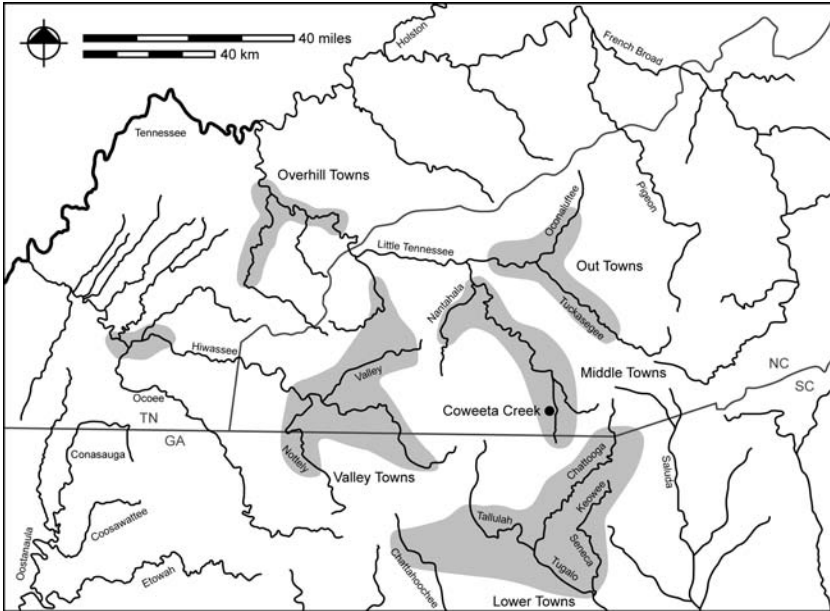


Figure 1.1. Historic Cherokee towns in the southern Appalachians (see also Fogelson 2004:337–338; Schroedl 2000:205, 2001:279; B. A. Smith 1979:48–50).

407–410; Muller 1989:21; Sullivan 2007). A whirlpool also has a center. The townspeople in the tale reached the mythical town in the whirlpool after fasting and participating in other ritual events in a townhouse. The townhouse connected the people to this center in the whirlpool; effectively, the townhouse was a tangible “center place” connected to the mythical “center place” in the whirlpool. Centered within the whirlpool was a town in which a traditional Cherokee way of life remained vibrant, at the dawn of prolonged and direct contact with European traders and trade goods. The center places in this tale were a townhouse, the ruins of an abandoned settlement where remnants of abandoned dwellings and a townhouse were still visible, a river, a whirlpool, and a space in Cherokee cultural memory within which traditional ways of life were still alive. Longe placed these events at about 10 years before direct and sustained interactions between Cherokee towns and English colonists (Corkran 1969). The South Carolina colony was founded in 1670 with the establishment of Charles Town (modern Charleston), and by 1685, an English trading post had been established at Macon, on the Ocmulgee River, in Georgia

(Mason 1983, 2005; M. T. Smith 1992; Waselkov 1994). Soon afterward, English traders from South Carolina and Virginia began pursuing trade relations with Cherokee towns (Crane 2004; Rothrock 1976). English trade goods first reached Cherokee towns in the late 1600s and early 1700s—and perhaps before then (see Shumate et al. 2005)—but the Cherokee were still “little known” to the English in 1713, during the run up to the outbreak of the Yamasee War in 1715 (Ramsey 2008:127–128, 132–134).

Many characteristics of the mythical Cherokee town recorded by Longe are manifested at the Coweeta Creek archaeological site (31MA34), located in the upper Little Tennessee Valley, in southwestern North Carolina (Figure 1.2; Rodning 2009a, 2010a). Longe’s tale does not necessarily refer to this locality—it could refer to any or many of the former settlements in the Lower Cherokee town areas of northeastern Georgia and northwestern South Carolina, some of which had been abandoned as early as the late 1600s and early 1700s—but it nevertheless helps us to understand the archaeology of the Coweeta Creek site, and, specifically, understand the significance of center places in the Cherokee cultural landscape of the southern Appalachians in the period extending from just before to just after European contact in eastern North America.

Archaeologists and historians identify five major Cherokee town areas—the Lower, Middle, Out, Valley, and Overhill settlements—and Coweeta Creek is located within the province of the Middle Cherokee settlements (Figure 1.3; Dickens 1979; Goodwin 1977; B. A. Smith 1979). Different dialects of the Cherokee language—an Iroquoian language—were spoken in different town areas (Fogelson 2004:337–338; D. H. King 1979:ix; Lounsbury 1961:11). Although there were kin relationships within matrilineal clans and broader cultural ties between Cherokee towns in these different areas, the towns were independent of each other, and during the eighteenth century, they often pursued divergent interests and agendas (Boulware 2011; Fogelson 2004:339). The historically known Middle Cherokee towns of Nequassee (31MA2), Joree (31MA77), and Cowee (31MA5) are associated with known archaeological sites respectively located 11, 14, and 22 kilometers north of (downstream from) the Coweeta Creek site, and there are several small sites in the near vicinity (Baker 1982). Some maps from the eighteenth century place a village or a town known as Newuteah in the vicinity of the Coweeta Creek site (Ayers 1987; Rogers 2009; B. A. Smith 1979). The eighteenth-century town of Echoee is probably associated with one or some of the known archaeological sites located north of the confluence of

MIDDLE CHEROKEE TOWN AT COWEETA CREEK

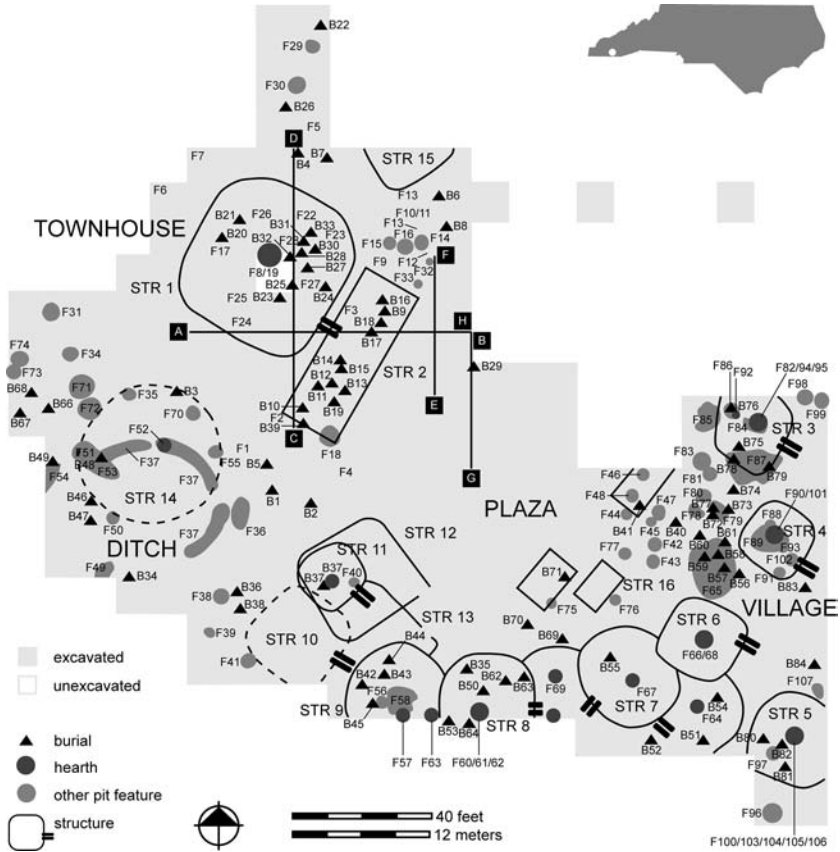


Figure 1.2. Schematic map of the Coweeta Creek site (see also Riggs 2008:5; Rodning 2001a:79, 2002a:12, 2007:470, 2009a:629, 2009b:3, 2010a:61, 2010b:3; Ward and Davis 1999:18; see Figure 3.2 for mound profiles).

Skeenah Creek and the Little Tennessee River, some 4 to 5 kilometers north of (downstream from) the Coweeta Creek site. The eighteenth-century town of Tessentee may have been located nearby, perhaps north of Echoee, or 2 kilometers south of (upstream from) the Coweeta Creek site near the mouth of Tessentee Creek. Neither Echoee nor Tessentee is known to have been directly related to the town that was situated at the Coweeta Creek site during the 1600s and early 1700s. In 1756, Raymond Demere referred to Echoee as the “first” Middle Cherokee town on the rugged and treacherous trail past the Lower Cherokee town of Keowee, and Cherokee warriors launched fierce at-

tacks near Echoe on expeditions led by Archibald Montgomery in 1760 and by James Grant in 1761 (Boulware 2011:119–120). In 1761, Grant led an expedition that burned some 1500 acres of gardens and fields and leveled 16 settlements in the Middle and Out town areas, including Echoe and neighboring settlements (Boulware 2011:125). It is possible that the residents of the seventeenth-century Cherokee settlement at the Coweeta Creek site were ancestral to the eighteenth-century Middle Cherokee town of Echoe, but such ancestral connections are presently not as clear-cut as in the cases of Joree, Cowee, Nequassee, Whatoga, Stecoe, and other Cherokee towns (Steere 2011).

During the eighteenth century, Cherokee towns were groups of households who shared a common identity and a set of ritual practices and civic responsibilities. The identity of a local group of households as a town was manifested architecturally in the form of a public structure known as a townhouse (Duncan and Riggs 2003:143–147; Schroedl 1978, 2000:204, 2001:288, 2009). Only those settlements with townhouses were known as towns and had formal town names (Gearing 1958, 1962; B. A. Smith 1979:47). Townhouses were not necessarily placed at the geographic centers of settlements, but they were center places, socially and symbolically. They were focal points of Cherokee public life and town identity, and townhouses were still present in the Cherokee landscape as late as the early nineteenth century.

Ethnohistoric sources relevant to the study of Cherokee towns in the southern Appalachians include written accounts by colonial traders, soldiers, missionaries, and other visitors from the 1700s and 1800s (Anderson et al. 2010a, 2010b; Corkran 1969; D. H. King 2007); colonial maps marking the locations and names of Cherokee towns, and in some cases, the multiple locations of Cherokee towns and town names (Goodwin 1977; B. A. Smith 1979); and Cherokee oral traditions that were shared with eighteenth-century traders such as Alexander Longe (Corkran 1969) and nineteenth-century ethnologists such as James Mooney (Jackson et al. 2004:34; D. H. King 1982, 2009; Urban and Jackson 2004b:719). These sources have been highly valuable in the archaeological study of Cherokee settlements in eastern Tennessee, northern Georgia, and the western Carolinas, and they are applicable to the study of the Coweeta Creek site, although Coweeta Creek largely predates the period during which these accounts were written, maps made, and myths and legends recorded. There are no known written accounts that specifically describe the Coweeta Creek site, as there are for Cowee, Joree, Nequassee, Whatoga, and several

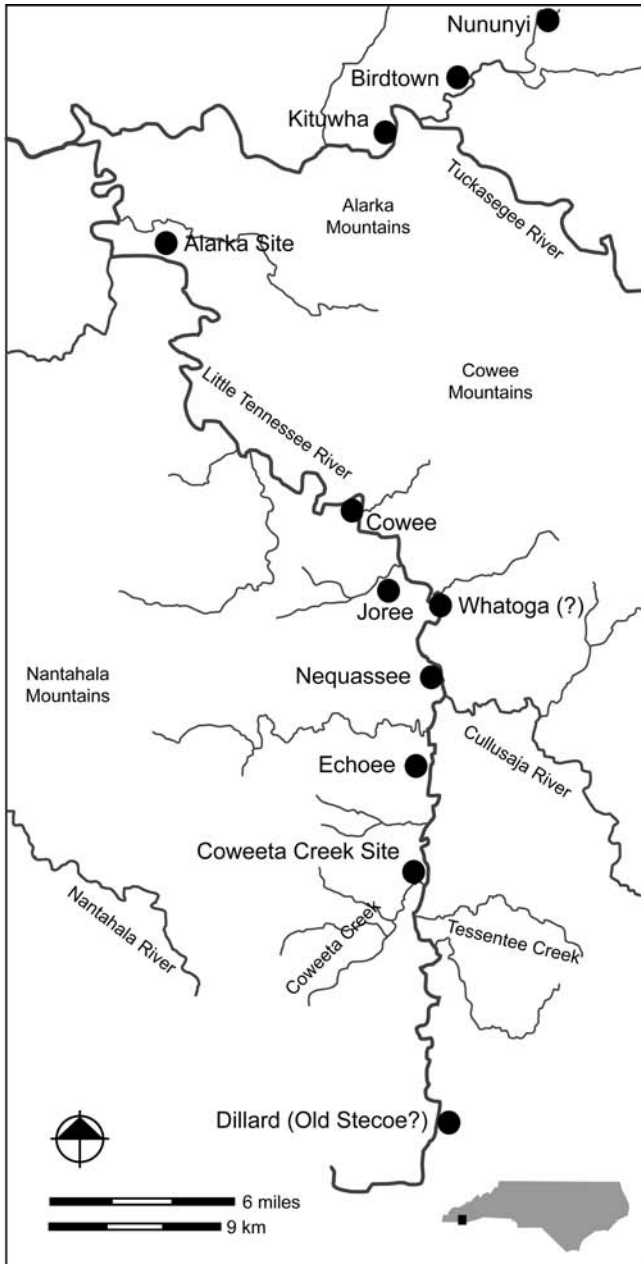


Figure 1.3. Middle Cherokee settlements in the upper Little Tennessee Valley (see also B. J. Egloff 1967:4).

Overhill Cherokee settlements in eastern Tennessee (Chapman 1985, 2009; Rogers 2009; Schroedl 1986b, 2009), but there are sources that describe the general characteristics of the landscape in the Lower Cherokee and Middle Cherokee settlements. The path William Bartram took in 1775 probably led him directly past the Coweeta Creek site (Waselkov and Braund 1995), and expeditions against Cherokee settlements in 1760 and 1761 likewise passed close by Coweeta Creek en route to the nearby site of Echoee, where a major battle took place in 1761 (Evans and King 1977). As noted in later chapters of this book, aspects of Cherokee oral tradition recorded by Longe and Mooney have close archaeological parallels at the Coweeta Creek site.

Archaeologists affiliated with the Research Laboratories of Anthropology (RLA, now known as the Research Laboratories of Archaeology) at the University of North Carolina (UNC) excavated Coweeta Creek as part of the RLA's Cherokee Archaeological Project during the 1960s and early 1970s (Dickens 1976, 1978; Keel 1976, 2002; Ward and Davis 1999:17–18, 138–139, 183–190). Excavations by the Cherokee Archaeological Project at the late prehistoric Warren Wilson and Garden Creek sites had proven successful, as had excavations of eighteenth-century Cherokee structures at the Tuckasegee and Townson sites. The interests of Cherokee Archaeological Project members shifted to the protohistoric period, at and after the historical moment of early European contact in the Southeast, between the period of sixteenth-century Spanish explorations and the development of English and French trade networks in the late 1600s and early 1700s. The Cowee and Joree sites were candidates for RLA excavations, but the RLA did not have access to them, and surface collections at Coweeta Creek had generated a substantial number of artifacts, including aboriginal potsherds and glass beads suggesting a date range from the 1500s through the 1700s. RLA excavations at Coweeta Creek began in 1965 and continued through 1971, spanning seven long field seasons, during which a large contiguous area was uncovered, revealing remnants of a townhouse, several domestic houses, and a town plaza. Other papers have discussed the dates of this site and its settlement history (Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008), its sequence of public structures (Rodning 2009a, 2011b), the characteristics and rebuilding patterns of domestic structures (Rodning 2007, 2009b), and mortuary practices (Rodning 2001a, 2011a). This book summarizes the main points that these other papers consider in greater detail and presents some new interpretations of old data, as well as some new data that I have compiled in recent

years. For example, this book presents some new radiocarbon dates, some new ceramic data, and some new ideas about that ceramic data, all of which are relevant to understanding the history of settlement at Coweeta Creek and its abandonment in the early eighteenth century. I am more convinced now than I have been in years past that Coweeta Creek was abandoned for much of the sixteenth century and resettled during the early-to-mid seventeenth century. Whereas I used to think there were six stages of the townhouse at Coweeta Creek, I now think there may have been seven—and there were shifts in the placement and alignment of the entryway that were significant moments in the history of the town. Southwest of the Coweeta Creek townhouse, somewhat hidden within the palimpsest of pits and postholes visible on the site map, is a remnant of a ditch that was probably part of an enclosure that served as a significant landmark and a center place long before the townhouse, and the formal town plan, were put in place.

Archaeology at the Coweeta Creek Site

Archaeological investigations of the Coweeta Creek site by UNC uncovered archaeological features in an area of contiguous excavation squares spanning 27,300 square feet, roughly 0.63 acres, or 0.25 hectares (Keel et al. 2002). These excavations unearthed remnants of at least six—and, perhaps, seven—townhouses, which were built and rebuilt in place, creating a “townhouse mound.” Individual stages of the townhouse probably lasted only between roughly 15 and 25 years, but the cycle of building and rebuilding them in place gave this public structure more enduring permanence. Surrounding the townhouse and adjacent plaza were domestic structures and domestic activity areas. Within these areas were dozens of hearths, pit features, and burials, and there was a semicircular ditch or trench feature near the townhouse mound (Figure 1.2). The townhouse and the semicircular ditch nearby were both placed close to the highest point at the site, which is situated in alluvial bottomlands along the upper Little Tennessee River (Figure 1.4). This placement of the townhouse may not be coincidental, and it may be that this high spot—slightly higher than the surrounding ground surface at the site—was purposefully chosen as the location for the architectural center of the Cherokee community here.

Surface surveys at Coweeta Creek have identified a surface scatter of artifacts in an area of some three acres, or 1.21 hectares, including high concentra-

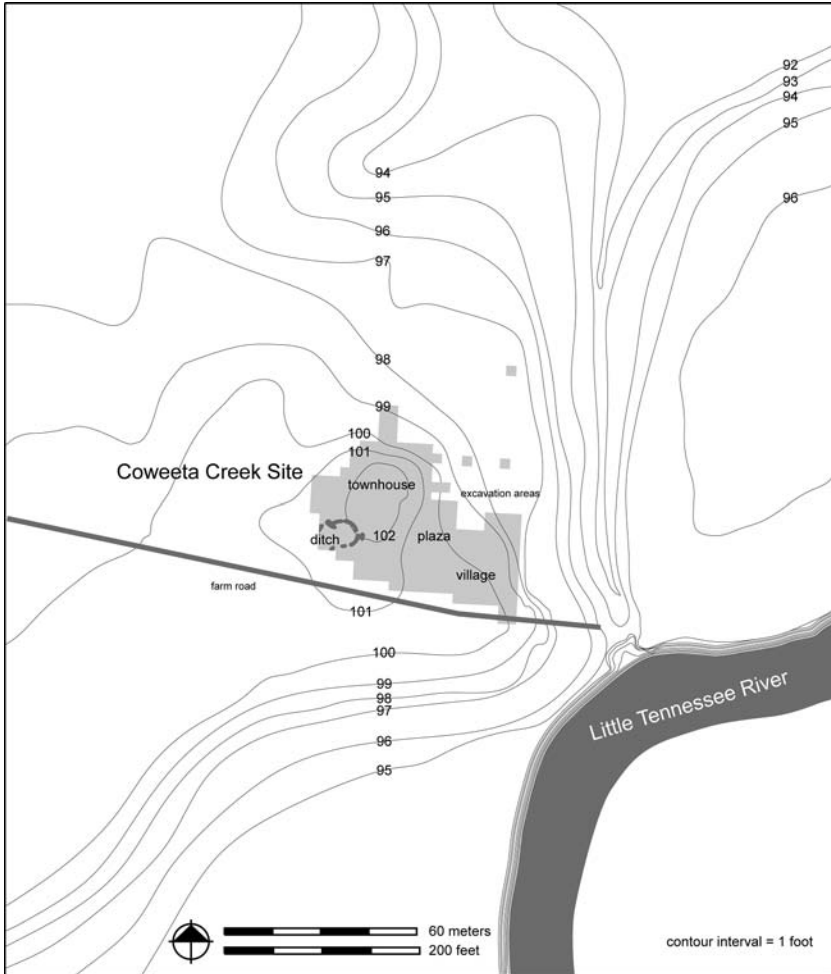


Figure 1.4. Topographic map of the Coweeta Creek site (redrawn from K. T. Egloff 1971:44).

tions of artifacts around the spot within the site that was slightly higher than the surrounding alluvial bottomlands (Figure 1.4). As excavations began, it became apparent that a large structure—the townhouse—was present near the high spot seen on the topographic map of the site and near the western edge of the surface scatter of artifacts (K. T. Egloff 1971:44). As it turns out, the burned remnants of at least six stages of a townhouse were present here, forming a low mound, but a mound that was not recognized as such until excavations un-

earthed the sequence of floors and burned architectural rubble between floors (Dickens 1978:124).

Excavations at Coweeta Creek concentrated first on the townhouse, and then shifted to other areas of the site, including the plaza and areas around the plaza where domestic structures and activity areas were present (Figure 1.2). Plow-zone deposits were removed in excavation squares measuring 10 by 10 feet, down to the top of the subsoil, and all dirt was sifted through half-inch mesh hardware cloth. Postholes, burials, and other pit features visible at the top of the subsoil were excavated with hand tools, and the contents of burials (Table 1.1) and features (Table 1.2) were processed by waterscreening and flotation, which were relatively new techniques at the time.

The sequence of townhouses at the site is visible as discrete concentrations of postholes near the northern end of the excavation area (Rodning 2002a:13–16, 2009a:641–642, 2010a:66–67). The main townhouse structure—or “winter townhouse” (following Riggs 2008:10–11; Schroedl 1986b:263–266, 2000:204; Shumate et al. 2005:5.22–5.45)—is Structure 1. Early stages of Structure 1 were square with rounded corners, roughly 48 feet in diameter, and the last stage of Structure 1 was slightly larger, at 52 feet in diameter (Table 1.3). Outside the entryway to Structure 1 are remnants of Structure 2, the rectangular ramada—or “summer townhouse” (following Riggs 2008:19–20; Schroedl 1986b:263–266, 2000:204)—built between Structure 1 and the town plaza. This ramada was built and rebuilt with each stage of the main townhouse itself (Rodning 2009a:639). Along this edge of the townhouse mound were placed deposits of boulders and white clay, perhaps forming a ramp near the edge of the townhouse (Rodning 2009a:649). At least parts of the plaza seem to have been covered with clay and white sand.

Several domestic structures and pit features are present in areas surrounding the townhouse and plaza (Rodning 2009b:1–8). Domestic structures are visible on site maps as discrete concentrations of postholes, with central hearths, paired entrance trenches, and deep postholes representing roof support posts around the hearths themselves. These houses closely resemble domestic structures at other late prehistoric sites in western North Carolina and surrounding areas (Dickens 1976, 1978; Hally 2002, 2008; Moore 2002a, 2002b). They generally correspond to historic Cherokee domestic structures known as winter houses (Faulkner 1978; Hally 2008; Schroedl 2000), although historic Cherokee winter houses were often circular rather than square. In some cases, sections of floors

Table 1.1. Burials at the Coweeta Creek site.

Burial¹	Sex²	Age²	Age Group³	Grave Form¹	Nonperishable Grave Goods¹
1	indeterminate	> 40 years	elder	simple pit	
2	indeterminate	> 30 years	mature adult	simple pit	
3	unknown	6.2 + 2 years	child	simple pit	
4	male	> 35 years	elder	simple pit	
5	unknown	8.5 + 2 years	adolescent	shaft and chamber	
6	male	42 + 5 years	elder	shaft and chamber	1 stone celt, 2 knobbed shell ear pins
7	female	> 30 years	mature adult	simple pit	
8	male	30 + 5 years	mature adult	simple pit	
9	male	37 + 6 years	elder	simple pit	burial wrap, 1 basket, 7 chipped-stone arrowheads, 91 columella beads, 11 olivella beads, 14 drilled pearls, 4 knobbed shell ear pins, 1 stone disc, ochre, mica
10	unknown	5 years + 16 months	child	simple pit	
11	male	50 + 10 years	elder	simple pit	
12	male	30 + 5 years	mature adult	simple pit	32 shell beads
13	indeterminate	19 + 3 years	young adult	simple pit	1 animal mandible, possible rattle pebbles
14	male	37 + 5 years	elder	simple pit	

15	male	37 + 5 years	elder	shaft and chamber	6 shell beads
16	unknown	5 years + 16 months	child	simple pit	1 shell mask gorget, 8 columella beads
17	male	44 + 5 years	elder	shaft and chamber	1 circular engraved shell gorget, 1 stone pipe, 2 knobbed shell ear pins
18	male	40 + 10 years	elder	simple pit	1 bone pin
19	unknown	1 year + 4 months	child	simple pit	3 shell pendants, 4 columella beads, 5 olivella beads
20	indeterminate	> 30 years	mature adult	simple pit	burial wrap
21a ⁴	indeterminate	> 18 years	young adult	simple pit	burial wrap; 1 shell bead
21b ⁴	indeterminate	> 40 years	elder		
21c ⁴	unknown	1 year + 4 months	child		
22	unknown	2 years + 7 months	child	simple pit	burial wrap
23	male?	25 + 5 years	mature adult	simple pit	burial wrap, 1 chipped-stone arrowhead, 1 shell mask gorget, 2 columella beads, ochre, mica
24	female	32 + 5 years	mature adult	shaft and chamber	burial wrap
25	male	27 + 6 years	mature adult	simple pit	
26	male?	43 + 9 years	elder	simple pit	
27	unknown	4.5 years + 14 months	child	simple pit	1 shell mask gorget, 2 knobbed shell ear pins
28	male?	30 + 10 years	mature adult	simple pit	1 clay pot, 14 drilled pearls

Continued on the next page

	Burial¹	Sex²	Age²	Age Group³	Grave Form¹	Nonperishable Grave Goods¹
29	indeterminate		> 30 years	mature adult	shaft and chamber	
30	male		23 + 3 years	mature adult	shaft and chamber	1 shell mask gorget
31	unknown		3 + 2 months	child	simple pit	4 shell pendants, 12 columella beads
32	male		25 + 4 years	mature adult	simple pit	2 knobbed shell ear pins
33	male		35 + 5 years	elder	simple pit	burial wrap, 2 shell beads
34	unknown		3 + 1 years	child	shaft and chamber	
35	male		> 40 years	elder	simple pit	
36	female		39 + 5 years	elder	simple pit	
37	female		> 30 years	mature adult	shaft and central chamber	animal bone and horn fragments
37a ⁴	male		35 + 5 years	elder		
38	unknown		7 + 2 years	child	simple pit	1 clay pot, 1 clay pipe
39	unknown		13 + 2.5 years	adolescent	shaft and chamber	
40	indeterminate		> 18 years	young adult	simple pit	
41	female		23 + 3 years	young adult	simple pit	1 turtle shell rattle, 24 shell bead fragments
42	female		40 + 5 years	elder	shaft and chamber	1 ground stone celt, 75 columella shell beads
43	female		17 + 3 years	young adult	simple pit	2 turtle shell rattles
44	male		30 + 5 years	mature adult	simple pit	25 columella shell beads
45	female		20 + 3 years	young adult	simple pit	1 shell hair pin
46	indeterminate		16 + 3 years	young adult	simple pit	

47	indeterminate	19 + 3 years	young adult	simple pit
48	indeterminate	> 30 years	mature adult	simple pit
49	unknown	3 + 1 years	child	simple pit
50	male	41 + 5 years	elder	simple pit
51	unknown	10 + 2.5 years	adolescent	simple pit
52	indeterminate	32 + 7 years	mature adult	simple pit
53	male	30 + 5 years	mature adult	simple pit
54	female	18 + 3 years	young adult	simple pit
55	male	30 + 10 years	mature adult	simple pit
56	unknown	8 + 2 years	adolescent	simple pit
57	female	27 + 5 years	mature adult	simple pit
58	male	21 + 3 years	young adult	simple pit
59	indeterminate	16.5 + 2 years	young adult	simple pit
60	female?	> 30 years	mature adult	simple pit
61a ⁴	indeterminate	> 21 years	young adult	simple pit
61b ⁴	unknown	9 + 3 months	child	simple pit
62	indeterminate	16 + 3 years	young adult	1 engraved shell mask gorget
63	female?	> 30 years	mature adult	1 clay pipe
64	female?	14 + 3 years	adolescent	
66	indeterminate	> 21 years	young adult	
67	indeterminate	17 + 3 years	young adult	1 shell bead
68	unknown	3 + 1 years	child	
69	unknown	4 + 1 years	child	

Continued on the next page

Burial¹	Sex²	Age²	Age Group³	Grave Form¹	Nonperishable Grave Goods¹
70	unknown	1-5 years + 6 months	child	simple pit	
71	unknown	7 + 2 years	child	simple pit	
72	female?	> 30 years	young adult	simple pit	
73	male	> 30 years	young adult	simple pit	
74	male	> 30 years	young adult	simple pit	
75a ⁴	male	35 + 5 years	mature adult	simple pit	schistose rocks on bottom of burial pit
75b ⁴	male	> 18 years	young adult		
76	indeterminate	25 + 5 years	mature adult	simple pit	
77	unknown	2.5 years + 8 months	child	simple pit	
78	male	> 30 years	mature adult	simple pit	
79	unknown	neonate	child	simple pit	
80	unknown	4.5 + 1 years	child	shaft and chamber	2 stone gaming discs
81	female	38 + 5 years	elder	simple pit	
82	unknown	3 + 1 years	child	simple pit	
83	unknown	7.5 + 2 years	adolescent	shaft and chamber	
84	unknown	neonate	child	simple pit	4 opaque turquoise glass beads

¹ Burial data from the Coweeta Creek site are compiled and illustrated by Davis et al. (1996). Burials are numbered 1 through 84, but there is no Burial 65.

² Age and sex determinations by Patricia Lambert (Davis et al. 1996; Lambert 2000, 2001, 2002). Sex identifications were not made for subadults.

³ Elder (> 35 years), mature adult (26–35 years), young adult (15–26 years), adolescent (8–15 years), child (< 8 years) (Rodning 2001a, 2011a).

⁴ Laboratory analyses of human remains from burials 21, 37, 61, and 75 identified bones from multiple individuals.

Table 1.2. Features at the Coweeta Creek site.

Feature Type	Feature Numbers
pits/basins	14, 15, 16, 18, 32, 33, 34, 35, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 55, 65, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 83, 88, 91, 93, 96, 98, 99, 100
hearths	8, 19, 52, 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 82, 90, 92, 94, 95, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106, hearth on top of Burial 18, hearth on top of Burial 37, hearth at 40R173?
firepits	29, 30, 31, 38
ditches/trenches	36, 37, 49, 53, 54
pots	22, 23, 27, 59
thatch	17, 20, 28
clay	10
rocks	4, 24, 25, 26
daub	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11
roof fall	58, 84, 89
wall fall	97
fill	79, 85, 86, 87
large postholes	56, 107
modern disturbances	3, 12

were preserved, but not often, and burials were often found inside the structures, or nearby. Many domestic structures had been rebuilt, in some cases in several stages (Table 1.4). Structures 7 and 9 predate the townhouse, and they may date to as early as the fifteenth century (Rodning 2008, 2009b). Structures 11, 12, and 13 probably predate the townhouse (Rodning 2009b). Structures 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, and 15 are probably contemporaneous with early stages of the townhouse (Rodning 2007, 2009a). Structure 14 is contemporaneous with late stages of the townhouse, or, perhaps, postdates the townhouse sequence entirely (Rodning 2009b). Visible as a concentration of postholes representing an edge and a corner of a building, Structure 15 may be contemporaneous with the townhouse—it may represent the dwelling of townhouse fire keepers and other civic leaders analogous to those present in Cherokee towns during the

Table 1.3. Public structures at the Coweeta Creek site.

	Shape	Hearth	Doorway	Length	Width	Area
Structure 1	square					
1F (latest)		Feature 8	southeast	15.85 m	15.85 m	251.22 m ²
1E		Feature 8	southeast	15.85 m	15.85 m	251.22 m ²
1D		Feature 19	southeast	14.63 m	14.63 m	214.04 m ²
1C		Feature 19	southeast	14.63 m	14.63 m	214.04 m ²
1B		Feature 19	southeast	14.63 m	14.63 m	214.04 m ²
1A (earliest)		Feature 19	southeast	14.63 m	14.63 m	214.04 m ²
Structure 2	rectangular			12.19 m	4.57 m	55.71 m ²

eighteenth century (Gearing 1962:23; Mooney 1900a:396; Rodning 2009b:17). Several linear and rectilinear posthole patterns are visible in the area of the site along the southwestern edge of the plaza, Structure 16 among them; these posthole patterns may represent ramadas built along the edge of the plaza directly across from the townhouse ramada (Rodning 2009b:17). Features in this part of the site include four circular pits topped with layers of yellow clay, the purposes of which are presently unknown, although given their placement along the southeastern edge of the plaza, it is possible that these pits were related to activities and events that took place on the plaza.

Excavations at Coweeta Creek unearthed 83 burials and the remains of 88 individuals (Table 1.1; Rodning 2001a, 2011a; Ward and Davis 1999:183–190). The forms of these graves include shaft-and-chamber burials, and rectangular to oval simple pit burials comparable to those seen at other Mississippian and protohistoric sites in the greater southern Appalachians (Dickens 1976; Hally 2004, 2008; Rodning 2011a:164). Burials with the greatest numbers and diversity of grave goods are those found in and around the townhouse (Rodning 2011a:166). Whether here or in other areas of the site, most of the burials with grave goods are associated with structures, as with the concentration of burials with grave goods in one area of the late prehistoric village at the Warren Wilson site in western North Carolina (Moore 2002b; Rodning and Moore 2010). Grave goods include chipped-stone arrowheads, clay and stone pipes,

Table 1.4. Domestic structures at the Coweeta Creek site.

Structure	Shape	Hearth	Entryway	Length	Width	Diameter	Area
3C	square	Feature 82	southeast	6.40 m	6.40 m	—	40.96 m ²
3B	square	Feature 95	—	—	—	—	—
3A	square	Feature 92/94	—	—	—	—	—
4B	square	Feature 90	southeast	5.49 m	5.49 m	—	30.14 m ²
4A	square	Feature 101	—	—	—	—	—
5E	square	Feature 100	southeast?	7.01 m	7.01 m	—	49.14 m ²
5D	square	Feature 103	—	—	—	—	—
5C	square	Feature 104	—	—	—	—	—
5B	square	Feature 105	—	—	—	—	—
5A	square	Feature 106	—	—	—	—	—
6B	square	Feature 66	southeast	6.10 m	6.10 m	—	37.21 m ²
6A	square	Feature 68	—	—	—	—	—
7D	rounded	Feature 67	southeast/ southwest?	—	—	8.84 m	61.34 m ²
7C	rounded	Feature 64	—	—	—	—	—
7B	rounded	Feature 69	—	—	—	—	—
7A	rounded	(40R173)	—	—	—	—	—
8C	square	Feature 61	east	7.01 m	6.71 m	—	47.04 m ²

Continued on the next page

Structure	Shape	Hearth	Entryway	Length	Width	Diameter	Area
8B	square	Feature 60	—	—	—	—	—
8A	square	Feature 62	—	—	—	—	—
9B	rounded	Feature 57	?	—	—	9.75 m	74.62 m ²
9A	rounded	Feature 63	—	—	—	—	—
10	?	?	southeast	—	—	—	—
11	rectangular	Burial 37	southeast	6.40 m	5.79 m	—	37.06 m ²
12	?	?	southeast	9.14 m	9.14 m	—	83.54 m ²
13	?	?	?	—	—	—	—
14	?	?	?	—	—	—	—
15	square	?	?	—	—	—	—
16	rectangular		northwest?	4.57 m	2.44 m	—	11.15 m ²

one circular engraved shell gorget and several pear-shaped shell mask gorgets (compare with Hally 2007; M. T. Smith 1987, 1989b; Smith and Smith 1989), shell beads, knobbed shell pins, clay pots, ground stone celts, and one burial with four turquoise glass beads.

During investigations at Coweeta Creek several dozen features were identified and excavated (Table 1.2; Rodning 2008; Ward and Davis 1999:183–190). These features include clay hearths, cylindrical pits, pits filled with fire-cracked rock, deposits of white clay around the edges of the townhouse, and preserved sections of structure floors. Feature designations were also sometimes given to concentrations of cross-mending sherds from broken pots found in situ on the floors of the townhouse and domestic structures.

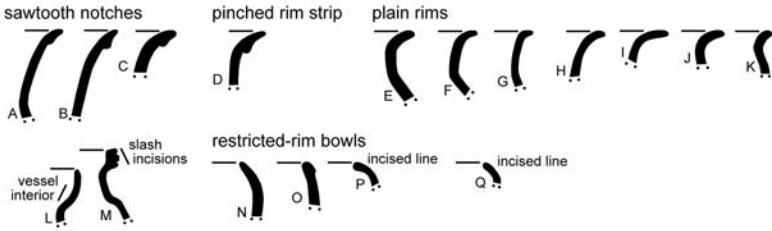
One of the most enigmatic features at Coweeta Creek is the discontinuous, semicircular ditch or trench in the area southwest of the townhouse, near the southwestern corner of the plaza (Figure 1.2). This feature (Feature 37) is located close to the highest point at the site, as seen on the topographic map made at the beginning of excavations in 1965 (Figure 1.4). While structures, burials, pits, and postholes reflect considerable activity and a great deal of building and rebuilding along the southern and eastern edges of the plaza, there is less evidence of architecture and activity areas in the vicinity of Feature 37, with the exception of Structure 14, which probably dates to the very late end of settlement history at the site, in the early eighteenth century (Rodning 2009b:16–17). This semicircular ditch is probably the remnant of a low mound, ring ditch, or embankment that enclosed a space set aside for periodic social gatherings or ritual events, during the period of settlement at the site before the townhouse and plaza were built (Rodning 2009b:15–16). This enclosed space may have marked a center place for the surrounding community in the period before the town was formally founded and its townhouse first built during the seventeenth century (compare with Benyshek 2010; Boudreaux 2007a:46–49).

Of course, surveys and excavations at Coweeta Creek generated vast collections of artifacts and ecofacts, most of which remain unanalyzed or under-analyzed (Keel et al. 2002). Most of the pottery from the site is attributable to the Qualla series and the Qualla phase, which spans the period from late pre-history through the eighteenth century (Purrington 1983; Rodning 2008). This regional variant of the broader Lamar ceramic tradition (Caldwell 1955; Hally 1994a; Sears 1955; Wauchope 1948, 1950, 1966; Williams and Thompson 1999) is characterized by globular jars, carinated vessels or cazuelas, and restricted-rim

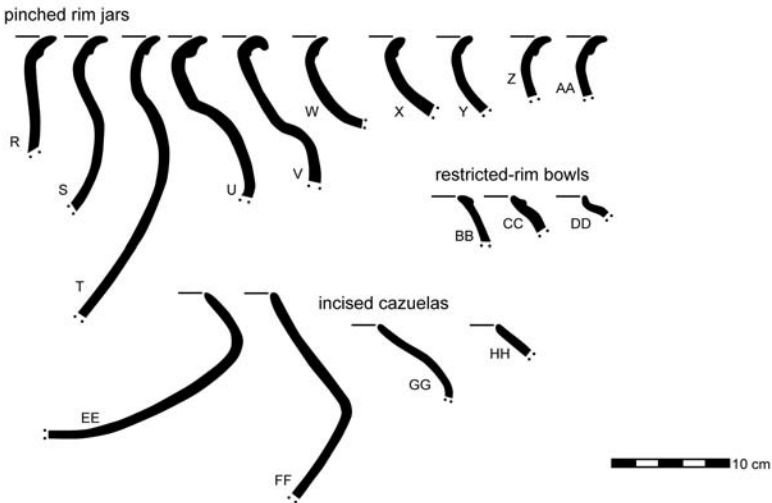
bowls (Figure 1.5); grit temper; burnished or polished interior surfaces; and exterior surface treatments such as complicated stamping, linear stamping, check stamping, corncob impressing, and others. Variation in jar-rim forms, forms of pinching and notching on rim strips, surface treatments, and geometric incised motifs near the rims of carinated bowls and bottles (Figure 1.6) in ceramic assemblages from independently dated contexts at the Coweeta Creek site all demonstrate temporal distinctions between Early Qualla (A.D. 1300–1500), Middle Qualla (A.D. 1500–1700), and Late Qualla (eighteenth century) pottery (B. J. Egloff 1967; Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008). Other artifacts from the site include ground stone tools, chipped-stone tools and debitage, clay and stone gaming discs, clay and stone pipes, at least one fragment of a redstone (and, probably, catlinite) calumet pipe, shell beads, shell pins, one circular shell gorget with an engraved rattlesnake motif (Rodning 2011a:163), and engraved shell masks (Figure 1.7). European goods from the site include glass beads; kaolin pipe fragments; several wrought iron nails; iron scissors, iron axes; brass or copper buttons, cones, wire, and scrap; lead shot; and chipped-stone gunflints and gunspalls (Rodning 2010b; see also Marcoux 2010a, 2012a, 2012b). Although animal bones and plant remains found at the site reflect traditional Cherokee foods and foodways at Coweeta Creek—maize, beans, squash, deer, and turkey, for example—peach pits have been found at the site, as well (VanDerwarker and Detwiler 2000, 2002). Spanish colonists introduced peaches to the Southeast during the sixteenth century, and peaches spread quite widely and very rapidly (Gremillion 2002; Hammett 1992, 1997; Waselkov 1997). It was easy for native groups in the Southeast to add peaches to traditional practices of farming and gardening, and peach trees were relatively common in Cherokee town areas by the eighteenth century, and perhaps as early as the mid-seventeenth century (Duncan and Riggs 2003:15; Shumate et al. 2005; Waselkov and Braund 1995:76).

Many samples of charcoal, and charred fragments of nuts and maize, were collected during excavations at Coweeta Creek from 1965 through 1971, and 16 of those samples have been radiocarbon dated during the past 10 years (Table 1.5). Several dates cluster in the late prehistoric period, especially in the 1400s, and several dates cluster in the 1600s (Figure 1.8; Rodning 2008, 2009a, 2009b). These radiocarbon dates, temporally diagnostic characteristics of assemblages of Qualla pottery from different contexts at the site, and temporally diagnostic European trade goods such as glass beads and kaolin pipe stems all support

Late Qualla



Middle Qualla



Early Qualla

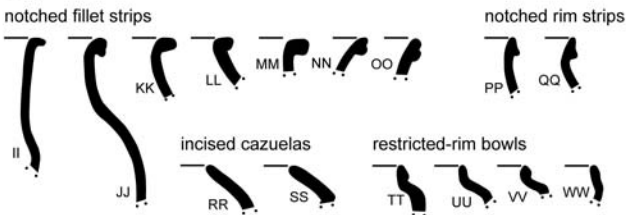


Figure 1.5. Rim modes in Late Qualla (A–Q), Middle Qualla (R–HH), and Early Qualla (II–WW) pottery from the Coweeta Creek site. Reproduced with permission from *North Carolina Archaeology* 57, © North Carolina Archaeological Society (Rodning 2008:6, 30–35).

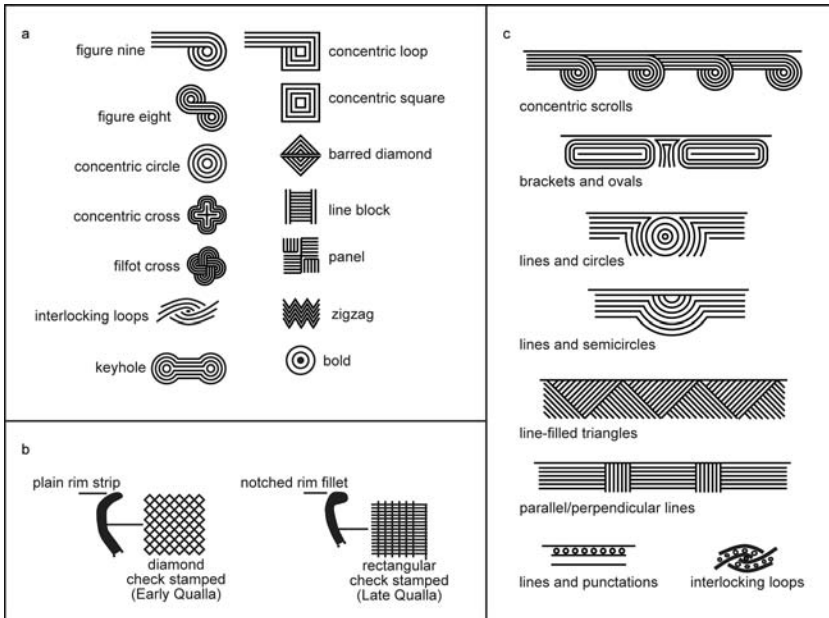


Figure 1.6. Surface treatments and motifs on Qualla pottery from the Coweeta Creek site: (a) complicated stamping; (b) check stamping; (c) incised motifs on carinated vessels. Reproduced with permission from *North Carolina Archaeology* 57, © North Carolina Archaeological Society (Rodning 2008:7–8, 31).

the following outline of settlement history at the Coweeta Creek site (Figure 1.9; Rodning 2007:471, 2009a:637, 2010b). During the fifteenth century, and perhaps before then, a small village was present at the site. During the seventeenth century, a formal town plan was put in place, with a townhouse, town plaza, and domestic structures placed around the plaza, all of which fit within an overarching alignment and orientation (Figure 1.2; Rodning 2007). During the late 1600s, most if not all of the domestic structures were abandoned, although the townhouse was kept in place, and, presumably, the community plan changed from a relatively compact arrangement of houses to a more spatially dispersed pattern, with greater distance between houses and between those houses and the townhouse. During the early 1700s, the townhouse was abandoned, and by the late eighteenth century, most of the upper Little Tennessee Valley south of the town of Echoe was largely abandoned (Figure 1.4; B. A. Smith 1979).

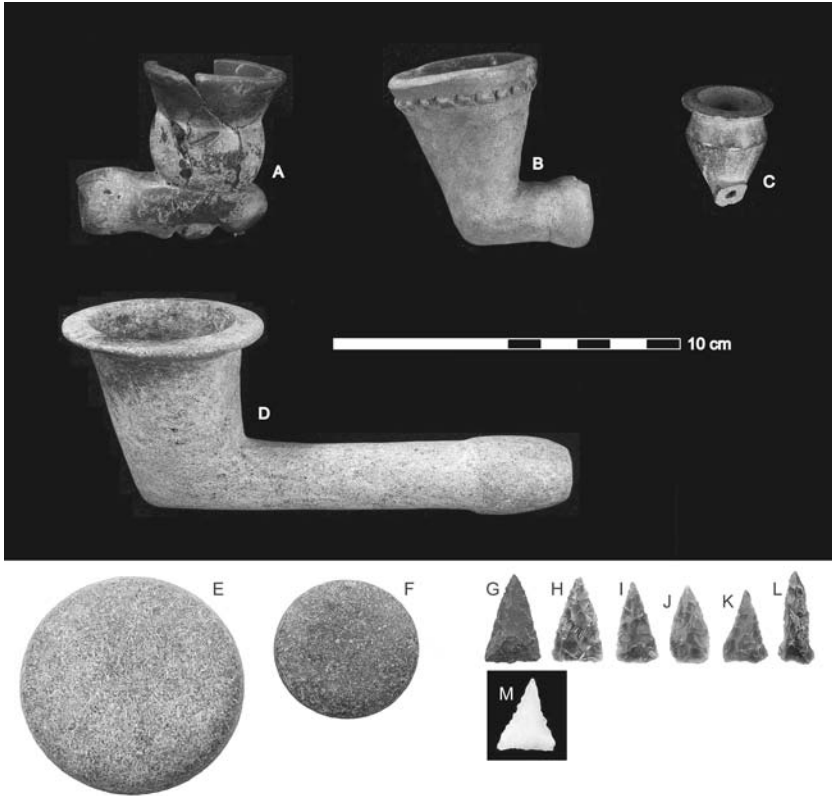


Figure 1.7. Clay smoking pipes (A–B), stone smoking pipes (C–D), stone discoidals (E–F), and chipped-stone projectile points (G–M) from the Coweeta Creek site. Photographs by R. P. Stephen Davis Jr., courtesy of the Research Laboratories of Archaeology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Center Places in the Cherokee Landscape

The principal argument of this book is that center places are manifested in many forms, and at many scales, at the Coweeta Creek site and in the broader Cherokee cultural landscape. They are visible in the form of earthen mounds, public structures, domestic structures, the arrangements of roof support posts inside public and domestic structures, and the central hearths in houses and townhouses, for example. The presence of these center places in the landscape anchored Cherokee people to places. Townhouses offered Cherokee towns an

Table 1.5. Radiocarbon dates from the Coweeta Creek site.

Context	Measured Radiocarbon Age		Intercept	13C/12C	Conventional Radiocarbon Age		One-Sigma Range	Two-Sigma Range	Sample
	Age	Age			Age	Age			
Feature 72	220 + 60 B.P.	200 + 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1670	-25.9		1650-1680	1530-1560	Beta-167072	
						1730-1810	1630-1950		
						1930-1950			
Structure 1F	220 + 50 B.P.	210 + 50 B.P.	cal A.D. 1660	-25.9		1650-1680	1530-1550	Beta-167067	
						1740-1800	1630-1700		
						1930-1950	1720-1820		
Structure 1C	230 + 60 B.P.	210 + 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1660	-26.2		1650-1680	1520-1580	Beta-167068	
						1740-1810	1630-1890		
						1930-1950	1910-1950		
Structure 7D	280 + 60 B.P.	250 + 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1650	-26.8		1530-1550	1490-1690	Beta-175805	
						1630-1670	1730-1810		
						1780-1800	1920-1950		
Feature 96	300 + 40 B.P.	290 + 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1640	-25.8		1520-1580	1490-1660	Beta-167073	
						1630-1650			
Structure 1A	350 + 40 B.P.	340 + 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1520	-25.7		1470-1640	1450-1650	Beta-243960 (AMS)	
						1590			
						1620			

Structure 1A	360 + 40 B.P.	380 + 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1470	-24.0	cal A.D. 1450-1520 cal A.D. 1590-1620	cal A.D. 1440-1640	Beta-243961 (AMS)
Feature 38	360 + 40 B.P.	320 + 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1530 cal A.D. 1560 cal A.D. 1630	-27.3	cal A.D. 1490-1640	cal A.D. 1460-1660	Beta-275158 (AMS)
Structure 6B	370 + 40 B.P.	360 + 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1490	-25.4	cal A.D. 1460-1530 cal A.D. 1560-1630	cal A.D. 1440-1640	Beta-255364 (AMS)
Structure 7D	390 + 60 B.P.	370 + 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1490	-26.1	cal A.D. 1450-1530 cal A.D. 1550-1630	cal A.D. 1430-1650	Beta-175804
Structure 4B	400 + 40 B.P.	400 + 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1460	-25.0	cal A.D. 1440-1490	cal A.D. 1430-1530 cal A.D. 1560-1630	Beta-255365 (AMS)
Structure 1A	410 + 60 B.P.	390 + 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1470	-26.1	cal A.D. 1440-1520 cal A.D. 1580-1630	cal A.D. 1420-1650	Beta-167069
Structure 7D	450 + 60 B.P.	450 + 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1440	-25.1	cal A.D. 1420-1470	cal A.D. 1400-1520 cal A.D. 1580-1630	Beta-175803
Structure 7D	560 + 70 B.P.	520 + 70 B.P.	cal A.D. 1420	-27.0	cal A.D. 1400-1440	cal A.D. 1300-1480	Beta-167070
Burial 37	610 + 40 B.P.	570 + 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1400	-27.3	cal A.D. 1320-1350 cal A.D. 1390-1420	cal A.D. 1300-1430	Beta-275159 (AMS)
Feature 65	740 + 60 B.P.	750 + 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1270	-24.5	cal A.D. 1240-1290	cal A.D. 1180-1310 cal A.D. 1370-1380	Beta-167071

CHAPTER I

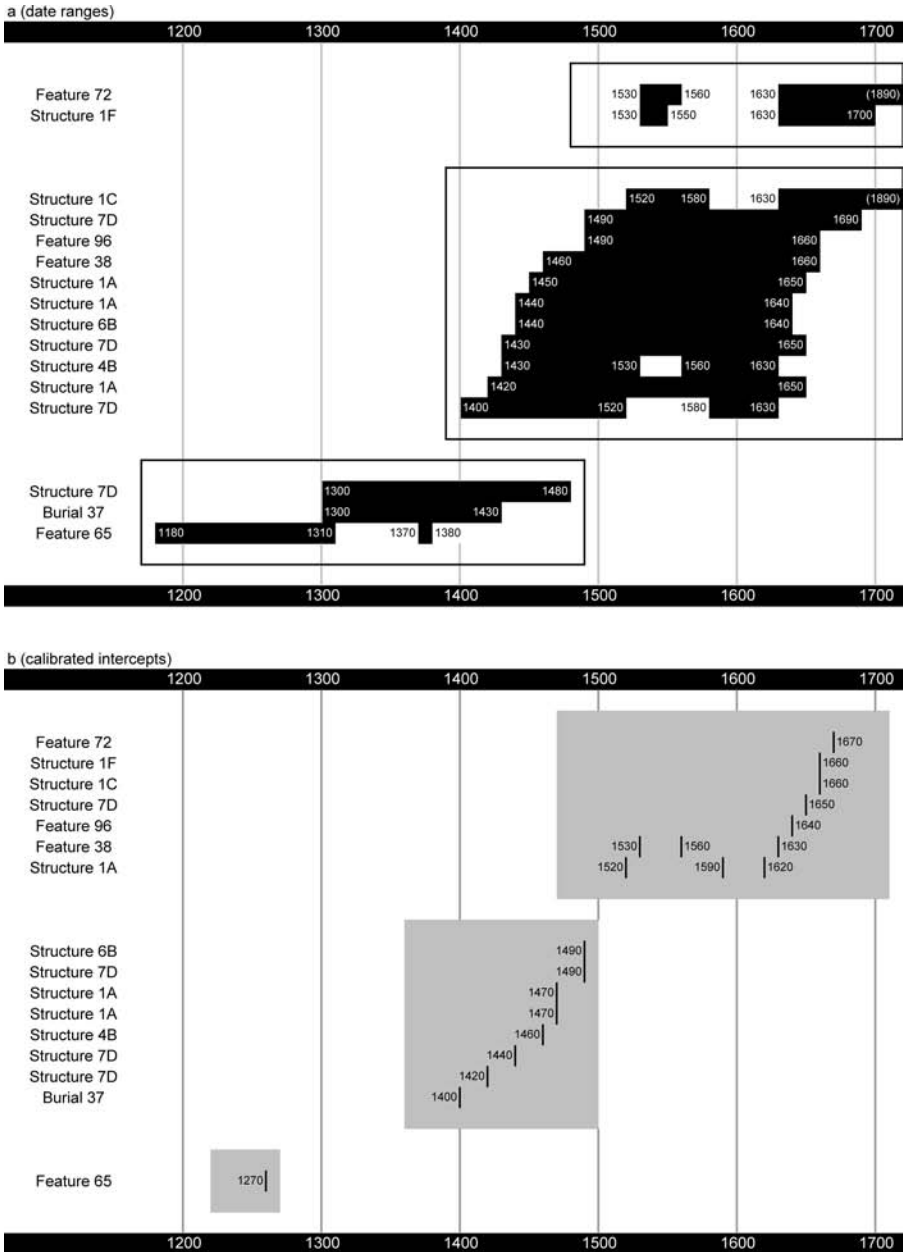


Figure 1.8. Radiocarbon dates from the Coweeta Creek site; (a) one-sigma age ranges; (b) calibrated intercepts (see also Table 1.5).

MIDDLE CHEROKEE TOWN AT COWEETA CREEK

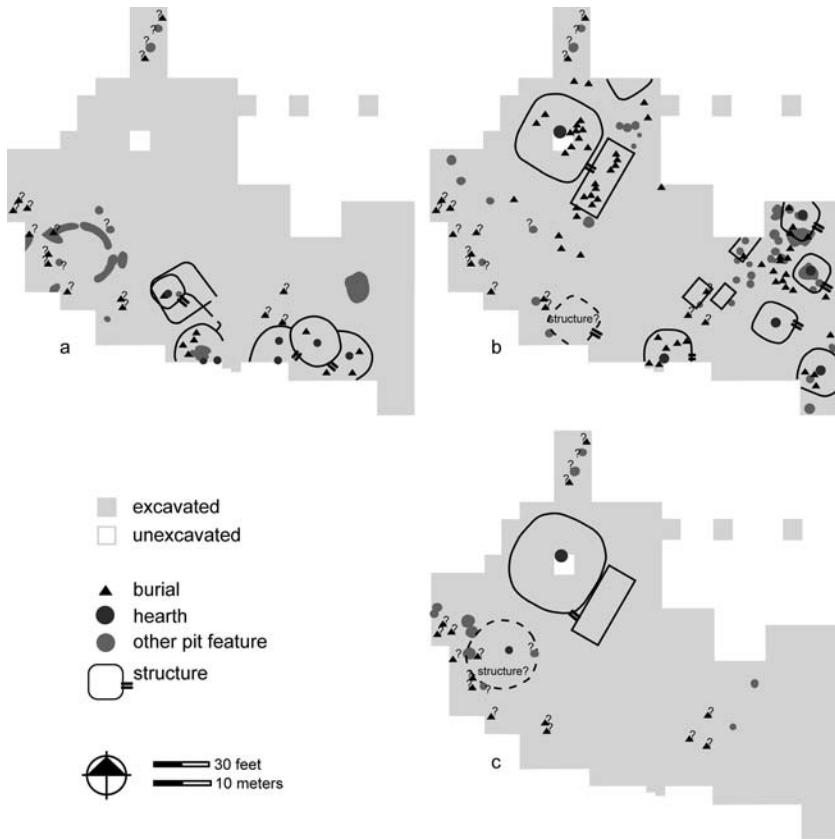


Figure 1.9. Stages of settlement at the Coweeta Creek site: (a) Early Qualla, fifteenth century A.D.; (b) Middle Qualla, seventeenth century A.D.; (c) Late Qualla, early eighteenth century A.D. Reproduced with permission from *The Durable House: House Society Models in Archaeology*, © 2007 by the Board of Trustees, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, courtesy of the Center for Archaeological Investigations (Rodning 2007:471), and with permission from *American Antiquity* 74(4), © Society for American Archaeology (Rodning 2009a:637).

architectural adaptation with which to attach themselves to a place, and in the course of the eighteenth century, architectural expediency and periodic movements of households and entire towns altered the role of townhouses as center places (Hatley 1993; Marcoux 2010a; Schroedl 2000). Like other native groups in eastern North America, Cherokee towns experienced demographic changes, loss of autonomy, and loss of land, but they also experienced dra-

matic changes to the sense of place that had developed within the built environment of Cherokee settlements during the preceding era. During the 1600s, townhouses were public structures at local scales, and community centers for households residing at particular settlements and surrounding areas, but by the late 1700s, townhouses had become community centers for increasingly dispersed towns, and, eventually, the entire Cherokee community as a whole (Schroedl 2009).

My approach to center places in the Cherokee landscape is not rooted in central-place theory, which has been influential in geography (Christaller 1966; Crumely 1976, 1977, 1979; Johnson 1972, 1973) and has been both applied in several archaeological case studies and critiqued as an interpretive framework for the study of prehistory (Hodder 1977; Hutson et al. 2012a; M. E. Smith 1977). Central-place theory is an explanatory framework for studying the sizes and spacing of major centers and outlying settlements in surrounding hinterlands (Gibbon 1984:230–233; Pool 2007:22–23; A. T. Smith 2003:36–45). Central-place theory concentrates largely on economic systems (Grant 1986; Hall 1996:192–193; C. A. Smith 1974). It assumes that the principle of least cost in the transport of raw materials and finished goods should apply, that larger and smaller settlements have hinterlands of corresponding sizes, that the hinterlands of different centers do not overlap, and that resources and access to goods are relatively uniform across particular areas. These conditions do not necessarily apply to the Cherokee landscape or elsewhere in Native North America, and the data considered in this study simply do not lend themselves to the development of a central-place model. More importantly, central-place theory focuses on the spatial patterns and development of regional economic systems. This study of center places concentrates instead on the social and symbolic aspects of architecture and landscape.

My approach to the archaeology of center places within the Cherokee landscape—and, specifically, within the built environment at the Coweeta Creek site—is guided by recent archaeological perspectives on the Ancestral Pueblo world in southwestern North America and, especially, recent perspectives on the architecture and landscape of Chaco Canyon and the greater Chacoan and Puebloan landscape in the northern Southwest (Kantner 2004; Lekson 1986, 2006, 2007; Varien et al. 1996). Drawing upon the cosmology of Puebloan peoples such as the Tewa, the Zuni, and the Keres, Van Dyke (2007:53) notes, “The center place is the point around which the sun, moon, and seasons re-

volve and the point of balance between opposing dualities.” The architecture of Chacoan great houses—pueblos with large ceremonial structures known as great kivas, and other rooms, built with distinctive stone masonry—formed center places for Chacoan groups, and great houses referred to the past through patterns of rebuilding and renovation of structures in place and patterns of artifact deposition within kivas (Crown and Wills 2003; Fowler and Stein 1992; Toll and Wilson 2000). The arrangements of both Chacoan settlements across the landscape and the roads connecting them are closely related to Puebloan cultural memory and myths about journeys and pilgrimages (Van Dyke 2003, 2004, 2007:54–59). Moving from these points to a consideration of the archaeology of Chacoan sites, Van Dyke (2007:59) writes, “If contemporary Pueblo peoples, as Chacoan descendants, share some aspects of a Chacoan worldview, then ethnographic information on Pueblo landscape and cosmography provides an invaluable lens through which to investigate the representation of ideas on the Chacoan landscape.” Her consideration of Puebloan cosmology in the recent past and present suggests that ideas about sacred geography, visibility of monuments and settlements, paths of movement across the landscape, memory of natural history and the mythical past, and directionality are visible in varying degrees at Chacoan sites dating to the period from A.D. 1000 through 1300. Documentary evidence about the Cherokee landscape during the 1700s and Cherokee myths recorded during the late 1800s likewise offer an interpretive lens with which to consider archaeological evidence about relationships between people and place in the southern Appalachians during the late prehistoric and protohistoric periods.

Chacoan settlements within Chaco Canyon and other areas of northern New Mexico were largely abandoned during the 1100s and 1200s, setting the stage for considerable movement of Puebloan groups throughout the northern Southwest during the 1200s and 1300s. These movements included many journeys and hardships that became embedded within Puebloan cultural memory and mythology as the settlements and communities recognizable as historic pueblos formed during the fifteenth century (Adler 1996, 2002; Bradley 1996; Duff 2004). Snead (2008a, 2008b; Snead et al. 2004) demonstrates that there were many ways in which Puebloan groups along the upper reaches of the Rio Grande River attached themselves to the new Puebloan landscape, including through architecture and the placement of pueblos with reference to cultural and natural landmarks. Cultural memory was materialized in archi-

ecture, and Puebloan cultural identity in the upper Rio Grande Valley was embedded within the palimpsests of architecture created through long-term connections between community and place (Snead 2008b:166). From his perspective, “landscape *is* history” (Snead 2008b:157). Fowles (2004, 2009) similarly demonstrates that trails and shrines anchored people and pueblos to the landscape of the upper Rio Grande Valley during periods of dislocation, displacement, migration, and the reformation of Puebloan communities in the Southwest—from his perspective, settlements with domestic architecture and activity areas cannot and should not be considered apart from the broader landscapes in which they were situated. Moving from the relatively arid Southwest to the more densely wooded southern Appalachians, relationships between past settlements and paths of movement through them and between them can be more difficult to determine, as are patterns of visibility between “cultural” and “natural” places in the landscape. And yet, even though the prehistory of Cherokee towns in the forested southern Appalachians was different from the prehistory of Puebloan peoples of southwestern North America, the Cherokee did develop a sense of place that can be reconstructed, at least in part, with reference to archaeological evidence as well as ethnohistory and oral tradition, as archaeologists in the Southwest have done.

One of the premises of this book is that the social and historical dimensions of places and architectural spaces are discernible archaeologically, at least to some extent (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:13–14). Structures are built to house groups of people and to create the settings for periodic events and everyday activities. Architectural materials and designs reflect local needs, local conditions, and local resources, but the layouts of structures and outdoor spaces actively shape the courses of the lives of people and of communities that, literally, take place within them. Arrangements of structures and spaces within settlements, and the spatial relationships between settlements and monuments, are affected by the contours of local landscapes and the natural environment, but the landscapes in which people live—those that people call “home”—are points of attachment between people and the groups of which they are members, as well as points of attachment between the present and the past. As Knapp and Ashmore (1999:14–15) put it, “People recognize, inscribe, and collectively maintain certain places or regions in ritual, symbolic, or ceremonial terms; conversely, these places create and express sociocultural identity. . . . Landscape provides a focus by which people engage with the world, and create and sustain a sense

of their social identity.” This point refers to landscapes more generally and the places within them, but the same point is applicable to the built environment of specific places, and, arguably, at the scale of individual structures, as well. As Jerry Moore (2005:3–4; see also Moore 1996a) writes in his study of cultural landscapes in the ancient Andes, “The built environment is a culturally constructed landscape that, like other cultural dimensions, includes utilitarian and nonadaptive, innovative and conservative elements. . . . Architecture both mirrors and shapes social interaction.”

A second major premise of this book is that architecture and settlement plans are reflections of cultural concepts about landscape, about relationships between people and place, and about community structure (Lane 1998; Rapoport 1990; Smith 2007). The architecture and layouts of settlements connect public and domestic structures—and the outdoor spaces surrounding them—to the broader regional landscapes of which they are part. As an example, there are connections drawn in Cherokee myths and legends between earthen mounds, public structures known as townhouses, and mountains—creating linkages between people, towns, monuments, and the southern Appalachian landscape (Mooney 1900a; Rodning 2009a, 2010a). References in Cherokee myths to the earth as an island, connected to the sky vault with cords at each of its four corners, have parallels in Cherokee architecture, and, specifically, in arrangements of four roof support posts around the central hearths of both public and domestic structures (Knight 1989, 2004:740–741, 2006; Rodning 2009a, 2010a). Several Cherokee myths and legends refer to mythical events taking place in “houses” and “townhouses” like those that were present within the landscape of Cherokee towns (Mooney 1900a, 1900b; Rodning 2009b, 2010a). Historic Cherokee settlements sometimes encompassed dwellings and fields spread across large areas of land, but a local community’s identity as a town was manifested in its townhouse, which created a setting for public life within the community and which marked the symbolic center of a town (Schroedl 2000, 2001; B. A. Smith 1979). Structures and settlement plans are both settings for and outcomes of cultural activity, but they are also points of attachment between people and place.

A third major premise of this book is that archaeologists can identify center places within past landscapes and in the built environment of past settlements. Archaeologists studying Ancestral Pueblo settlements in southwestern North America have drawn from Puebloan ethnography and cultural knowledge to

identify archaeological correlates of center places within the ancient and relatively recent Puebloan landscape, for example (Stein and Lekson 1992; Van Dyke 2007). Within the Puebloan landscape of the Southwest are settlements with kivas and large settlements with great kivas. Kivas are semisubterranean structures that were settings for ritual events. Kivas typically have single holes in the floor—normally near hearths—known as sipapu, which symbolize the portals through which Puebloan ancestors entered the world. Kivas are powerful and sacred points within the Puebloan landscape, and sipapu are center places. Within the southern Appalachians, townhouses and townhouse hearths are known to have been center places for Cherokee towns; they were not always placed at geographic center points within settlements, but they were the hubs of public life within Cherokee towns and served as landmarks for those towns (Schroedl 1978, 2009). These public structures also housed hearths in which sacred fires were kept burning constantly. These hearths should perhaps be considered the true center places of Cherokee towns in the sense that those hearths contained sacred fires that manifested the life and spirit of the towns.

Aside from the remnants of townhouses and townhouse hearths, there are several other forms of archaeological evidence from the southern Appalachians and the greater Southeast that emphasize centers and center symbolism. One is the iconography seen on engraved shell pendants known as gorgets (A. King 2007:130, 2010), an iconography in which concentric circles and cross-in-circle motifs are widespread (Brown 1985:108–111; Kneberg 1959; Lankford 1987:41–42, 67, 71, 73). Another is the iconography seen on engraved and stamped pottery (Knight 2007a:156), some of which depicts designs comparable to those seen on gorgets and much of which emphasizes concentric loops, concentric scrolls, concentric circles, and, even, concentric crosses (Hally 1994a; Moore 2002a; Rodning 2008).

Another form of archaeological evidence from the Southeast that emphasizes centering and center symbolism is burial placement (Buikstra and Charles 1999). At the Etowah site in Georgia, for example, one mound is the setting for burials of members of an elite lineage spanning several generations—attaching members of this lineage to this place and to one particular earthen monument—and arrangements of burials are placed around the outer edges of some earthen mound stages (A. King 2004). At the Moundville site in Alabama, after neighborhoods of houses had been abandoned, later generations of the households or lineages who had lived there—and who had moved elsewhere—placed the

dead in the former locations of those houses and neighborhoods, thereby connecting themselves to Moundville, even though it had been largely abandoned (Wilson 2008, 2010). Of course, the treatment of the dead and the placement of burials serve the needs and interests of the living. The examples from Moundville and Etowah noted here demonstrate the efforts of lineages and households to attach themselves to particular places, and to particular monuments, thereby centering themselves within the landscape. Throughout the southern Appalachians, during the period just before and after European contact, burials were typically placed inside and beside public and domestic structures (Hally 2004; Sullivan 2001, 2006). These practices created connections between burials and the structures that housed both the living and the dead (Sullivan and Rodning 2001, 2011; Rodning and Moore 2010).

The fourth and last major premise of this book is that, in addition to archaeological evidence of center places and center symbolism from the Southeast and elsewhere, there is evidence for center places and center symbolism in Cherokee myth and legend and from the ethnohistory of Cherokee towns in the southern Appalachians. Developing interpretive frameworks from ethnographic and ethnohistoric evidence about Native American cosmology has proven valuable to the archaeological study of architecture and landscape in the Puebloan Southwest (Lekson 1999; Van Dyke 2007) and of earthlodges in the Great Plains (Pauls 2005; Roper 2005; Roper and Pauls 2005). Situated beside the upper Little Tennessee River, in the heart of the historic Middle Cherokee settlements in southwestern North Carolina, Coweeta Creek is a valuable site at which to look for archaeological evidence of center places and center symbolism in the Cherokee landscape, and for several reasons. First, the Coweeta Creek site dates to the period just before and just after European contact in the Southeast, and therefore offers a glimpse into the Cherokee landscape during a period of dramatic change in Native North America. Second, the site was extensively excavated in the course of seven long field seasons, and from this settlement much can be learned about the spatial layout of public and domestic architecture. Third, the structures and spatial patterns visible at Coweeta Creek have parallels with late prehistoric and protohistoric settlements elsewhere in the greater southern Appalachians, including the Warren Wilson and Garden Creek sites in western North Carolina (Dickens 1978; Keel 1976), numerous sites in eastern Tennessee (Polhemus 1987, 1990; Schroedl 1998; Sullivan 1987, 1995), and the King site in Georgia (Hally 1988, 2008). Fourth, al-

though the Coweeta Creek site itself cannot definitively be related to one of the historically known Middle Cherokee towns from the eighteenth century (Duncan and Riggs 2003; Goodwin 1977; B. A. Smith 1979), the site is located in an area where several encounters between Cherokee groups and South Carolina colonists took place during the 1700s (Crane 2004; Hatley 1993); it is close to places such as Cowee and Nequassee, which are noted in Cherokee myths and legends recorded during the late 1800s (Mooney 1900a); and it is close to the likely locations of settlements such as Echoee and Tessentee.

Guided by the premises outlined here, the following chapters consider different aspects of the archaeology of the Coweeta Creek site, and relevant material from ethnohistoric sources. These chapters constitute neither a definitive report about the Coweeta Creek site nor a thorough analysis of the artifacts collected from the site, which include pottery (primarily attributable to the Qualla phase), chipped and ground stone tools, clay and stone smoking pipes, shell and bone artifacts, and other forms of material culture. The focus here is the built environment of this Cherokee community, and, specifically, evidence for center places formed through the architecture at Coweeta Creek and its layout.

Chapter 2 summarizes archaeological and ethnohistoric evidence about earthen mounds in the Cherokee landscape and Cherokee public structures known as townhouses. Townhouses were hubs of public life in Cherokee towns, and they materialized the status of local groups of households as towns (B. A. Smith 1979; Schroedl 2009). As recorded by Smithsonian Institution ethnologist James Mooney (1900a, 1900b) during the late nineteenth century, Cherokee oral tradition relates townhouses to earthen mounds and mountains (Rodning 2009a, 2010a)—mythical townhouses were said to have been present near mountain summits, some mounds were said to have been remnants of mythical townhouses dropped at those respective points in the landscape, and some mounds were said to have been platforms for townhouses whose hearths were containers for everlasting fire. Historic sources demonstrate that some townhouses, such as those at the Middle Cherokee settlements of Cowee, Whatoga, and Nequassee, were built on the summits of earthen mounds (Evans and King 1977; Waselkov and Braund 1995). When William Bartram visited Cherokee settlements in 1775, ruins of abandoned townhouses were visible in many places (Rodning 2002b, 2009a; Waselkov and Braund 1995)—although other townhouses were still present, including the Cowee townhouse. Archaeological evidence confirms that townhouses were built on the mound at the Cherokee Out

town settlement of Kituhwa and that sequences of townhouses were built and rebuilt in place at the Coweeta Creek site and at the Lower Cherokee settlement of Chattooga, in northwestern South Carolina (Moore 2009; Moore and Schroedl 2008; Riggs and Shumate 2003). This evidence collectively demonstrates that townhouses were centers of community life in Cherokee towns and that they were relatively permanent landmarks in the Cherokee landscape.

Chapter 3 discusses public architecture at Coweeta Creek in greater detail, including the main townhouse (or “winter townhouse”) and the rectangular ramada (or “summer townhouse”) adjacent to it, and the plaza placed beside the townhouse. Several burials were placed inside and around the outer edges of the townhouse itself. Some archaeological characteristics of the Coweeta Creek townhouse correspond closely with aspects of Cherokee oral traditions recorded during the late 1800s (Mooney 1900a) and with Cherokee townhouses as described by Alexander Longe, Henry Timberlake, James Adair, William Bartram, and other visitors to Cherokee towns during the 1700s (Belt 2009; Braund 2005; D. H. King 2007).

Chapter 4 considers evidence of domestic structures at the Coweeta Creek site. Household dwellings were comparable to townhouses in terms of their architectural design and raw materials, although they were much smaller; close resemblances between public and domestic structures are likewise seen at late prehistoric and postcontact sites in northern Georgia (Hally 2002, 2008), eastern Tennessee (Polhemus 1990; Schroedl 2000, 2001; Sullivan 1987, 1995), and northwestern South Carolina (Howard 1997; Riggs 2008; Schroedl 1994). Sequences of building and rebuilding houses in place created durable connections between houses at particular points within the Coweeta Creek settlement, as in the case of the townhouse itself (Rodning 2007). Burials within and beside houses probably further anchored specific households to particular points within the built environment of the Coweeta Creek site, as they did at other sites in western North Carolina, Georgia, and eastern Tennessee (Hally 1988, 2008; Hally and Kelly 1998; Sullivan 1987, 1995). Posthole patterns, stratigraphic evidence, and radiocarbon dates demonstrate the presence of slightly different types of domestic structures—and different patterns of rebuilding—at different points in the history of settlement at the Coweeta Creek site (Rodning 2007).

Central hearths are characteristic components of both public and domestic structures in the southern Appalachians dating from late prehistory through the

seventeenth century. Chapter 5 discusses the characteristics and sequences of clay hearths at Coweeta Creek. Hearths were placed at or near the midpoints of townhouses and dwellings, and four roof support posts were arranged around these hearths, creating square areas around the circular hearths at the center. The fires kept in these hearths were the primary sources of heat and light inside these structures, and hearths themselves were critical for cooking. Hearths and the fires in them had symbolic as well as pragmatic associations, as is evident from Cherokee oral tradition and from written accounts by colonial visitors to Cherokee towns from the eighteenth century. From this perspective, hearths can be thought of as symbolically significant points within the built environment of Cherokee settlements and as “center places” for houses and households; townhouse hearths served as center places for entire Cherokee towns.

Like houses and the hearths inside them, burials rooted groups to particular points in the southern Appalachian landscape. Chapter 6 discusses burials at Coweeta Creek, specifically, patterns in the placement of burials relative to architecture at the site. Archaeologists often focus on patterns in the grave goods associated with burials of women and men, adults and children, as clues about status distinctions in past societies (Rodning 2011a; Rodning and Moore 2010). My treatment of mortuary patterns at Coweeta Creek focuses on burials as components of the built environment and as cultural deposits associated with particular structures.

By the late eighteenth century, and probably during the early eighteenth century, the Coweeta Creek site was largely abandoned. At some point, perhaps as early as the late seventeenth century, most of the household dwellings at the site were abandoned, although the townhouse was kept in place until the second or third decade of the eighteenth century. Based on the differences between fifteenth-century and seventeenth-century ceramics from the site, it is also likely that the site underwent an occupational hiatus, perhaps during the sixteenth century. Chapter 7 considers evidence relevant to understanding the nature of abandonment and resettlement at the site during the 1500s and 1600s, and the reasons why the site may have been abandoned during the early eighteenth century. Households from the Coweeta Creek community probably moved to other Middle Cherokee settlements such as Echoee, Tessentee, Nequassee, and Cowee, and perhaps even to other Cherokee town areas. Chapter 7 also considers potential evidence of an earlier cycle of abandonment and resettlement at the site. This evidence demonstrates the long-term presence of

center places that shaped long-term cycles of settlement, abandonment, and resettlement at this locality.

My concluding chapter considers the relevance of the Coweeta Creek site to broader knowledge about Cherokee settlements in southwestern North Carolina and surrounding areas. During the eighteenth century, dozens of Cherokee towns dotted the southern Appalachian landscape, the architectural centers of which were townhouses. Some of those towns—such as Cowee and Nequassee—were large towns, with dozens of houses and with earthen mounds. Many other towns were probably associated with smaller settlements, like Coweeta Creek. As the following chapters about architecture and the built environment at Coweeta Creek demonstrate, dwellings and townhouses were center places that rooted households and whole towns to particular points in the landscape. The last major stages of settlement at the Coweeta Creek site date to the late 1600s and early 1700s, long after early Spanish contact in the Southeast, but before or at the beginning of the development of formal trade relations between Cherokee towns and the English colony of South Carolina (Crane 2004; Rothrock 1976). Given the temporal span of Cherokee settlement at Coweeta Creek, this site gives us a significant glimpse of the built environment of a community just before the dramatic changes that Cherokee towns experienced in the course of the deerskin trade and ensuing conflicts that developed between Cherokee towns and colonial groups during the eighteenth century (Boulware 2011; Hatley 1989, 1993, 2006; Hill 1997). During the nineteenth century, many Cherokee people in the southern Appalachians were forcibly removed from their homes and homeland. The Cherokee were not only dispossessed of land but also uprooted from the southern Appalachian landscape and deprived of their sense of place (*sensu* Basso 1984, 1988, 1996a, 1996b; Boulware 2011:30; Feld and Basso 1996) that had developed with reference to mountains, rivers, forests, and fields, and the center places within this landscape, including mounds, townhouses, plazas, and hearths.

2

Mounds, Townhouses, and Cherokee Towns

During the late nineteenth century, James Mooney (1889, 1890, 1891, 1894, 1900a, 1900b), an ethnologist affiliated with the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution, recorded oral traditions known to Cherokee elders in western North Carolina. One of the historical myths Mooney recorded (1900a:395–397), “The Mounds and the Constant Fire: The Old Sacred Things,” describes practices related to building earthen mounds and townhouses, many of which have close parallels in the sequence of townhouses at the Coweeta Creek site. According to Mooney’s version of this oral tradition, earthen mounds were thought of as foundations for townhouses, built by ancestors of the “Ani’-Kĭtu’hwagĭ,” or the people of Kĭtu’hwa, one of the oldest and most sacred mounds and towns in the Cherokee landscape, located along the Tuckasegee River (Duncan and Riggs 2003:72–74; Riggs and Shumate 2003; Riggs et al. 1998:ix–x). Townhouses were built on level bottomlands beside rivers so that there were level surfaces for dances and ballgames nearby, and so that people could go down to the water during dances and other community events. To build a mound, people first placed a circle of stones on the ground surface and made a fire at the center of the stone circle. Then, one or more recently deceased town leaders—“some say seven chief men from the [seven] different clans”—were buried near the fire, along with an uktena (mythical rattlesnake) scale or horn (probably an engraved shell gorget), an Ulŭnsŭ’tĭ stone (probably a quartz crystal representing the diamond embedded in the forehead of an uktena), a feather from the right wing of an eagle or tlă’nuwă (mythical hawk), and beads of seven different colors (red, white, black, blue, purple, yellow, and grayish blue). A priest conjured the beads, the uktena scale, the

Ulûnsû'tī stone, and the feather with disease so that if enemy warriors attacked and burned a town or a townhouse, the conjured artifacts buried in the townhouse would cause the timely deaths of those warriors. Women then brought baskets of earth to build a mound, covering the stones and the burials but leaving an opening at the center, and they fitted a hollow cedar log around the fire to protect it from the earth. This cedar log enclosed the fire up to the floor of the townhouse, which was built on the surface of the earthen mound. A man known as the fire keeper stayed in the townhouse to keep the fire burning constantly. This perpetual fire, known as “atsi'la gālûñkw`ti'yu,” or “the honored or sacred fire,” was the source of new fire for houses in a settlement, especially during annual community renewal rituals, when households put out the fires in domestic houses and rekindled them with fire from the townhouse hearth (Anderson et al. 2010a:48). It is said that there were and are everlasting fires burning in the mounds at Nikwāsī' (Nequassee), Kītu'hwa (Kituhwa), and some other towns; that the fire in the townhouse at Tugalo, in northeastern Georgia, continued burning even after the townhouse was destroyed during warfare with colonists (Anderson et al. 2010a:214); and that when new fires were started in the hearths of these townhouses for annual community renewal rituals, the new fire from those hearths was then transported to other settlements. According to Mooney's version of this oral tradition, some Cherokee soldiers encamped near Kituhwa during the United States Civil War saw smoke rising from the mound. Mooney also noted sacred items—including sacred smoking pipes—that had formerly belonged to Cherokee towns. His version of this historical myth concludes with the comment, “All the old things are gone now and the [Cherokee] are different” (Mooney 1900a:397).

Several points of interest in this oral tradition about mounds and the fires kept in Cherokee townhouse hearths are relevant to the archaeological study of the architecture and built environment of the Middle Cherokee settlement at the Coweeta Creek site. First, mounds are said to have been built by “the ancestors of the old Ani'-Kītu'hwagī,” or “the people of Kituhwa.” Kituhwa is one of the sacred mother towns of the Cherokee and was a center of Cherokee cultural conservatism during the eighteenth century (and, arguably, in the present; Riggs et al. 1998:ix; see also Boulware 2011:24–26). Other names for the Cherokee people include the “Ani'-Yūñ'wiyă'” (or “real people”), and the “Ani'-Tsa'lāgi',” but given the status of the Kituhwa town and the mound at that particular site, the name “Ani'-Kītu'hwagī” can refer to the Cherokee

people as a whole, and its literal translation relates the broader Cherokee community to a specific earthen mound. Second, townhouses are referred to as being built in bottomlands, near rivers—as in the case of the Kituhwa mound and the Coweeta Creek site—offering water access to people participating in dances, ballgames, and other ritual events in townhouses and on the outdoor plazas adjacent to Cherokee townhouses (Anderson et al. 2010a:237). Third, the myth describes the careful preparation of a pure ground surface for building a townhouse, the placement of a circle of stones on that surface, the kindling of a fire at the center, and the burial of prominent personages in the town (perhaps mostly men, perhaps members of several or all of the seven traditional Cherokee clans) before an earthen mound was built, and a townhouse built upon it. Fourth, a hearth was placed at the center of the townhouse, as was a hollow log, which enclosed the hearth and which connected the townhouse floor to the ground underneath it (see chapter 5 for discussions of hearths at the Coweeta Creek site, including a hearth placed atop a burial of a male elder with shell beads and a shell gorget). Fifth, a group of artifacts was buried in the ground before the townhouse was built, including beads that were red, white, black, blue, purple, yellow, and grayish blue. Shell beads made by Native Americans before European contact were, generally, white. Beads of many other colors (and various color combinations) circulated widely across eastern North America after European contact (Little 2010; Marcoux 2012a, 2012b; Quimby 1966). Lastly, the beads and other artifacts buried in the ground were placed to protect the town and the townhouse. Interestingly, although no glass beads were found in any of the burials in the Coweeta Creek townhouse (see Chapter 6), there were other artifacts placed in burials, including shell gorgets, any or all of which could potentially have been “conjured” as described in “The Mounds and the Constant Fire.”

This traditional Cherokee tale also demonstrates the symbolic significance of the fires kept in townhouse hearths. These “honored and sacred” fires were kept burning constantly, and they were the sources of the fires kept in the hearths of Cherokee domestic houses, which were rekindled during annual community renewal rituals. There is even the reference to “everlasting fires” in the townhouses of major Cherokee towns—including Nequassee, Kituhwa, and others where townhouses were probably placed on large earthen mounds—that may have been the source of fires kindled in lesser towns in surrounding areas, perhaps reflecting hierarchical or ancestral relationships between towns. More can

be said of “The Mounds and the Constant Fire” and other Cherokee oral traditions (Lankford 1987; Mooney 1900a). I include this tale to set the stage for an archaeological consideration of the architecture and built environment of Cherokee towns during the period just before and after European contact in the southern Appalachians. I am interested in how the architecture and built environment of Cherokee settlements created center places that anchored people to the southern Appalachian landscape, especially during the period after European contact and the widespread instability it created in the Americas. Archaeology at Coweeta Creek offers a window onto continuity and change in the built environment of one Cherokee town during this tumultuous and transformative period. This chapter considers documentary evidence about Cherokee towns during the 1700s and Cherokee oral traditions recorded during the 1800s. These forms of evidence set the stage for interpreting archaeological evidence from a town that dates primarily to the 1600s and early 1700s, with an emphasis on the materiality of center places at different scales, including mounds and townhouses as community centers, dwellings as centers for households within towns, and hearths and burials as center places for towns, households, and individuals.

Cherokee Towns

During the late 1600s and 1700s, there were five major groups of Cherokee towns in the southern Appalachians, including the Lower Cherokee towns in what is now northwestern South Carolina and northeastern Georgia, the Middle Cherokee towns in the upper Little Tennessee Valley of southwestern North Carolina, the Cherokee Out towns in the Tuckasegee and Oconaluftee valleys, the Cherokee Valley towns along the upper Hiwassee River and its tributary streams, and the Overhill Cherokee towns along the lower Little Tennessee and Tellico rivers in eastern Tennessee (Figure 1.1). This point in history dates to several generations after early Spanish expeditions traversed the southern Appalachians and much of the rest of southeastern North America (Ewen 1990, 1996; Ewen and Hann 1998; Worth 1994, 2002). The colonial slave trade, and the new forms of warfare that developed along with it, greatly impacted Native American groups of the Southeast during the seventeenth century (Ethridge and Shuck-Hall 2009; Gally 2002, 2009; M. T. Smith 1989a, 1994, 2002, 2006). Spanish colonists began exchanging trade goods for deer-

skins as early as the late 1500s, but it was not until the 1700s that the English deerskin trade spread widely across the Southeast, absorbing Cherokee and other Native American groups in its wake and altering traditional ways of life (Braund 2008; Corkran 1962, 1967, 1970; Wesson 2008).

The core areas of eighteenth-century Cherokee towns were largely bypassed by sixteenth-century Spanish *entradas*, although the Cherokee had enough contact with Spanish colonists to refer to them by the name of “Ani’-Skwa’ni” (Mooney 1900a:509). Members of the Hernando de Soto (1539–1543) and Juan Pardo (1566–1568) expeditions did encounter Cherokee people, including leaders of Cherokee towns who visited Pardo at the town of Joara, in the upper Catawba River Valley in the western North Carolina Piedmont (Beck et al. 2006, 2011; Booker et al. 1992; Levy et al. 1990). During this period, people in historic Cherokee town areas in southwestern North Carolina could reach the upper Catawba Valley—the province of Soto’s “Xuala” and Pardo’s “Joara”—by way of Swannanoa Gap, along the Swannanoa River (Beck and Moore 2002:212). The name “Swannanoa” is derived from the Cherokee word “Suwa’li-nūñnâ’hî,” referring to the trail leading to settlements of the “Ani’-Suwa’li,” or people of the Joara province (Hudson 1997:188; Mooney 1894, 1900:194–195, 509, 532). After traversing the province of Joara, along the eastern edge of the Appalachians, both the Soto and Pardo expeditions crossed the mountains north of Cherokee town areas, en route to eastern Tennessee (Beck 1997; Beck and Moore 2002; Hudson 1986, 1994, 2005). The history of Spanish *entradas*, of course, had far-reaching effects on the landscape and lifeways of the Native American Southeast, including areas in which people had only indirect contact with Spanish colonists (M. T. Smith 1987) and indirect access to Spanish goods (Waselkov 1989a). Direct contact with the Soto and Pardo expeditions, by contrast, dramatically affected the prosperity of the provinces of Ocuta, in the Oconee Valley of Georgia (Williams 1994; Williams and Shapiro 1996); Cofitachequi, in central South Carolina (DePratter 1989, 1994; Hudson et al. 2008); Joara, along the western edge of the North Carolina Piedmont (Beck 1997, 2013; Beck and Moore 2002; DePratter and Smith 1980); and Coosa, in the Ridge and Valley province of northwestern Georgia (Hally 1994b; Hally et al. 1990; Hudson et al. 1985).

As much as 100 to 150 years—some five to seven generations—after the era of major Spanish explorations in the Southeast, English colonial trade networks and trade goods began to reach Cherokee settlements, connecting them to

Carolina and Virginia. Compared to other groups in other areas of the Southeast, the Cherokee were, relatively speaking, latecomers to the South Carolina deerskin trade, as compared with the Chickasaws and the Creeks, for example (Braund 2008; Hahn 2002, 2004; Johnson et al. 2008). Charles Town was established in 1670, and by 1685, traders from Charles Town had established a trading post on the Ocmulgee River, in central Georgia (Mason 2005; Waselkov 1994). Henry Woodward learned about Cherokee settlements in the mountains during his visit to Westo villages along the Savannah River in 1674, and the Cherokee signed a treaty with Charles Town in 1684, perhaps as an effort to stem the pace of Westo slave raids against the Cherokee (Crane 1918; Hatley 1993:17; Woodward 1911). French *coureurs de bois* traveled from the Mississippi Valley to the southern Appalachians in an effort to develop trade relations with Cherokee towns in the 1690s and early 1700s (Rothrock 1976; Swanton 1946:111). English traders from both South Carolina and Virginia began visiting Cherokee settlements in the late 1600s, and some Cherokee people transported deerskins to colonial settlements to trade (Hatley 1993). By the early 1700s, several English traders were living in Cherokee settlements (Rothrock 1976). Trade relations were formalized and centralized in 1717, with the establishment of formal colonial trading posts at only selected Cherokee towns such as Cowee and Quanassee, following the upheavals of the Yamasee War (Boulware 2011:33–56; Oatis 2004; Ramsey 2008). Archaeological evidence indicates that some glass beads, iron tools, and peaches reached even small and isolated Cherokee settlements like that at the Alarka site in the upper Little Tennessee Valley as early as the mid-seventeenth century (Shumate et al. 2005), and that by the early eighteenth century, much greater numbers of trade goods were available to people at Coweeta Creek (Rodning 2010b) and at the Tuckasegee site along the Tuckasegee River (Keel 1976; Ward 2002).

During the eighteenth century, only those Cherokee settlements with public structures—or townhouses—were known as towns. Built of wood and earth, townhouses created settings for the practice of public life in Cherokee towns, marked the placement of Cherokee towns on the landscape, and manifested the identity of local groups of households as towns (Rodning 2011b; Schroedl 1986b). They were visible landmarks, as were the plazas beside them, and some townhouses are known or thought to have been built on the summits of earthen platform mounds, including those at the Middle Cherokee settlement of Cowee (Waselkov and Braund 1995:84–85), the Lower Cherokee settle-

ments of Keowee and Seneca (Waselkov and Braund 1995:74–76), the Cherokee Valley towns of Hiwassee and Quanassee (Dickens 1967; Dorwin 1991; Schroedl 2001:290; Skowronek 1991), and the Cherokee Out town of Kituhwa, for example (Riggs and Shumate 2003; Riggs et al. 1998). There are written descriptions of and references to townhouses at these and other Cherokee settlements, and there are several examples of archaeologically known earthen mounds that probably were platforms for historic Cherokee townhouses, such as the Tugalo, Chauga, Estatoe, and Nacoochee mounds in Lower Cherokee town areas (Heye et al. 1918; M. T. Smith 1992; Wynn 1990). There are written descriptions of Overhill Cherokee townhouses dating to the eighteenth century, and archaeological evidence of townhouses at four Overhill Cherokee sites (Baden 1983; Russ and Chapman 1983; Schroedl 1978, 1986a, 1986b, 1989).

Dwellings and domestic activity areas were placed around townhouses and town plazas. The shapes and sizes of Cherokee settlements and the spacing of structures varied according to the number of houses and people, and according to local landforms. Cherokee towns included anywhere from 10 to more than 50 households, or from 100 to more than 500 people (Fogelson 2004:342; Fogelson and Kutsche 1961; Schroedl 2000:206). Cherokee townhouses themselves resembled domestic structures, but they were considerably larger. Archaeological examples of townhouses in the southern Appalachians from the 1500s through the 1700s demonstrate a temporal trend in increasing townhouse size, which was related to an increase in the average number of people within Cherokee towns and the need for larger public structures to accommodate them (Rodning 2011b; Schroedl 1978, 1986b, 2009).

Colonial visitors to Cherokee settlements in the 1700s and 1800s described townhouses and plazas, household dwellings, and some aspects of Cherokee material culture, in varying degrees of detail (Randolph 1973; Waselkov and Braund 1995; Williams 1927, 1928). Documentary evidence about specific characteristics and dimensions of Cherokee architecture and historically known Cherokee settlements is reviewed in detail elsewhere (Riggs 2008; Schroedl 1978, 1986, 2000, 2001, 2009). Of interest here are the clues these documentary sources provide about the roles of townhouses, plazas, hearths, and other aspects of the built environment of Cherokee towns as “center places” within the Cherokee landscape. Some of those townhouses are known or thought to have been placed on large earthen mounds that, in and of themselves, were significant landmarks and center places on the landscape (Duncan and Riggs

2003:145–147; Waselkov and Braund 1995:75–76). Documentary evidence from the 1700s and early 1800s demonstrates the following points about the roles of townhouses, household dwellings, and hearths as center places in the Cherokee landscape.

First, as community centers, townhouses were settings for town council deliberations (Boulware 2011:14–15; Fogelson 1971:327–328; Gearing 1958, 1962). During the eighteenth century, all members of Cherokee towns—men, women, and children—were welcome to participate in town council deliberations that took place inside townhouses (Persico 1979). The voices and views of some members of Cherokee towns—especially elders with titles such as “Beloved Man” and “Beloved Woman”—were more influential than those of others, but everybody and anybody could speak (Perdue 1998). Decisions reached during these deliberations were not binding, and dissenting groups could choose not to abide by them.

Second, townhouses were architectural maps, of a sort, of social relations within towns. Seating arrangements at events within Cherokee townhouses reflected the membership of people in one clan or another. There were and are seven Cherokee clans (Fogelson 2004:346; Urban and Jackson 2004a:698), and, ideally, each of those clans was represented within a town. Within towns, members of different clans shared social, political, and ceremonial responsibilities (Perdue 1998:41–62). Members of the seven clans sat together in their own sections of townhouses (Anderson et al. 2010a:34, 264; Anderson et al. 2010b:46, 145). Seating arrangements in townhouses also reflected the accomplishments (e.g., war honors) and statuses (e.g., as warriors) of different people within the community (Anderson et al. 2010a:14–15, 58–59; Anderson et al. 2010b:33, 36, 228, 232).

Third, townhouses were both “male” spaces, in a sense, as well as “community” spaces. Warriors fasted in townhouses to purify themselves before and after going on the warpath, and the fire keepers and priests who frequented townhouses and lived in houses nearby were often male elders (Boulware 2011:14; Gearing 1962:23). Burials in and near townhouses were more often those of men and children than those of women (Rodning 2001a, 2011a). On the other hand, all members of a community could and did participate in town council deliberations and other community gatherings in townhouses (Perdue 1998; Persico 1979). Women are said to have brought baskets of earth to build the mounds on which townhouses were built (Mooney 1900a:396). If women did indeed build

mounds or otherwise prepare ground surfaces on which townhouses were built, or if women participated in preparing the wood and bark necessary to build townhouses, women too had tangible and enduring connections to the architecture of Cherokee townhouses. Women also brought fire from townhouse hearths to the hearths of domestic houses (Mooney 1900a:396). In transporting fire from the centers of townhouses—which served as the centers of towns—women were central to the maintenance of connections between households and townhouses.

Fourth, townhouses were settings for talks with colonial traders and diplomats, and these events often involved leaders from several different Cherokee towns, and, sometimes, leaders from different Cherokee town areas (Perdue 1998; Persico 1979; B. A. Smith 1979). Colonists such as James Adair, George Chicken, Sir Alexander Cuming, John Herbert, William Henry Lyttleton, Maurice Moore, Henry Timberlake, and others participated in diplomatic events that took place in Cherokee townhouses, often with leaders from several Cherokee towns present (Jackson et al. 2004:32; Salley 1936; Williams 1927, 1928, 1930, 1937). Townhouses created particular points within the landscape where such events, involving people from many different points on the North American map, could take place. At these events, townhouses were focal points—center places—for diplomatic events and interactions that significantly shaped the fortunes and interests of specific towns and the course of colonial history in the American South.

Fifth, just as Cherokee townhouses were settings for deliberations related to trade and diplomacy, they were settings for scalp dances—during which war deeds were publicly noted and acknowledged—and for ritual preparation and purification related to warfare (Duncan 2009; Mooney 1900a:375–377, 496; Perdue 1998:53). Warriors fasted in townhouses before and after expeditions on the warpath, both in preparation and in purification upon returning home (Anderson et al. 2010a:258). Given the importance of trade, diplomacy, and warfare to the survival of the Cherokee community during the eighteenth century, townhouses were significant points in the built environment of Cherokee settlements for towns' participation in broader interaction networks.

Sixth, townhouses were settings for other dances and social gatherings in Cherokee towns (Corkran 1969:22–25; D. H. King 2007:15–21; Waselkov and Braund 1995:85–86). Some of these dances were held to welcome colonial visitors to Cherokee towns, and others were held in advance of ballgames between

different Cherokee towns. Townspeople gathered at townhouses for dances that took place after the dead were buried (Anderson et al. 2010b:185). Such events emphasized community identity and the relationships binding local households together within towns. As with diplomatic events emphasizing connections between Cherokee towns and the outside world, townhouses were significant focal points—center places—for public events within Cherokee towns.

Seventh, townhouses were highly visible landmarks within Cherokee settlements, as were the plazas beside them. Visitors to Cherokee settlements had no trouble identifying townhouses, based on the size of these structures compared to that of dwellings and on the placement of townhouses beside large outdoor plazas. Constant fires were kept in townhouse hearths, and there probably were columns of smoke emanating upward from townhouses that would have been visible landmarks, at least periodically. In some cases, large numbers of people gathered on these plazas for public events and dances (D. H. King 2007:19–21). At some towns, flags were placed atop tall wooden poles outside townhouses, with red flags indicating that a town was at war and white flags symbolizing that a town was at peace (D. H. King 2007:18–19).

Lastly, the hearths inside Cherokee townhouses were receptacles for fires that manifested the identity and vitality of the town. People were proscribed from carrying ashes and embers from townhouse hearths outside townhouses except under special circumstances, including events wherein ashes were deposited in carefully chosen pits located outside townhouses (Corkran 1969:36–39) and the practice of war leaders carrying “holy fire” from townhouse hearths with them on the warpath (Anderson et al. 2010b:23; Corkran 1969:44–47). Elders within Cherokee towns were charged with the task of maintaining perpetual fires in townhouse hearths (Mooney 1900a:396). Periodically, the fires in the hearths of Cherokee dwellings were rekindled with ashes and flame from hearths in local Cherokee townhouses (Anderson et al. 2010a:38, 48; Mooney 1900a:396). Meanwhile, fire from the hearths of townhouses at large towns such as Nequassee and Kituhwa was periodically transported to the hearths of townhouses in outlying settlements (Mooney 1900a:396). The transport of fire from one townhouse hearth and from one community to another is reminiscent of the Cherokee myth “The First Fire” (Mooney 1900a:240–242; Zogry 2010:41–42), during which the water spider successfully brought fire back from the island on which “the first fire” originated. According to this cosmogonic myth, after several animals—the raven, the screech owl, the hooting owl, the horned

owl, the black racer, and the blacksnake—tried and failed to bring fire back, the water spider spun a bowl of thread on her back, and carried a single coal of fire back across the water from the island. One of the ritual responsibilities of Cherokee towns was to keep the fire in the central hearth of its townhouse going, and periodically, fire from the “island” of the hearth inside the townhouse was carried to other places. The fires in townhouse hearths were center places for Cherokee towns, and, similarly, the fires in the hearths of household dwellings were center places for those structures and social groups within Cherokee towns.

An emphasis on center places and circles is similarly evident in Native American maps of the Southeast and Midatlantic during the 1600s and early 1700s. Gregory Waselkov (1989b) has very carefully described and deciphered seven such maps, including one drawn on paper with guidance by native people, three drawn on deerskin and copied by English colonists onto paper, two deerskin maps copied onto paper by French colonists, and the deerskin cloak from Tidewater Virginia known as Powhatan’s Mantle, thought to have been associated with Powhatan himself, or with one of the many chiefs of local villages within Powhatan’s realm. On this deerskin mantle, dating to the early seventeenth century, the central figures of a person flanked by a deer and a possible wild cat are surrounded by circles, all of which are made of marine shell beads sewn on the mantle itself. Five other maps similarly depict communities—sometimes local villages or towns, sometimes larger tribal societies—as circles painted on deerskins, with pairs of lines representing trading paths connecting these circles. As Waselkov (1989b) demonstrates, social groups and communities ranging in scale from local villages to regional confederacies were depicted on these maps as circles. Typically, the community to which a mapmaker belonged was placed at or near the center of such a map. Furthermore, the relative sizes of the circles representing different communities corresponded to the relative number of people within those respective communities.

These maps manifest Native American world views that emphasize social relationships as much as, if not more than, the relative geographic positioning of different settlements, but they also identify circles and center places within the social landscape. Visual depictions of these relationships emphasize circles—or rectangles, in the cases of Charles Town and Virginia, as they were depicted on a deerskin map made by a Catawba Indian (Waselkov 2006:445)—with paired lines connecting these shapes. These maps were not drawn to depict relative

geographic placements of different settlements on the landscape but, rather, to emphasize social closeness and distance between communities (Waselkov 2006:443). The connections between communities were depicted as pairs of lines, or paths, running from one circle to another. Communities themselves, of course, were depicted as circles, corresponding to the different “center places” in the social landscape of Native American settlements and societies.

None of these maps were drawn by Cherokee mapmakers, but the Cherokee are depicted on a Catawba deerskin map dating to roughly 1721 and a Chickasaw deerskin map dating to roughly 1723 (Waselkov 2006:469–481). Interestingly, the Catawba map depicts direct social relationships—and, presumably, trade relations—between the Cherokee and the Chickasaw, and between the Cherokee and Charles Town, but no direct relationship between the Cherokee and the Virginia colony. Meanwhile, the Chickasaw map likewise depicts direct social relations between the Cherokee and the Chickasaw, and between the Cherokee and the English, but not between the Cherokee and Creek towns in Alabama and Georgia.

Although there are no extant Cherokee maps from the protohistoric period, the widespread emphasis on circles and spirals—and on center symbolism, more generally—throughout the prehistoric and historic Southeast, and the depiction of the Cherokee as circles on the Catawba and Chickasaw deerskin maps, make it likely that Cherokee people visualized their own world with a similar emphasis on paths and circles. This emphasis on centering also manifested architecturally, in central hearths surrounded by arrangements of roof support posts, for example (chapter 5); in sequences of building and rebuilding public and domestic structures in place (chapters 3 and 4); and in the placement of burials inside and beside domestic structures associated with specific households and public structures that were centers for public life within towns (Chapter 6). Circular and semicircular ring ditches—which may have been associated with mounds and earthen embankments—likewise may have marked points on the landscape that were center places for communities, and the settings for periodic community gatherings (chapters 1 and 7).

Cherokee Myths

Aside from historic sources about events that took place in Cherokee townhouses, oral tradition also lends insight into the social and symbolic aspects of

townhouses and other center places in the built environment. The written versions of these oral traditions relate Cherokee townhouses to permanent sights (sites?) in the sky, such as the stars, and permanent landmarks on earth, such as mounds and mountains. They refer to spirits living in the Nequassee mound, under its townhouse. Mythical townhouses are placed within mountains, underneath rivers, and underground. Hearths in the Kituhwa and Nequassee townhouses are said to contain everlasting fire, and that fire was circulated within those towns and sometimes transported to other Cherokee settlements, connecting people of several towns to particular points in the landscape. Oral traditions recorded by Mooney (1900a) refer to Cherokee townhouses as settings where entire Cherokee towns would gather for dances, community deliberations, town councils, and other public events (242–249, 341–342, 375–377); where deliberations with leaders from Iroquois and other native groups were held (367–370); and where sacred possessions and community leaders were buried (395–397). All of these points emphasize center places within the Cherokee mythical and historical landscape.

One of these mythical center places is the island described in the myth of “The First Fire” (Mooney 1900a:240–242). Before this first fire, the world was cold. Then the Thunders sent lightning to the bottom of a hollow sycamore tree on the island, starting a fire. The animals could see the smoke from this fire, but the island was across the water, so the animals held a council to make a plan for getting the fire and bringing it back. After the raven, the screech owl, the horned owl, the hooting owl, the little blacksnake, and the great blacksnake all failed to retrieve the fire, the animals held another council, and at last the water spider volunteered. She wove a bowl from her own thread, placed the bowl on her back, and crossed the water. She brought a single coal of fire back with her. Because of the water spider’s act, the Cherokee people have had fire ever since. The practice of carrying fire from townhouse to dwelling, and from one townhouse to another settlement (Mooney 1900a:395–397), is reminiscent of the water spider’s mythical trip, bringing fire across the water from the island—the center place—from which it originated (Mooney 1900a:240–242). Fires were kept in Cherokee townhouse hearths, and from those hearths, fire was spread to dwellings and to other settlements, in reenactments of the path of the water spider with the first fire. The story of the water spider is also reminiscent of practices whereby Cherokee war leaders carried fire from their townhouse hearth on war expeditions (Anderson et al. 2010b:23; Corkran 1969:44; Fogel-

son 1971:334) and expectations that those “war fires” and the fires in townhouse hearths were tended by people who kept them burning constantly (Mooney 1900a:396). This mythical journey to bring fire to the people is depicted on engraved shell gorgets from the late prehistoric and protohistoric Southeast (Brain and Phillips 1996:83–106; Penney 1985:189). Many such gorgets depict center symbols in the form of the cross-in-circle motif on the backs of spiders (Brain and Phillips 1996:107–112; Lankford 1987:66–68).

Hearths were built and fires kindled before townhouses were erected, and those hearths and fires were maintained throughout the life history of townhouses, as outlined in the historical myth, “The Mounds and the Constant Fire” (Mooney 1900a:395–397). According to this historical myth, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, a circle of stones was placed in the ground, a fire was lit at the center of the circle, one or more burials were placed in the ground, sacred items were buried with them, and basketloads of earth were put down to build a mound on which a townhouse was then built. As women piled earth atop the stones and burials, they left a space at the center around the fire, and they fitted a cedar trunk with the bark on around the fire to protect it from the earth surrounding it. This enclosure of a townhouse hearth within a cedar log recalls the hollow sycamore tree that is said to have housed the first fire, which the water spider visited. Given the careful treatment of fires in townhouse hearths, and the reference to townhouse fires encased in cedar, the fires kept in townhouse hearths may have served as symbolic reenactments of the mythical first fire. The fire in every Cherokee townhouse hearth formed a center place connecting that hearth, that fire, and that town to the mythical first fire. That connection spread to households and dwellings within Cherokee towns, as the fires in the hearths of domestic houses were periodically rekindled with fire taken from the townhouse hearth.

As noted in the myth “The Nûñně’hĩ and Other Spirit Folk,” fire was present in the Nûñně’hĩ townhouses, which, presumably, are analogous to the townhouses in Cherokee towns (Mooney 1900a:330–333; see also Fogelson 1982). The Nûñně’hĩ were immortal spirits, the “people who live anywhere,” and lived in the mountains surrounding Cherokee town areas, where they kept many townhouses, especially in the tallest mountains with bald summits. The Nûñně’hĩ are said to have had townhouses underneath the Nequassee mound, the summit of Pilot Knob in North Carolina, and Blood Mountain, near the source of the Nottely River in northeastern Georgia. These spirit people were

invisible and kept silent except when they wanted to be seen and heard, and, often, hunters in the mountains could hear dance songs and drumbeats from invisible Nûñné'ǰ townhouses, which would seem to relocate suddenly when people approached the apparent sources of those sounds. When people were lost in the mountains, the Nûñné'ǰ brought them to townhouses inside mountain summits, where they cared for those lost travelers and eventually guided them back home. Nûñné'ǰ warriors are also known to have helped Cherokee towns, as they once did at Nequassee, when they emerged from the Nequassee mound, saving the town from an enemy attack (Mooney 1900a:336–337). Nûñné'ǰ townhouses are said to have been present in a hole in the ground near the headwaters of the Nottely River, where warm air from the fire in the townhouse hearth reached the ground surface, and at a circular depression in the ground, roughly the size of a townhouse, near the headwaters of the Tugalo River, in northwestern South Carolina, near the old trading path that connected Cherokee towns to the South Carolina colony. Nûñné'ǰ are said to have lived anywhere and everywhere, but they did maintain townhouses at specific points within the landscape, especially underneath mountain summits. Nûñné'ǰ townhouses were center places, and some lay within mountains and earthen mounds, both very visible landmarks. People could not see the Nûñné'ǰ themselves, but they could see particular points within the landscape where those spirits dwelled.

Another historical myth, “The Removed Townhouses,” specifically relates townhouses to mountains and earthen mounds (Mooney 1900a:335–336). It is said that long before they were forcibly removed to Oklahoma, the people of Cherokee towns on the Valley and Hiwassee rivers, in the area of the Cherokee Valley towns of North Carolina, heard Nûñné'ǰ voices, warning them of wars and misfortunes to come and inviting the people of those towns to live with the Nûñné'ǰ in the mountains and rivers nearby. These voices said that those who wanted to live with the Nûñné'ǰ should gather in townhouses and fast there for seven days, without shouting or making war whoops during the fast. At the end of the seven days, the Nûñné'ǰ would come to take the people who fasted with them. People deliberated in their townhouses, and they decided to go with the Nûñné'ǰ to places where they would be happy forever. At the confluence of the Hiwassee River and Shooting Creek, at a place known as Du'stiya'lûñ'yǰ, people prayed and fasted, and after seven days, the Nûñné'ǰ took them under the water. The townspeople are still there in the water at

Du'stiya'lûñ'yĩ, and it is said that on warm summer days, when the wind crosses the surface of the water, people can hear the Nûññě'hĩ talking. Fish nets are known to catch on the bottom of the river at this spot, because the ancestors and spirits under the water grab the nets, to remind people they are still there. Not far away, the people of Anisgayâ'yĩ town fasted and prayed for six days, and on the seventh day, there were sounds from distant mountains that became louder and louder as they approached the Anisgayâ'yĩ townhouse. Suddenly the sounds were like thunder, and as the ground underneath the Anisgayâ'yĩ townhouse shook, some of the people inside it screamed. The Nûññě'hĩ had started lifting the Anisgayâ'yĩ townhouse off the ground, but the cry from the people startled them. The Nûññě'hĩ dropped part of the Anisgayâ'yĩ townhouse back to the earth, where it formed the mound known as Sě'tsĩ, but regrouped and carried the rest of the townhouse, and all the people inside it, to the summit of Tsuda'ye'lûñ'yĩ (Lone Peak), near the headwaters of the Cheoah River in Graham County, North Carolina. There the townspeople still reside, although they are invisible and immortal.

This story emphasizes the permanence of townhouses as enduring components of the landscape. Townhouses like that of the town of Anisgayâ'yĩ, earthen mounds such as Sě'tsĩ, mountain summits such as Tsuda'ye'lûñ'yĩ, and the place along the Hiwassee River known as Du'stiya'lûñ'yĩ connected Cherokee people to mythical ancestors and to events that took place in the mythical past. As durable landmarks in the Cherokee landscape, townhouses, mounds, and mountain summits formed center places connecting the mythical and ancestral past to the present.

As described in the historical myth “The Spirit Defenders of Nĩkwăsi” (Mooney 1900a:336–337; see also Fogelson 1982), the Nûññě'hĩ once emerged from the Nequassee mound and helped warriors from the town repel an attack by an unknown tribe from the southeast. According to oral tradition, these enemy warriors laid waste to the Lower Cherokee settlements and then advanced toward the mountains. Anticipating an attack, the warriors of Nequassee—“on the head of Little Tennessee”—gathered everybody from the town in the townhouse, and scouts kept a constant lookout for signs of danger. One day, at dusk, an alarm was given, and the warriors from Nequassee met the attackers. The warriors fought bravely but were eventually overwhelmed. At that point, hundreds of Nûññě'hĩ warriors—“armed and painted for the fight”—poured out of the Nequassee mound, becoming invisible when they reached the edges of

the settlement. The attackers were forced to retreat, and the Nûnně'hi pursued them to a ridge between the valleys of the French Broad and Tuckasegee rivers. The attackers hid behind rocks and trees, but arrows shot by the Nûnně'hi went around the rocks and trees, and only six of the attackers lived to reach the source of the Tuckasegee River, where they pleaded with the Nûnně'hi for mercy, at the place now known to the Cherokee as Dayûlsûn'yi, meaning "where they cried." The Nûnně'hi chief told them they deserved punishment for attacking the peaceful town of Nequassee, and the chief sent the survivors home to spread the news of what had taken place. The Nûnně'hi went back to the mound at Nequassee, and it is said that they are still there. During the United States Civil War, Federal troops ambushed Confederates posted near the Nequassee mound, in the town of Franklin, but they saw so many people (that is, the Nûnně'hi) that they retreated without attacking.

As for the enemy warriors who attacked Nequassee, it is tempting to relate this "unknown tribe" to one of two groups, or, perhaps, to both. One candidate is the Westoes, the group that was displaced from the Northeast by Iroquoian raids and eventually settled in abandoned areas of the Savannah River Valley. The Westoes are known to have been slave raiders and probably did attack Cherokee settlements during the late 1600s (Bowne 2009; Crane 1918; Galley 2002). Another candidate is Charles Town and the South Carolina colony, which was a major source of trade goods but also supported periodic military expeditions against Cherokee settlements during the 1700s and sponsored Westo raids against the Cherokee (Boulware 2011; Hatley 1993; Ramsey 2008).

References to the townhouse in this story shed light on the significance of townhouses to Cherokee towns. Given the threat of an impending attack by a powerful enemy, the warriors of Nequassee gathered the community in the townhouse. Here, the townhouse serves as a place of safety and refuge, adding to its multidimensional role as a community center for the town. When the battle seemed lost, and the safety of the town and townhouse under threat, the Nûnně'hi poured forth from the earthen mound underneath the townhouse, protecting the town and preserving the vitality of the community, as did the sacred possessions buried in the ground upon which townhouses were built.

Myths and legends refer to townhouses and everlasting fires in the Nequassee and Kituhwa mounds, and not only are townhouses present on the ground, on and in mounds and mountains, and in rivers, but there are also connections between townhouses and the sky. As noted in the cosmogonic myth "The

Origin of the Pleiades and the Pine” (Mooney 1900a:258–259), the stars in the Pleiades constellation are related to seven boys who lived when the world was new and danced around a townhouse before ascending to the sky. These seven boys were always playing the *gatayû’sťi* game beside the townhouse in their town; this game (known to archaeologists as *chunkey*) is played by rolling a stone disc along the ground and sliding or throwing a stick at the rolling stone. Their mothers scolded them, but the boys kept playing the game. One day, the mothers cooked *gatayû’sťi* stones with corn, and fed the stones to the boys when they came home for supper. The boys became angry, and they decided to go to the townhouse, where they would no longer trouble their mothers. The boys began dancing around the townhouse. When their mothers came to look for them, they saw them dancing and noticed that their feet were off the ground and that the boys rose higher with each circuit around the townhouse. They ran to catch their sons, but the boys were already higher than the roof of the townhouse. One mother brought her son back to the ground with his *gatayû’sťi* pole, but he struck the ground with such force that the earth closed around him. The other six boys kept dancing and circling up into the sky, forming the arrangement of stars known as the Pleiades, and to the Cherokee as *Ani’tsutsă* (The Boys). The townspeople grieved for them, and the mother whose son was swallowed by the earth went to that spot every day to cry for him. At the spot dampened by her tears sprouted a little green shoot that eventually became a tall pine tree.

The game of *gatayû’sťi*, or *chunkey*, probably originated in the Mississippi Valley and was played across much of eastern North America from late prehistory through the nineteenth century (Brown 1985; DeBoer 1993, 2001; Morse and Morse 1983; Pauketat 1994, 2004). Visitors to Creek settlements in the lower Southeast noted the presence of *chunkey* yards during the eighteenth century, and George Catlin made paintings of *chunkey* games that took place in villages in the Missouri Valley during the nineteenth century (Pauketat 2009: 36–50; Waselkov and Braund 1995:130–132, 154–155, 167–186). It is tempting to interpret the round *gatayû’sťi* stones in “The Origin of the Pleiades and the Pine” as center symbols, based on their circular shape, but a stronger argument can be made for center symbolism in the circuits made by the seven boys while they danced around the townhouse. This circular movement led them up into the sky, where they are still visible as stars, forming a visible connection between the sky vault and mythical events that took place “when the world was

new” at a townhouse. In this myth, townhouses are not only associated with earthen mounds, mountain summits, and rivers but also with the sky and the stars. It is tempting to relate the circular movements of the seven boys here, as well, to the concentric circular and spiral designs seen on engraved shell gorgets (Brain and Phillips 1996; Hally 2007; Muller 1966, 1989, 2007) and on complicated stamped and incised pottery from the greater southern Appalachians dating from late prehistory through the eighteenth century (Hally 1986a, 1994a; Moore 2002a; Riggs and Rodning 2002).

Of course, as noted at the beginning of this book (see also Hatley 1993:3–4), the trader Alexander Longe recorded an oral tradition about an enchanted Cherokee town known as Agustoghe, hidden in a whirlpool in a river (Corkran 1969:40–45). This enchanted town was centered within a whirlpool—which forms a spiral shape within a current—and within the whirlpool was a townhouse. It was centered temporally, as well, at a point before English traders and trade goods became commonplace in Cherokee towns.

Another reference to a spatial and temporal center place in the Cherokee landscape comes from the 1816 journal of Major John Norton and references to his 1813 visit to Cherokee towns (Fogelson 1978; Klinck and Talman 1970; Marcoux 2010a:56). Norton was the son of a Scottish woman and a Cherokee man from Keowee, one of the Lower Cherokee towns in northwestern South Carolina. As a member of a regiment of the British army in North America, he became an adopted member of an Iroquois village in the Northeast. During a visit to the southern Appalachians, he learned from Cherokee elders that the original Cherokee settlements were situated at the headwaters of the Little Tennessee River. The reference to the head of the Little Tennessee River places this origin point near the Coweeta Creek site. The myth recorded by Mooney (1900a:336–337; Duncan and Riggs 2003:141–156) entitled “The Spirit Defenders of Nīkwāsi” places Nequassee at the “head of the Little Tennessee,” and this area is not far away from locations of Cherokee Out towns along the Tuckasegee River, including Kituhwa, one of seven Cherokee “mother towns” whose mound is known in myth and cultural memory as an origin point of the Cherokee people (Duncan and Riggs 2003:72–74; Mooney 1900a:15, 182, 225, 525; Riggs et al. 1998:ix). While no one site should be singled out on the basis of archaeological evidence as the origin point of the Cherokee people, the landscape of that origin point—that “center place”—can be thought of as comparable to

that of archaeological sites in the upper Little Tennessee Valley and nearby areas in the Tuckasegee and upper Hiwassee valleys to the east and west, respectively.

Cherokee Oral Tradition and Archaeology

Archaeologists and ethnohistorians have debated and demonstrated the problems and prospects of applying oral tradition to the interpretation of archaeological evidence, the relevance of oral tradition to archaeology, and the ethical considerations of “excavating” both Native American oral traditions and past settlements of Native American people and groups (Bernardini 2005; Crowell and Howell 2013; Howey and O’Shea 2006, 2009). While I acknowledge the potential problems of using oral tradition to interpret archaeological evidence (Mason 2000, 2006, 2009), I advocate a form of direct historical analogy here in applying written accounts of Cherokee oral tradition to the interpretation of late prehistoric and protohistoric sites from historic Cherokee town areas, including the Coweeta Creek site. The present study concentrates on the archaeology of Cherokee settlements in southwestern North Carolina, the region in which James Mooney recorded Cherokee oral tradition in the late 1800s. The sites of interest here date to the period between the fifteenth century and the early 1700s. The Cherokee experienced dramatic cultural changes during this period, and oral traditions would have changed accordingly. Some Cherokee historical myths recorded by Mooney chronicle interactions with other Native American groups that were spurred by European contact and colonialism. At least one historical myth—“The Spirit Defenders of Nikwāši” (Mooney 1900a:336–337)—refers to enemy warriors attacking from the southeast, and, perhaps, those warriors represent South Carolina colonists or Native American allies of Charles Town and the South Carolina colony. According to the story recorded by Alexander Longe (Corkran 1969:40–43) about the enchanted Cherokee town of Agustoghe, located beneath a whirlpool in a river, the town was first known to the Cherokee about ten years before the English were present in Cherokee towns. A Cherokee legend about a place along Soco Creek in North Carolina refers to Cherokee warriors attacking a group of Spanish explorers (Mooney 1900a:408). Cherokee eagle killers are said to have at least sometimes asked the spirits of eagles to seek vengeance against the Spanish, not the Cherokee, reflecting, perhaps, “the enduring impression which the cruelties

of the early Spanish adventurers made upon the natives” (Mooney 1900a:282). These examples underscore the point that Cherokee oral tradition and cultural memory rapidly grew to encompass Cherokee reflections on the experiences of European contact and colonialism, as we should expect. That point notwithstanding, my argument here is that Cherokee oral tradition moves us closer to the cultural mindset of Cherokee people during the periods spanned by settlements at Coweeta Creek and other archaeological sites than is possible without reference to Cherokee oral tradition.

Because myths and legends are shaped by the experiences of people and communities, which makes it difficult to pinpoint the antiquity and veracity of oral traditions and of specific elements within them, oral tradition is not a straightforward guide to the interpretation of archaeological evidence (Mason 2000, 2006, 2009). According to this logic, oral traditions recorded in the 1800s should not be applied directly to archaeological or documentary evidence about life during the 1600s and before. This point is well taken, considering the dramatic changes the Cherokee and other Native North American groups experienced during this period, which spanned the sixteenth-century Spanish *entradas*, the colonial slave trade, the eighteenth-century English deerskin trade, the American Revolution, the Removal period, and the Civil War.

A second problem in applying oral tradition as an interpretive framework in archaeology is that different people remember myths and legends differently, tell them in different settings, and use words and phrases that are not always easily translated from one language to another (Anyon et al. 1997:79). Myths and legends grow organically and unpredictably. Unlike the dates of archaeological sites and primary historical sources, the date at which an oral tradition, or particular elements of it, first developed can be very difficult to determine.

A third problem with applying oral tradition to the study of archaeology is the bias introduced by participants in the oral tradition. The interests, life experiences, and agendas of people involved in relating and recording oral traditions affect what is remembered and what is written down. Of course, there are gaps and biases in all sources of evidence about the past—archaeological, historical, ethnological—and these problems are not unique to the challenges of deciphering and interpreting oral tradition.

In fact, the dynamic nature of oral tradition, in general, creates a parallel between archaeological sites and recorded versions of myths and legends, because both archaeological sites and oral narratives are palimpsests of sorts (Anyon

et al. 1997:86). Material remnants of cultural activity accumulate at archaeological sites, forming layers. What archaeologists find are outcomes of many events and myriad forces shaping the archaeological contexts uncovered during archaeological excavations. As oral traditions are told and retold, shared between generations, and remembered by different people with different experiences and perspectives, they likewise accumulate layers of material and meaning. Any single instance of relating an oral tradition, or writing it down, is the outcome of different cultural and historical forces, and the cultural knowledge accumulated as aspects of myths and legends are told, retold, remembered, and, in some cases, forgotten.

Despite these problems in applying oral tradition to the study of archaeology, there are compelling reasons to draw upon Native American myth, legend, and cultural memory as an interpretive framework for studying the archaeology of culturally affiliated sites. First, Native American oral tradition brings us closer to the perspectives of the people directly associated with sites and artifacts of archaeological interest and helps us to contextualize archaeological finds and our interpretations of them. Setting aside considerations of historical veracity, oral tradition is embedded within a cultural logic and worldview, and the details of myths and legends illustrate understandings about the world as it is and has been experienced by the people living in it. With respect to the Cherokee myths and legends recorded by James Mooney (1900a) and Alexander Longe (Corkran 1969), it is worth reiterating that these oral traditions make many references to earthen mounds, townhouses, hearths, fire, dwellings, and other “sites” that have direct parallels at archaeological sites, as well as to natural and cultural landmarks within the southern Appalachian landscape. Such sites and places form part of the mnemonic devices through which Cherokee people have remembered events and trends in the recent and more ancient past. Archaeology offers the chance to explore the intersections between the imagined landscape of Cherokee cultural memory and the landscape and built environment of Cherokee settlements.

Second, spatial referents are common in myth, legend, and cultural memory. While oral traditions are imagined, and reimagined, they are also anchored within mythical and historical landscapes (Robinson 2000; Schmidt 1983, 2006; Whitridge 2004), and, often, within architectural spaces. Such points of reference are directly amenable to archaeological consideration (Kelly 1997a, 1997b; Monroe 2011; Norman and Kelly 2004). Oral traditions and other forms

of social memory are relational forms of knowledge that make connections between cultural knowledge and particular places (Jones and Russell 2012:271), and they shape the “senses of place” that develop in different cultural settings (Jones and Russell 2012:268; Norder 2012). While the cartography of Cherokee myth, legend, and cultural memory is not a direct interpretive map for archaeologists to follow, it does offer a rich starting point for the consideration of the architecture and built environment at Coweeta Creek and other Cherokee sites in southwestern North Carolina and surrounding areas.

Center Places and Cherokee Towns

Archaeologists have much to contribute to knowledge of the relationships between people and place, between the mythical past and the present as they are manifested in settlements and monuments, and between the ideational dimensions of architecture and the built environment (Barrett 1990, 1996, 1999; Bradley 1998, 2000; van de Guchte 1999). Written versions of Cherokee oral traditions and of visits to Cherokee settlements during the eighteenth century identify several aspects of a Cherokee “sense of place” (sensu Basso 1984, 1988, 1996a, 1996b; Feld and Basso 1996) and “identity of landscape” (sensu Brady and Ashmore 1999; Knapp and Ashmore 1999; Snead 2004), and they identify center places that are amenable to archaeological study.

Center places are widespread within the landscape of late prehistoric and protohistoric Puebloan settlements in the American Southwest, and they are manifested at several different scales. Fowles (2004, 2009, 2010) describes networks of shrines placed at cardinal points around villages in the northern Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico, for example; some are relatively modest in scale, but, collectively, these shrines situate those villages and the people within them at the center of the world. Snead and Preucel (1999) relate shrines and springs to *shipap*, or places of origin in the Puebloan landscape and points at which people first entered the world in the mythical past. Semisubterranean ceremonial structures known as kivas likewise form powerful center places in the Puebloan landscape (Snead and Preucel 1999), and the holes known as sipapu in kiva floors likewise symbolize *shipap*, incorporating mythical origin places of people within the setting of sacred architecture. Snead (2002, 2008a, 2008b) relates these kinds of center places in the northern Rio Grande landscape to Puebloan identity—as is evident at sites dating primarily from the

1200s through 1500s. From his perspective, Puebloan identity and history were deeply embedded within the landscape and were materialized in the form of shrines, rock carvings, and pueblos with kivas and plazas visible from varying distances in the areas surrounding them. Of course, people chose places for settlements with considerations about community safety and stability, access to water, and the presence of arable farmland, but they also placed settlements with reference to natural and cultural landmarks and to mythical and historical events that took place at abandoned pueblos that were often still visible in the landscape.

From an earlier era in Puebloan culture history, center places are similarly evident in Chaco Canyon and at outlying settlements in the Chacoan landscape of northwestern New Mexico and surrounding areas of the northern Southwest, in the form of kivas, for example, and in the placement of kivas and pueblos relative to canyons and mesas. With respect to the layout and architecture of kivas and pueblos in Chaco Canyon and outlying areas of the Ancestral Pueblo landscape, Van Dyke (2004) demonstrates that Chacoan architecture emphasized balanced dualism and center places, including the concept of Chaco Canyon itself as a center place, connected to a network of Chacoan outliers with forms of masonry architecture comparable to monumental architecture in Chaco Canyon. Guided by Puebloan ethnography and oral tradition, especially as these pertain to movement across the landscape in the history of Puebloan societies, Van Dyke (2007) relates Chacoan architecture to Puebloan identity, cosmology, ideology, and memory. Chacoan great houses were large pueblos with plazas and kivas, including some very large kivas, multistory domestic room blocks, earthen mounds, and straight road segments emanating from them (Van Dyke 2003:181–186). Chacoan great houses were settings for periodic social gatherings and rituals, and they were probably places of pilgrimage. They did not have many permanent residents, although ritual specialists may have been permanent residents of the great houses in some cases. Beside great houses were earthen mounds, which were built in many stages over relatively long periods (Wills 2001). These mounds were composed of debris that was probably generated when kivas and houses were periodically cleaned out (Wills 2009). The placement of middens or mounds beside settlements has considerable antiquity in the Puebloan Southwest, and in Puebloan cosmology and oral tradition, they are considered sacred, in part because they make the ancestral past visibly present in the landscape (Van Dyke 2003:187–

189). Chacoan architecture is present at several sites outside Chaco Canyon known as Chacoan outliers, which were venues for community events for residents of surrounding areas; the architecture of Chacoan outliers referenced great houses in Chaco Canyon, and several Chacoan outliers are encircled and enclosed by earthen berms, emphasizing the presence of “center places” in the greater Chacoan landscape of the northern Southwest (Cameron 2002). As in the case of Chacoan road segments near great houses in Chaco Canyon itself, road segments are associated with Chacoan outliers, probably because they formalized the movement in and out of center places within a landscape of pueblos, abandoned pueblos, natural landmarks, and areas that were farmed (Van Dyke 2007).

Comparable points can be made about townhouses, earthen mounds, and other center places in the Cherokee landscape of the southern Appalachians and about the relevance of Cherokee oral tradition and ethnohistory to the archaeology of center places in the southern Appalachians. As visible and enduring landmarks, earthen mounds connected people to particular points in the landscape, and there are both “real” and “mythical” connections between mounds and townhouses; some townhouses were built on mound summits, and earthen mounds are associated with events that took place in the mythical past. Townhouses were community centers and hosted dances, town-council deliberations, ritual preparations for warfare, and diplomatic events involving people from outside the local community. References to the past are found in the architecture of townhouses, in the presence of burials and sacred possessions that were placed in the surfaces where townhouses were then built, and in the presence of “constant” or “everlasting” fire in townhouse hearths. Fire from townhouse hearths was shared with households, thereby connecting the hearths in household dwellings to the hearths within townhouses. Just as kivas, sipapu, shrines, and the ruins of abandoned pueblos centered Puebloan groups within the landscape and history of the Southwest, so did townhouses center Cherokee towns within the southern Appalachian landscape, creating durable connections between people and place. The sense of permanence embodied in townhouses is emphasized in Cherokee myths through references connecting townhouses to the sky (and, specifically, the stars in the constellation of Pleiades) and to mountains and rivers where mythical townhouses were placed.

Archaeological manifestations of these kinds of center places are known from several late prehistoric sites, protohistoric sites, and historic Cherokee sites

in the southern Appalachians, including earthen mounds, townhouses, plazas, and hearths that were built and rebuilt in place, creating containers for “constant” and “everlasting” fires. More subtle archaeological signatures of center places include arrangements of deeply set roof support posts around hearths, which connect floors (earth) to the roofs (sky) of structures (sensu Pauls 2005; Prine 2000); concentrations of burials in and around structures (see Hally 2008); and semicircular or circular ditches enclosing spaces that were set apart from the settings of domestic life (see Benyshek 2010). Many characteristics of center places are evident in the built environment of the Coweeta Creek site, especially in the form of the sequences of townhouses at the site, as discussed in the following chapter.

3

Public Architecture

One of the Cherokee cosmogonic myths recorded by James Mooney (1900a: 239–240), “How the World was Made,” characterizes the earth as a great island floating in an ocean and suspended from the sky vault by cords attached to the corners of the island at each of the four cardinal directions. The cords kept the earth from sinking into the water, an event that would mark the end of the world. Many earthen platform mounds from the late prehistoric Southeast were also quadrilateral. Knight (2006:429; see also Hally 2002:109) characterizes these platform mounds as “earth icons,” and he relates the corners of mounds to the mythical four corners of this “great island.” Many late prehistoric and protohistoric townhouses in the southern Appalachians were likewise square structures, with rounded corners and arrangements of four roof support posts placed around central hearths. Roof support posts connected the ground (earth) to the roof (sky) and can be considered analogous to the four cords suspending the earth from the sky vault. From this perspective, the cords—manifested architecturally as roof support posts—were critical to keeping the world intact. Without these cords, and without the proper preparation and curation of roof support posts, the earth could, potentially, disappear, by sinking into the ocean. Sullivan (1987; see also Fogelson 2004:341; Schroedl 1998) characterizes late prehistoric and town layouts in eastern Tennessee as domestic structures “writ large,” and, indeed, Cherokee dwellings closely resembled townhouses. Both the public and domestic structures at Coweeta Creek demonstrate shapes, alignments, layouts, and arrangements of roof support posts and central hearths that suggest these structures were architectural depictions

of the earth island described in the Cherokee myth recorded by Mooney (Hally 2002:109).

Across the greater southern Appalachians, and elsewhere in the Southeast, earthen platform mounds marked the major centers of regional chiefdoms during late prehistory (Blitz 1999; Blitz and Livingood 2004; Emerson and Pauketat 2008), and townhouses were focal points in the landscape of Cherokee towns during the eighteenth century (B. A. Smith 1979). Platform mound sequences chronicled the histories of the communities associated with specific mounds, and they materialized the succession of one generation to another (Ferguson 1971; Hally 1993, 1996, 1999, 2006; Wesler 2006). Temporal gaps are evident in many mounds in the southern Appalachians, including Etowah, for example, as well as Chauga and Tugalo, reflecting the periodic abandonment and resettlement of some mound sites (Anderson 1994, 1996a, 1996b; Cobb and King 2005; A. King 1999, 2001, 2003a, 2003b).

Documentary evidence indicates that some Cherokee townhouses were built on the summits of platform mounds, such as those at Nequassee and Cowee (Waselkov and Braund 1995), although the only direct archaeological evidence of a townhouse built on a mound is the geophysical signature from the Kituhwa mound (Riggs and Shumate 2003). It is likely that there were townhouses on the summits of the Nequassee, Cowee, Chauga, Tugalo, Estatoe, Dillard, Peachtree, and Spike Buck mounds during the 1600s and 1700s, but at present, there are no definitive *archaeological* signatures of public structures on the summits of those mounds (Kelly and de Baillou 1960; Kelly and Neitzel 1961; Setzler and Jennings 1941). By contrast, the archaeological remnants of the historic Cherokee townhouses at the Overhill Cherokee settlement of Toqua are *not* built on the summits of mounds (Koerner et al. 2011; Polhemus 1987; Schroedl 1978). Some historic Cherokee townhouses were associated directly with earthen mounds, and there were symbolic linkages between townhouses and mounds, as well.

Documentary sources from the eighteenth century describe Cherokee townhouses as venues for meetings with colonists and traders, town-council deliberations, gatherings among men, ritual preparations for warfare, and dances and ritual events, including those preceding ballgames against other towns. Townspeople gathered for town-council deliberations in Cherokee townhouses, and because Cherokee towns sought consensus on decisions affecting entire

communities, those deliberations could last for long periods (Perdue 1998:55–56; Persico 1979). Colonial trader George Chicken, Colonel Maurice Moore, Colonel John Herbert, Sir Alexander Cuming, William Henry Lyttleton, Lieutenant Henry Timberlake, and others all met with head men from Cherokee towns in Cherokee townhouses, and Timberlake described events during which proposed treaty terms were read aloud in Cherokee townhouses (D. H. King 2007). James Adair wrote of an invitation in 1751 by “the old beloved men” and “war chieftains” of Middle Cherokee towns to a group of South Carolina traders to visit them in a townhouse, to feast and to smoke “according to their old friendly custom” (Braund 2005:200). William Bartram attended a dance and a feast that lasted all night in the Cowee townhouse in 1775 in preparation for a ballgame the following day against a neighboring Cherokee town (Waselkov and Braund 1995:85). Bartram noted that there were many such dances held in townhouses throughout the year (Waselkov and Braund 1995:86). Gearing (1962:26–28; see also Champagne 1983, 1990, 1992; Fogelson 1962, 1963, 1971; Herndon 1971) argues that the organization of warriors for ballgames, and the organization of Cherokee town leaders for diplomatic negotiations with other native or colonial groups, was analogous to the organization of warriors for warfare; all of these activities probably were associated with events that took place in Cherokee townhouses. Gearing (1962:47–49) refers to town-council deliberations about war, ritual preparations for war by warriors, and ritual purification of warriors after returning home from the warpath—events that probably took place largely within townhouses. Longe describes events in and around townhouses when successful warriors were welcomed home by townspeople, when those warriors sang and spoke about their deeds and accomplishments on the warpath, and when war leaders and Beloved Men gave younger men the war names and war honors they had earned (Corkran 1969:44–46; Gearing 1962:49).

Referring to Chickasaw, Creek, and Cherokee towns from across the Southeast, Adair (Boulware 2011:14–15; Hally 2002:107; Hudson 1977) described rectangular summer houses paired with circular winter houses, whose floors were lower than the surrounding ground and whose roofs were covered with daub. He wrote that every town had a community structure, or a “mountain house,” similar to the typical domestic house but much larger (Williams 1930:453). He characterized these public structures as gathering places for male elders and warriors and for feasting and dancing by entire towns (Braund 2005:410).

During his visit to Overhill Cherokee settlements in eastern Tennessee, Timberlake (D. H. King 2007:17; Williams 1927:59) noted that the typical townhouse was made of wood and covered with earth and looked rather like a “small mountain.” He added that it was very dark inside townhouses, because there was only a single relatively small smokehole through the roof, and that much of the smoke from the fire in the townhouse hearth would settle in the roof. He described the doorway to a townhouse as a long, narrow entryway, wide enough to accommodate only one person at a time. Timberlake described the inside of a townhouse as comparable to an amphitheater, with rows of seats surrounding the center, where the hearth and the seats of “head warriors” were placed.

Daniel Butrick and John Howard Payne, who lived in Cherokee towns during the early nineteenth century, described traditional Cherokee townhouses as circular or heptagonal structures, with walls between six and eight feet tall and conical roofs covered with bark and supported by sturdy interior posts (Anderson et al. 2010b:435–436). Outside a townhouse was built a small shed, or portico. Beside the shed was a level yard, or plaza. Butrick and Payne describe some townhouses as having seven sides (Anderson et al. 2010b:145; Witthoft 1949:49), one for each of the seven traditional Cherokee clans (Anderson et al. 2010a:221; Mooney 1900a:212–213). Whether circular, heptagonal, octagonal, or “square with rounded corners” (that is, four sides and four corners, or the equivalent of eight sides), townhouses followed the same basic template from the 1500s through the early 1800s (Hally 2008; Schroedl 1978, 1986b, 2009; Riggs 2008), and the shapes of townhouses may have been, in part, a function of size (Rodning 2011b).

Butrick was a Christian missionary and a student of Cherokee language and culture, and Payne was an author, actor, and, eventually, an advocate for the Cherokee people (Anderson et al. 2010a:xii–xxvii). Based on their experiences, their consultations and interactions with Cherokee people, and oral tradition, Butrick and Payne described a great many aspects of traditional Cherokee culture, including a variety of community events that took place in townhouses. Many written accounts from the eighteenth century referred to the dimensions and other architectural details of Cherokee townhouses and described significant events that took place in them and on the plazas adjacent to them, but they often did not delve into the symbolic aspects of the townhouses and events. By contrast, Butrick and Payne wrote about seating arrangements during different townhouse events, purification rituals and the series of annual festivals

that included events held in Cherokee townhouses, practices of kindling and rekindling the sacred fires kept in Cherokee townhouse hearths, and other topics. Mooney (1900a:502–503) drew upon these early-nineteenth-century writings in documenting the oral tradition “The Mounds and the Constant Fire,” and its references to Cherokee townhouses and earthen mounds, during the late nineteenth century.

Several myths and legends likewise refer to Cherokee townhouses. Townhouses are noted in Cherokee myths and legends as sources of fire for the hearths in household dwellings, and everlasting fires are said to burn in earthen mounds at Nequassee and Kituhwa (Mooney 1900a:396). The great Thunder and his sons are said to live above the sky vault, but other Thunders are said to live in waterfalls and on mountains, where they maintain townhouses (Mooney 1900a:257). The immortals (Núnně’hí), or “people who live anywhere,” are also said to have townhouses in the mountains, especially on bald mountain summits where no trees grow (Mooney 1900a:330). The cosmogonic myth “Kana’ťi and Selu: The Origin of Game and Corn” (Mooney 1888:98–105, 1900:242–249; Zogry 2010:42–43) records the story of the first hunter (Kana’ťi, husband of Selu) and the first farmer (Selu, wife of Kana’ťi). Kana’ťi sets out on a journey to follow Selu to the land of the dead, the Darkening Land, after Selu is killed. Kana’ťi visits several settlements on his way to the Darkening Land, in most cases finding the people gathered in townhouses.

As recorded in the historical tale “The False Warriors of Chilhowee” (Boulware 2011:1–3; Mooney 1900a:375–377), townhouses were settings for Cherokee scalp dances, during which warriors adopted war names and recounted their accomplishments on the warpath. According to this tale, the warriors from Chilhowee claimed to have attacked Shawnee settlements, which during the eighteenth century were located in the Ohio River Valley; in fact, they had attacked people from the Cherokee town of Cowee. When they learned what had happened, the people of Cowee sought revenge, threatening to do so during the dance that took place seven days later in the Chilhowee townhouse.

In the story “The Removed Townhouses” (Mooney 1900a:335–336), as noted in chapter 2, people in Cherokee towns along the Hiwassee and Valley rivers in southwestern North Carolina heard voices warning them of war and misfortune to come. The Núnně’hí invited people to fast in their townhouses and stay quiet for seven days, after which the Núnně’hí would take the people to live with them under the water. Townspeople gathered in their townhouses to

deliberate. The people of a town named Anisgayá'yí decided to fast together in their townhouse to prepare for the Nûñné'hí to take them away. On the seventh day, thunder from faraway mountains grew louder and louder, until it became a roar, the ground underneath the Anisgayá'yí townhouse began to shake, and people began to scream. The Nûñné'hí had begun to lift the Anisgayá'yí townhouse and the mound underneath it, but were startled by the people's screams, and dropped part of the townhouse back to earth. That part of the townhouse became a mound known as Sě'tsǐ, but the Nûñné'hí carried the rest of the townhouse to a mountain peak known as Tsuda'ye'lúń'yí, thereby connecting townhouses to earthen mounds and mountain summits, both of which were (and are) permanent landmarks.

The relationship between townhouses and earthen mounds is also evident in the historical myth "The Mounds and the Constant Fire" (Mooney 1900a:395–397), which describes Cherokee practices of building townhouses, as noted in chapter 2. This story refers to placing stones, hearths, burials, and sacred possessions in the ground upon which townhouses were to be built. With respect to townhouses as architectural spaces within the Cherokee cultural landscape, this tale describes the relationship between townhouses and earthen mounds, the placement of burials and sacred possessions in the ground before a townhouse was built, and the presence of a sacred and perpetual fire in the townhouse hearth. The beads and other sacred possessions placed in the ground were "conjured" with magical formulas to protect the townhouse, to scare away enemy warriors with the threat of disease, and, effectively, to preserve the vitality of the town itself. There is some difference here between the description Mooney gives of townhouse locations and the locations noted by Adair and Bartram. Adair describes townhouses on hilltops. Bartram notes that both the Cowee and Whatoga townhouses—as well as several abandoned townhouses in the Lower and Middle town areas—were built on earthen mound summits, and although he does not specify whether those households were natural landforms or artificial mounds, they could be either or both. Both descriptions are probably correct, in that townhouses and large settlements were typically placed close to rivers and streams (like the mounds of Cowee and Nequassee), and townhouses were sometimes placed atop mounds (as at Cowee and probably at Nequassee), or on high ground.

The cosmogonic myth "The Origin of the Pleiades and the Pine" (Mooney 1900a:258) recounts the tale of seven boys who played chunky by the town-

house, despite scolding from their mothers. Their mothers fed them chunky stones as punishment, which made the boys angry. They went back to the townhouse and began dancing around it, lifting higher into the air with each lap around the townhouse. One mother managed to pull her son back down to the ground with a chunky pole, but he hit the ground so hard that the earth swallowed him. The other six boys circled up to the sky, where they became the stars in the constellation Pleiades. Just as earthen mounds and Cherokee townhouses depict the earth island (Knight 2006:424) and are symbolically connected to the natural and cultural landmarks of mounds and mountains, townhouses are connected to the cosmos through this story about the Pleiades.

These references to mythical townhouses, and documentary evidence about historic townhouses, demonstrate the following points about their symbolic dimensions as part of the Cherokee cultural landscape and the built environment of Cherokee towns. First, townhouses were settings for events significant to Cherokee community life. Second, townhouses marked the places where significant warriors, community leaders, and sacred possessions of Cherokee towns were buried. Third, townhouses enclosed the hearths in which sacred fire was kept. Lastly, townhouses and earthen mounds were monuments and permanent landmarks, and they were related to events in the mythical and historic past.

Public Architecture and Public Spaces at Coweeta Creek

At least six—and probably seven—stages of a townhouse were built and rebuilt in a single spot at the Coweeta Creek site. Based on pottery, radiocarbon dates, and colonial trade goods, the last stage of the townhouse dates to the late 1600s or early 1700s, and its first stage dates to the early seventeenth century, or, perhaps, the late 1500s, at the earliest (B. J. Egloff 1967; Rodning 2009a). When the site was first mapped by UNC archaeologists in the 1960s, the highest point on the ground surface was very close to the location of the townhouse (Figure 1.4; K. T. Egloff 1971). Given the history of modern farming and earthmoving, it would be difficult to confirm whether that was a relatively high point in the alluvial bottomlands along the Little Tennessee River when the Coweeta Creek townhouse was first built, but I consider it likely that local topography guided the placement of the townhouse at this particular location. Although it was not built as an earthen platform mound, like those at Nequas-

see and Cowee, the Coweeta Creek townhouse mound was formed as successive stages of the townhouse were burned down, buried, and rebuilt (Rodning 2009a). Figure 3.1 shows the concentrations of postholes, entrance trenches, hearths, burials, and other features associated with these successive stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse. Figure 1.2 shows the locations of stratigraphic profiles exposed in the Coweeta Creek townhouse mound, and profile drawings keyed to Figure 1.2 are shown in Figure 3.2. Outside the main townhouse (Structure 1) was a ramada or summer townhouse (Structure 2), and beside these paired structures was a plaza that was covered at least in part with clay and sand (Rodning 2002a).

The first pair of winter (Structure 1) and summer (Structure 2) townhouses was built on a clean surface, and the winter townhouse was probably built in a basin (Figure 3.1; compare with Hally 2002, 2008:68–70, 73–78, 131–132). There is no indication that there were any structures present in this area before the townhouse was first built. Accumulations of pre-townhouse-mound humus near the edges of Structure 1 indicate that the ground surface was cleared off, probably to create a symbolically pure surface on which to build a townhouse. The winter townhouse (Structure 1) was 15.85 by 15.85 meters square, with rounded corners. The summer townhouse (Structure 2) was approximately 12 to 13 meters by 3 meters in size and was placed directly outside the entrance to Structure 1. The corners of Structure 1 corresponded roughly to the cardinal directions, and its original entryway was placed in the middle of the southeastern edge of the townhouse, facing southeast. The long axis of the summer townhouse was perpendicular to the alignment of the townhouse entryway. There were four major roof support posts in Structure 1, and their arrangement around the central hearth corresponded to the placement of the structure's corners relative to the cardinal directions. Several burials were placed in the ground either before or soon after the townhouse was first built, in the area outside the original entryway and in the area inside Structure 1 between the entryway and the central hearth.

The accumulations of pre-mound humus at the edges of the townhouse and the presence of paired entrance trenches are good indications that an earthen embankment surrounded the winter townhouse (Figure 3.2; compare with Hally 2002, 2008:73–78). Groups of burials were present on each side of the original entrance trenches; people would have moved directly between these groups of burials while entering and exiting the townhouse. The entryway, and the buri-

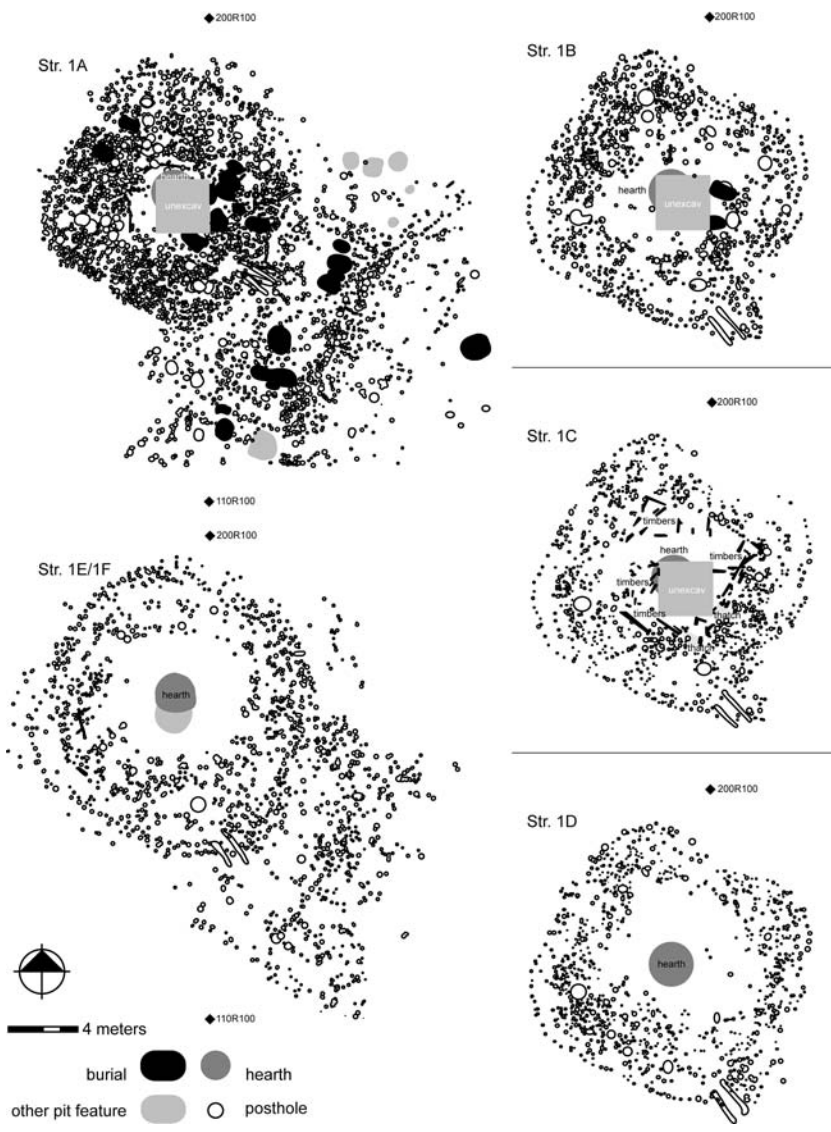


Figure 3.1. Sequence of public structures at the Coweeta Creek site. Reproduced with permission from *American Antiquity* 74(4), © Society for American Archaeology (Rodning 2009a:641).

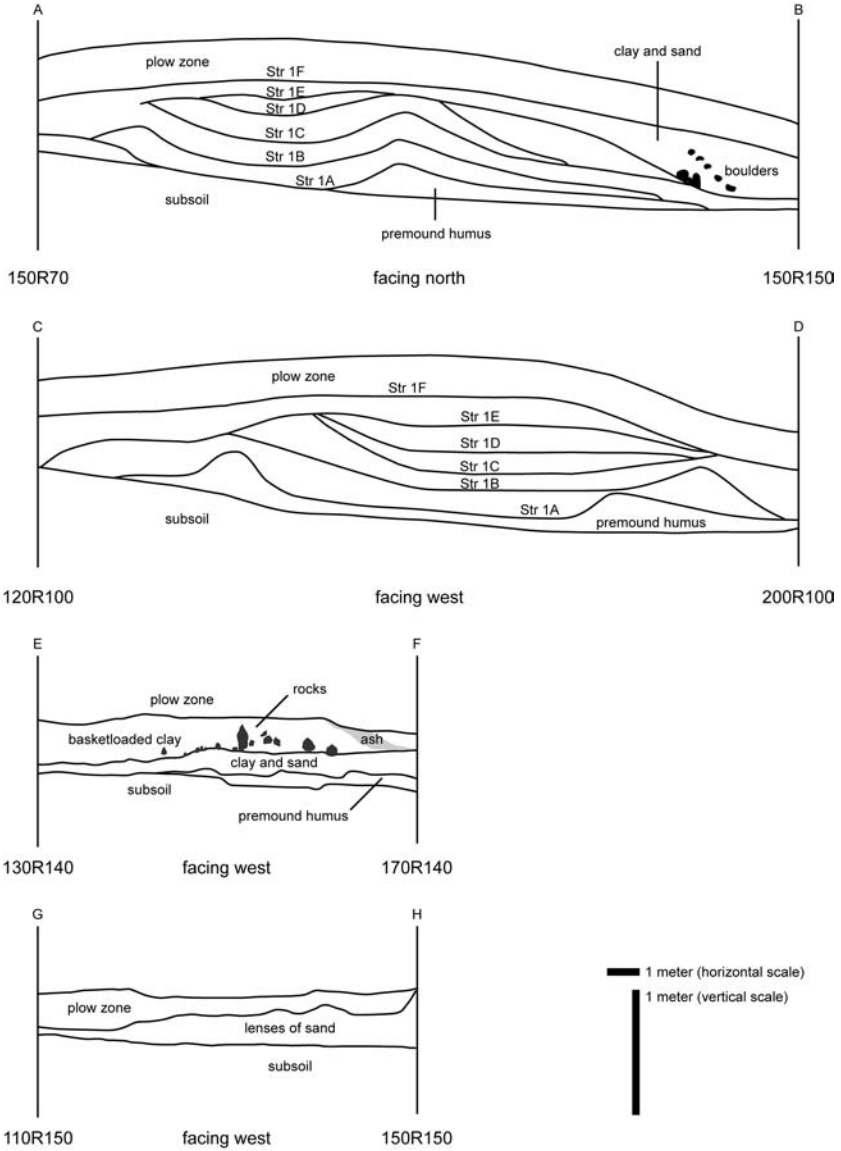


Figure 3.2. Stratigraphic profiles through the Coweeta Creek townhouse mound (see Figure 1.2 for profile locations; see also Rodning 2010a:68).

als beside it, guided movement into and out of the townhouse. This pathway was perpendicular to the long axes of the summer townhouse and plaza and corresponded to the alignments of entryways in domestic structures south and east of the plaza. Later stages of the entryway were placed at the southernmost corner of the winter townhouse, although they shared the same alignment as the original entryway, and clusters of burials may have been placed beside this entryway, as in the case of burials beside the original embankment. Before the entrance was moved to the corner, it was rebuilt in the original location but at a slightly different angle than its predecessor. It is possible that the townhouse entryway opened toward the southeast to relate the townhouse to the symbolism of “south” and “east” as cardinal directions, including the presence of light and the rising sun in the east. It is also possible that the townhouse entryway guided movement from the townhouse and plaza toward a point in the Little Tennessee River where townspeople could go to water, both as a daily practice and as a practice associated with ball games and other community rituals (Zogry 2010:132–139).

Six townhouse floors were recognized in the field during excavations of the townhouse mound, above the surface that was created when the pre-townhouse-mound humus was removed (Rodning 2002a, 2009a). I have previously concluded that there were six stages of the townhouse. I now suggest there were at least seven. The posthole patterns and features that I have associated with Structure 1A (Rodning 2009a, 2010a) probably represent two stages of the townhouse, rather than one. It is possible that the two pairs of entrance trenches associated with this stage of the townhouse simply reflect renovation or reconstruction of the entryway rather than an entirely new stage of this public structure. On the other hand, given the significance of the entryway in guiding movement in and out of the townhouse, and the placement of burials outside the entryway on each side, I now consider it more likely that any adjustments to the placement and alignment of the entryway would have been significant developments in the life history of the townhouse as a community structure. Given the shift in the angle at which the entryway was aligned, the replacement of the original entryway may represent a correction of sorts, if people in the town decided the first townhouse was slightly offset from the desirable alignment. Of course, later stages of the entryway were placed in the corner of the townhouse. The movement of the entryway to the corner may in part reflect instability in the ground surface at the original entryway or the compara-

tive ease of having an entryway at a corner, where the posts from two different walls came together. Digging the first pair of entrance trenches, and then the second, may have created an unstable surface, making it necessary to move the entryway at later stages of the townhouse.

If and when moving the doorway was deemed necessary, it could have been shifted just slightly to the southwest or northeast, or left and right, respectively, of the original entryway. The presence of burials outside the original entryway is probably one reason that it was moved all the way to one corner, assuming it was not acceptable to construct an entryway that would disturb those burials. Interestingly, there are groups of burials on each side of the later entryway, at the southernmost corner of Structure 1, creating the same effect as burials bordering the pathway leading to the original entryway. Meanwhile, it may have been preferable from an architectural engineering perspective to place the entryway at the corner of Structure 1, because the gaps between posts associated with any two walls would have been easy points within the framework of the structure at which to place an entryway.

All the burials in structures 1 and 2 are associated with early stages of the townhouse. The tops of some burial pits were visible on the floors of structures 1A and 1B. Others were visible at the top of subsoil, indicating that they were placed in the ground just before the first townhouse was built, or soon afterward. Burials placed near the corner entryway probably were associated with the second or third stages of the townhouse, when the entryway was first placed at the southern corner of the structure. None of the burials can be associated with later stages of the townhouse. Mooney (1900a:395–396) records the traditional practice of burying one or more people in the ground, along with artifacts that were conjured to protect the town and townhouse, before the townhouse itself was built; the burials and grave goods in the Coweeta Creek townhouse may be evidence of this practice.

The first four successive stages—or five, if, based on the presence of two different pairs of entrance trenches, Structure 1A is counted as two stages—each have the same layout, shape, dimensions, and alignment. The only change in the townhouse after the Structure-1A stage is the movement of the entryway. As described in the historical legend “The Mounds and the Constant Fire” (Mooney 1900a:396), permanent fires were kept in Cherokee townhouse hearths, and those hearths were surrounded by hollow cedar logs, with the bark on, to protect the hearth from the earth. There is no evidence that cedar logs surrounded

the hearth in the Coweeta Creek townhouse, but there was a fired clay rim around the hearth. Once the first Coweeta Creek townhouse fire was lit, it effectively burned in the same spot until the townhouse was abandoned, in the sense that the hearth was maintained at the same place at each stage of the townhouse. Just as the hearth was kept in place throughout the history of the townhouse, roof support posts (symbolizing the “cords” from which the earth was suspended from the sky vault) were kept in the same place, at least through the Structure-1D stage. The last two stages of the townhouse, structures 1E and 1F, may have had different arrangements of roof support posts around the hearth, although the hearth itself was in the same spot.

The cyclical life history of the townhouse was punctuated by burning, burying, and rebuilding, events analogous to the death, rebirth, and renewal of the broader community (Rodning 2009a:652–656). As described in “The Mounds and the Constant Fire” (Mooney 1900a:396), just before the annual Green Corn dance, the fires in the hearths in domestic houses were extinguished and then rekindled with fire from townhouse hearths. Green Corn dances and related events symbolized the rebirth and renewal of an entire community (Perdue 1998:25–27; Wetmore 1983; Witthoft 1949) and were held annually, both in Cherokee towns and in the settlements of other native groups throughout the Southeast (Braund 2008:24; Gearing 1962:3–4; Hudson 1976:365–375). Green Corn ceremonialism during the nineteenth century may have encompassed several different traditional festivals from earlier eras, including the Festival of the First New Moon of Spring, the New Green Corn Feast, the Ripe Green Corn Feast, and others (Anderson et al. 2010a:34–35; Zogry 2010:107, 110–113). During the Festival of the First New Moon of Spring and the New Green Corn Feast, the hearths and the fires in townhouses were renewed and rekindled (Anderson et al. 2010a:38–39; Witthoft 1949:33). Townhouses were not rebuilt every year, but the acts of putting out townhouse fires, burning townhouses down, and burying and rebuilding them demonstrate the emphasis on cycles of rebirth and renewal. Louis-Philippe, the Duke of Orleans and later the King of France, visited Toqua and other Cherokee settlements in eastern Tennessee during the late eighteenth century (Schroedl 1978; Sturtevant 1978). Louis-Philippe wrote that Cherokee townhouses were traditionally rebuilt atop the remnants of preceding stages of those structures, an architectural practice that had the effect of creating low earthen mounds (Knight 2006:424; Sturtevant 1978:200). The cycles of building, burning, burying, and rebuilding the Coweeta Creek town-

house have parallels in the archaeology of Caddoan structures in eastern Oklahoma and Arkansas (Kay and Sabo 2006; Perttula 2009; Trubitt 2009), earthen mounds at Caddoan sites from Arkansas down to eastern Texas (Schambach 1996), some Mississippian platform mounds in the Tennessee River Valley in Alabama (Krause 1996), and ceremonial architecture in southwestern North America (Creel and Anyon 2003; Crown and Wills 2003; Walker 2002).

While the renovation and maintenance of the townhouse, including the replacement of some posts, probably took place periodically, as needed, the complete rebuilding of townhouses probably took place every 15 to 25 years (Rodning 2009a:649–651; compare with Cook 2005; Knight 2004:741). Colonial trade goods and a single radiocarbon date from the last stage of the Coweeta Creek townhouse clearly place it in the late 1600s, or more likely in the very early 1700s (Rodning 2010b:29–48; see also Marcoux 2010a, 2012b). Radiocarbon dates and pottery from the first stage of the Coweeta Creek townhouse place it in the early-to-mid 1600s, or perhaps as early as the late 1500s (Rodning 2009a:638–639). If the abandonment of the townhouse can be dated to approximately 1715, and if we assume that there were six or seven stages of the townhouse represented in the entire sequence and that the original townhouse can be dated to approximately 1600, there would be somewhere between 15 and 25 years between rebuilding episodes. This estimate is slightly greater than, or at the high end of, estimates for the longevity of Native American post-in-ground structures in eastern North America (Milner 1986:230–231; Pauketat 1989:302, 2003:46; B. D. Smith 1995:239–242), and slightly greater than estimates for the longevity of post-in-ground earthlodges on the Great Plains (Roper 2005:120–122). It is close to the average lifespan of each stage of the Apalachee council house beside the Spanish settlement of Mission San Luis, in Tallahassee (Shapiro and Hann 1990). The Apalachee council house at San Luis was first built in 1656, and it was rebuilt twice between 1656 and 1704 (Hann 1994:347–349; Hann and McEwan 1998; McEwan 2001, 2004:671; Shapiro and Hann 1990). Additional circumstantial evidence in support of this proposed time frame is the fact that Alexander Longe (Corkran 1969) does not refer to the longevity of Cherokee townhouses in the postscript to his journal of life in Cherokee towns, from sometime before 1710 until 1724. His actual journal, some 74 pages long, is lost. Longe may have noted the longevity of townhouses and the periodicity of events related to building and rebuilding townhouses in his journal, but it is also possible that he never lived in any one town long enough to witness an

entire cycle of building and rebuilding a townhouse. Longe did note in the postscript to his journal that when a townhouse was built, “there is commonly ten towns about building one of them” (Corkran 1969:36), indicating that a great number of people were involved in the construction, whether from one town or many. Given the number of people involved in building or rebuilding townhouses and the amounts of wood, bark, thatch, and earth necessary to build them, it is likely that they were built to last as long as possible. Even if there were a great many people involved in building a townhouse, the tasks of building and maintaining townhouses may have fallen largely to men during periods of the year when they were not busy helping women with planting and the harvest and not away hunting and making war (Gearing 1962:2–3).

Generally speaking, the late stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse were direct replicas of the early stages, although the last two stages, structures 1E and 1F, were slightly larger and more rounded at the corners than structures 1A through 1D (Figure 3.1). As is evident from public structures at the late prehistoric Ledgeford Island site (Sullivan 1987), the protohistoric King site (Hally 2008), the seventeenth-century Lower Cherokee settlement at the Chattooga site in northwestern South Carolina (Schroedl 1994, 2000, 2001), and the seventeenth-century Coweeta Creek site (Rodning 2002a, 2009a), late prehistoric and protohistoric public structures in the southern Appalachians were square with rounded corners. Archaeological and documentary evidence indicates that Cherokee townhouses in eastern Tennessee were circular or octagonal (Polhemus 1987; Schroedl 1978, 1986b, 2009), and William Bartram (Waselkov and Braund 1995) describes the Cowee townhouse as round. The shift from townhouses that were “square with rounded corners” (which, itself, is essentially octagonal, with four straight sides and four rounded corners, like the Cherokee townhouses at Toqua) to circular townhouses is probably related to the enlargement of Cherokee townhouses. Townhouses at Overhill Cherokee settlements in eastern Tennessee demonstrate that townhouse size increases over the eighteenth century; meanwhile, the typical number of roof support posts increases from four to eight, to hold up larger and therefore heavier roofs (Schroedl 1978, 1986b). The increase in townhouse size and the shift from four to eight roof supports are apparent in the two successive stages of the eighteenth-century Overhill Cherokee townhouse at Chota-Tanasee (Schroedl 1986b). At first glance, there is a significant difference between a square and a circular townhouse, but from another perspective, it is evident that they are based on the same archi-

tectural template (Rodning 2011b). Pushing out the sides of square townhouses would have given them a more rounded shape, making it possible to build larger townhouses on the same general template. This development is seen in the enlargement of the Coweeta Creek townhouse during its last two stages, which are roughly 15.85 meters in diameter, as compared to the first five stages, which are roughly 14.63 meters per side. The enlargement of the Coweeta Creek townhouse, like the enlargement of eighteenth-century townhouses more generally, probably reflects an increase in the number of people affiliated with individual towns and the necessity for constructing larger townhouses to accommodate more people during town council deliberations and other events that took place in townhouses.

Beside the winter townhouse at Coweeta Creek was a rectangular ramada, or summer townhouse (Rodning 2002a, 2009a). Analogous to the summer townhouses seen at Chota-Tanasee and Chattooga (Schroedl 1986b, 2000), this rectangular structure at Coweeta Creek created a sheltered, shaded area outside the entryway to the winter townhouse and guided movement from the plaza into the townhouse. Like the summer townhouse at Chota-Tanasee, the long axis of the summer townhouse at Coweeta Creek was perpendicular to the townhouse entryway, but the summer townhouse at Chattooga was parallel to the long axis of its entryway (Schroedl 1986b, 2001). Individual stages of Structure 2 at Coweeta Creek are not easily discernible in posthole patterns, but it is clear that stages of Structure 2 were associated with the first and last stages of Structure 1, and almost certainly with all intervening stages of Structure 1. William Bartram (Waselkov and Braund 1995:183–185) writes that Cherokee towns held events in summer and winter townhouses during the corresponding seasons, hence the seasonal names archaeologists apply to these different forms of public structure. It is worth noting here that the floor space in Structure 2 is considerably less than the floor space in Structure 1. If structures 1 and 2 at Coweeta Creek are “winter” and “summer” townhouses, respectively, and if Bartram is correct about the seasonality of these different forms of public architecture, then there may have been seasonal differences in the kinds of events and activities that took place inside these townhouses at Cherokee settlements. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact edges of Structure 2 in the palimpsest of postholes outside Structure 1, but the larger floor space inside Structure 1 means that the winter townhouse could accommodate more people than the adjacent summer townhouse. Of course, during events or social gatherings in Struc-

ture 2, people could have also made use of space in the adjacent plaza, beside the summer townhouse.

In the vicinity of structures 1 and 2 were deposits of white clay and boulders (Rodning 2009a, 2010a). They may have been placed around the edges of the townhouse during its later stages, when the accumulated remnants of several townhouses would have formed a low mound. Boulders and clay may have been added to form a ramp or to stabilize the townhouse mound, or both. The white clay may have had some symbolic significance as well, as a symbol of the status of the surrounding community as an old town or as a peace town (Rodning 2010a:68–69). Deposits of white clay in mounds and in burial pits at the late prehistoric Shiloh site in Tennessee may have marked the status of Shiloh as a peace town, or, alternatively, as an old town (Welch 2006:152–153, 155, 162–170, 257–258). For Native American groups in the Southeast, white symbolized peace, purity, wholesomeness, and maturity (Gearing 1958, 1962; Hudson 1976:126–127, 132, 274, 416; Lankford 1987:38–39, 1993). By contrast, red symbolized war, warriors, blood, and youth (Corkran 1953, 1955, 1956; Mooney 1891:388–395, 1900b:3; Power 2004:134–137, 2007:53–54). Within the Coweeta Creek townhouse the white clay outside the edges of later stages of the townhouse balanced the red deposits inside the townhouse, including the perpetual fire in the townhouse hearth and the burned remnants of old townhouses themselves.

Several pits near the Coweeta Creek townhouse were probably receptacles for the ashes and embers from the townhouse hearth. Two circular pits—features 32 and 33 (Figure 3.3), northeast of Structure 2—contained ash, charcoal, pottery, and clay. Two other pits—features 34 and 35, southwest of Structure 1—likewise contained large amounts of ash and charcoal. Very large concentrations of ash have been identified near the late prehistoric public structure at the Ledford Island site in eastern Tennessee, and they are interpreted as deposits of debris from the townhouse hearth (Lewis et al. 1995:529–530). Similar concentrations of ash have been found in the Tugaloo mound in northeastern Georgia, and the “ash bed” along the northern edge of the Tugaloo mound (Anderson 1994:210; Smith and Williams 1978; Williams and Branch 1978) could represent the periodic disposal of ashes from the structures built on successive stages of the platform mound. Longe (Corkran 1969:36; see also Anderson et al. 2010a:221–224) refers to the practice of disposing ashes from a townhouse hearth once a year in a place close to the townhouse itself. Longe (Corkran

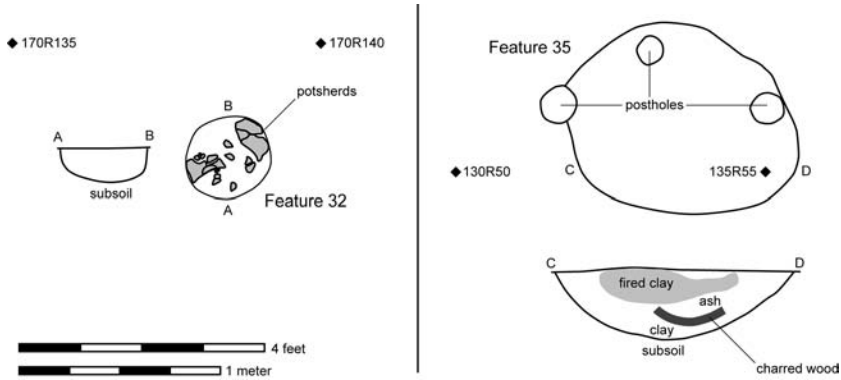


Figure 3.3. Circular pit features north of Structure 2 (Feature 32) and southwest of Structure 1 (Feature 35) at the Coweeta Creek site.

1969:36) gives a name (Skeona) to these deposits of debris from townhouse hearths. Longe translates Skeona as “the spirits” or “place of the spirits.” Perhaps it is purely coincidence, and perhaps “Skeona” and “Skeenah” have different meanings, but there is a stream known as Skeenah Creek that meets the Little Tennessee River some 3 kilometers north of (downstream from) the Coweeta Creek site.

North of the Coweeta Creek townhouse, another concentration of postholes (Structure 15) probably represents the corner of a structure, either another public structure or a dwelling (Rodning 2009b:17). Hally (2008:139–145) considers the possibilities that a structure adjacent to the townhouse at the King site represents either a dwelling for town chiefs or male elders, or a structure that housed sacred possessions of the community. Gearing (1962:23) writes that some male elders lived in structures near Cherokee townhouses. They tended the fires in townhouse hearths and participated in other events and activities that took place in townhouses, including the periodic disposal of ashes and embers from townhouse hearths. They lived in dwellings near townhouses in part because thereby they were not associated with the house of any particular clan or lineage within the community but with the life of the town as a whole.

Concentrations of postholes bordering the southwestern and southeastern edges of the plaza represent several different kinds of structures (Rodning 2009b:16). Mooney (1900a:282–283) describes small, round huts (detsānūñ’lī) built to house the sacred feathers and wands for eagle dances—some of the post-

holes around the edges of the plaza at Coweeta Creek could represent “feather houses” or similar structures. Located along the southwestern edge of the plaza, structures 12 and 13 may represent large, unroofed enclosures, as they contain no clear indications of hearths or roof support posts. Along the southeastern edge of the plaza, there are several linear and rectilinear patterns of postholes that are probably associated with ramadas, comparable to the townhouse ramada. The chronological placement of these ramadas along the southeastern edge of the plaza is not clear. They may be contemporaneous with domestic structures to the south and east, or, alternatively, they could postdate those domestic structures. As discussed in the following chapter, several domestic structures at Coweeta Creek were contemporaneous with early stages of the townhouse, but most or all of those domestic structures had been abandoned by the late 1600s or early 1700s, when the late stages of the townhouse were built.

Of course, the plaza itself can be considered an example of public space, and, arguably, an example of public architecture, in that it was built and maintained rather than just left as empty space within the Coweeta Creek settlement plan (Figure 1.2; see also Kidder 1998, 2002; Moore 1996a, 1996b). The southwestern, southeastern, and northwestern edges of the plaza are very distinct. The location of the northeastern edge is more difficult to pinpoint. Excavation squares placed north of the primary area of excavation did unearth evidence for postholes, indicating that there were structures placed northeast of the plaza. The width of the plaza from northwest to southeast was roughly 12 meters, and, conservatively, the length of the plaza from its southwestern to northeastern edges was probably approximately 27 meters. At least part of the plaza was covered with sand. European trade goods such as glass beads and kaolin pipe fragments were recovered from deposits of sand covering the plaza, confirming that the plaza was still actively maintained as a setting for public events in the late 1600s and early 1700s.

Documentary sources from the eighteenth century describe a variety of events that took place on plazas at Cherokee settlements. Colonial traders and other visitors were welcomed to Cherokee towns with gatherings of townspeople on plazas and dances performed on plazas (D. H. King 2007:19–20). As outdoor spaces adjacent to townhouses, plazas were staging grounds for approaching and entering these structures (Hally 2008:121–126). Towns placed red or white flags atop posts near townhouses as symbols of whether they were at war or at peace (D. H. King 2007:18–19; Schroedl 1986b:223). These flag poles

would have been placed at or near the edges of town plazas, like the town posts at late prehistoric and protohistoric sites in the southern Appalachians, including the King site (Hally 2008:152–160).

Many late prehistoric and protohistoric settlements in the southern Appalachians—including King, for example, as well as Warren Wilson, Ledford Island, and Toqua—were enclosed by log stockades, but there were no stockades around Cherokee towns in the eighteenth century, and there is no direct evidence of a stockade at the Coweeta Creek site. Given the similarities in settlement plans of the Ledford Island and Coweeta Creek sites (Schroedl 1998:83–85, 2000:212–213, 2001:286–287) and the presence of a log stockade at Ledford Island (Sullivan 1987, 1995), it is often thought that the Coweeta Creek settlement was enclosed by a log stockade. The presence of a series of log stockades at Warren Wilson (Moore 2002b; Ward and Davis 1999:160–161) and the compact arrangement of structures at Warren Wilson and Coweeta Creek (Ward and Davis 1999:186–187) are also cited as reasons why there was probably a log stockade at Coweeta Creek. The minimum distances between log stockades and public structures at the King and Ledford Island sites are greater than the limits of excavation around the Coweeta Creek townhouse, and it is possible that excavations at Coweeta Creek simply did not uncover enough area for remnants of a log stockade to have been unearthed. Given the size of the townhouse at Coweeta Creek, there was clearly the potential to mobilize the labor and resources necessary to build and maintain stockades.

Another approach to evaluating the presence or absence of a log stockade at Coweeta Creek is to consider the reasons why a stockade might have been worthwhile, especially considering the significant costs associated with building and maintaining them. Log stockades were present at many settlements in the Southeast during late prehistory and during the sixteenth century, and they were effective fortifications against traditional aboriginal forms of warfare, which focused primarily on relatively small-scale raids by status-striving warriors and their efforts to take war captives (Dye 1995, 2004, 2006a, 2006b; Little 1999; Schroeder 2006). Enclosing settlements, and people, with log stockades gave people safe haven from such attacks (Steinen 1992). They may have discouraged attacks both by impeding movement into settlements, and also by making escape routes for attacking warriors more difficult (Roscoe 2008). Throughout the seventeenth century, increasing numbers of Native American war captives were sold as slaves, and the strategy of Native American warfare

changed (Bowne 2005, 2009; Ethridge 1984, 2006, 2010; Gally 2002, 2009a, 2009b). With the developing emphasis on taking large numbers of war captives as slaves during the seventeenth century, stockades may have made people more vulnerable as targets for attack, and, therefore, houses and households may have spread out in more dispersed patterns without stockades, even as they continued to keep townhouses and plazas as settings for public life. That said, documentary evidence indicates that during the eighteenth century, the Overhill Cherokee settlements of Great Tellico and Chatuga were each enclosed by a log stockade (Chambers 2010; Hill 1997; B. A. Smith 1979). Given the absence of direct evidence for a stockade at the Coweeta Creek site, I am currently inclined to conclude that there was not a stockade around the settlement. Following conflicts with Spanish conquistadores in the 1500s (Dye 1990, 1994, 2002) and the increasing threat of slave raids in the 1600s (Riggs 2012), stockades, I believe, became less common in the Southeast than they had been during late prehistory.

Center Places in Public Architecture at Coweeta Creek

Towns were, first and foremost, communities of people, rather than settlements or particular points on the landscape (Boulware 2011; Schroedl 2000). Several Cherokee town names—Ayuḥwaʼsǐ (or Hiwassee), Itseyi (or Echoee), It-sati (or Chota), Stiká'yǐ (or Stecoe), Tǎlikwǎʼ (or Tellico), Tǎlulǔʼ (or Tallulah), Tǎnǎsǐʼ (or Tanasee), Tʼsatuʼgǐ (or Chattooga), Tamaʼli (or Tomotley), Tǎʼskiʼgǐ (or Tuskegee), and Tʼsiyǎʼhǐ, for example—each refer to multiple places in the Cherokee landscape (Goodwin 1977; Mooney 1900a; B. A. Smith 1979). The names of some Cherokee towns—such as Great Tellico, Little Hiwassee, Old Stecoe, Old Estatoe, Little Keowee, and New Echota—probably refer to status and descent relationships between towns with shared names, and in some cases the movement of towns from one place to another (Boulware 2011:162; B. A. Smith 1979). The periodic movement of towns may be reflected in the multiple locations of town names, including Estatoe, for example, on eighteenth-century maps (B. A. Smith 1979:51–52). During the eighteenth century, many Lower Cherokee townspeople moved to the Middle, Out, and Overhill Cherokee areas—perhaps taking place-names with them—including, perhaps, Chattooga, as there are locations associated with that name on the Chattooga River

in northwestern South Carolina, on the Tellico River in eastern Tennessee, and possibly on the Chatooga River in northwestern Georgia (Mooney 1900a:536). There are some historically known eighteenth-century examples of “conjoined” towns, including Chatuga and Great Tellico, located on the Tellico River in eastern Tennessee (Persico 1979:92). Although the people of Chatuga and Great Tellico lived in a single settlement—and one described as very compact and thickly settled, with the houses of each town intermingled with each other—they were considered distinct towns, because each town maintained its own townhouse (Boulware 2011:77; Mereness 1916:111–112; B. A. Smith 1979:56–57). Towns attached themselves to particular places through townhouses, which anchored them within the landscape. Townhouses were at once permanent and portable, in the sense that townhouses were visible manifestations of a town at a particular point in the landscape, and in the sense that a local group of households could build and maintain a townhouse at any point in that landscape, thereby creating and maintaining its status as a town.

Townhouses and plazas were settings for public life in Cherokee towns and, meanwhile, were landmarks and center places. Like other townhouses, the townhouse at Coweeta Creek had a central hearth, in which a perpetual fire was kept throughout the life history of this structure and the town as a community. From the first through last stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse, the hearth was maintained in the same place, emphasizing the theme of an everlasting fire and keeping the town connected to the same point of reference (that is, to the hearth and the fire kept in it) throughout the history of building and rebuilding the townhouse. As in other examples of late prehistoric and historic Cherokee townhouses, the central hearth at Coweeta Creek was surrounded by a set of four roof support posts, which are very likely analogous to the four cords from which the earth is said in Cherokee myth to have been suspended from the sky. Several burials were placed in the ground during early stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse, and as discussed in chapter 6, many of those burials contain grave goods that may have been considered symbolic or even sacred possessions of the town. As outlined in chapter 5, the Coweeta Creek townhouse closely resembled dwellings nearby, along the edges of the plaza, although the townhouse was much larger. Just as dwellings “housed” matrilineal and matrilocal households, the townhouse “housed” the community as a whole. Even as houses were built, rebuilt, and abandoned, and even as the

spatial layout of the community changed, the townhouse stayed in place. The townhouse formed a center place within the landscape, and it connected the past and the present at that particular site.

The connection between the past and the present is evident in the consistent location of the townhouse, including both the winter townhouse and summer townhouse, in the same place for at least six and probably seven successive stages, which span several generations of the community. Its hearth, the container of the town's sacred fire, was kept in place throughout the history of building, burning, burying, and rebuilding the townhouse. Several community leaders were buried in the ground where the townhouse was then built, and the location of several burials corresponded to paths of movement in and out of the townhouse. The past was present in the Coweeta Creek townhouse, in the form of those burials and in the form of burned and buried stages of early townhouses. The townhouse was a focal point and a hub for public life within the Coweeta Creek community, and it formed a center point connecting the community to the history and life cycle of the townhouse itself. Similar arguments can be made about domestic structures. The townhouse anchored the town as a whole to a particular point in the landscape, and dwellings anchored households to particular points within an overarching town plan.

4

Domestic Architecture

Several Cherokee myths and legends recorded by Mooney (1900a) refer to houses. In the cosmogonic myth “The Daughter of the Sun” (Mooney 1900a: 252–254; Zogry 2010:46–47), the sun is said to live on the other side of the sky vault from earth. The daughter of the sun lived in a house in the middle of the sky, and the sun visited her daughter there each day during her traverse of the sky. Another cosmogonic myth, “The Origin of Game and Corn” (Mooney 1900a:242–249), recounts the tale of Kana’ti and Selu, the first man and woman, and their son, and it refers to townhouses, household dwellings, and storehouses. The Scottish trader James Adair lived in and visited many Native American settlements throughout the Southeast from the 1740s through the 1760s, and he noted that townhouses—or “mountain houses” in his phrasing—were basically the same as dwellings, except that townhouses were larger (Braund 2005:410; Williams 1930:421). With respect to domestic architecture at Native American settlements in the Southeast, including Cherokee settlements in the southern Appalachians, Adair described winter houses, summer houses, and storehouses (Braund 2005:403–410; Williams 1930:412–421). Again with respect to both Cherokee and other native groups, Adair even refers to houses as settings for the treatment and burial of the dead (Braund 2005:207–217).

While visiting the Middle Cherokee settlements in 1775, William Bartram stayed for several days at Cowee, and he explored areas in the vicinity of Cowee and the nearby town of Joree (Waselkov and Braund 1995:84). Bartram noted that there were “about one hundred dwellings” in the town, on both sides of the Little Tennessee River. Based on these and other structures that Bartram saw in the upper Little Tennessee Valley, he described Cherokee dwellings as

square, one-story structures made of logs that were stripped of bark, notched at their ends, and covered with clay that was tempered with dry grass. Beside these structures were small, conical structures covered with dirt known as “hot houses,” or “winter houses.”

Based on what Bartram saw at Cowee in 1775, it seems that townhouses were built somewhat differently during the eighteenth century (Waselkov and Braund 1995:84–85). The townhouse at Cowee was a large rotunda, situated atop a large earthen mound, which was built on top of a natural hill. According to Bartram’s account, first, a set of wooden posts was placed vertically in the ground in a circular array. These posts were notched at the top so that they could support roof beams. Then, a second set of notched wooden posts, twice as tall as the first, was placed in the ground, inside the first circle of posts, and then a third circle of taller and stronger posts was placed inside it. The rafters were bound together by “cross beams and laths,” and, the roof was made by wrapping a layer of bark across the rafters. Bartram added that Cherokee townhouse roofs were sometimes covered with “thin superficies of earth,” although he did not specify whether the Cowee townhouse roof was covered with earth. Bartram noted the presence of a large center post in the Cowee townhouse, forming the pinnacle of the roof and centering the rafters at the top of the structure. Archaeological examples of Cherokee townhouses have central hearths rather than central posts, and either four or eight roof support posts situated around those hearths, and thus Bartram’s description of the Cowee townhouse diverges from archaeological evidence in this respect.

There are broad similarities between the Cherokee houses and townhouses that Adair described and those described by Bartram. Bartram seems to have seen structures built with horizontally placed logs stacked on top of each other—like log cabins (Waselkov and Braund 1995:185)—while Adair clearly refers to walls and roof support posts made of vertically placed posts, like those typical of aboriginal architecture in the greater southern Appalachians from late prehistory through the seventeenth century (Hally 2002, 2008; Polhemus 1990; Schroedl 1998, 2000, 2001). By contrast, there were differences between the Cowee townhouse and the dwellings Bartram saw while visiting Middle Cherokee settlements during the late eighteenth century (Waselkov and Braund 1995:84), suggesting that Cherokee groups continued building traditional forms of public architecture even as they experimented with new forms of domestic architecture (compare with Pauls 2005).

Archaeological evidence from some late-eighteenth-century Overhill Cherokee settlements in eastern Tennessee is consistent with this view of conservatism in public architecture even as domestic architecture began to change. Mooney (1900a:82) wrote that the Cherokee maintained many traditional forms of architecture and material culture through the end of the eighteenth century, at least in some areas, although some changes are evident archaeologically. Schroedl (1986b, 2000, 2001, 2009; see also Marcoux 2010a, 2012a) has related continuity and change in Cherokee architecture to Cherokee involvement in trade and warfare with English colonists. Townhouses at Overhill Cherokee settlements dating to the mid-to-late eighteenth century generally resemble those at Coweeta Creek and other sites dating to the 1500s and 1600s, although later townhouses are generally more rounded or octagonal than earlier townhouses (Schroedl 1978, 1986b; see also Riggs 2008). Domestic structures at Chota-Tanasee are very much like the Chota-Tanasee townhouses, but some of the rectangular houses at Mialoquo and Tomotley differ significantly from domestic architecture predating European contact; meanwhile, the dwellings at Mialoquo and Tomotley differ from townhouses at those sites (Baden 1983; Russ and Chapman 1983; Schroedl 2000, 2001, 2009).

Documentary sources refer to the following types of architecture in eighteenth-century Cherokee settlements: hot houses (or winter houses), which were round; summer structures, which were typically rectangular in shape and paired with winter houses; and storehouses. Hot houses, known to the Cherokee as “*āsī*” (Mooney 1900a:230; Waselkov and Braund 1995:184) were analogous to the winter houses—which were square with rounded corners and had central hearths and four roof support posts, walls made of log posts and earth, and roofs made of bark and earth—that were typical of the greater southern Appalachians at the time of European contact (Faulkner 1978; Hally 2002, 2008:50–106). Summer structures were built beside winter houses (Braund 2005:407–408; Waselkov and Braund 1995:186), and archaeological evidence indicates that they were typically rectangular in shape, with deeply set posts supporting roofs that may have served as storage spaces (Hally 2008:106–120). Storehouses can be difficult to identify archaeologically, although they may be represented by sets of four posts that supported covered platforms in which food was stored above ground, and some archaeological examples have been identified. Documentary sources make many references to storehouses. Domestic structures housed matrilineal and matrilocal family groups, and the core mem-

bers of Cherokee households were generally members of the same clan, conferring some amount of power to women in the sphere of household and kinship (Fogelson 1990; Perdue 1998:42–49; Sattler 1995). Men became members of those households and developed affiliations with their wives' clans when they married, but they also maintained affiliations with their mothers' clans and the towns in which they were born, even though they typically moved after getting married (Boulware 2011:31–33; Gilbert 1937, 1943; Perdue 1998).

An excellent example of protohistoric Cherokee domestic architecture, including a winter house paired with a summer house, comes from the mid-seventeenth-century Alarka site in the upper Little Tennessee Valley (Shumate and Kimball 1997; Shumate et al. 2005). Excavations at Alarka have uncovered remnants of an octagonal winter house and an adjacent rectangular summer house. The pattern of architectural pairing at Alarka broadly resembles the pairing between the townhouse and townhouse ramada at the Coweeta Creek site, but Alarka represents a small and relatively isolated farmstead, and the settlement of a single Cherokee household, rather than a house and household within a larger Cherokee settlement. Excavations at Chota-Tanasee, in eastern Tennessee, have identified numerous examples of mid-to-late eighteenth-century paired domestic structures, including circular winter houses and rectangular summer houses (Schroedl 1986b). An early eighteenth-century burned structure at the Tuckasegee site (Keel 1976; Ward 2002), in the area of the Cherokee Out towns in southwestern North Carolina, probably represents a circular winter house comparable to those at Chota-Tanasee and at Alarka.

Other examples of paired winter houses and summer structures have been found in the Brasstown Valley, near the headwaters of the Hiwassee River, in northeastern Georgia (Cable and Reed 2000; Cable et al. 1997). Excavations at several sites scattered along Brasstown Creek have unearthed square posthole patterns representing winter houses, with the posthole patterns of rectangular summer structures adjacent to them. Based on pottery and radiocarbon determinations, these sites and structures are thought to date to the 1600s and early 1700s.

Late Prehistoric Domestic Structures in the Southern Appalachians

The square houses in the Brasstown Valley, and at Coweeta Creek, are the same type of domestic structure as those seen at many sites in eastern Tennessee

(Lewis et al. 1995; Polhemus 1990; Sullivan 1987, 1995), northern Georgia (Gougeon 2006, 2007; Hally 2002, 2008; Hally and Kelly 1998), and western North Carolina (Dickens 1976, 1978; Moore 2002a, 2002b; Ward and Davis 1999), dating from late prehistory through the seventeenth century. Polhemus (1987:232, 236–240) refers to such houses at Toqua as Type 4a and Type 4b structures. Hally (2008:50–106) refers to them as “primary domestic structures” in his consideration of the King site in Georgia, which dates to the mid-to-late sixteenth century. Other examples of these late prehistoric structures include those at the Warren Wilson, Garden Creek, Ledford Island, and Mouse Creeks sites (Dickens 1976; Lewis et al. 1995).

These structures typically were built in basins. Dirt was dug to create a depression, after which wall posts and roof support posts were placed vertically in the ground to support wall plates and roof beams. Sticks were woven through the framework of the wall posts, and walls were then daubed with earth, probably including the dirt that was dug out of structure basins in the first place. Roofs were made of bark and thatch, and probably some earth. A single clay hearth was placed at the center of each house, and there may have been a single daubed smokehole in the roof directly above the hearth. A set of roof support posts—normally four—was arranged in a square shape around the hearth. Benches and other furniture were often placed along the inner edges of houses, between the roof support posts and the walls. Pits were dug into the floors of some houses, and burials were also relatively common in house floors. Houses typically had one entryway, visible archaeologically in the form of paired entrance trenches. These entrance trenches supported the foundations of covered entryways that were sturdy enough to cut through the earthen embankments surrounding the houses themselves. These structures ranged in size from 4.5 to 9.5 meters per side, or 20 to 90 square meters (Dickens 1978; Hally 2008; Sullivan 1987). The combination of structure basins, log posts, bark, earth, covered entryways, and steeply pitched roofs gave these structures an appearance that was sometimes likened to “caves above ground” (Hally 2002).

Rectangular ramadas, or summer structures, are seen at Mississippian and protohistoric settlements in the southern Appalachians, as well. Polhemus (1987: 232, 241–242) describes the rectangular Type 5b structures at the Toqua site as “semiopen sheds or porticoes,” although at Toqua these are interpreted as public rather than domestic structures. Hally (2008:105–116) identifies rectangular ramadas within “household zones” at the King site and refers to these domestic

structures as “rectangular structures.” Although many such ramadas are present at the King site, the direct pairing of primary domestic structures (winter houses) with rectangular structures is not as clear-cut as is seen at the Brass-town Valley and Alarka sites, perhaps because the King site is a compact settlement, enclosed within a log stockade (Hally 2008:115–120), whereas the later Alarka and Brass-town Valley sites represent more spatially dispersed houses and households. Given the deeply set corner posts in some rectangular structures at the King site, it is possible that the rooftops of these structures were platforms for storage (Hally 2008:118–119). Such structures have not been identified at the Warren Wilson or Garden Creek sites in North Carolina (Dickens 1976), although they are present at late prehistoric sites in eastern Tennessee (Polhemus 1987; Schroedl 1998; Sullivan 1995). Rectangular structures at sites in these areas range from one to three meters wide and from three to seven meters long (Hally 2008).

Cherokee Domestic Structures at the Coweeta Creek Site

Archaeological evidence of late prehistoric and eighteenth-century Cherokee domestic architecture, and written references to eighteenth-century Cherokee dwellings, create a framework with which to consider evidence for the dimensions, layouts, features, and rebuilding patterns of domestic structures at Coweeta Creek (Rodning 2007, 2008). Some posthole patterns at the site are clearly recognizable as domestic structures (Rodning 2009b:3–4). Others are more clearly identifiable by mapping out arrangements of hearths and deep postholes (Rodning 2009b:7–8). Because roof support posts bore considerable weight, they were typically set more deeply than wall posts and posts associated with benches and other furniture, and there are several examples of deep postholes (probable roof supports, in many cases) clustered around domestic hearths (Rodning 2009b).

One type of dwelling at Coweeta Creek is represented by structures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 (Figure 4.1; Rodning 2009b:9–13). These structures closely resemble those seen at the Warren Wilson, Garden Creek, Ledford Island, and King sites. They range in size from 5.8 to 7.4 meters per side, or 33.64 to 54.76 square meters. There are typically four roof support posts around the central hearths in these structures. All have paired entrance trenches, evidence of covered entry-

rebuilding in place

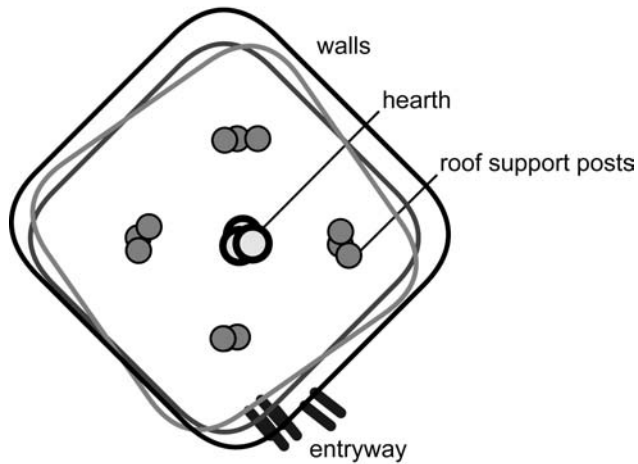


Figure 4.1. Schematic map of seventeenth-century houses and rebuilding patterns at the Coweeta Creek site. Reproduced with permission from *The Durable House: House Society Models in Archaeology*, © 2007 by the Board of Trustees, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, courtesy of the Center for Archaeological Investigations (Rodning 2007:473).

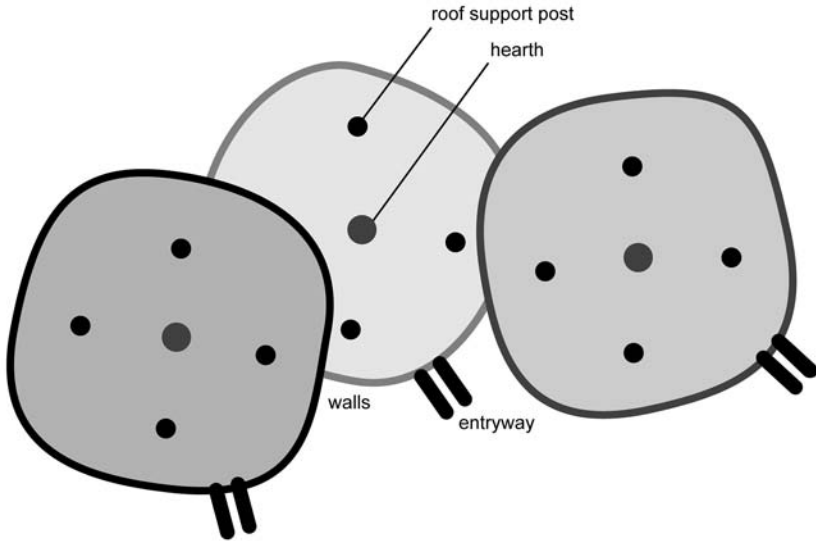
ways, and, probably, earthen embankments. The entryways all open toward the southeast, away from the townhouse but along the same axis as the townhouse entryway. As is evident from the superpositioning of hearths and entrance trenches, these structures were built and rebuilt in place, and the hearths in these structures effectively were kept in place during these rebuilding stages. Radiocarbon determinations and pottery from Structure 6 place it in the seventeenth century. The wrought iron nail found in the first stage of the hearth (Feature 68) in Structure 6 is consistent with that dating, although it could potentially date to the late sixteenth century. Very similar pottery is seen in Feature 96, just south of Structure 5. Similar pottery in structures 5 and 6 suggests that these houses, and Feature 96, are all contemporaneous. Similarities in these

structures, and similarities between the alignments of these structures and the alignment of the townhouse, all suggest that they are contemporaneous, dating to the 1600s, or, perhaps, the 1500s (Rodning 2008, 2009b).

Another type of dwelling at Coweeta Creek is represented by structures 7 and 9 (Figure 4.2; Rodning 2009b:11–13). These structures are slightly more rounded and slightly larger than those just described. Structure 7 is roughly 9.4 meters in diameter, with four roof support posts (Rodning 2009b:18); radiocarbon dates and pottery from the floor of this house place it in the fifteenth century (Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008). Structure 9 is roughly 10.32 meters in diameter, with four roof support posts (Rodning 2009b:4); there are no radiocarbon dates from this structure, but pottery from the floor of Structure 9 is comparable to pottery from Structure 7, and architectural similarities suggest that structures 7 and 9 are contemporaneous. The posthole patterns associated with structures 7 and 9, respectively, are truncated by posthole patterns associated with structures 6 and 8, respectively. There are four burials inside Structure 9, and as many as four inside successive stages of Structure 7. These structures were not built and rebuilt in place but in an offset pattern, with the placements of hearths shifting from one stage to another (Rodning 2007, 2009b). These structures predate the townhouse, as is evident from radiocarbon dates and pottery from structures 1 and 7. They probably are part of a settlement that was less compact and had a less formal layout than the protohistoric settlement—townhouse, plaza, and domestic houses around the plaza—at this site.

Differences in the rebuilding patterns of fifteenth-century and seventeenth-century houses at Coweeta Creek probably reflect differences in the layout of the settlement itself during late prehistoric and protohistoric periods (Rodning 2007, 2008, 2009a:637). During the fifteenth century, there were dwellings like structures 7 and 9 present at the site—and probably more dwellings outside the area that has been excavated—and structures were spaced relatively far apart. The hearths of the last stages of structures 7 and 9 are 20.97 meters apart, for example, which is greater than the average distance (13.23 meters) between hearths of structures that date to the seventeenth century (Rodning 2009b:18). Radiocarbon dates and pottery from Feature 65 place this large oval pit sometime between the 1100s and 1400s (Rodning 2009b:8), and the similarities in potsherds from Feature 65 with pottery from structures 7 and 9 indicate that they are all generally contemporaneous. There is no clear indication

offset rebuilding pattern



20 feet
 6 meters

Figure 4.2. Schematic map of fifteenth-century houses and rebuilding patterns at the Coweeta Creek site. Reproduced with permission from *The Durable House: House Society Models in Archaeology*, © 2007 by the Board of Trustees, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, courtesy of the Center for Archaeological Investigations (Rodning 2007:473).

that a townhouse or plaza was present at the site during the fifteenth century, although there are rectilinear arrangements of postholes in the area southwest of the plaza (structures 12 and 13) that may represent large public structures or (more likely) unroofed enclosures.

Another building nearby (Structure 11) probably also dates to the fifteenth century (Rodning 2009b:14). The central hearth of Structure 11 was built directly atop Burial 37. This grave is the only shaft-and-chamber burial at Coweeta Creek with a central chamber, although there are examples of shaft-and-central-chamber burials from at least one other site in western North Carolina, that is, the Warren Wilson site (Dickens 1976:103–104). The unique form of Burial 37 at Coweeta Creek, and the unique set of grave goods in it—fragments of animal bone and horn—suggest that the adult man or adult woman in this burial was

a ritual specialist of some kind, perhaps a conjuror (Fogelson 1961, 1975, 1977; Zogry 2010:114–116). Given the placement of this burial underneath the hearth of Structure 11, it is likely that the structure itself, and the events and activities that took place within it, was closely related to the memory of one or both of the people buried here.

Northwest of Structure 11, and in the same area as Feature 37, is a concentration of postholes, hearth, and four roof support posts (deep postholes in a square arrangement around the hearth) that are designated Structure 14 (Rodning 2009b:15). The edges of a structure in this part of the site are indistinct, but the hearth and deeply set roof support posts are clear evidence of a structure, and the size and round shape of the posthole concentration here are comparable to the early-eighteenth-century Cherokee house at the Tuckasegee site, on the Tuckasegee River, in the area of the Cherokee Out towns (Greene 1999; Keel 1976; Ward 2002). There is additional circumstantial evidence that this structure dates to the late 1600s or early 1700s. First, a single radiocarbon date on charcoal from a pit near Structure 14 places this pit (Feature 72) in that time frame (Rodning 2008). Second, the pottery and colonial trade goods—glass beads, kaolin pipe fragments, and brass or copper artifacts—from features 71 and 72, both in the vicinity of Structure 14, are consistent with this date (Rodning 2010b; compare with Kidd and Kidd 1970; Brain 1979, 1988). Third, there is minimal evidence for cultural activity in this area of the Coweeta Creek site for much of the 1500s and 1600s. For reasons outlined in chapter 8, it is likely that Feature 37 is the remnant of a ditch enclosure associated with a mound or embankment dating to an early stage in the history of settlement at the site. As outlined here and in chapter 4, there is a great deal of building and rebuilding of public and domestic architecture at the site through the seventeenth century, but not in the vicinity of Feature 37. Eventually, late in the history of the Coweeta Creek settlement, after the townhouse had replaced the Feature 37 ditch enclosure (and an associated mound and/or embankment?) as the major local landmark, and after most of the domestic houses at the site had been abandoned, a dwelling (Structure 14) was built here, close to the townhouse.

Along the southeastern edge of the plaza, directly across from the townhouse ramada, there are concentrations of postholes that probably represent ramadas or other small structures (Rodning 2009b:3, 26, 27). One such building is designated Structure 16, but there are probably other examples of comparable structures nearby. It is possible that Structure 16 and others like it are contempora-

neous with structures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8, and with early stages of the townhouse. Alternatively, it is possible that they are contemporaneous with late stages of the townhouse, at which point most or all of the nearby domestic structures (3, 4, 5, 6, and 8) had been abandoned. Small structures along the edge of the plaza may have been kept as shelters or cabins by households who had moved farther away from the townhouse and plaza but who would still have participated in events and activities in these public spaces within the community.

Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric Houses at Coweeta Creek

Houses at Coweeta Creek that are contemporaneous with the townhouse at the site are townhouses “writ small” (Sullivan 1987), but several dwellings predate these structures (Rodning 2008). It is possible that there was even a period of abandonment between the fifteenth-century and seventeenth-century settlements at this site, given the differences between Early Qualla and Middle Qualla pottery from Coweeta Creek (Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008). This period of abandonment probably accounts for the slight offset and overlap in the placement of structures 6 and 8 (dating to the 1600s) and structures 7 and 9 (dating to the 1400s). By the seventeenth century, the community had grown to a point at which a townhouse—and the formal structures of shared leadership and community ritual practice—were necessary, and sustainable. By the late 1600s or early 1700s, most or all of the domestic structures at Coweeta Creek had been abandoned, but the townhouse was still present, and Late Qualla pottery from some pit features at the site indicate that the townhouse and plaza were still hubs of public life within the town (Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008, 2009a, 2010b). Radiocarbon dates, colonial trade goods, and Late Qualla pottery from the last stage of the Coweeta Creek townhouse all suggest an abandonment of the townhouse itself in the early-to-mid eighteenth century.

Center Places and Cherokee Houses at Coweeta Creek

Both the fifteenth-century and seventeenth-century houses at Coweeta Creek demonstrate evidence of central points and center places. The townhouse was a center place for the town as a whole, and it connected the town to the life history of its townhouse, and, similarly, dwellings anchored households to par-

ticular locales within the Coweeta Creek town plan, as is evident from the following points.

First, there are central hearths in each house, except for the ramadas along the southeastern edge of the plaza, across from the Coweeta Creek townhouse ramada. Of course, hearths and the fires kept in them were sources of light and warmth, and cooking and other household tasks were performed in and around those hearths. There were symbolic dimensions to domestic hearths, as well. For example, women in Cherokee households rekindled the fires in those hearths during annual events that emphasized town identity and community renewal (Anderson et al. 2010a:38, 285; Lankford 1993; Perdue 1998). Women rekindled the fires in domestic hearths with fire brought out of the townhouse hearth, thereby connecting each house and household with the townhouse and the town (Anderson et al. 2010b:70, 163, 202–203; Mooney 1900a; Perdue 1998). The placement of some hearths atop burials at Coweeta Creek (and at the Warren Wilson site) likewise suggests that hearths had symbolic significance. They connected the living and the dead at the center points of at least some houses, and just as the hearth in the townhouse marked a center place for the community as a whole, the hearths in dwellings marked center places for households within the town.

Second, around the central hearths in domestic structures at Coweeta Creek are sets of deep postholes representing four roof support posts. These posts connected the floor (earth) to the roof (sky), and they formed four corners around the hearth. As in the case of the roof supports in the townhouse, they are architectural manifestations of the mythical four cords from which the earth (floor) was suspended from the sky (roof). From this perspective, dwellings are architectural cosmograms, with hearths at their centers. Roof support posts and hearths marked the centers of structures, they centered households within the local built environment, and they connected different realms of the cosmos.

Third, as is the case in the townhouse, burials are present in most of the dwellings at the Coweeta Creek site. One structure had a hearth placed directly atop a burial, and in other instances burials were placed in house floors. Dwellings formed center places connecting the living and the dead, and connecting past and present generations of the community within its built environment.

Fourth, most of the houses at Coweeta Creek were rebuilt at least once. Even the offset rebuilding patterns associated with houses dating to the fifteenth century demonstrate evidence for continuity in structure placement;

structures were shifted slightly, but each stage was rebuilt close by. Rebuilding patterns of houses dating to the seventeenth century further emphasize continuity of placement, in that structures were rebuilt directly in place, as in the case of the townhouse.

Marcoux (2010a, 2012a) contrasts this long-term continuity of structure placement, and long-term investment in permanent settlement, with more expedient forms of architecture in Cherokee settlements dating to the mid-to-late eighteenth century. His recent consideration of Cherokee settlements in Tuckaleechee Cove in eastern Tennessee demonstrates significant differences in post-hole density and numbers of rebuilding stages at the Tuckaleechee settlements as compared to Coweeta Creek and other late prehistoric and protohistoric sites. His interpretation of these differences is that after years of interaction with European colonists—including interactions through the slave trade, the deer-skin trade, and warfare—architectural expediency and settlement mobility were preferable to the kind of permanent settlement and emplacement that were characteristic of late prehistoric and protohistoric settlements in the southern Appalachians.

Schroedl (2000, 2001) likewise relates patterns of continuity and change in Cherokee architecture to developments in the aftermath of European contact in the Southeast. Cherokee groups continued building townhouses throughout the 1700s and into the early 1800s, and although the shapes and sizes of townhouses changed somewhat, the basic template for townhouses endured (Rodning 2011b). Even as large and relatively compact settlements were abandoned in favor of spatially dispersed farmsteads, townhouses, like the Coweeta Creek townhouse, remained focal points for Cherokee towns, even when most or all of the domestic structures nearby had been abandoned. Cherokee domestic architecture was more susceptible to change and innovation in the course of the eighteenth century (Schroedl 1986b). Those changes are not evident in domestic architecture at the Coweeta Creek site, where structures and structure rebuilding patterns are directly comparable to those seen at late prehistoric and protohistoric settlements in the southern Appalachians and reflect an emphasis on permanence and emplacement.

5

Hearths

Townhouses and dwellings were center places for towns and households, as were the hearths inside them. Hearths were permanent, in that they were made of hardened clay, and in many cases, such as at Coweeta Creek and other sites, they were built and rebuilt in place, along with the structures that contained them. Hearths and the fires kept in them were also portable, in that the fires themselves could be transported to other hearths, other structures, and other settlements. Fires were kept constantly burning in the hearths of townhouses, and households within towns periodically rekindled fires kept in the hearths of domestic structures with ashes and embers from the townhouse hearth, thereby forming tangible links between households and towns, and between households within towns. Alexander Longe noted the permanence of fires kept in the hearths of Cherokee townhouses and the centrality of those hearths to community life within Cherokee towns. Longe noted that a “temple” was supported with “great pillars of wood,” that a round hearth was placed in the middle of such a structure, and that a perpetual fire was kept in the hearth of such a “temple” (Corkran 1969:12). When deer were brought back to a town, the meat was passed through the flames of the fire in a townhouse hearth, and meat offerings were made to the cardinal directions (Corkran 1969:12). Longe commented further on the rationale for cutting deer meat and offering it to the four directions and to the fire, relating this ritual to the four winds and to an effort to maintain balance in the world. From his written comments, the following points stand out for this particular study of the built environment at the Coweeta Creek site. First, the “temple” supported by “great pillars of

wood” was a townhouse. Second, the hearth in the “temple” was round, and such a circle would have had a midpoint of its own. Third, it was situated at the “middle of” (or at a center point within) the townhouse, as is the series of circular hearths inside the Coweeta Creek townhouse. Fourth, there was clear reference to the four directions, and as seen in the preceding chapters, the corners of structures at the Coweeta Creek site, and roof support posts inside them, are generally aligned with those cardinal directions. Fifth, before the deer meat was shared with the community, it was passed through the fire inside the townhouse. Lastly, the fire kept in the townhouse hearth was never allowed to go out.

As recorded by James Mooney (1900a:396) in the myth “The Mounds and the Constant Fire,” after a townhouse was built, “One man, called the fire-keeper, stayed always in the townhouse to feed and tend the fire.” This fire was first kindled when a town was formed and a townhouse first built. This fire burned throughout the life of the town. Several colonial visitors to Cherokee towns during the 1700s and early 1800s noted the presence of hearths and fire—even perpetual fire—in Cherokee townhouses (Schroedl 1986b:220–223). Longe also learned that when groups of warriors returned to their hometowns, bringing with them the “war fire” that was lit before such war expeditions, war chiefs would put that fire back into the hearths of their respective townhouses (Corkran 1969:44–46). Warriors often traveled considerable distances from home. Fire from townhouse hearths connected warriors to hometowns, and those were the same fires that burned in townhouse hearths during ritual deliberations and preparations *before* warriors went on the warpath and during purification rites *after* warriors returned home.

As recorded by James Mooney (1900a:240–242) in the myth “The First Fire,” when the world was still cold and dark, the animals held a council to determine how to retrieve fire from the hollow of a sycamore tree on an island. They all could see the smoke rising up from the sycamore tree, so they knew there was a fire burning there. The raven, the screech owl, the hooting owl, the horned owl, the black racer snake, and the blacksnake all attempted to cross the water to bring back the fire, but they could not do so. After another council, the water spider volunteered to go. The spider spun a bowl (known as a *tusti* bowl) with her thread, ran across the water, and brought back a single coal. The single coal from the island and the sycamore tree is seen in this myth as

the source of all fire (Hill 1997:35–37). Similarly, the fires in townhouse hearths were the sources of new fire for the hearths kept in every house in every town (Hill 1997:12–13). Meanwhile, the smoke rising up through the roof of a townhouse would have signaled that the fire in the townhouse hearth was still burning (Hill 1997:72–73).

The symbolism of fire, especially fire from Cherokee townhouse hearths, is noted by Longe and others (Anderson et al. 2010a:237–238; Corkran 1953, 1955, 1956, 1969:36–37; Lankford 1987, 1993). Longe wrote that the fire from townhouse hearths had to stay inside the townhouse. After he lit his pipe from the flames in a townhouse hearth, for example, he was asked to dump out his pipe and put out the fire before departing the townhouse, so as not to combine “fire that belonged to the temple” (i.e., fire from the townhouse hearth) with “common fire” (i.e., fire from the hearths in domestic structures).

An annual series of events during which fires from townhouse hearths were taken outside townhouses included the several festivals that were eventually incorporated into Green Corn ceremonialism (Corkran 1969:14–26; Lankford 1987:54–55; Wetmore 1983). As recorded by Butrick and Payne, the fires in Cherokee townhouse hearths were rekindled during the Feast of the First New Moon of Spring (Anderson et al. 2010a:38; Witthoft 1949:33), and that fire was taken to the houses nearby. Butrick and Payne note that new fires were made in townhouse hearths during the New Green Corn Feast (Anderson et al. 2010a:39), as well, but they do not specify that fire was taken to houses during this event. According to Longe, ashes and embers from a townhouse hearth were taken outside the townhouse only once each year and were deposited in a carefully chosen place called “Skeona,” meaning “place of the spirit,” referring, perhaps, to the spirit of the town itself (Corkran 1969:36–37). There is some indication that there was “everlasting fire” in the townhouse hearths at Nequassee and Kituhwa, and some other Cherokee towns, and that when new fires were lit during Green Corn dances at these towns, those fires were shared with other Cherokee settlements (Mooney 1900a:396; Schroedl 1986b:223; Witthoft 1949:37–38).

Depictions of sacred fire appear in Mississippian iconography from across the Southeast. The cross-in-circle motif is thought to symbolize sacred fire, for example, and is found on pottery, engraved shell gorgets, and even on painted house floors (Dye and Wharey 1989:334–335; Power 2004:143–144, 163–164;

Wesler 2001:52). The cross-in-circle motif is also incorporated into iconographic depictions of sun symbols (Muller 1989:22), square crosses (Muller 1989:14), and water spiders (Muller 1989:24). Another motif, seen on Cox Mound gorgets, includes a round sun symbol surrounded by a square made of interlocking spirals (Muller 1989:22; Strong 1989:233). The arrangement of four corners around a sun symbol is comparable to the arrangement of four roof support posts around a hearth. Archaeological examples of cross-in-circle motifs and Cox Mound gorgets date from the late prehistoric period, and while they are found in areas of the Southeast outside of Cherokee town areas in the southern Appalachians, they depict symbolism that seems directly related to documentary and archaeological evidence of fire and hearths in Cherokee townhouses and houses. Of course, hearths served the very practical purposes of generating heat and light inside structures, and hearths were necessary for cooking. Nevertheless, the significance of fire in Mississippian iconography and in Cherokee myth makes it clear that hearths had symbolic significance, as symbolic centers of towns and of households.

While many hearths at late prehistoric South Appalachian Mississippian sites and at protohistoric and historic Cherokee sites were circular, others were square; they had rounded or flattened bottoms and molded clay rims that stood above the surfaces of surrounding structure floors (Dickens 1976:51–66; Keel 1976:28–34; Schroedl 1986b:77–78). The presence of such hearths at sites disturbed by plowing can be considered evidence of depressed structure floors and structure basins, the depth of which would have at least partly protected central hearths from the damaging effects of plowing (Hally 2008:68–70, 78–79; Polhemus 1987:187–198). Fired clay hearths were present in all stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse (Rodning 2009a); on top of one of the burials in Structure 2, the rectangular structure beside the townhouse; in all the dwelling houses (structures 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8) at the site; and in Structure II, in which the hearth was built atop Burial 37 (Rodning 2011a). All the hearths at Coweeta Creek were round, with flat or rounded bottoms. The largest hearths (features 8 and 19) are those from the townhouse (Figure 5.1). Hearths associated with fifteenth-century houses at the site (structures 7 and 9) range from approximately 48 to 122 centimeters in diameter. Hearths associated with seventeenth-century houses at the site (structures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8) are slightly smaller, ranging from approximately 37 to 95 centimeters in diameter. Corresponding to

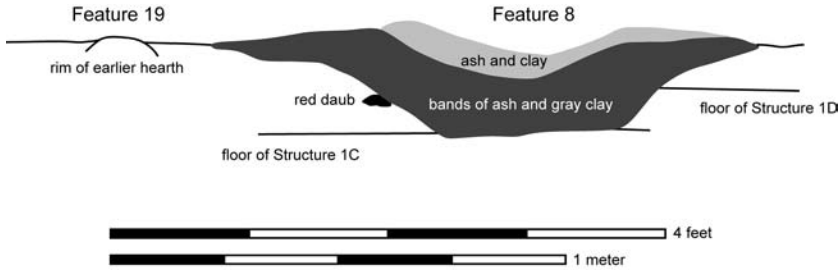


Figure 5.1. Sequence of hearths in the townhouse at the Coweeta Creek site. Reproduced with permission from *American Antiquity* 74(4), © Society for American Archaeology (Rodning 2009a:649).

the pattern of rebuilding the townhouse and townhouse hearths in place are sequences of hearths at specific points within several domestic structures at the site (Figure 5.2).

As noted in chapters 3 and 4, the public and domestic structures at Coweeta Creek exhibit different rebuilding patterns. At least six, and probably seven, stages of the townhouse were built and rebuilt in a single spot, anchoring the town to this particular point in the landscape. The hearth effectively stayed in place from its first to its last stages, although, undoubtedly, it was periodically renovated and rebuilt, as was the townhouse. If the fire kept inside the Coweeta Creek townhouse hearth burned constantly, as Longe wrote in the early 1700s and as Mooney recorded in the late 1800s, then this fire effectively burned during the entire sequence of townhouses at the Coweeta Creek site, perhaps spanning several generations of the community. The only points in this sequence during which the fire may not have been burning in the hearth itself were those episodes during which the entire townhouse was burned down, before it was buried and rebuilt.

Comparable rebuilding patterns are evident in several domestic structures at Coweeta Creek, including structures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8. As with the townhouse, the hearths in these dwellings were rebuilt in place. These hearths anchored houses and households to particular points within the settlement plan, even as new structures were built. The fires in these hearths generated light and heat, for illuminating and warming houses and for cooking. Assuming the fires in these hearths were kindled and rekindled with fire from the townhouse hearth,

HEARTHES

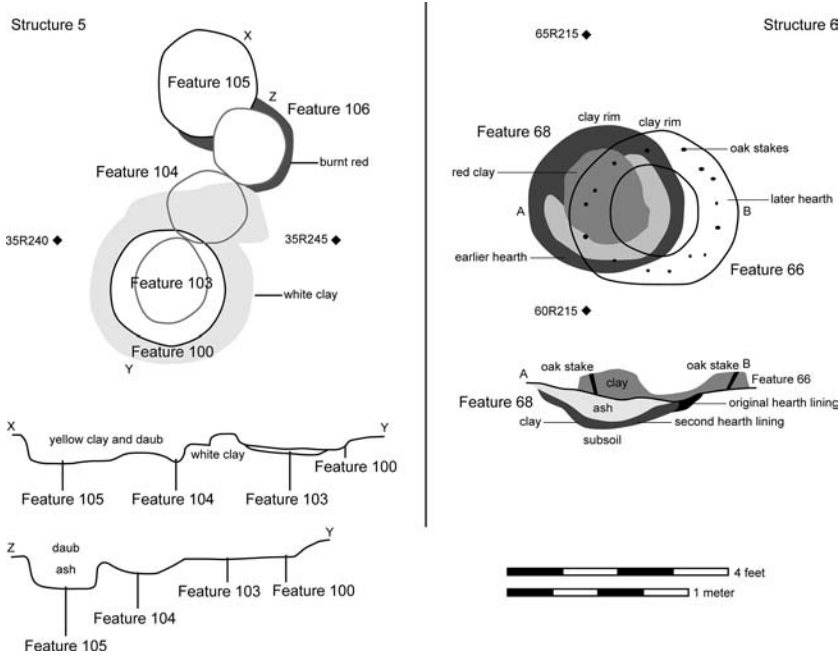


Figure 5.2. Sequences of hearths in structures 5 and 6 at the Coweeta Creek site (see also Rodning 2009b:12).

they connected houses and households to the townhouse and to other houses whose hearths contained fire from the same source.

The domestic structures at Coweeta Creek dating to the fifteenth century, including structures 7 and 9, exhibit another kind of rebuilding pattern. Although these houses were rebuilt in the same general locations, they shifted from one stage to another, and new hearths were built. Although some hearths in seventeenth-century structures shifted slightly from one stage to another (as seen in Structure 5), the placements of successive stages of these hearths overlapped. By contrast, the hearths in successive stages of Structure 7 shifted by several meters, and an entirely new hearth was built when the house was rebuilt. These dwellings predate the townhouse, so there was no local townhouse hearth to serve as the source of fire for the hearths in structures 7 and 9 as there was for later houses.

Close to the hearths of public and domestic structures at Coweeta Creek

were arrangements of roof support posts, represented archaeologically by deep postholes spaced around hearths, normally in square patterns (Rodning 2009b). Hearths themselves were placed at the centers of structures, and the roof support posts marked corners of square areas around them. Hearths placed in the earth were connected to the sky through the smoke that emanated upward from the fires kept inside them, and roof support posts likewise connected earth and sky. These posts, placed in the ground, supported the structures' roofs. Like the four cords suspended from the sky vault and connected to the earth island, roof support posts connected the floor (earth) to the roof (sky).

The same can be said for the roof support posts in the Coweeta Creek townhouse, which served as the corners of the square area around the townhouse hearth and as connections between earth and sky (Rodning 2009a). The townhouse and its hearth formed the focal point for a community for several generations, even as some aspects of the townhouse changed. For example, the entryway was moved from the middle of the southeastern wall to the southernmost corner, and in the last two stages of the townhouse, the arrangement of roof support posts seems to have changed. Despite these changes, and despite periodic burning, burying, and rebuilding, the townhouse hearth stayed in the same place. There is no way to know from archaeological evidence alone whether the fire burned constantly, but we can say from archaeological evidence that the placement of the townhouse hearth was, indeed, constant.

Remnants of the townhouse hearth can also be identified outside the townhouse itself. Several pit features near the townhouse contained large amounts of ash and charcoal (Rodning 2009a, 2010a). Two of these features (34 and 35) are located southwest of Structure 1 (Figure 3.3). Three others (14, 15, and 16) are located just north of Structure 2 (Figure 3.3). These features are located between the townhouse ramada and Structure 15, suggesting, perhaps, that Structure 15 was a residence for the people, likely male elders, responsible for maintaining the townhouse hearth and for participation in other townhouse activities (Gearing 1962:23). Similar deposits have been found several meters southwest of the townhouse at the Ledford Island site in eastern Tennessee (Lewis et al. 1995:525). The ash heap at Ledford Island probably represents a dumping place (perhaps a late prehistoric example of the "Skeona" recorded by Longe?) for ashes from the large hearth inside the public structure at this site (Corkran 1969:36–37; Lewis et al. 1995:530; Sullivan 1987:21–22, 27–28). Whether such ash heaps or pits were visible to townspeople at Ledford Island and Coweeta

Creek is difficult to discern, but they do indicate that when ashes from townhouse hearths were removed from those townhouses, they were deposited close by. Townhouses not only housed the “constant fire” kept by those towns but also marked the places where ashes from those fires were placed in the ground.

Hearths in the townhouse and in household dwellings at Coweeta Creek were center places in several respects. First, they were placed at or very close to the midpoints of the structures themselves. Second, they were placed at the centers of the spaces bounded by the roof support posts. Third, they were the primary sources of light and heat inside structures that had only single entryways. Fourth, hearths and the fires kept in them probably were focal points for social gatherings, ritual events, and domestic activities. Fifth, the fires inside hearths generated visible columns of smoke emanating upward through roofs or smokeholes. Columns of smoke that literally connected hearths to roofs may have symbolically connected townhouses and dwellings—and the towns and households associated with them—to the sky while making them visible within the landscape in the form of rising smoke (compare with Creel and Anyon 2003, 2010; Kay and Sabo 2006; Perttula 2009). Sixth, the fires in the hearths of domestic structures may have been kindled, and periodically rekindled, with fire from the townhouse hearth, thereby connecting each household hearth and each household to the broader community (see also Lankford 1993). Fires in townhouse hearths were considered sacred, and people connected themselves to those hearths and townhouses through fires kept in the hearths of household dwellings and through the “war fires” traditionally carried by warriors on the warpath, giving them tangible connections to home. Seventh, hearths were kept in place when structures were rebuilt. Hearths thereby connected successive generations of the Coweeta Creek townhouse and dwelling houses to each other, creating permanence in the layouts of these structures even as they were rebuilt. Of course, it would have been convenient to renovate or rebuild hearths in place, rather than to move or remove them as structures were rebuilt, and hearths would have provided a sense of continuity as the Coweeta Creek settlement plan developed.

Hearths at Coweeta Creek and at other Cherokee settlements in the southern Appalachians connected households to the community centers of townhouses—the source of fire for hearths in household dwellings—and hearths marked the central points of architectural cosmograms. The four corners of the earth were marked by four roof support posts. The earth, in the form of structure floors,

was connected to the sky vault (or roof) by those roof support posts. Like the sun, hearths were sources of light and heat. Smoke from the fires kept inside household and townhouse hearths emanated upward, from earth to sky, materializing the presence of households within settlements, and Cherokee towns within the landscape of the southern Appalachians.

6

Burials

Alexander Longe described Cherokee mortuary practices as follows in the 1725 postscript to his journal (Corkran 1969:26). As a person approached the end of life, close family members would stay with him or her, and more distant relations would come to mourn after the person died. After a day of mourning, the mourners would send for the “priest of the town” to conduct the burial itself. Mooney (1900b:3) adds that the souls of the dead would cling to those of the living in an effort to have company in the afterlife, and mourners would “break the hold of the spirit” of the dead by going to water “to wash away the memory of the bereavement” with the guidance of the priest. Longe noted that many people, including town leaders and “common people,” were buried with large amounts of goods, especially trade goods acquired from colonial traders. These goods were given to the dead to help them in journeying to the afterlife, and they could also be given as gifts to deceased friends and family members. The number of mourners, Longe wrote, and the amount of goods given to the dead, varied according to the statuses and social roles of the deceased. People were not buried with their own material possessions, because it was thought that the souls of the dead would then wish to reside with those material goods rather than journeying to the afterlife. Mooney (1900b:3) notes that the spirits of the deceased were “loath to leave the scenes of life” and to travel to the Darkening Land, and thus it was necessary for the living to help the souls of the dead on that journey. Witthoft and Hadlock (1946) and Fogelson (1982:94–95) argue that the spirit folk known as the *Nûnně’hĩ* led the recently deceased to the afterlife, and although the world of the *Nûnně’hĩ* was

normally inaccessible to the living, it was close to Cherokee settlements, and the Nûnné'hi could interact with the dead when necessary.

The section of the postscript to Longe's journal describing Cherokee practices of mourning for the dead raises several points of interest, including the idea that South Carolina traders benefited from Cherokee practices of burying goods with the dead so they could give them to friends and family in the afterlife, practices that may have contributed greatly to Cherokee demand for those trade goods. At the Coweeta Creek site, there is only one burial with European trade goods, and in that case, only four opaque, turquoise glass beads (Rodning 2008, 2010a, 2011a). The general absence of European trade goods from the site—in contrast to the large numbers of them found in burials at Overhill Cherokee settlements in Tennessee (Schroedl 1986b)—suggests that burials at Coweeta Creek predate the point at which such trade goods became widely available in Cherokee towns.

With respect to my consideration of burials and the built environment at the Coweeta Creek site, the following points about Longe's commentary are most significant. First, if we take his passage about burial customs literally, it is clear that grave goods were related to the deceased's status when alive, even though it is also clear that the family members of the deceased chose what to bury with them (compare with Nassaney 2000:417–418, 2004:342–343; Parker Pearson 2000:83–94). Second, grave goods were gifts to the deceased and, eventually, gifts to “friends and relations” in the afterlife (compare with Potter 1993, 2006; Seeman 2010:122, 2011:3–4; Simmons 1970:68, 1986). Third, although grave goods were not necessarily personal possessions, they did become the possessions of the deceased in the course of burial, in that they were taken out of circulation and placed in the ground to accompany the dead to the afterlife. Lastly, events related to death and the burial of the dead brought family members together at specific houses, although in the case of influential community leaders, many people other than family members would participate, as well.

Daniel Butrick, who lived in Cherokee towns during the early nineteenth century as a missionary and was a student of Cherokee language and culture, described the following practices related to mourning and burying the dead (Anderson et al. 2010a:228–230). Butrick noted that people mourned the dead for four days and cleansed the house of a deceased person with the help of a priest from the nearby townhouse. Butrick wrote that the possessions of the de-

ceased were either buried with him or her or were burned and that all the food and furniture within a house was discarded or buried. The priest put out the fire in the hearth, disposed of the wood and ashes from the hearth outside the house, and kindled a new fire, before taking all household members to the river to bathe. On the fifth day, after sacrifices were made in the new fire within the house, the mourners prepared food to take to the townhouse for the “feast of consolation” shared by the priest, his assistants, and the mourners themselves.

Butrick noted in his commentary on Cherokee dreams that spirits of the dead would visit a house soon after a person was buried (Anderson 2010b:240–241). The household would make food for the spirits and place the food near the burial itself, or in some other “conspicuous place.” This reference by Butrick to the practice of feeding the dead is broadly analogous to the practice noted by Longe of giving goods to the dead, in that both refer to giving offerings to those making the journey to the afterlife.

According to the Cherokee cosmogonic myth “The Daughter of the Sun” (Mooney 1900a:252–254), the deceased would travel to the “darkening land” after death. According to the cartography of this and other Cherokee myths and legends, the land of the dead was situated in the west, where the sun sets, but the living could not bring the dead back from the darkening land. The sun lived on the other side of the sky vault from the earth, but her daughter lived in the middle of the sky, and the sun would visit her daughter’s house during the sun’s daily traverse across the sky. After the sun’s daughter was killed by a bite from a great rattlesnake, the sun grieved and did not shine on earth anymore. The people consulted medicine men known as the “Little Men” and on their advice sent seven men west to the darkening land to bring back the sun’s daughter, in an effort to make the sun shine again. The Little Men told them that they would find the ghost of the daughter of the sun and that they should catch her while she was dancing. They were then to put her ghost in a wooden box and to keep the lid closed until they brought the box back to the people. The seven men did not heed this advice and let the lid open, only slightly, but enough to let the ghost out. Had they brought the sun’s daughter home safely, people could have brought back other friends and family from the ghost country, but because they did not bring the sun’s daughter back, the dead can never come back to the living. This spatial and conceptual separation between the living and the dead, and the location of the darkening land at the point where the

sun sets, is also noted in the myth “Kana’ti and Selu: The Origin of Game and Corn” (Mooney 1900a:242–249), which tells the story of the first Cherokee man and woman and their sons.

The conceptual separation between the land of the living and the land of the dead stands in contrast to the placement of burials inside and beside public and domestic structures at Cherokee town sites in the southern Appalachians. At late prehistoric and protohistoric sites in northern Georgia, eastern Tennessee, and the western Carolinas, burials are commonly found in and around dwellings and townhouses and in earthen mounds (Rodning and Moore 2010; Sullivan 1987, 1995, 2001, 2006; Sullivan and Rodning 2001, 2011). Burials have been found in and near domestic structures at several Overhill Cherokee settlements, and there are some (though relatively few) examples of burials associated with Overhill Cherokee townhouses (King and Olinger 1972; Schroedl 1986b). While the dead could not come back to the living, from another perspective, the dead were never far away; they became part of the built environment where they had lived. Butrick and Payne noted that the Cherokee’s “most ancient custom” was to bury the deceased directly under the spot where that person died, or where that person had a bed in the house; the exception was chiefs, who were buried underneath their seats in townhouses (Anderson et al. 2010a:228–229, 257–258). Houses, and perhaps townhouses too, required purification following the deaths of household members, and townhouses and dwellings were both architectural spaces in which the dead were placed (Anderson et al. 2010b:52–53, 184–185).

The relationship between burials and the built environment of Cherokee settlements is also apparent in Mooney’s version of the oral tradition “The Mounds and the Constant Fire” (1900a:395–396). This historical myth refers to burials as foundational deposits in the ground on which townhouses were then built. After the ground was cleared, and after a circle of stones was placed around a fire, one or more recently deceased community members were buried close to this fire. Women brought basketloads of earth to cover the stones and burials, and then the townhouse was built. From this perspective, the burials of people and of goods were critical components of the built environment. Sacred possessions of the town—an Uktena scale (probably a shell gorget with an engraved rattlesnake motif; Hudson 1978; Muller 2007:25; Rodning 2011a:167–168), an Ulúñsú’ti stone (probably a quartz crystal, or “divining crystal”; Anderson et al. 2010a:31, 33, 230–231; Hudson 2005:156–164; Mooney

1900a:297–298), and glass beads—were among the objects buried. The beads were “conjured” by priests so they would protect the townhouse, and the town, as long as the townhouse was present. These deposits within Cherokee townhouses and townhouse mounds were architectural elements, as well as gifts to the deceased.

The reference in this Cherokee myth to burials placed in the ground upon which townhouses were built indicates that public structures not only created venues for community events but also marked the resting places of prominent persons in the history of Cherokee towns. Ancestors were present within the public lives of Cherokee towns, at least symbolically, and archaeological evidence demonstrates that burials were literally present inside and beside townhouses. Given the overarching similarities in the architectural designs and materials of Cherokee townhouses and dwellings, it is not unreasonable to expect that comparable relationships existed between households and those people buried in and near domestic structures.

Archaeologists have long looked to burials for clues to status distinctions in past societies (Parker Pearson 2000:72–94; Sullivan and Mainfort 2010; Tainter 1978). Material traces of mortuary practices shed light on gender distinctions (Clayton 2011), networks of kinship and descent (Arnold and Green 2002), wealth and rank differentiation (Chapman et al. 1981; Mainfort 1985; Wason 1994), and social and political complexity and diversity in past communities (Beck 1995; Brown 1971; Rothschild 1979). Although it is sometimes difficult to discern symbolism from archaeological evidence, mortuary patterns also lend insight into symbolic and sacred aspects of burials and mortuary ceremonialism (Bartel 1982; Cannon 1989, 2002; Rakita 2008.). The placement of burials and the distribution of grave goods shed light on the social and political organization of past communities, but such mortuary data also offer insight into the connections between the living and the dead (Chesson 2001; Kuijt 2001; Morris 1991). Burials form sites of memory within the landscape and built environment, and they relate the memory of the dead to the interests and needs of the living (Bloch 1971; Dillehay 1995; Fleming 1972, 1973).

This consideration of the burials at the Coweeta Creek site emphasizes that burials and grave goods were part of the built environment (Goldstein 1980, 1995; Parker Pearson 1992, 1993, 2000:193–197; Potter and Perry 2011). The townhouse was buried and rebuilt periodically, and ashes from the townhouse hearth were placed in the ground nearby. Stages of domestic structures were

burned down and buried, as houses were rebuilt. Burials likewise placed people, and the grave goods given to them, in the ground. Although the burials themselves would not have been visible for long after they were put in the ground, many burials at the site serve as clear references to structures that housed both the living and the dead.

Of course, burials represent different kinds of cultural deposits than do structures and the materials that accumulated in the course of everyday life. Structures house events and activities, and burials commemorate the lives of individuals. Events associated with burying and remembering the dead are carefully crafted, and they are retrospective. Burials themselves are created in relatively brief periods—days, perhaps, or even shorter spans of time—whereas archaeological remnants of structures and the material culture associated with them represent material accumulations spanning several years, or in the case of structures with long rebuilding sequences, several generations. As commemorative deposits, burials offer symbolic, and selective, commentary on individuals and their connections to others within the community, rather than on the material outcomes of everyday life. Burials in structures connect the dead placed within them to the continuing life history of those structures, including cycles of burning and rebuilding (Lucero 2008), and make those structures focal points for the continuity and the persistence of the social groups housed within them (Hutson 2009; Hutson et al. 2004, 2012a, 2012b). Both burials and structures are also outcomes of social action (Gillespie 2008), making them amenable to the study of past social relations and of the relationships between people and place.

Van Dyke and Alcock (2003:3) have written, “People remember the past according to the needs of the present, and social memory is an active and ongoing process.” Burials represent one set of practices related to social memory. Archaeologist Michael Rowlands (1993) has drawn a distinction between inscribed and incorporated memory, relating inscribed memory to visible manifestations and representations and incorporated memory to activities that have few if any material traces. Sociologist Paul Connerton (1989) similarly differentiates inscribed memory from embodied memory, the former being associated with monuments and other materially visible representations of memory and the latter with specific events and bodily practices that have few direct material correlates. Burials placed in the ground within and beside structures at Native American settlements in the southern Appalachians cannot be consid-

ered monuments, except that in many cases, they were placed within architectural spaces that were visible markers for those burials (compare with Wilson 2010). From this perspective, burials at sites in the southern Appalachians represent decisions that surviving members of households and towns made about the preferred placement of the dead in an effort to sustain connections between the dead and the living (compare with Gillespie 2002; McAnany 1995; McGuire 1992).

As Van Dyke and Alcock (2003:5) also note, “Places are spaces that have been inscribed with meaning, usually as a result of some past event or attachment.” At the late prehistoric Mississippian site of Moundville, in Alabama, burials in earthen mounds connected elite echelons of the Moundville chiefdom to the map of hierarchical social relations manifested in the layout of the mounds and plaza themselves (Knight 2007b; Knight and Steponaitis 2007; Peebles and Kus 1977). Meanwhile, concentrations of burials within abandoned houses and neighborhoods at Moundville created “social and spatial continuity with ancestral residential space” late in the history of the Moundville chiefdom (Wilson et al. 2010:89). Burials in mounds and in other monumental spaces connect individuals to the public life and symbolism manifested in them (Joyce 2008; Meskell 2003; Nielsen 2008). Similarly, burials in residential spaces and public structures situate the dead within the spatial realm of everyday life and community life, connecting the past and the present within the built environment of houses and towns (Hally 2008; Hendon 2007; Joyce 2007).

Payne and Butrick noted the practice of placing burials within Cherokee houses and townhouses, or at least the cultural memory of such burial placement, if Cherokee burial practices had changed by the early nineteenth century, when Payne and Butrick were writing: “The most ancient custom was to bury the corpse in the house, directly under that spot in the floor where the person died, except in the case of a distinguished chief, and then he was buried under the seat he had usually occupied in the council house” (Anderson et al. 2010b:194). With this in mind, houses and townhouses functioned as referents to the dead and as points of reference to the placement of burials, which were not visible, strictly speaking, but which may have been remembered specifically through the spatial relationship between burials and visible elements of the built environment (compare with Charles and Buikstra 2002). This spatial relationship enabled the living to know where the dead were located (Silverman 2002), and it made architectural spaces within Cherokee settlements *loci* for

memory and enactments of claims to group identity (Gillespie 2002), including identity at the level of entire towns and of the households within them. Archaeologists have noted in burials and burial mounds references to features of the natural landscape (see Arnold 2002; Dillehay 1990). In the case of Cherokee mortuary practices, burials seem to have referenced elements of the built environment more than they referenced natural landmarks.

The converse of remembering the dead may have been forgetting them, or, perhaps, releasing the dead to embark on the journey to the darkening land. As Payne and Butrick note, following the burial of a deceased person and a ritual immersion in a nearby creek or river: “The name of the deceased was not to be mentioned on any account whatever, and at some periods of their history, it has been the custom for one of the relatives of the deceased to go to the town house, cleanse it, and then unite with the people of the town in a dance, the more perfectly to obliterate all remembrance of the deceased from their minds” (Anderson 2010b:185). Burials and other aspects of mortuary ritual are rites of passage, after all, and they enact a series of transformations through which the dead are separated from the surviving community and are set forth on the journey to the afterlife (see Parker Pearson 1993).

Given these associations between burials and the built environment of Cherokee settlements, the dead were at once visible and invisible (Goldstein 2002): visible because of the spatial associations between burials and structures, and invisible in the senses that burials were placed underground and that the dead journeyed to the afterlife after departing the land of the living. According to the Cherokee beliefs about death recorded by Alexander Longe in the 1700s and by Payne and Butrick during the early 1800s, the spirits of the dead would stay close to the living until they were helped on their journey to the afterlife. Payne and Butrick specifically refer to practices of burning or burying the material possessions of the deceased (Anderson et al. 2010a:229) and of setting out food to appease the spirits of the dead (Anderson et al. 2010b:240). They describe practices of purifying houses where the dead had lived (Anderson et al. 2010a:185), such as rekindling fires in household hearths and discarding the “old” and “impure” ashes and wood (Anderson et al. 2010b:229). These activities were aimed at purification rather than commemoration. Longe refers to taking gifts—including colonial trade goods—to the afterlife and to the ancestors already there (Corkran 1969:26). Like Payne and Butrick, Longe too notes that the spirits of the dead were thought to stay close to the material posses-

sions of the deceased until they were burned or otherwise discarded (Corkran 1969:26). From this perspective, practices of handling and burying the dead were perhaps focused as much on letting go of the deceased, and sending them on to the afterlife, as they were on commemorating them.

The placement of burials inside and beside structures or monuments created tangible connections between the places of the dead (burials in the ground) and the places of the living (public structures and dwellings). Burials placed within public and domestic spaces at Coweeta Creek probably contributed to keeping structures in place, even as the structures themselves were abandoned, often through burning, and then were rebuilt. From this perspective, burials were, in a sense, centripetal forces within the built environment of a settlement like Coweeta Creek, with the placement of the dead anchoring households to particular points within the community plan and anchoring the town as a whole to the townhouse and the burials within and beside it. As David Hally (2008:309) notes in his study of the Mississippian town at the King site, located beside the Coosa River in northwestern Georgia, spatial associations between standing structures, the remnants of preceding stages of those structures, and burials associated with dwellings probably symbolized intergenerational continuity within households and lineages (compare with Sullivan 1987). The same perspective is relevant at the broader scale of entire towns, given the presence of burials in community structures such as townhouses, like those at Coweeta Creek and at the King site.

One major premise of this chapter is that the burials at Coweeta Creek were placed in the ground in reference to structures and other aspects of the built environment (Moore 2004; Parker Pearson 2000:124–141; Rodning 2001a, 2011a). Several burials were placed inside the townhouse, for example, and others just outside the entryway to the townhouse. Several burials were placed inside domestic houses at the site, and others in close proximity to dwellings. The locations of burials, and the grave goods found in these burials, shed light on social dynamics within the Coweeta Creek settlement and on the relationships between people and the built environment of this community.

Burials and the Built Environment at the Coweeta Creek Site

Excavations at Coweeta Creek identified 83 burials and the skeletal remains of 88 individuals (Figure 1.2; Table 1.1; Rodning 2001a, 2011a). Twenty-three

Table 6.1. Burials associated with public and domestic structures at the Coweeta Creek site.

Context	Burials
Townhouse	6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 39
Townhouse Mound Perimeter	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8
Plaza	29
Village	22, 26, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84

burials were located in structures 1 and 2, and 11 were located in close proximity to the townhouse, including 1 in the plaza near the edge of the ramada beside the townhouse (Table 6.1). Twenty-two burials were placed inside domestic structures; 3 close to or underneath ramadas along the southeastern edge of the plaza; 2 more near those ramadas at the southeastern corner of the plaza; 12 in areas immediately adjacent to structures 3, 4, and 5; and 10 in areas near Feature 37, southwest of the townhouse (Table 6.1). Most of the burials at the site ($N = 70$, or 84 percent) were simple pit burials (Figure 6.1), while others ($N = 13$, or 16 percent) were shaft-and-chamber burials (compare with Hally 2008:202–214). Of the 13 shaft-and-chamber burials (Figure 6.2), 1 (Burial 37) had a central chamber and 12 had side chambers (compare with Dickens 1976:103–104).

Grave goods are associated with 31 burials (37 percent) at the Coweeta Creek site (Figure 6.3; Table 1.1; Rodning 2001a, 2011a). Grave goods are present in 15 of the 29 burials (52 percent) associated with the townhouse and in 16 of the 54 burials (30 percent) in other areas of the site. Burials in the townhouse are much more likely than burials elsewhere at the site to include grave goods. Most of the burials containing grave goods, and certainly those with the greatest variety of grave goods, are concentrated in and around the townhouse. Many of the

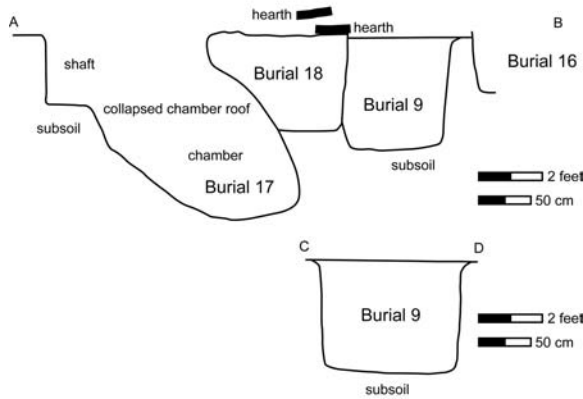
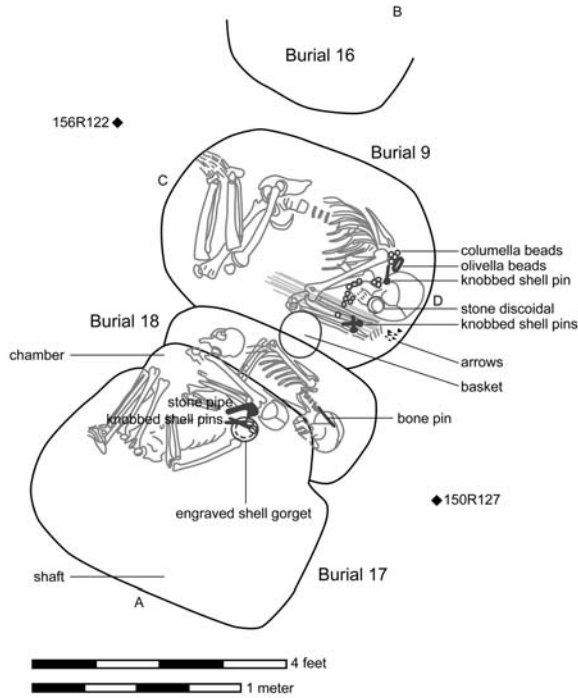


Figure 6.1. Burial 9 at the Coweeta Creek site, an example of a simple pit burial adjacent to a second simple pit burial (18) and a shaft-and-chamber burial (17) (compare with Dickens 1976:104; Rodning 2011a:149, 153; Ward and Davis 1999:165). Reproduced with permission from the *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 30(2), © Elsevier Inc. (Rodning 2011a:148), and with permission from *American Antiquity* 74(4), © Society for American Archaeology (Rodning 2009a:647).

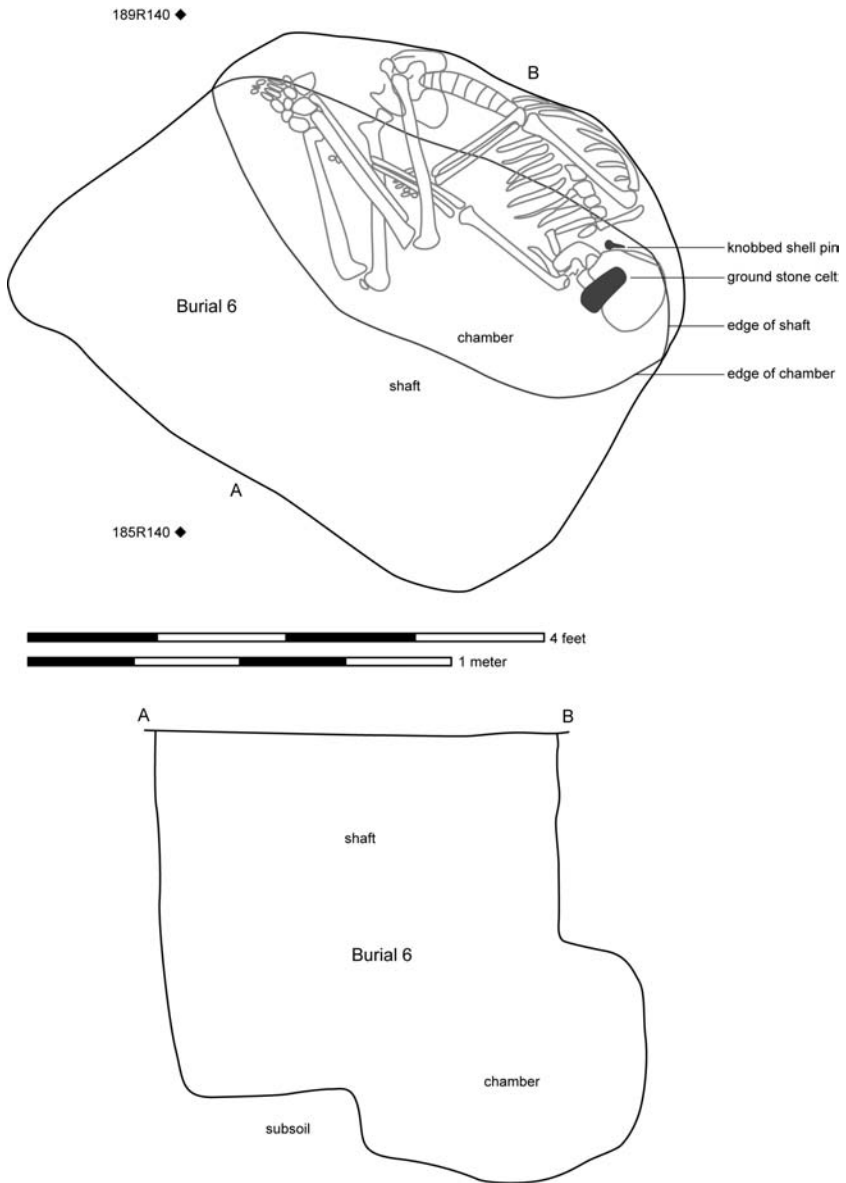


Figure 6.2. Burial 6 at the Coweeta Creek site, an example of a shaft-and-chamber burial (compare with Rodning 2011a:154, 165). Reproduced with permission from *American Antiquity* 74(4), © Society for American Archaeology (Rodning 2009a:646).

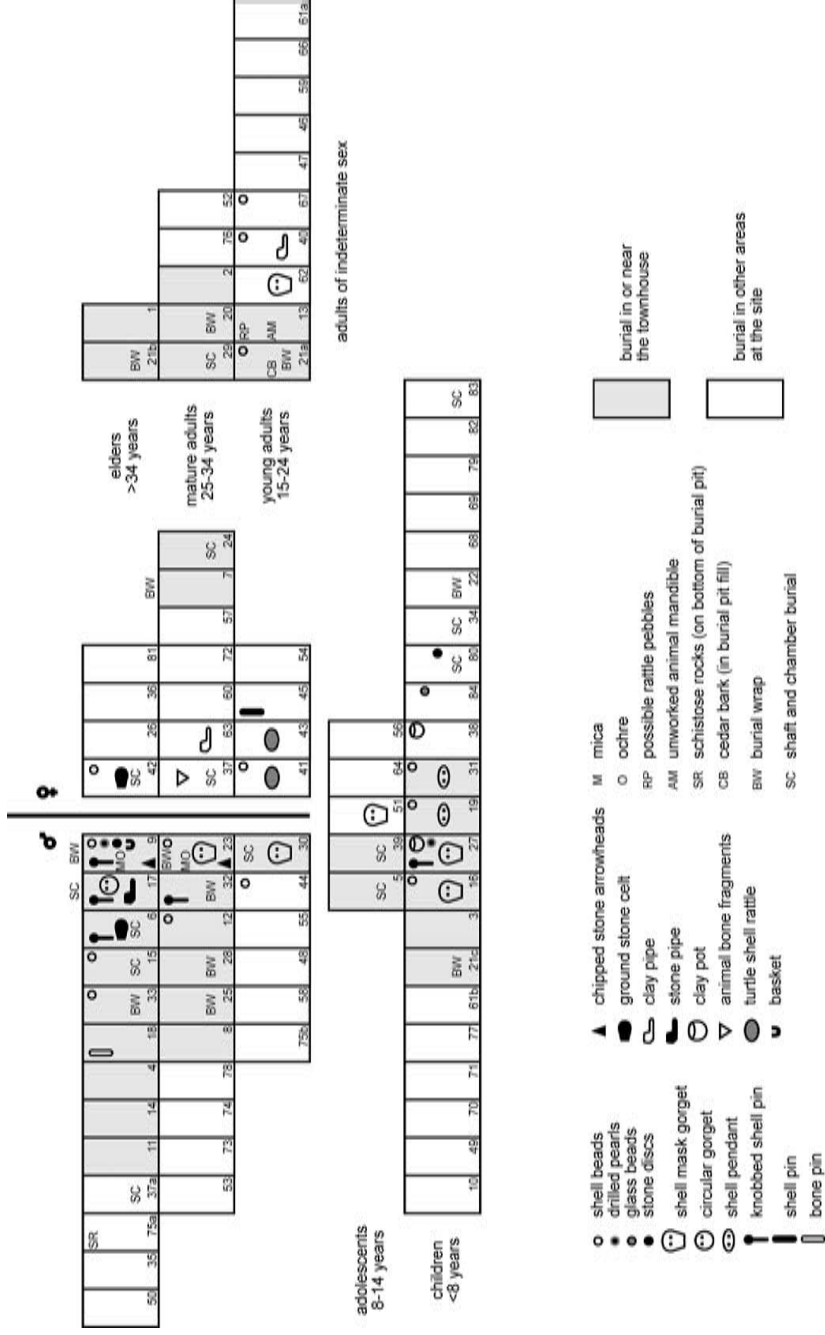


Figure 6.3. Burials and grave goods at the Cowceta Creek site (after Rodning 2001a:92-93; 2011a:158; Rodning and Moore 2010:96).

burials containing grave goods in domestic houses were concentrated in structures 8 and 9, which represent dwellings from different stages of settlement.

Grave goods from Coweeta Creek are broadly comparable to those seen at other late prehistoric and protohistoric sites in the greater southern Appalachians (Dickens 1976; Hally 2004, 2008; Lewis et al. 1995). Shell beads, made from *Marginella* and *Olivella* shell, and from the columella of *Busycon* shells, are mostly barrel-shaped, although some are disc-shaped (see Hally 2008:266–270). Knobbed shell pins are made from the columella of *Busycon* shells and are identified as ear pins based on their typical placement in burials adjacent to skulls (see Hally 2008:264–265). Shell pendants are oval in shape and have suspension holes but no engraved designs. Circular shell gorgets are made of *Busycon* shell and have iconographic motifs engraved on the concave surface; this, paired with the presence of suspension holes, indicates these gorgets were suspended around the necks of individuals (Hally 2008:262–263; Muller 2007). The single example of such a gorget from Coweeta Creek depicts a rattlesnake and is attributable to the Carter’s Quarter-gorget type, which is seen at other sites dating to the 1500s and 1600s (Brain and Phillips 1996:83–106; Brown 1985:188; Ward and Davis 1999:188). Rattlesnakes, or *utsa’náti*, were considered the chiefs of the snake tribe, and they have been “feared and respected accordingly” (Mooney 1900a:253, 295, 313, 463, 544). Furthermore, within the Cherokee world view, *utsa’náti* are thought of as symbols of transformation (Fogelson 1971:335; Zogry 2010:60). These points may account for the placement of an engraved rattlesnake gorget in a burial inside the Coweeta Creek townhouse. Some burials at Coweeta Creek have pear-shaped shell mask gorgets made of *Busycon* shells and feature humanlike imagery engraved on the convex surface, sometimes with forked-eye surrounds symbolizing raptors (Rodning 2012:38; Smith and Smith 1989). Mask gorgets, which are commonly associated with burials of adult males and children, may have had symbolic significance related to warfare and hunting (Brown 1985:189–190; Hally 2008:261; Lankford 1987:85–91). The seven chipped-stone arrowheads associated with the male elder in Burial 9 are likewise probably associated with warfare or hunting (Hally 2008:421–427, 440–448), and the ochre found in Burial 9 may have been associated with making paint for ritual events, perhaps even the red paint associated with warfare. Two burials at Coweeta Creek—both elders, one female (Burial 42) and one male (Burial 6)—contain stone celts. Based on the oblong shape and sizes of these two celts, they could have been weapons, or woodworking tools,

and, generally, across the Southeast, these artifacts are found in Mississippian burials of people with relatively high status and rank (Hally 2008:234–235, 437–438). In contrast to the male-focused and warfare-related symbolism of these kinds of grave goods, two burials of young adult women at the site contain turtle shell rattles, like those Cherokee women wore on their arms and ankles during dances (Perdue 1998). There are also examples of burials—women and men, adults and children—with clay or stone smoking pipes and stone gaming discs. Smoking pipes are thought to have been associated with ceremonial events in late prehistoric and protohistoric societies of the greater southern Appalachians (Hally 2008:448–450). Stone discs may represent gaming pieces, for games of chance, and they could also be replicas of chunky stones, like those fed by Cherokee mothers to their sons in “The Origin of the Pleiades and the Pine” (Mooney 1900a:258–259).

Figure 6.3 visually summarizes the grave goods and burial pit forms at the Coweeta Creek site. Each rectangle depicts the types of grave goods associated with each individual in the burials at the site, and those with gray shading represent burials directly associated with structures 1 or 2. Shaft-and-chamber burials are marked as such, and others are simple pit burials.

Figure 6.3 divides the Coweeta Creek burial population into the following age groups: elders (more than 35 years old at death), mature adults (26 to 35 years), young adults (16 to 25 years), adolescents (8 to 15 years), and children (less than 8 years). These age groups are generally comparable to the age groups identified by other researchers, including distinctions between children and adolescents and between adolescents and adults (Eastman 2001, 2002; Sullivan 1987, 2001, 2006; Thomas 1996). Meanwhile, documentary sources indicate that historic Cherokee groups recognized different stages of adulthood, lending some support to the idea that the age groups identified here may be broadly comparable to stages in life courses as the Coweeta Creek community understood them (Fogelson 1971:329–330; Perdue 1998:26–28; Persico 1979: 92–95). Of course, the estimated age ranges for several individuals overlap more than one age group, which potentially introduces error into these analyses; I have attempted to place each individual within the most likely age group, based on skeletal data and identifications of age at death, and the overall patterns are more important than the precise identifications of specific individuals. The sex of some adults and of all subadults (individuals less than 16 years old at death, including children and adolescents) was considered indeterminate by Patricia

Lambert (2000, 2001, 2002), the bioarchaeologist who analyzed skeletal remains from Coweeta Creek and several other late prehistoric and postcontact Cherokee sites in western North Carolina as part of the NAGPRA inventory compiled by the UNC Research Laboratories of Archaeology (Davis et al. 1996).

As seen in preceding chapters, the Coweeta Creek settlement dates from the fifteenth through the early eighteenth century, and there may have been one or more periods during which the site was abandoned (Rodning 2008). Several structures can be dated through radiocarbon determinations (Table 1.5) and through pottery, and burials in these structures can be dated by association. Pottery from some burial pits is temporally diagnostic, but the ceramics in these cases give *terminus post quem* dates for the burials themselves.

One burial containing temporally diagnostic pottery is Burial 37. Sherds from the fill of Burial 37 demonstrate diamond-check stamping, coarse plain surface treatments, and everted rims without notched rim strips. These characteristics are all diagnostic of Early Qualla pottery, dating from A.D. 1300 to 1500 (Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008). A recent accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) date on charcoal from the fill of Burial 37 is A.D. 1300 to 1430 (Table 1.5), with a calibrated intercept at 1400. A hearth was built on top of Burial 37, and this recent AMS determination gives *terminus post quem* dates for both the burial and the hearth.

This hearth probably represents the central hearth inside the concentration of postholes identified as Structure 11. There are at least five, and perhaps seven, similar examples of burials underneath hearths at the late prehistoric Warren Wilson site in western North Carolina (Dickens 1976:102–128). At the King site in northwestern Georgia, dating to the mid-to-late sixteenth century, burials inside houses are thought to represent members of the households associated with those domestic structures (Hally 2008:214–219). The same can probably also be said of burials inside houses at the Coweeta Creek and Warren Wilson sites. If that is the case, then those individuals buried underneath hearths may represent significant members of particular households or lineages, or perhaps founding members of associated houses. The primary individual in Burial 37 is an adult woman, and reanalysis of the skeletal remains for the NAGPRA inventory by the RLA revealed the presence of additional remains from an adult male. Perhaps one or both of these individuals were closely associated with the activities that took place in Structure 11, be they domestic activities or

ritual events, or both. Grave goods in Burial 37 at the Coweeta Creek site include several pieces of animal bone and horn core fragments. One of the burials at the Warren Wilson site (Burial 7) underneath a hearth inside a structure (House B) likewise contains animal bone elements—panther phalanges, conch shell with red ochre, and gar scales—as well as pieces of mica and several shell beads (Dickens 1976:104–109). Animal bones from burials at the King site are interpreted as medicine bundles or ritual items (Hally 2008:470–474). Given the presence of animal bones as grave goods in Burial 37 at Coweeta Creek, and the placement of the burial at a point at which a hearth and Structure 11 were then built, it is tempting to conclude that the person or persons in Burial 37 were significant as ritual specialists—perhaps akin to the “conjurers” in Cherokee communities of the nineteenth century (Fogelson 1978, 1980, 1984, 1989; Witthoft 1983; Zogry 2010:107–132)—and that the structure was the setting for ritual activities or the dwelling of the specialists who performed them.

The dates of burials in the area southwest of the townhouse (burials 34, 36, 38, 46, 47, 48, 49, 66, 67, 68), near the ditch enclosure (Feature 37), are difficult to determine, but burials 48 and 49 clearly intrude into different sections of Feature 37. None of these burials are clearly associated with any structures, and although they are located close to both Feature 37 and Structure 14, the temporal relationships between them are not clear. There are not many sherds present in the fill of these burials, and no sherds from these burial pits can be definitively identified as Middle Qualla or Late Qualla, which lends some support to the idea that they could date to the Early Qualla stage of settlement at Coweeta Creek, before larger amounts of artifacts accumulated over the long term. On the other hand, sherds in burial pit fill represent whatever sherds were lying on the ground when the burial pits were originally dug. There seems to have been much less activity in this area of the site than in areas south and east of the plaza, and it may be that there simply were not many sherds deposited there in the first place, and, therefore, fewer sherds were incorporated into burial pit fill in this area of the site.

Several burials, including the four burials (51, 52, 54, 55) associated with Structure 7, can be dated to the Early Qualla settlement at Coweeta Creek on the basis of spatial and stratigraphic associates with dated structures. With the exception of Burial 51, in which an engraved shell mask gorget is associated with an individual whose age at death was approximately 10 years (compare with Smith and Smith 1989), these burials contain no grave goods. There are

as many as four stages of Structure 7, based on the presence of four hearths in the sprawling pattern of postholes centered around Feature 67, the hearth associated with the last of these stages. Four radiocarbon dates from Structure 7 place it in the fifteenth century (Rodning 2008:12, 2009a:10–13). The posthole pattern represented by the last stage of this domestic house is truncated by the posthole pattern of Structure 6, which can be dated to the seventeenth century, based on pottery from the floor of Structure 6 and on one radiocarbon date from the site (Rodning 2008:25, 2009a:10–13). It is possible that some of the burials located in close proximity to Structure 7 are actually associated with Structure 6. On the other hand, the placement of Burial 55 inside Structure 7, and the placement of Burial 52 just outside the doorway to the last stage of this house, suggests that at least these burials were associated with Structure 7.

Radiocarbon dates definitively place Structure 7 in the fifteenth century, and the similarities between the pottery from structures 7 and 9 definitively place Structure 9 in the fifteenth century. The location of the entryway of Structure 9 is unknown, but most other structures at the site have entryways near their southeastern sides or corners. If that is the case for Structure 9, then the four burials in the floor of this structure (42, 43, 44, 45) would have been placed in the back of the house, on the other side of the hearths (features 57 and 63) from the entryway. These individuals include a female elder buried with a ground stone celt and 75 shell beads, a young adult female buried with 2 turtle shell rattles, an adult male buried with 25 shell beads, and a young adult female buried with a shell pin. At the site as a whole, relatively few burials contain grave goods. The concentration of four burials with these mortuary offerings inside one house may be indicative of the status and wealth of the household associated with this structure.

The posthole pattern of Structure 9 is truncated by Structure 8, which dates to the seventeenth century, based on its similarities to other structures at the site that date to that period. Of the burials (35, 50, 53, 62, 63, 64) associated with Structure 8, one (Burial 62) is the burial of a young adult (sex indeterminate) with an engraved shell mask gorget, and another (Burial 63) is an adult female with a clay pipe (Rodning and Moore 2010:96). Given the concentration of grave goods inside Structure 9, and the proximity of structures 8 and 9, it is possible that these structures were residences within a single household or a single lineage, whose status within the community was reflected in these apparent concentrations of grave goods in this part of the site. Similar concen-

trations of grave goods are seen in a series of domestic structures in one area of the stockaded village at Warren Wilson (Rodning and Moore 2010:85–86). At Warren Wilson this pattern is interpreted as indicating the long-standing presence of one or more high-status households in this part of the site, and the same may be true for structures 8 and 9 at Coweeta Creek.

Other dwellings contemporaneous with Structure 8 include structures 3, 4, 5, and 6. Pottery from the floor of Structure 6, and one radiocarbon date for Structure 6, indicates that this house dates to the seventeenth century. There are no burials inside Structure 6, although there is one (Burial 84) in the area outside its entryway, perhaps reflecting an association between this burial and this structure. There are two stages of the hearth (features 66 and 68) in Structure 6. Interestingly, there is one wrought iron nail associated with the first stage of this hearth (Feature 68), meaning that the hearth must date later than early Spanish contact in the Southeast, although it could date to the 1600s or even the early 1700s. Meanwhile, the newborn child in Burial 84 is associated with four turquoise glass beads, making it the only burial at the site with colonial trade goods. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Alexander Longe wrote that the Cherokee were keen to have access to trade goods from South Carolina, and that many Cherokee people during the eighteenth century were buried with colonial trade goods, as gifts to take with them to the afterlife and to share with friends and relations (Corkran 1969:26). Trade goods were widely available in Cherokee towns by the early eighteenth century, although some trade goods did find their way to Cherokee settlements during the 1600s, and perhaps even during the 1500s (Rodning 2010b; Shumate et al. 2005; Waselkov 1989a). Burials at Coweeta Creek probably predate the point at which such trade goods became widely available.

Four burials (75, 76, 78, 79) are associated with Structure 3. These burials include a newborn child, two mature adult males, one young adult male, and another adult of indeterminate sex. The only grave goods in these burials are schistose rocks found at the base of Burial 75; these rocks may be part of the burial itself, rather than grave goods directly associated with either of the adult males whose skeletal remains were found here. During excavations at the Coweeta Creek site in the 1960s and early 1970s, one individual (an adult male) was identified in this burial. During the preparation of the NAGPRA inventory by the RLA in the 1990s, skeletal remains of another adult male were identified (Davis et al. 1996). It is possible that the remains of the additional

adult male in Burial 75 represent a war trophy, as seen in several burials at the sixteenth-century King site in Georgia (Hally 2008:260–261, 431–432, 447–448, 469–470). On the other hand, as in other instances of Coweeta Creek burials with remains of multiple individuals (such as burials 21 and 61), the relationships between the individuals may be those of parents and children, or other kinship ties.

In contrast to the four burials inside Structure 3, there are no burials inside the adjacent Structure 4, and only one burial (83) of an adolescent located outside the entryway to Structure 4. The lack of burials in Structure 4 may indicate that its occupation spanned a shorter period than those of other domestic houses nearby. It may also be the case that deceased members of the Structure 4 household were buried in areas outside and close to the structure itself.

Several burials are, in fact, placed in close proximity to Structure 4. Four burials (72, 73, 74, 77) are located just behind Structure 4 and just south of Structure 3. Eight others (40, 41, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61) form a row that parallels an apparent gap between structures 4 and 6. Two of these burials (40, 41) are located close to posthole patterns that probably represent ramadas placed along the southeastern edge of the plaza. The others (60, 61, 59, 58, 57, 56) correspond to the placement of Feature 65 and they are intrusive into Feature 65. Radiocarbon dates and pottery from Feature 65 indicate that it dates to the Early Qualla stage of settlement at Coweeta Creek, and, therefore, that it may date to roughly the same period as Burial 37 and structures 7 and 9 (Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008). Burials probably were placed here at a later date, when structures 3 and 4 were occupied. It may also be significant that the original entryway to Structure 1 forms an axis that, if continued through Structure 2 and across the plaza, would go right through Feature 65 and the row of burials there. The evidence is circumstantial, but if the original entryway to the townhouse formed a significant axis and alignment, that alignment might account for the row of burials placed in the gap between structures 4 and 6. Of course, the reverse may be the case, and it may be that Feature 65, and the burials that later cut through it, formed significant components of the local landscape that were reference points for the original entryway to the townhouse.

South of Structure 4, and generally contemporaneous with it, is Structure 5. The three burials in this house include a female elder and two children, one of whom was buried with two stone gaming discs. The relatively low number of burials in Structure 5 actually seems to contradict the apparent length of its re-

building sequence, as is evident from the series of at least three and as many as five stages of the Structure 5 hearth. It is possible that burials associated with Structure 5 were placed in the ground near the structure but outside the limits of excavated areas at the site. It is also possible that some of the burials near the southeastern edge of the plaza were associated with the Structure 5 household.

Several burials are associated with ramadas placed along the southeastern edge of the plaza. Three burials (69, 70, 71) are children. Two others (40, 41) have already been noted, as they are located along the line connecting the original townhouse entryway to the gap between structures 4 and 6. Burial 40 is a young adult of indeterminate sex and contains a clay pipe and two shell beads. Burial 41 is a young adult female and contains a turtle-shell rattle and 24 shell bead fragments. It is tempting to relate the turtle shell rattle in Burial 41 to dances that probably took place on the nearby plaza and in the townhouse. Such dances may predate the townhouse itself, as there are two turtle-shell rattles associated with the young adult woman in Burial 43, in Structure 9, which predates Structure 1.

Along the northwestern edge of the plaza, directly across from the ramadas along its southeastern edge and the locations of burials 40 and 41, are structures 1 and 2, the townhouse and townhouse ramada. Some of the richest burials at the site, in terms of grave-good associations, are located in Structure 2 and, specifically, on both sides of the original entryway to Structure 1. North of this entryway are burials 9, 16, 17, and 18, including three male elders and one child, collectively buried with seven chipped-stone arrowheads, a woven basket, a circular shell gorget with an engraved rattlesnake motif, pieces of mica, pieces of ochre, dozens of shell beads, knobbed shell pins, drilled pearls, a stone disc, a stone pipe, and an engraved shell mask gorget. South of the original entryway to the townhouse are burials 14 and 15, including two male elders buried with shell beads and pebbles that may represent rattle pellets. In later stages of the townhouse, the entryway was shifted to the southernmost corner of the structure, where another concentration of burials is present. Burials 11, 12, 13, and 19 form a northern cluster beside this later entryway to the townhouse—associated with these two male elders, one young adult, and one child are shell beads and shell pendants. Burials 10 and 39 form a southern cluster beside this later entryway—there are no grave goods associated with these burials of a child and an adolescent. In terms of the number and diversity of grave goods, those placed close to the original entryway to the townhouse are the richest buri-

als at the site. People entering and exiting the townhouse would have moved right past these burials, and it is likely that this burial placement was reserved for people with the greatest significance to the community at large. The adults buried here—most of them adult males—were likely entitled to such burial treatment through lifetime accomplishments and contributions to the community (i.e., achieved statuses; see O’Shea 1984; Shennan 1975). The children and the one adolescent buried here may have been given this burial treatment because of kin relationships or other associations with the adults buried here, or because of expectations that they would have made comparable contributions to the community, had they lived long enough (i.e., ascribed and associative statuses; see Hatch 1987; Gamble et al. 2001, 2002; O’Shea 1996).

Eleven burials are located inside the townhouse itself, and as with the burials in Structure 2, all of these burials are associated with early stages of Structure 1, perhaps all with its first stage (Figure 6.4). Nine burials (23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33) are located between the entryway and the hearth. The others (20, 21) are located in the back of the townhouse; Buttrick and Payne wrote that the western side of a townhouse was considered more sacred than its eastern side, where the door was placed (Anderson et al. 2010b:232). The range of grave goods in these burials is comparable to those seen in the burials in Structure 2: shell mask gorgets, knobbed shell pins, shell pendants, shell beads, drilled pearls, and one clay pot. The profile of the people buried inside the townhouse is generally comparable to those buried in Structure 2—several adult males and some children, although there is also one adult female here, and there are fewer elders in Structure 1 than there are in Structure 2.

Following the reference in Cherokee oral tradition to the placement of burials and other offerings in the ground before a mound and a townhouse were built (Mooney 1900a:396), I conclude that these burials and the grave goods in them were dedicatory deposits made by the town as a whole to the Coweeta Creek community and to its townhouse. They became part of the townhouse itself, and part of its life history. These deposits were placed near the entryway to the townhouse, and although they were not visible after they were placed in the ground, they were present in the space in which people moved in and out of the townhouse itself.

Dedicatory offerings and burials are also present in kivas and in retired and abandoned residential rooms at Puebloan settlements in Chaco Canyon, New

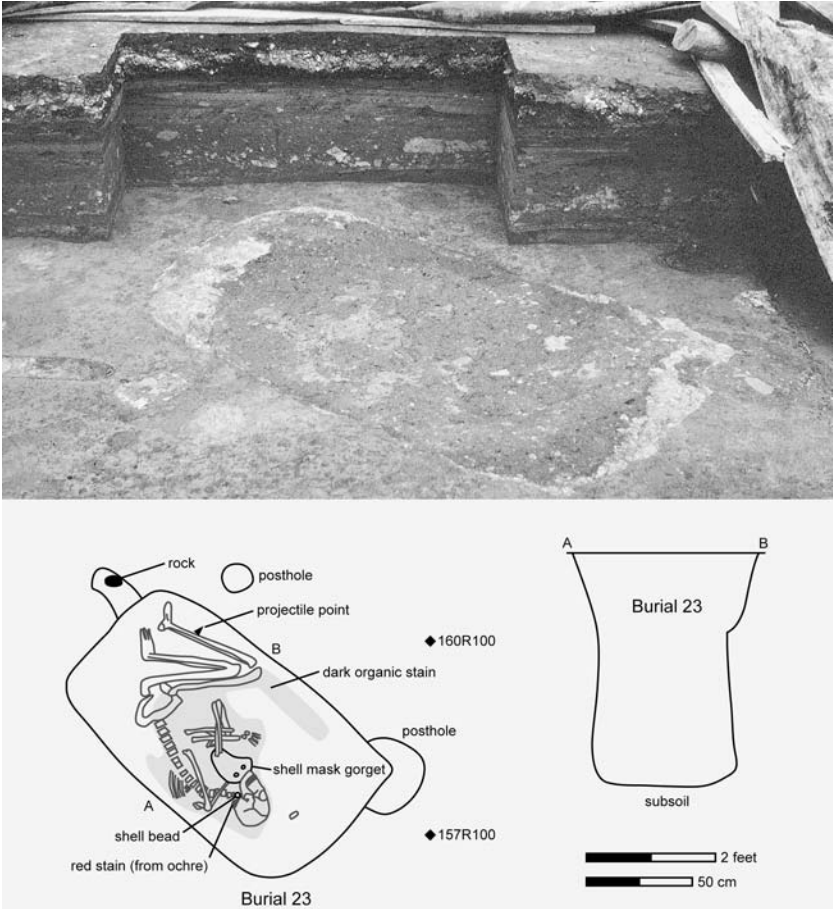


Figure 6.4. Burial 23, one of several burials associated with the first stage (Structure 1A) of the Coweeta Creek townhouse; note the sequence of townhouse floors and burned architectural rubble in the stratigraphic column in the background. Planview and profile maps reproduced with permission from the *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 30(2), © Elsevier Inc. (Rodning 2011a:162).

Mexico (Mills 2008). Such offerings and burials in kivas became part of the architectural setting of Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl, both of which are large Chacoan ceremonial centers known as great houses. Mills (2008:106–107) interprets caches of shell beads and turquoise as dedicatory offerings of community possessions that commemorated individuals buried in kivas and in abandoned residential or storage rooms, and that in other cases marked the retirement and abandonment of rooms and kivas. Mills (2008:103–105) characterizes the large cache of cylindrical jars in Room 28 at Pueblo Bonito as a dedicatory deposit of pots made by different groups and brought to Chaco Canyon. Turquoise pendants and strands of black and white beads were “secreted away” in wall niches in the great kiva at Chetro Ketl; these deposits, and layers of sand between successive stages of the kiva, are interpreted as deposits marking the closure of an old structure and the dedication of a new one (Mills 2008:86–91). Hundreds of wooden sticks have been found in Room 32 at Pueblo Bonito, adjacent to Room 33 and its particularly large accumulation of grave goods and burials; these sticks are interpreted as ceremonial staffs, perhaps badges of membership in a ritual society and perhaps markers of the statuses of the people buried nearby (Mills 2008:101–107). With the exception of the cylindrical jars, which may have been brought out onto the western plaza at Pueblo Bonito for community events, these deposits were comparable to the burials and grave goods in the Coweeta Creek townhouse in that they were part of the structures that housed them, even if they were not visible. At Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico, rooms with burials and dedicatory offerings were often remembered long after they were sealed (Mills 2008:100–101). At Coweeta Creek, the burials in and around the townhouse, and the grave goods placed within them, were not visible after they were placed in the ground, but it is likely that they were remembered, at least in the sense that they were community possessions placed within the townhouse.

Nine burials are placed around the edges of the Coweeta Creek townhouse. Six of them (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7) are situated to the southwest or the northeast of Structure 1, and they include individuals from the entire age range within the community—men and women, adults and children, and one adolescent. Burials 6 and 8 are located north of Structure 2 and south of Structure 15. Burials 6 and 8, and the adult males buried in them, are located closer to Structure 15 than they are to Structure 2. If features 14, 15, and 16—which are also located

in the area just north of Structure 2—are indeed deposits of ash from the townhouse hearth (see chapters 3 and 5; Rodning 2009a:645), then it is possible that the adult males in burials 6 and/or 8 were significant participants in events that took place in the townhouse. There is some evidence that the male elders responsible for tending the fire in the hearths of Cherokee townhouses and conducting other ritual events there lived in houses close to the townhouses themselves (Gearing 1962:23). The rationale for this arrangement is that by having a residence close to the townhouse, these men could have downplayed clan or household affiliations and practiced a life concentrated on the townhouse and on the town as a whole.

Burials placed around the perimeter of the Coweeta Creek townhouse have parallels at late prehistoric mound centers in northern Georgia and eastern Tennessee. At the Hixon site in Tennessee, an earthen mound encompassed several mound stages and remnants of structures—some burials were placed within mound stages underneath structures, and more were placed in the side slopes of the mound, around the edges of mound summits and the structures built on them (Lewis et al. 1995:379). At the Etowah site in Georgia, one of three mounds (Mound C) includes a sequence of structures, log stockades, and burials; there are also log stockades and burials placed around the edge of Mound C itself, forming a perimeter around successive stages of the mound (Brain and Phillips 1996:132–175; A. King 2003a:66–83, 2004). Given these precedents at Hixon and Etowah for burials placed around the edges of mounds and structures, it is likely that at least some of the burials around the perimeter of the Coweeta Creek townhouse were placed there along a threshold of sorts, enclosing a space and a center place with special significance to the surrounding community. These burials are analogous in some respects to those beside the entryway to the Coweeta Creek townhouse. Burials beside entryways to the townhouse guided movement in and out of this public space. Burials placed around the outer edges of the townhouse marked the threshold separating this public space from other areas within the built environment of the town.

North of the townhouse are Burial 22 (a young child) and Burial 26 (a female elder). Postholes in the vicinity of these burials suggest that there was some kind of structure here. At present, little more can be said about these burials, or about the kind of structure or structures that may have been built in this area north of the townhouse.

Mortuary Patterns and the Cherokee Town at the Coweeta Creek Site

The following points can be made about burials and grave goods, and the spatial relationships between burials and structures, at the Coweeta Creek site.

1. Burials in the townhouse and townhouse ramada are much more likely to have grave goods than burials elsewhere at the site. Whatever statuses entitled individuals to grave goods, these statuses likewise often entitled people to burial in and around the townhouse. If burials in domestic houses are identified as members of associated households, then burial in the townhouse probably emphasizes the significance of an individual to the community as a whole, rather than to a particular household.

2. The burials with the most grave goods at the site, and the greatest variety of grave goods, are those in the ramada beside the townhouse, and, especially, those close to the original entryway. According to “The Mounds and the Constant Fire” (Mooney 1900a:396), prominent people in a community are said to have been buried at the spot where a townhouse was then built, and the same myth refers to sacred items buried in the ground with them. The people buried beside the townhouse entryway, and in the townhouse, may have been comparable to the community leaders mentioned in this myth recorded by Mooney.

3. Most of the burials in the townhouse (Structure 1, or the “winter townhouse”) and in the ramada adjacent to it (Structure 2, or the “summer townhouse”) are those of adult males or children. The concentration of adult male burials in the Coweeta Creek townhouse is consistent with ethnohistoric evidence about the prominence of men as warriors, chiefs, priests, fire keepers, and leading voices of Cherokee town councils during the eighteenth century (Evans 1976; Gearing 1958, 1962; Kelly 1978a, 1978b). Burials inside and beside the Coweeta Creek townhouse placed men, women, and children at the center of this Cherokee town, literally and symbolically.

4. Several burials in Structure 2 were placed beside the pathways leading to the original entryway and later entryways into Structure 1. Extrapolating from this spatial pattern, I conclude that all movement in and out of the Coweeta Creek townhouse was guided, in a sense, by the placement of those burials, and the ancestral community members placed within them. Extrapolating further, I suggest that the Coweeta Creek townhouse—and, probably, townhouses at other Cherokee towns—directly connected the architectural center of the

community to its past, given the placement of burials within it, the rubble of early stages of the townhouse covered by its later stages, and continuity in the placement of the hearth throughout the life cycle of the townhouse (compare with Mooney 1900a:396; Rodning 2013).

5. As is the case with public architecture, many burials are located in and around domestic structures, and the places of the dead overlap with spaces of the living. This pattern is relatively common at late prehistoric sites in the southern Appalachians (Dickens 1976, 1978; Hally 2004, 2008; Sullivan 1987, 1989, 2001, 2006). Following the commentary on Cherokee mortuary practices by Alexander Longe (Corkran 1969:26), death brought family members together, both in the sense of gathering people together for rituals of remembrance and burial and in the sense of creating the more enduring presence of burials placed inside and beside the houses associated with those families and households.

6. Analogous to the concentration of grave goods in burials associated with the townhouse—especially in burials outside the townhouse entryway—there were concentrations of grave goods in particular household dwellings, especially Structure 9 (dating to the 1400s) and Structure 8 (dating to the 1600s). Structure 8 was built on the remnants of Structure 9, although not directly on top of it, and there may have been a period between the abandonment of the former and the construction of the latter during which the site was largely abandoned. During both of these periods, dwellings with grave goods were concentrated in the same part of the settlement, first in Structure 9 and then in Structure 8, perhaps reflecting the long-term connection between this point within the settlement and high-status households within the community.

7. Burial goods, of course, were placed in the ground with specific individuals, but, collectively, they became deposits associated with structures, such as the townhouse, for example, or domestic houses. From this perspective, the meanings and values associated with specific grave goods may have become associated with the structures themselves. Once in the ground, burials and grave goods were not visible components of the built environment, but associated structures were. Public architecture at Coweeta Creek created venues for the practice of public life within the community, but the townhouse also housed the burials of significant personages in the community. Domestic structures housed families, but they also marked the resting places of at least some members of the household and lineage and of gifts given to them in burial.

8. The practice of burying people inside and beside public and domestic structures may have paralleled the practice of burning, burying, and rebuilding those structures themselves. Structures experienced cycles of life, death, and rebirth, as did the groups associated with them. The past was always present within the built environment of this settlement, in the form of burned and buried architecture and in the placement of burials and buried goods within those architectural spaces.

Like the houses and townhouses at Coweeta Creek, burials at the site can be thought of as center places, in that they connected groups of people—the community as a whole, individual households, and even individuals—to particular points in the landscape. The town was rooted to this place through the townhouse and through the people and material culture buried within it. Households were rooted to particular points within the settlement through burials inside and beside domestic structures.

This perspective is applicable to the grave goods found at Coweeta Creek, as well as to burial location. Placing goods in burials would have taken them out of circulation, and given the concentration of burials with grave goods in structures, many of those goods became centered within the townhouse and in other structures. Following Alexander Longe (Corkran 1969), such goods would have been gifts for the deceased to take to the afterlife, as gifts for friends and relations, which would have continued the circulation of such items, just in another cosmological realm. If Fogelson (1982) and Witthoft and Hadlock (1946) are correct that the *Nûnně'ǰĩ* conducted the recently deceased to the land of the dead, then grave goods may represent gifts to the *Nûnně'ǰĩ* themselves, perhaps to influence them to interact with the dead on behalf and in favor of the living. Without the placement of goods in burials, without the center places for the dead and for the goods given to them, they may not have been able to reach the darkening land at all.

Witthoft and Hadlock (1946:417), based on Cherokee oral tradition and interviews with Cherokee people conducted during the early twentieth century, argue that the *Nûnně'ǰĩ* are spirits of the dead who practice an old and traditional way of life and who live not far from Cherokee houses and settlements. They write that the *Nûnně'ǰĩ* warned the Cherokee of danger at critical points in Cherokee history and that the *Nûnně'ǰĩ* generally have been helpful to people. They identify the *Nûnně'ǰĩ* as the spirits who lead the dead through

rivers and streams to the springs that serve as portals to the underworld. The last places where the dead were put before journeying to the darkening land were the burials where the living sent them on their way to the afterlife. Burials and grave goods thus may reflect conversations with the *Núñné'hi* about the significance of the people whom they took on those journeys.

As Fogelson (1982:94–95) argues, the *Núñné'hi* were not only spirits of Cherokee ancestors but also powerful agents in accessing the power of the dead. From this perspective, burials and grave goods are implicated in conversations between the living and the dead. It is said that while the *Núñné'hi* are often hidden from the living, they dwell nearby, and, perhaps, the placement of burials inside and nearby townhouses and dwellings kept the *Núñné'hi* close.

If burials were, in some respects, points of connection between the land of the living and the world of ancestral spirits, then the act of abandoning houses and settlements may have also involved abandoning those connections. Moving away from a house meant moving away from ancestral house members who may have looked after living members and who were there to lead them to the afterlife. Moving away from a townhouse meant abandoning a community center, its hearth and the sacred fire kept in it, and the burials of founding members of a town.

Given these symbolic aspects of public and domestic architecture, abandoning a house or a settlement with a townhouse probably had a significant impact on community identity. The sense of place within a community was rooted in public and domestic structures and in the burials associated with them. A community was rooted to its past through the built environment and the burials within it, and abandoning a place—voluntarily or not—must have altered or uprooted the sense of place within a community.

7

Abandonment of the Coweeta Creek Site

During his visit to Lower and Middle Cherokee settlements in 1775, William Bartram found thriving towns in some places and elsewhere abandoned settlements, old fields, and the ruins of former townhouses, including at least one on the summit of an earthen mound (Waselkov and Braund 1995:74–77). Between the Lower Cherokee towns of Seneca and Keowee, Bartram traveled through “high forests of excellent land” and a “fertile vale,” which, in the memory of the traders with whom Bartram conversed, had recently been a single continuous settlement for many miles, with many dwellings and abundant fields. Bartram saw, instead, the posts and other “vestiges of ancient Indian dwellings” and “several Indian mounds” at the former location of the town of Keowee. En route from the Lower Cherokee settlements to Middle Cherokee towns in southwestern North Carolina, Bartram traveled through old fields and the sites of several abandoned settlements. Bartram noted at one abandoned site the presence of “tumuli, terraces, posts and pillars, and old Peach and Plum orchards.” Later, he passed by the “ruins of the Oconne town,” and, then, numerous sites with remnants of abandoned dwellings and fields. Eventually, he came to the “ruins of the ancient famous town of Sticoe,” where there was a large mound supporting a townhouse, “with banks encompassing their circus,” and a “great terrace,” with the terrace perhaps representing an abandoned plaza. The ruins of “Sticoe,” or “Stecoe,” may have been the Dillard mound, in the upper Little Tennessee Valley, in northeastern Georgia (Hally 1994a:167–173; Wynn 1990:48–58). After departing this abandoned settlement, Bartram passed through more old fields and abandoned settlements before arriving at Echoee, Nequassee, and Whatoga, en route to Cowee. His route between the “ruins of

the ancient famous town of Sticoe” and the settlement of “Echoe, consisting of many good houses, well inhabited,” would have taken him right past the location of the Coweeta Creek site. At that point, the Coweeta Creek site had been abandoned, perhaps because of attacks on Cherokee towns by colonial troops in 1760 and 1761 (Corkran 1962; Evans and King 1977; Waselkov and Braund 1995:74), because of attacks on Cherokee towns by Creek warriors during the 1740s and 1750s (Boulware 2011:57–74; Corkran 1967), or because of the destabilizing effects of the slave trade and the deerskin trade during the late 1600s and early 1700s (Boulware 2011:32–56; Gally 2002; Riggs 2012). Expeditions led by Archibald Montgomery in 1760 and James Grant in 1761 devastated Lower Cherokee and Middle Cherokee town areas (Boulware 2011:110–129; Hatley 1993:119–140; Wilburn 1950, 1959). Less than one year after Bartram visited Cherokee towns, attacks led by Andrew Williamson, Samuel Jack, and Griffith Rutherford razed towns and fields in the Lower Cherokee and Middle Cherokee areas, and additional campaigns against Cherokee towns were conducted by Anglo militias during the last quarter of the eighteenth century (Boulware 2011:161–164; Hatley 1993:191–203; Wood 1950).

Bartram surmised that many of the abandoned Cherokee settlements that he saw had been abandoned in the aftermath of the Montgomery and Grant expeditions some 14 or 15 years before his visit (Waselkov and Braund 1995:76). Any of the conflicts between Cherokee and Creek towns, and between Cherokee towns and the South Carolina colony, may have led to the abandonment of Cherokee settlements, especially the Lower Cherokee settlements, which were closer than the Middle Cherokee towns to English settlements, and closer to Creek towns (Smith and Waselkov 2000; Worth 2000), with whom Cherokee towns were often at odds during the 1700s (Hatley 1993). Some entire towns moved to the Overhill Cherokee settlements in eastern Tennessee during the 1700s in an attempt to distance themselves from colonists and the trading paths connecting South Carolina with Cherokee towns (Baden 1983). Of primary interest here is not the reason or reasons why the abandoned Cherokee settlements that Bartram saw had been abandoned, but, instead, the fact that remnants of houses and townhouses were still visible as much as 15, and perhaps more, years before he saw them. If the town of Old Stecoe was abandoned soon after raids on Cherokee towns in 1760 and 1761, then it is noteworthy that 15 years later, the townhouse posts, an earthen embankment around the townhouse, and remnants of dwellings were still visible.

Alexander Longe likewise notes evidence for the visibility of abandoned Cherokee townhouses in his account of the enchanted town of Agustoghe, accessed through a whirlpool in a river, as described to Longe by a priest whom he knew (Corkran 1969:42). People from other towns came to the whirlpool, and while they could not see the enchanted town, they heard the sounds of voices and of life in it. As proof of the veracity of his tale, the priest told Longe that he could still “see the pillars of the temple and the posts of the houses” and that when Cherokees would travel near the whirlpool in the river, they could “hear those people hallowing and whooping and dancing and the drum beating.” Longe dates the events recorded in this story to 10 years before the English were in the Cherokee settlements. English traders first arrived in Cherokee towns in the last decade of the 1600s, but they became a much more common and more permanent presence in Cherokee towns in the first decade of the 1700s, and the English formalized a network of trading posts after 1715. That would place the events in this story of the enchanted town sometime just before or after 1700. Just as Bartram witnessed ruins of abandoned Cherokee settlements in the late 1700s, this story recorded by Longe refers to remnants of former houses and townhouses as part of the Cherokee landscape in the early 1700s.

These passages are relevant to the present study of the Coweeta Creek site for the following reasons. First, there is considerable evidence for the abandonment of relatively large areas within the Lower Cherokee and Middle Cherokee settlements during the eighteenth century, including much of the upper Little Tennessee Valley, south of Echoee. Second, there is clear evidence that remnants of earthen embankments around townhouses, the posts of townhouses and houses, and even the edges of plazas were visible on the landscape for many years after towns had abandoned them.

The settlement at Coweeta Creek was abandoned at least twice. The Early Qualla settlement was abandoned sometime in the late 1400s or early 1500s (Rodning 2008). The Middle Qualla settlement—the formally planned town—was established in the late 1500s or, more likely, in the early 1600s (Rodning 2007). By the late 1600s, most or all of the domestic houses at the site had been abandoned, although the townhouse was kept in place, even as households rearranged themselves in a more spatially dispersed pattern (Rodning 2009b). Sometime during the early 1700s, the last stage of the townhouse was abandoned (Rodning 2010b).

Abandonment of the Coweeta Creek Site, ca. 1500

As summarized in chapter 4 (see also Rodning 2008, 2009b), several houses were present at the Coweeta Creek site during the fifteenth century. Several pits, including Feature 65, probably date to this stage in the history of settlement at the site, and, perhaps, to an even earlier episode of occupation. Several burials, including Burial 37, and the burials associated with structures 7 and 9, probably date to the fifteenth century, based on radiocarbon dates and temporally diagnostic pottery. The calibrated intercepts and the date ranges for radiocarbon determinations from these contexts form a cluster that is distinct from the radiocarbon dates of samples from contexts that are associated with Middle Qualla and Late Qualla pottery (Rodning 2008). These distinct clusters hint at a gap in the history of settlement at Coweeta Creek after the Early Qualla stage of settlement at the site, and before the formally planned, compact town was built. The differences between Early Qualla and Middle Qualla pottery from Coweeta Creek offer supporting evidence for this period of abandonment (Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008).

Early Qualla pottery from Coweeta Creek—especially sherds and vessel sections from Feature 65, from Burial 37, and from structures 7 and 9—is made of dark, compact, sandy clay paste (Riggs and Rodning 2002). Surface finishes include complicated stamping, elongated linear stamping, and diamond-check stamping (Rodning 2008:32–33). There is some evidence for incised motifs, but not the bold, geometric incised motifs seen on cazuelas from Middle Qualla structures and features at Coweeta Creek (Rodning 2008:32–35), from Tugaloo-phase deposits in Georgia and South Carolina dating to the 1500s and early 1600s (Hally 1986a, 1986b, 1994a; Hally and Langford 1988; Hally and Rudolph 1986), and from Burke-phase sites in the upper Catawba Valley dating to the 1400s and 1500s (Moore 2002a). Unlike the notched rim treatments typical of pottery attributable to the Burke, Tugaloo, and Middle Qualla phases, many Early Qualla rims are undecorated, and some rim strips have patterns of “sawtooth notching” that are different from later forms of fingertip/fingernail notching along the bottoms of rim strips. Assemblages of Early Qualla pottery from the Coweeta Creek site also include some collared and incised rims (typical of late prehistoric Pisgah pottery in western North Carolina) and small red-painted bowls.

Middle Qualla pottery from Coweeta Creek—including sherds and vessel sections from Structure 6, from early stages of the townhouse, and from Feature 96—is made of lighter paste and micaceous clay (Riggs and Rodning 2002). Middle Qualla vessels are typically thicker than Early Qualla vessels. Middle Qualla pottery typically has highly burnished interior surfaces, and while smoothed and polished inner surfaces are seen on Early Qualla pottery, the heavy burnishing (creating shiny and faceted surfaces resembling glass) that is typical of Middle Qualla pottery stands out. Complicated stamping is the most prevalent exterior surface treatment on Middle Qualla pottery, and stamp motifs are much more deeply impressed in the clay than is the case with Early Qualla pottery. Curvilinear complicated stamp motifs are common, including concentric scrolls, concentric crosses, and interlocking loops. Check stamping is absent. Cazuelas with bold, geometric incised motifs are common, including such designs as concentric scrolls, concentric ovals, and concentric semi-circles. Jars typically have very sharply defined shoulders and have rim strips with fingernail or fingertip notches along the bottom.

The differences between Middle Qualla and Late Qualla pottery from Coweeta Creek are less pronounced (Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008; Wilson and Rodning 2002). Complicated stamping is still present in Late Qualla pottery, but rectilinear motifs are more prevalent than curvilinear motifs (Rodning 2008:33). Jars still have notched rim strips, but in late Qualla pottery, many rim strips have notches placed not along the bottom but on the top of clay beads (sometimes known as rim fillets or appliquéés) wrapped around the rim strips themselves (Rodning 2008:35). The typical curvature of jar rims is different in Middle Qualla and Late Qualla pottery, as well, with Late Qualla jars typically having less sharply defined shoulders and more gradual curvature from the shoulder to the lip of the rim (Rodning 2008:34–35). Check stamping is again present in Late Qualla pottery, although in rectangular-check patterns, rather than the diamond-check patterns seen in Early Qualla pottery at Coweeta Creek (Rodning 2008:30–32). Middle Qualla pottery is directly comparable to the Tugalo series, identified at sites in northern Georgia and northwestern South Carolina, where it is dated from A.D. 1550 to 1650 (Hally 1986a, 1994a; Mark Williams 2004a, 2004b). Late Qualla pottery is directly comparable to the Estatoe series, which succeeds the Tugalo series in northern Georgia and northwestern South Carolina and is dated from A.D. 1650 to 1750 (Hally 1986a, 1994a; Marshall Williams 2008, 2009).

These differences between the Early Qualla pottery and Middle Qualla pottery at Coweeta Creek are consistent with the idea that the site was abandoned between its Early Qualla (1400s) and Middle Qualla (1600s) stages of settlement (Rodning 2007). Additional evidence consistent with such a temporal gap in settlement comes from the architecture at the site. Domestic structures dating to the 1600s are square, with rounded corners, and were built and rebuilt in place; they closely resemble Structure 1 in these respects (Rodning 2007). Domestic structures dating to the 1400s are slightly larger, slightly more rounded, and were rebuilt in an offset pattern; radiocarbon dates and pottery make it clear that these houses predate the first stage of Structure 1 (Rodning 2008). And although seventeenth-century structures share the same general alignment as fifteenth-century structures, these alignments are slightly offset, and some seventeenth-century structure patterns truncate posthole patterns associated with fifteenth-century houses, as in the cases of structures 6 and 7, for example, and structures 8 and 9.

If the Coweeta Creek site was indeed abandoned in the late 1400s or early 1500s, were there any landmarks that guided the arrangement and alignment of architecture in the formally planned settlement built during the late 1500s or, more likely, during the early 1600s? As noted, some seventeenth-century houses—for example, structures 6 and 8—disturbed the remnants of fifteenth-century houses. On the other hand, there is no evidence that building the townhouse, the plaza, or houses around the plaza disturbed Feature 65 or Burial 37. There must have been some visible markers or remnants of the past settlement that guided the construction of the Middle Qualla settlement at Coweeta Creek. Those markers could have been something as simple as mounded areas atop abandoned houses, or even remnants of posts still in place in the ground. Bartram and Longe both noted remnants of past structures and settlements still visible on the ground some 10 to 15 years after they were abandoned, if not longer. That period is considerably shorter than the decades that may have separated the Early and Middle Qualla stages of settlement at Coweeta Creek, but references by Bartram and Longe to visible remnants and ruins of past settlements indicate that traces of past settlement and cultural activity were visible in at least some places years after those places were abandoned.

Could there have been anything more formal marking the placement of an abandoned settlement at the Coweeta Creek site? The ring ditch (Feature 37) and any embankment or mound that may have been associated with it is a

good candidate for such a marker and placeholder. This ring ditch is located close to the highest point in the bottomland beside the Little Tennessee River where the Coweeta Creek site is located, making it a good placement for an embankment or mound whose purpose was to mark a focal point or center place within the landscape. Comparable ditches have been found at the Town Creek mound site in the North Carolina Piedmont (Boudreaux 2007a:46–49, 2007b; Coe 1995) and at several sites in Cherokee town areas in southwestern North Carolina (Ashcraft 1996; Benyshek 2010:80–97) and eastern Tennessee (Harrington 1922:35–56). At these sites, ditches are thought to date to the Late Woodland or Early Mississippian periods (Benyshek 2010; Boudreaux 2007a, 2007b). The date of the ditch (Feature 37) at Coweeta Creek is not clear, but it may have been built very early in the history of settlement at Coweeta Creek, and it seems to have been largely undisturbed for much of the Early Qualla and Middle Qualla stages of settlement at the site. Feature 37 may have been associated with a mound or an embankment that was the major landmark at the site until a townhouse was built, and it may have guided the placement of the townhouse at this particular point, in the first place (Rodning 2009b:25–27). Structure 14 was eventually built at this point, and colonial trade goods from nearby pits (e.g., features 71 and 72) reflect cultural activity in this vicinity in the late 1600s and early 1700s, but by this point, the townhouse and plaza were the major landmarks at the site (Rodning 2010b:25–27).

The reasons why the Early Qualla settlement at Coweeta Creek was abandoned are difficult to determine. Settlements probably would have been abandoned periodically because of the declining productivity of farmland and the declining availability of wood and other resources (Hatley 1989). Another possibility is that the site was abandoned because of a violent attack or a threatened attack (compare with Riggs 2012). There is some circumstantial evidence supporting the possibility that the Early Qualla settlement was abandoned after an attack. On the floor of the last stage of Structure 7 were found several pots, chipped-stone tools, clay smoking pipes, and a carved wooden paddle for stamping pottery. There is clear evidence that the house was burned down, although it is not entirely clear whether the structure was burned accidentally or intentionally. An easy way to dismantle and abandon this structure—built of earth, wood, bark, and thatch—would have been to burn it down. If the Structure 7 household burned this structure to rebuild it, or to move to another settlement, it is likely they would have removed material possessions

from the house before burning it. The fifteenth century corresponds to the period during which large areas of the Savannah River Valley (Anderson 1990a, 1990b, 1999, 2001) and the Etowah River Valley (A. King 1999, 2001, 2003a, 2003b) were abandoned, and it is possible that some people from those areas moved up to the mountains, perhaps creating some degree of tension or conflict about access to land and resources.

Whatever the reasons for the abandonment of the Early Qualla settlement at Coweeta Creek, the site was resettled, and the formal town plan was put in place during the seventeenth century. Domestic houses were built in close proximity to abandoned structures, such as the placement of Structure 8 close to Structure 9, and the placement of Structure 6 close to Structure 7. The townhouse and plaza were built close to Feature 37, and the original entryway to the townhouse pointed directly toward the location of Feature 65. There must have been some visible traces of the preceding settlement that guided the placement and alignment of structures and the plaza within the Middle Qualla settlement plan. Although the Coweeta Creek site had been abandoned, at least temporarily, there were aspects of the built environment that endured during hiatuses in its occupation and that were incorporated within the formally planned town that was in place by the early-to-mid seventeenth century.

Abandonment of the Coweeta Creek Site, ca. 1715

The series of townhouses at Coweeta Creek dates from the 1600s through the early 1700s (Rodning 2009a), and several domestic structures date to the same period (Rodning 2009b). This chronological placement is supported by the presence of Middle Qualla pottery in these structures (Rodning 2008), radiocarbon dates, and the shared axiality and orthogonality in the arrangement and alignment of these structures and the town plaza (Rodning 2007). The absence of colonial goods from domestic structures with Middle Qualla pottery—with the exception of one wrought iron nail from the first stage of the hearth in Structure 6—indicates that these houses predate the period when colonial trade goods became widely available in Cherokee towns (Crane 2004; Keel 1976; Rodning 2008, 2010b). By contrast, there are a great many colonial trade goods from Structure 1—glass beads, kaolin pipe fragments, chipped-stone gunflints, brass buttons, pieces of lead shot, and charred peach pits—indicating that the late stages of the townhouse date to the late 1600s and early

1700s, at a point at which most or all of the nearby domestic houses had been abandoned (Rodning 2010b; compare with Shumate et al. 2005). The glass-bead assemblage from the site likely dates to the early eighteenth century (Marcoux 2012b; Rodning 2010b; M. T. Smith 1987), and following standard techniques for dating assemblages of kaolin pipes (Binford 1962, 1972; Harrington 1951, 1954), the kaolin pipe stem fragments from the site can be dated to the period between 1700 and 1715. This pipe-stem date provides a *terminus post quem* date for the abandonment of the Coweeta Creek site as a whole, one that is consistent with radiocarbon determinations, glass beads, and temporally diagnostic characteristics of Qualla pottery.

Why was the Coweeta Creek site abandoned during the early eighteenth century? Of course, native groups periodically abandoned settlements for many reasons, including localized depletions of farmland and timber sources (see also Bolstad and Gragson 2008; Gragson and Bolstad 2007). During the eighteenth century, there were large areas of old and abandoned fields in some areas between Cherokee settlements (Hill 1997:90). Households and whole towns probably moved periodically from one location to another, in search of arable farmland and forest resources, even if they did not move far (compare with Ethridge 2003; Goodwin 1977; Gremillion 2004). Bartram visited the remnants of an abandoned Cherokee settlement in the vicinity of Joree and Cowee that he described as having been “a very flourishing settlement” that was deserted when its residents were in search of “fresh planting land, which they soon found in a rich valley but a few miles distance over a ridge of hills” (Waselkov and Braund 1995:80). Individual towns may have been surrounded by several hundred acres of fields, in varying stages of succession (Duncan and Riggs 2003:145–147). Community growth probably contributed to the abandonment of settlements, if groups grew to sizes that necessitated larger structures or settlement areas or that favored the movement of some people to new settlements (Hally 2008:540–541).

On the other hand, in the aftermath of Spanish expeditions and the development of English trade networks in the Southeast, the compounding effects of European contact and colonialism may have contributed to the abandonment of the formally planned settlement at Coweeta Creek sometime during the protohistoric period. The most recent radiocarbon dates from the site—from the last stage of the townhouse, for example, and from Feature 72—fall in the late 1600s or early 1700s (Rodning 2009b). The date ranges for glass

beads and kaolin pipe stems from the last stage of the townhouse, and from Feature 72, are consistent with this time frame (Rodning 2010b), although recent analyses of glass-bead assemblages from Cherokee sites suggest a slightly later date range, from the second through fourth decades of the eighteenth century (Marcoux 2012b). The kaolin-pipe assemblage from Coweeta Creek dates to between 1700 and 1715. This date is very close to the point when English traders like Alexander Longe began living in Cherokee towns (Corkran 1969; Goodwin 1977; Rothrock 1976) and to the period of unrest and regional conflicts known as the Yamasee War, which began in 1715 and pitted the vulnerable South Carolina colony against several Native American groups and alliances across the Southeast (Marcoux 2010a, 2012a; Oatis 2004; Ramsey 2008).

The course of the Yamasee War was related to instability triggered by conflicts between the Tuscarora and English colonists in North and South Carolina from 1711 to 1713, the spread of colonial settlements and farms inland from the Atlantic seaboard, the effects of the slave trade and the new forms of warfare that developed during the seventeenth century, the debts and disagreements that accumulated during the early years of the deerskin trade between South Carolina traders and native groups throughout the Southeast, and unrest between Yuchi and Cherokee groups in the South Carolina backcountry (Oatis 2004; Ramsey 2008; Riggs 2012). Cherokee towns were divided, some favoring an alliance with South Carolina, others favoring alliances with native groups waging war against South Carolina. Cherokee towns eventually did ally themselves with South Carolina, after Cherokee warriors murdered several Creek town leaders at the Lower Cherokee settlement of Tugalo in 1716 (Hatley 1993). Creek towns became major trading partners with South Carolina as early as 1685, when an English trading post was established on the Ocmulgee River in Georgia, and it is possible that the Cherokee hoped to displace the Creeks as major trading partners with South Carolina (Mason 2005). In any case, although Cherokee relations with South Carolina during the Yamasee War were often in flux, the fact that Cherokee towns chose not to ally themselves with Native American groups against South Carolina probably saved Charles Town. At the end of the Yamasee War, the South Carolina colony sought to formalize and centralize trade relations with Cherokee towns, and it installed traders at Cherokee towns of strategic importance to the colony, including Keowee, Tugalo, Quanassee, Cowee, Tellico, and Tanasee (Boulware 2011:77; Rothrock 1976:23). Colonial traders had lived in several Cherokee towns. After the Ya-

masee War, traders and trade goods were concentrated within those Cherokee settlements where South Carolina trading posts were established. These developments may not have directly caused the abandonment of relatively small settlements like Coweeta Creek, but they probably created incentives for people to move toward large Cherokee towns, like Cowee, and away from smaller settlements, like Coweeta Creek.

This proposed time frame for the abandonment of the Coweeta Creek site also corresponds to the point in the early eighteenth century just after the Cherokee attack, aided and abetted by Alexander Longe and other English traders, on the Yuchi town of Chestowee (Hahn 2012:126; Jackson 2012:xxii; Warren 2012:168–169). Longe and another trader, Eleazar Wiggan, kept a trading store at Chestowee, located near the western edge of Cherokee town areas and like other traders, they let local hunters accumulate greater debts than they could pay (Riggs 2012:43). Longe and Wiggan pressed the Yuchis for payment sometime in 1711 or 1712, and violence ensued (Gallay 2002:319). It is likely that Longe and Wiggan encouraged warriors and head men from Overhill Cherokee towns to attack Chestowee. During the Cherokee attack in 1713, nearly all the warriors of Chestowee were killed, and other men, women, and children were taken captive and sold as slaves. Longe was stripped of his trading license after an inquiry conducted in 1714, and he fled from Cherokee country in 1715, but the South Carolina Commons House forgave Longe in 1724 after his service to the colony in conflicts with Cherokee towns (Vassar 1961). There is no clear, direct relationship between these developments and the history of the community at the Coweeta Creek site, but they probably contributed to unrest and instability in Cherokee town areas, and the town of Chestowee was probably located in eastern Tennessee, northeastern Georgia, or northwestern South Carolina, not far from the Middle Cherokee towns (Riggs 2012:58)

More generally, during the 1600s and early 1700s, colonial European demand for Native American slaves led to escalations in warfare across much of eastern North America (Dye 2009; Richter 1982, 1983; Worth 2012). Traditional Native American practices of warfare focused on taking war captives who were, in some cases, adopted into the communities of the warriors who bested them in battle or, in other cases, tortured and killed. Warfare gave warriors chances to achieve war honors, and thereby to achieve status and prestige. With the advent of the Native American slave trade in the colonial American South, suddenly there were incentives to change the focus of warfare. Rather than con-

ducting small-scale raids focused on acquiring captives and other markers of warrior status and accomplishment, native warriors went on the warpath to take larger numbers of captives who could be adopted into communities who had lost community members to colonial warfare and enslavement or who could be sold into slavery.

The threat of raids by enemy warriors, and the new forms of warfare that were practiced during the period of the slave trade, probably favored spatially dispersed settlement and periodic movement, rather than the compact, long-term settlements typical of many areas in the Southeast during the 1500s and 1600s (Marcoux 2010a). Compact settlements, including those enclosed by log stockades, were an effective response to the threat of traditional forms of warfare, which focused primarily on status relations between and within Native American groups. Such settlements made people more vulnerable to slave raids and, perhaps, encouraged households to spread out in an effort to mitigate that vulnerability.

The Native American slave trade did not affect Cherokee towns as dramatically as it affected smaller groups living closer to European colonial communities in coastal areas. Still, many Cherokees were sold into slavery, after having been captured by enemy warriors, perhaps in incidents comparable to the Cherokee attack in 1713 on the Yuchi town of Chestowee (Corkran 1969:3). In 1674, Henry Woodward visited the newly established Westo settlements along the Savannah River, and he encouraged them to bring deerskins and slaves for trade with South Carolina settlements nearer the coast (Axtell 1997, 2001:25; Woodward 1911:134). In 1684, Charles Town signed a treaty with the Cherokee in response to predatory warfare by the Westoes and others (Hatley 1993:17; Swanton 1946:111). Meanwhile, the Westoes wreaked havoc on Native American settlements and societies throughout the Southeast (Bowne 2009; Crane 1918; Juricek 1964), until they were displaced by Shawnees allied with South Carolinians in 1682. The Shawnee then began raiding Cherokee towns situated at the headwaters of the Savannah River (Ethridge 2010:161). The Cherokee visited Charles Town to ask for relief from slave raids in 1693, and while they received no help at that point and developed no formal trade relationship with South Carolina, there were apparently many itinerant traders in Cherokee country by 1698 (Ethridge 2010:162).

In contrast to the effect of settlement dispersal and dislocation created by the slave trade and the threat of slave raids, the colonial trading posts had the

effect of concentrating settlements in the vicinity of these sources of colonial trade goods. When William Bartram visited Middle Cherokee settlements in the late eighteenth century, there were many people living in and near the town of Cowee, although areas south of Echoee—including the location of the Coweeta Creek site—had been largely abandoned. It may be no mere coincidence that Cowee was one of the towns in which the South Carolina colony installed a resident trader in the aftermath of the Yamasee War.

The establishment of formal trading posts—or even just permanent and centralized residences of colonial traders—probably set the stage for the eventual abandonment of many smaller settlements like the Coweeta Creek site and the concentration of people in larger settlements like Keowee and Cowee, where South Carolina trading houses were established. When William Bartram visited Cherokee towns in 1775, the most prosperous and populous Cherokee communities were those like Keowee, Cowee, and the Lower Cherokee town of Seneca, located near Keowee (Waselkov and Braund 1995:74–75, 78–80, 86–88), where trading posts had been established. Within the upper Little Tennessee Valley, in 1775, much of the area south of Echoee was largely abandoned—including the area around the Coweeta Creek site as well as the area around the Dillard mound site in northeastern Georgia—and there were relatively high numbers of people living at and near the sites of Joree and Cowee. From what Bartram wrote, it would seem that Cowee was the major hub within the greater Middle Cherokee community during the period of his visit. If the size of the Nequassee mound and references to “everlasting fire” within it are indications of the importance of that site as a major Cherokee community center during the period before European contact (Duncan and Riggs 2003:151–155), then it is all the more remarkable that Cowee may have been the more powerful Middle Cherokee town during the late eighteenth century.

Archaeological Perspectives on Abandonment

Archaeologists have long been interested in the topic of abandonment, at local and regional scales, and in the reuse and resettlement of abandoned places and structures (Cameron 1991, 1993; Nelson and Hegmon 2001; Stanton and Magnoni 2008). Abandonment can refer to the complete abandonment of a site or a region (Cobb and Butler 2002, 2006; Mainfort 2001; Williams 1990, 2001) or to a shift from a pattern of dense, aggregated settlement to a much

lighter or more spatially dispersed pattern of settlement (Hegmon et al. 1998). Reasons for abandonment include depletion of local resources, social conflict within communities, community growth and fissioning, prospects of new opportunities within trade and exchange networks available from other localities, or attacks or threats of attacks by outsiders. Abandoned sites may be revisited periodically by people living nearby, and they are sometimes reoccupied at the point when resources are replenished or other local conditions favor such resettlement (Schlanger and Wilshusen 1993). All of these possibilities are relevant to understanding the occupational history at the Coweeta Creek site, the possible occupational hiatus between its Early Qualla and Middle Qualla settlements, and the abandonment of the Late Qualla settlement during the eighteenth century. The following discussion considers archaeological approaches to abandonment at regional and local scales, and perspectives on the periodic abandonment of specific structures, as an interpretive framework for understanding continuity and change in the built environment at the Coweeta Creek site.

Fish and Fish (1993) note that the abandonments of sites or entire regions are best understood as solutions to problems, or the pursuit of prospects of settlement at different sites or in different areas. From this perspective, abandonment is best understood with respect to conditions and constraints at the point of departure and at the eventual destination of a group or a community (Fish and Fish 1993:99–100). They identify evidence for community-wide abandonment of the Hohokam settlement at the Marana mounds—located near modern Tucson, Arizona—even as other Hohokam communities in neighboring areas stayed in place, and, presumably, absorbed at least some of the people who had abandoned Marana (Fish and Fish 1993:105–108). They conclude that while changes in climatic and environmental conditions, and population increases and resulting pressure on resources, may all have played a role in the abandonment of the Marana community, there would still have been enough resources in the area around Marana to sustain this community. There must have been social as well as ecological forces that led an entire community to abandon this locality.

Schlanger and Wilshusen (1993; see also Brooks 1993; Lightfoot 1993) make the point that while people may abandon sites or regions because of long-term trends or region-wide conditions, abandonments are local events, and they are the results of decisions made by individual communities or even individual

households. They and others have demonstrated many local variants in the Puebloan Southwest to the large-scale phenomenon known as the Great Abandonment (Cameron and Duff 2008; Kintigh et al. 2004; Lekson and Cameron 1995). There is evidence for prolonged drought, pronounced conflict, and widespread abandonment and resettlement of Pueblos in the northern Southwest during the 1100s and 1200s. These developments, and the conflicts created by them, led to the eventual formation of larger, multiethnic pueblos in the 1300s and 1400s and to the ancestral forms of the pueblos present in the Southwest at the point of Spanish contact during the sixteenth century. These developments were indeed shaped by region-wide trends, but responses to them varied from one place to another, and from one community to another.

Focusing on the Mesa Verde region in southwestern Colorado, and particularly during the period of the 1100s and 1200s, Varien (1999, 2002) identifies evidence indicating that households periodically abandoned specific settlements and moved to nearby locations, even as community centers stayed in place for long periods. These persistent community centers are characterized by concentrations of domestic room blocks and public architecture in the form of plazas and kivas. From this perspective, household mobility is seen as a viable strategy by which people can access resources from a variety of places while maintaining close connections to a particular place as a focal point for a community.

Ortman and Bradley (2002; see also Ortman 2008; Potter and Yoder 2008) describe one such community center, Sand Canyon Pueblo, in southwestern Colorado. A settlement was present at the site by the eleventh century. A large planned community center was built at this site during the early-to-mid twelfth century, including plazas, domestic room blocks, and architectural suites comprising kivas, great kivas, and other structures. Many members of the Sand Canyon community lived in sites in surrounding areas, but Sand Canyon Pueblo was the community center, with its concentrations of plazas, public structures, residential rooms, and storage rooms (Ortman and Bradley 2002:53). This planned settlement, and the kivas and plazas within it, formed an enduring community center that persisted even as individual structures and outlying settlements were periodically abandoned. During the late thirteenth century, after several decades of occupation at Sand Canyon Pueblo and at sites in surrounding areas of the central Mesa Verde region, the Sand Canyon locality was largely abandoned, perhaps because of the onset of drought conditions or

an increase in violence and warfare, or both. The large amounts of material culture that were left on the floors of some kivas and surface rooms at Sand Canyon Pueblo suggest that local residents may have been forced to leave hurriedly or planned on moving far away, thereby limiting what they could take with them (Ortman and Bradley 2002:70).

Within the very different landscape of Iroquoian villages in northeastern North America, there is evidence for cycles of settlement and abandonment at local scales from late prehistory through the contact period (Warrick 1988, 2000, 2008). Iroquoian villages, composed of timber-frame longhouses enclosed by log stockades, were surrounded by fields and forest. During the sequences of settlement at specific sites, some longhouses were rebuilt or abandoned, and households periodically moved away and moved back from specific village sites. At another spatial scale, and another temporal scale, entire villages were periodically abandoned, perhaps as local sources of wood and farmland were depleted and as timber-frame longhouses and log stockades decayed. Just as some sites were periodically abandoned, people likewise periodically moved back to those settlements, perhaps as local resources were replenished. Cycles of Iroquoian village abandonment and aggregation were also related to processes of social and political coalescence (Birch 2008, 2010, 2012; Birch and Williamson 2013a, 2013b). Increasing levels of conflict and warfare contributed to the formation of very large villages and the realignments of social ties and politics within Iroquoian communities during the late prehistoric and proto-historic periods (Bamann et al. 1992:452; Engelbrecht 2003:89, 2009; Snow 1994:26–33, 46–47, 52–57).

Not only are regions and sites abandoned, but so too are specific structures. Archaeologists have reconstructed sequences of building, rebuilding, abandoning, and extending longhouses at many late prehistoric Iroquoian sites in the Northeast (Engelbrecht 2003; Trigger 1976, 1981, 1985; Warrick 1988, 2000). Longhouses at Neolithic villages in Europe are thought to have been abandoned periodically but were kept standing as points of reference for new stages of longhouses built adjacent to them (Bradley 1996). At the major Mississippian mound center of Moundville, in Alabama's Black Warrior River Valley, neighborhoods of abandoned houses became the settings for concentrations of burials (Wilson 2008, 2010). Burials in these abandoned neighborhoods at Moundville probably represent descendants of the households who had lived there early in Moundville's history (Steponaitis 1998, 2009), before most of the

residential population left Moundville itself and moved to settlements in outlying areas, even as they returned to Moundville to participate in public events and to bury the dead within ancestral neighborhoods. The abandonment of structures, in these cases, does not mean that those structures were forgotten. Even after their abandonment, these structures, and the points at which they were built, remained significant within the broader cultural landscape.

Modes of abandonment are incorporated into the design and life history of some forms of architecture. Kay and Sabo (2006; see also Perttula 2009) demonstrate that extended-entryway structures at Caddoan settlements in Arkansas, eastern Oklahoma, and eastern Texas were specifically designed to house mortuary rituals, and that the events during which these charnel structures were burned down were integral episodes within the life cycles of these structures. Schambach (1996) makes a similar argument about structures in Caddoan mounds in Arkansas that were periodically built, burned down, and rebuilt in place, creating monumental palimpsests of architecture. Krause (1996) goes further in his study of the Mississippian mound at the Snodgrass site in the Tennessee River Valley in Alabama, arguing that the cycle of building, burning down, and rebuilding structures whose remnants were effectively buried in the mound itself symbolized the cycles of life and death, rebirth and renewal, of the community itself. Creel and Anyon (2003, 2010; see also Walker 2002) likewise identify evidence for the “ritual retirements” of communal pit structures in the Mimbres River Valley of southwestern New Mexico. During the 800s and 900s, communal pit structures in the Mimbres River Valley were periodically burned down, wall remnants toppled, and center posts removed. During the 1000s and 1100s, communal pit structures were no longer burned down, but, instead, when abandoned, were allowed to fall apart on their own. These different treatments of communal pithouses are thought to have been related to the dramatic social changes taking place within Mimbres society during the transition from foraging to farming and from “pithouse to pueblo” during which people throughout the Southwest shifted from semisubterranean pithouses to aboveground masonry pueblos (Creel and Anyon 2003:87–89). The practice of burning communal pit structures is thought to have been associated not with warfare or with abandonments of Mimbres villages, but, rather, with a prescribed and a symbolic stage in the life history of a structure and its associated community (Crown and Wills 2003:77–80). The common theme in all of these cases is that periodic cycles of burning and burying architecture

were associated in some way with community history and identity. They created tangible markers of community history and identity, both in the form of “retired” structures and mounds and in the form of the visible spectacles of burning down the structures themselves.

Another case of cycles of architectural remodeling, rebuilding, and renewal comes from kivas at Pueblo Bonito, Pueblo Alto, Chetro Ketl, Kin Nahasbas, and Pueblo del Arroyo in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, dating to the period from the tenth through the early twelfth centuries A.D. (Crown and Wills 2003). Many archaeologically known kivas from these sites have been rebuilt at least once, and in one instance as many as seven times. In most cases, walls were cut down to the level of benches and the new kiva was built with a center point offset from the center point of the original kiva. In some cases, new walls were built inside the footprint of original kiva walls, with the floors of the abandoned kivas covered with new construction material and rubble. Crown and Wills (2003) speculate that Chacoan kivas may have been remodeled and rebuilt approximately once every 20 years. Given the nature of kiva rebuilding, and the amount of effort and raw material (wood and stone) that would be necessary, they conclude that kiva rebuilding was related to ritual events and ritual renewal of these ceremonial structures, rather than to more quotidian concerns about correcting problems in original kiva layouts or the selective replacement of specific architectural elements. Several kivas in Chaco Canyon were burned down (Crown and Wills 2003), perhaps in events comparable to those during which communal pithouses in the Mimbres Valley were burned down (Creel and Anyon 2003), supporting the idea that these Chacoan kivas were rebuilt for the purposes of ritual renewal and continuity from one stage to another. This prescribed rebuilding and renewal of the kivas themselves is consistent with archaeological and ethnographic evidence for the longstanding Puebloan practice of periodically replastering and repainting kiva walls.

The foregoing discussion of archaeological perspectives on abandonment considers cases from several different culture areas in North America and cases in which abandoned structures and settlements endure as significant and persistent places within the landscape. In shifting focus to southwestern North Carolina and the Coweeta Creek site, the following points must be considered. First, there is documentary evidence for the widespread abandonment of much of the Lower Cherokee town areas, including those in northwestern South Carolina and northeastern Georgia, by the mid-to-late eighteenth

century (Waselkov and Braund 1995:75–76). There is no clear evidence of any major climatic or ecological conditions that would have prohibited Cherokee settlement in these areas during the 1700s; on the contrary, there were thriving Middle Cherokee towns and abundant farmlands in the upper Little Tennessee Valley, north of Echoee, during the late 1700s (Waselkov and Braund 1995:76–80). It is more likely that the eighteenth-century abandonment of the Coweeta Creek site was related to the effects of predatory warfare during the slave trade, periodic tensions with the South Carolina colony and with Creek towns during the period of the deerskin trade (Gallay 2002; Hatley 1993), and the concentration of colonial traders and trade goods from South Carolina at large Cherokee towns during the second and third decades of the eighteenth century (Crane 2004; Rothrock 1976).

Second, evidence from Coweeta Creek suggests the possibility of a relatively rapid abandonment of the site during the late 1400s or early 1500s. The last stage of Structure 9 dates to the fifteenth century, as does Structure 7. Given the range of artifacts found on the floor of Structure 9—including pots, fragments of basketry, chipped-stone tools, and a wooden paddle for stamping pottery—it is possible that this last stage of Structure 9 was burned catastrophically after or as it was abandoned. Whether this structure burned accidentally, or was burned in an attack, is not known. If burned during an attack, such an attack may have been related to the movement of people to southwestern North Carolina from surrounding areas, assuming those movements created stresses related to the availability and accessibility of land and other resources. Large areas of the Savannah and Etowah valleys were abandoned during the 1400s and early 1500s (Anderson et al. 1986, 1995; A. King 1999, 2001), and the Oconee River Valley in Georgia was largely abandoned in the late sixteenth century, following Spanish *entradas* (Williams and Shapiro 1996). It is possible that people from these areas moved to western North Carolina, where they would have encountered groups already residing in the Appalachian Summit and Western Piedmont provinces.

Third, and in contrast to the more rapid abandonment of the Coweeta Creek site during the fifteenth century, the abandonment of the site during the late 1600s and 1700s seems to have been more gradual. The townhouse and plaza were still present at Coweeta Creek through the early eighteenth century, but most if not all of the domestic structures south and east of the plaza had been abandoned by that point (Rodning 2009a). It is possible that one domestic

house, Structure 14, dates to the early eighteenth century (Rodning 2009b), but other households within the Coweeta Creek community had presumably moved some distance away from the Coweeta Creek townhouse, perhaps to small settlements scattered along the upper Little Tennessee River and its tributary streams. The townhouse and plaza themselves were eventually abandoned, and the Coweeta Creek site is located within the area of the Middle Cherokee settlements in which William Bartram found abundant evidence of abandoned towns and fields in 1775. It is difficult to know exactly where the residents of the Coweeta Creek site went, but it seems likely that they were absorbed into the nearby eighteenth-century Cherokee towns of Tessentee and Echoee or moved north toward the larger concentrations of eighteenth-century Cherokee settlements near Joree and Cowee, or some combination of these developments.

It is not clear whether the last stage of the Coweeta Creek townhouse was abandoned because of an attack, or threatened attack, or, rather, because households within the community simply drifted away, were absorbed into other towns, or founded a new town center at a different site. The last known stage of the Coweeta Creek townhouse was burned down, but in that respect, its abandonment mirrors the burning and abandonment of each of its predecessors. It is more likely that the last townhouse at Coweeta Creek was burned down during the same kind of ritual and community renewal events as the preceding stages, but that it was just not rebuilt, either because the focal point of this Cherokee community had shifted elsewhere or because members of the community became members of other Cherokee towns.

It is possible that the Coweeta Creek site was abandoned following attacks by other native groups—Westoes or Creeks, for example—during the 1600s or 1700s. There is no specific, historically documented instance of a Westo raid on a Cherokee town, but the Westoes are known to have attacked many groups in the southern Appalachians, and Cherokee town leaders appealed to the South Carolina colony in the late 1600s to help stop Westo attacks (Bowne 2005; Galloway 2002). There were considerable tensions between Creeks and Cherokees during the 1700s, including the murders of Lower Creek town leaders visiting the Cherokee town of Tugalo in 1715 (Hatley 1993:23–31; Ramsey 2008:151–152) and continuing hostilities between the Creeks and Cherokees in 1717, in the aftermath of the Yamasee War. Creek warriors are known to have raided Cherokee towns, especially Lower Cherokee towns, during the eighteenth century, and especially during periods of heightened hostility in the

1740s and 1750s. It is possible that Creek warriors raided Cherokee towns during the early eighteenth century, especially between 1715 and 1717, as Cherokee towns sought to restore trade and friendship with the South Carolina colony (Ramsey 2008:183–196) and as Creek towns debated how to balance the problems and prospects of alliances with the English, the French, and the Spanish (Ramsey 2008:197–218).

Although the Coweeta Creek site is not definitively associated with any specific Cherokee town, the name of the creek itself may reflect the presence of people from Creek towns in the upper Little Tennessee Valley, either as permanent residents, or as periodic visitors, or both. “Coweta” is the name of an important Lower Creek town on the Chattahoochee River in Georgia (Ramsey 2008:197–218; Swanton 1928, 1946:126–127, 1952:165–166). The Cherokee term, “Ani’-Kawi’tä,” refers to the people from Lower Creek towns on the Chattahoochee and Apalachicola rivers in Georgia and Florida, differentiating them from the “Ani’-Ku’sä,” or Upper Creek towns on the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers in Georgia and Alabama (Dimmick 1989; Lolley 1996; Mooney 1900a:508–509). The “Coweeta” Creek in southwestern North Carolina could refer to that Lower Creek town, in particular, or to the Lower Creeks in general (Mooney 1900a:383). The “Coweeta” in Coweeta Creek could refer to a former settlement by Lower Creeks in the midst of Cherokee towns, to an area where battles with Lower Creek warriors took place, or to imagined or actual alliances between Creeks and Cherokees (see also Hatley 1993:131). Interestingly, there are references to mounds in Muskogee myths, especially in myths associated with the historic Creek towns of Coweta and Kasihta (Knight 2006:423). One of the myths about Coweta describes a raid on the town by Cherokee warriors, during which “mythical” Creek warriors emerged out of the Coweta mound to help the “real” Coweta warriors defeat the Cherokee attackers (Swanton 1928:54–57). These mythical events parallel those said to have taken place at the Middle Cherokee town of Nequassee, when its Spirit Defenders emerged from the mound to help the warriors from Nequassee win the battle (Mooney 1900a:336–337). Muskogean people from the town of Coweta—located on the Chattahoochee River (Braund 2008)—and people from the Cherokee town at Coweeta Creek may have been connected and entangled with each other through a history of both “actual” warfare and “mythical” events associated with it.

Both the townhouse and domestic structures at Coweeta Creek experienced cycles of building, burning, burying, and rebuilding, probably related to cycles of rebirth and renewal of the social groups housed within them. Although the raw materials (wood and earth) with which these structures were built were perishable and needed periodic replacement, practices of building and rebuilding structures in place, as well as practices of burying the dead inside and beside structures (Hally 2008:308–309), created permanent linkages between people and center places within the built environment. This point is especially applicable to the townhouse (Rodning 2007:474–477), whose long life history created an enduring center place for the community that probably spanned several generations.

Archaeology at Coweeta Creek thus offers evidence of abandonment at several scales, including the scales of domestic structures, public structures, and the settlement as a whole. Periods of abandonment at Coweeta Creek may also be related to broader regional trends. It is not entirely clear why there would have been an occupational hiatus during the sixteenth century, but such a gap may simply reflect a normal periodic abandonment of a locality or may be related to regional unrest and instability on the eve of European contact in the southern Appalachians. During the seventeenth century, individual structures were periodically burned down and abandoned, but they were typically rebuilt in place, and the placements and alignments of public and domestic structures consistently referenced the original placement and alignment of the townhouse. The abandonment of Coweeta Creek during the early eighteenth century is most likely related to the widespread instability and change associated with the slave and deerskin trades.

The probable ditch enclosure (Feature 37) at Coweeta Creek, which may represent a small mound enclosed by a ditch and embankment, may have been built sometime before a village was built at the site during the fifteenth century. If that ditch and any earthworks associated with it predate the fifteenth-century village, it may have served as a reference point that guided the placement and alignment of fifteenth-century structures. The ditch was a center place and a landmark that was probably visible when the formally planned town was built, at which point the townhouse and plaza became the major center places for the community. This landmark created long-lasting continuity in the layout of the Coweeta Creek settlement, beginning in the 1400s—and perhaps well before

that—through the early 1700s. During this time, there were periods when the Coweeta Creek site was largely abandoned.

Some of the seventeenth-century dwellings at Coweeta Creek were situated close to, but not directly on top of, the remnants of fifteenth-century houses, and houses were situated near but not directly on a large basin (Feature 65). That spatial overlap of houses may have been coincidental. On the other hand, given the regularity in spacing and alignments at the Coweeta Creek site, it is possible—and, in my view, probable—that the footprints of those abandoned houses were marked, or remembered, in some way. It is even possible that the members of these seventeenth-century households were descendants of the fifteenth-century households. The presence of several burials in structures 8 and 9, for example, suggests close connections between these households and this particular point within the Coweeta Creek settlement plan.

Abandonment and Center Places

During the history of settlement at Coweeta Creek, individual structures were periodically abandoned, and the site was largely abandoned during some or all of the sixteenth century. When the settlement was rebuilt during the 1600s, the layout of the formal town plan referenced the remnants of structures dating to the 1400s, to the ditch enclosure (Feature 37) that dates to the fifteenth century or earlier, and possibly to Feature 65, the large oval basin dating to the fifteenth century or earlier, situated along an axis that runs from the original entryway to the townhouse, across the plaza, and between two houses (structures 3 and 4) on the southeastern edge of the plaza. When the townhouse and plaza were built during the seventeenth century, they became the hub of public life in the community. The placement and alignment of the townhouse and plaza guided the placement and alignment of domestic structures at the site, even as individual stages of structures were abandoned and new ones built. After most dwellings had been abandoned, the townhouse stayed in place. Even as there were changes in the built environment at Coweeta Creek, and even as specific structures were periodically abandoned, several reference points preserved the continuity, axiality, and orthogonality of the site's built environment.

Some of these reference points are burials placed inside and beside structures. The presence of these burials anchored the community as a whole to a particular point within the landscape, and anchored households to particular

points within the settlement plan (Rodning 2007; Rodning and Moore 2010; Sullivan and Rodning 2011). Other authors have made similar arguments about burials at Mississippian and protohistoric settlements elsewhere in the greater southern Appalachians (Hally 2008; Sullivan 1987). Individual structures were periodically abandoned, but the resting places of the dead created points of reference for new stages of both public and domestic structures. Even after most or all of the domestic structures at Coweeta Creek had been abandoned, the townhouse continued to mark the locations of burials associated with early stages of the townhouse, perhaps of some of the founding members of this Middle Cherokee community.

The townhouse served as another reference point and “persistent place” (see Thompson and Pluckhahn 2012) within the community. Although the doorway was moved from its original location to one corner of the structure, the alignment of this entryway was maintained throughout the sequence of townhouses at Coweeta Creek. The axis formed by the townhouse entryway was perpendicular to the long axis of the townhouse ramada and adjacent plaza, and it was also aligned with the axes formed by entryways into most domestic houses at Coweeta Creek. These alignments, though not precisely the same, were close to the alignments of structures dating to the fifteenth century. They were preserved even after most domestic structures had been abandoned, in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

Burials and structures therefore created center places within the community and its local landscape, as did hearths, including the townhouse hearth and those in domestic houses. The townhouse hearth was kept in place throughout the townhouse sequence, creating continuity within the cycle of building, abandoning, burning, and rebuilding of this public structure. According to Cherokee oral tradition (Mooney 1900a:395–397), town elders known as “fire keepers” were responsible for keeping the hearths in townhouses burning constantly. Following the same Cherokee oral tradition (Mooney 1900a:502–503), households periodically rekindled the fires in the hearths of dwellings with embers and ashes from townhouse hearths. The townhouse hearth formed a center place, and households within a community were directly connected to it through shared fire.

The many center places present in the built environment at Coweeta Creek—and, probably, at other late prehistoric and protohistoric Cherokee settlements in southwestern North Carolina and surrounding areas—created permanence

within the upper Little Tennessee Valley landscape. Even though structures were built of perishable raw materials and needed periodic replacement, hearths, burials, and the footprints of houses and townhouses endured. Even though the site as a whole was abandoned during late prehistory, remnants of preceding structures guided the layout of the formally planned town that was built during the seventeenth century. Even though houses around the edges of the plaza were abandoned during the late 1600s or early 1700s, the townhouse, townhouse hearth, and plaza continued to mark the center of the community. When William Bartram visited Cherokee towns in 1775, remnants of old townhouses, earthen embankments, and even terraces or plazas were visible at some abandoned settlements, including the “ruins of the ancient and famous old town of Sticoe” (Waselkov and Braund 1995:76). If these traces of former towns were recognizable to a visitor, they probably were also meaningful places to the Cherokee people who built them, lived in them, and remembered them.

8

Center Places in the Cherokee Landscape

Soon after [the Festival of the First New Moon of Spring] . . . through the Seven Prime Counsellors, appointed a Sacred Night-Dance; and on the seventh day from that of issuing the order, new fire was to be made by seven chosen men. . . . On the evening of the sixth day, there was a general assemblage of the people at the National Heptagon [the principal Cherokee townhouse], and many passed the night in a religious dance. . . . Early on the ensuing morning, the seven who were commissioned to make the new fire, commenced their operations. One was the official fire-maker, the other six, his assistants. A hearth was carefully cleansed and prepared. A round hole being made in a block of wood, there was a small quantity of dry golden-rod weed dropped into it; and then a stick, the end of which just filled the opening, was whirled rapidly till the weed caught fire. The fire was now kindled on the hearth; and thence taken to every house, by the women who waited around for the purpose. . . . The old fires having been every where extinguished, and the hearths cleansed of the old ashes, wood, &c, new fires were lighted throughout the country and a sacrifice was made in each one of them from the first meat killed afterwards by those to whom they respectively belonged.

—John Howard Payne (Anderson et al. 2010a:38; see also Mooney 1900a:502–503)

John Howard Payne traveled to the Cherokee country in northern Georgia and southeastern Tennessee in 1835, and soon after arriving at Red Clay, Tennessee, he attended Cherokee council deliberations. Payne later met Daniel Butrick, the missionary, and they began corresponding with each other about traditional Cherokee culture and contemporary politics. The epigraph to this chapter is an

excerpt from Payne and Buttrick's commentary about annual events surrounding the rekindling of sacred fires in Cherokee townhouse hearths, and this excerpt is quoted in Mooney's (1900a:502–503) historical notes and parallels to the oral tradition, "The Mounds and the Constant Fire." Mooney quotes this passage from Payne's manuscript to corroborate descriptions by A'yûnini (Swimmer), the Cherokee elder and one of Mooney's sources of myths and legends, of townhouses and the fires kept in townhouse hearths. By the early nineteenth century, there were relatively few Cherokee townhouses in the Cherokee Republic—including the large townhouse that was built at the Cherokee capital of New Echota sometime after 1825 (de Baillou 1955, 1967)—and by that date Cherokee people had experienced considerable cultural changes in the course of the slave trade, the deerskin trade, and the American Revolution and its aftermath (Boulware 2011; Hatley 1993). During the 1600s and 1700s, and, probably, during late prehistory and the 1500s, there were many more townhouses at town sites throughout the greater southern Appalachians, and the events of rekindling fires in townhouse hearths may have been different from those held during the 1800s. On the other hand, as Mooney (1900a) notes, there was widespread consensus among Cherokee elders that in the ancient past, fires in townhouse hearths were kept burning constantly, and there were said to have been everlasting fires burning in the Nequassee and Kituhwa mounds. According to the notes Mooney (1900a:502–503) appended to his account of "The Mounds and the Constant Fire" as related to him by Swimmer, this historical myth "is given solely as a matter of popular belief, shaped by tribal custom and ritual," with the "question of fact" left for archaeologists to consider. The series of townhouses and townhouse hearths at the Coweeta Creek site, and the presence of center places in other forms at Coweeta Creek and elsewhere in the southern Appalachians, suggests that there was considerable symbolism attached to Cherokee townhouses and townhouse hearths in antiquity.

During the eighteenth century, the fires in townhouse hearths materialized the identity and vitality of towns, and households were connected to the sacred fire in the local townhouse through practices by which household hearths were periodically rekindled with fire from the townhouse hearth. This point emphasizes the symbolic significance of the enduring placement of the Coweeta Creek townhouse hearth in the same location, from its first stage in the early-to-mid 1600s to its sixth or seventh stage in the early 1700s. This hearth formed the center place for the Coweeta Creek town for several iterations of the town-

house, and probably, several generations of the community. Following references in documentary sources and recorded Cherokee oral tradition (Mooney 1900a:395–397), the hearth in the Coweeta Creek townhouse was the source of fire for rekindling the fires in the household hearths at Coweeta Creek, thereby connecting households to each other and to a town and a townhouse. Following descriptions by Alexander Longe (Corkran 1969:36–37) of the periodic disposal of ashes from the hearths of Cherokee townhouses, several pits in the vicinity of the Coweeta Creek townhouse probably represent the places to which Longe referred as “Skeona,” or “places of the spirit,” where ash from townhouse hearths was periodically discarded. Like the placement of burials and sacred town possessions in the ground before the Coweeta Creek townhouse was built, and like the townhouse itself and the hearth inside it, deposits of ashes from the townhouse hearth rooted the Coweeta Creek community to this particular point within the landscape of southwestern North Carolina.

Just as the Coweeta Creek townhouse hearth contained a constant fire and served as a center place for the town, so too did the hearths in domestic structures form center places for households within the Coweeta Creek community. Houses dating to the fifteenth century were rebuilt in an offset pattern, and new hearths were built when the structures were shifted slightly. By contrast, houses dating to the seventeenth century were rebuilt in place, as is evident from the redundant footprints of successive stages of those structures and the sequences of hearths within them. If the fires in these hearths were indeed periodically rekindled with fire from the townhouse hearth, then these center places of households were directly connected to the center place of the broader community. If fire from townhouse hearths was shared between major mound centers (like Nequassee and Cowee) and other Middle Cherokee settlements, then the hearths in both the townhouse and dwellings at Coweeta Creek connected the town as a whole to a broader social network, perhaps including larger Middle Cherokee towns such as Nequassee, Cowee, or Whatoga, or the town situated at the Dillard mound site in Georgia.

Hearths in the townhouse and in household dwellings at Coweeta Creek were surrounded by arrangements of four roof support posts. Of course, these posts served the very practical purpose of supporting the roofs themselves. They also formed center places, of sorts, by delineating the area around those hearths. During the eighteenth century, the shape of townhouses shifted from square with rounded corners to circular or octagonal (Schroedl 1978), but the

late prehistoric and protohistoric pattern of four or more roof supports formed a square arrangement around a hearth, not unlike the square patterns enclosing circles and sun symbols on engraved shell gorgets found at sites in the southern Appalachians and elsewhere in the Southeast (Rodning 2012). Roof support posts around the hearths in Cherokee townhouses were analogous to the four cords that, according to Cherokee cosmogonic myths, connected the earth to the sky vault (compare with Pauls 2005; Prine 2000), and roof support posts were analogous to the four corners of the pyramidal platform mounds that were widespread in the Mississippian Southeast (Knight 1986, 2006). While neither as widely visible as townhouses nor as large as the earthen mounds like those at Nequassee and Cowee, roof support posts formed corners around central hearths. These hearths and roof support posts in the townhouse and dwellings at Coweeta Creek referred to broader cosmological symbolism within the settings of domestic life and community life in this Middle Cherokee town.

The townhouse and domestic structures at Coweeta Creek formed center places for the town and its households that outlasted individual stages of those structures. At least six, and probably at least seven, stages of the townhouse were built and rebuilt at a single spot within the town plan, and several domestic structures were built and rebuilt in place. Successive stages of these structures referenced the buried remnants of preceding stages, giving past generations of the townhouse and houses a visible presence within the built environment.

Connections between the past and the present can also be seen in the placement of burials in and near structures, including burials in and around the Coweeta Creek townhouse. Burials were placed beside the entryway to the townhouse; movement in and out of the townhouse for events related to public life within the community led people directly past these burials. Other burials were placed inside the townhouse, and, similarly, inside and beside several domestic structures at the site. Several other burials were placed around the outer edges of the townhouse, forming a perimeter that enclosed the townhouse and its hearth (compare with A. King 2004:156, 158, 159, 161, 164). Given these spatial patterns in burial placement at the Coweeta Creek site, it is best to consider burials—and the grave goods placed within them—as part of the built environment (Rodning 2001a, 2011a; Rodning and Moore 2010; Sullivan and Rodning 2001, 2011). Grave goods are concentrated primarily in burials associated directly with structures, especially in the townhouse and townhouse ramada, and in a series of domestic structures near the southwestern end of the plaza.

The townhouse and domestic structures were center places not just for living members of the community but also for the dead and they were instrumental in maintaining connections between the living and the dead. Like the burials at late prehistoric and protohistoric settlements in eastern Tennessee (Sullivan 1987, 1995) and northern Georgia (Hally 2004, 2008), burials at Coweeta Creek created permanent connections between the past and the present, and they anchored households and the town to particular points in the landscape.

The plaza itself can also be thought of as a center place within the Coweeta Creek community. Plazas are major components of the built environment of Mississippian towns across the Southeast (Demel and Hall 1998; Muller 1986, 1997, 1998; Stout and Lewis 1998). Plazas are constructed and maintained as important spaces within settlements, rather than as empty spaces within them (Heckenberger 2005; Keegan 2009; Siegel 1996, 1999). Mississippian plazas were situated adjacent to, and were often surrounded by, earthen mounds (Kidder 1998; Wesson 1998). The amount of earth moved in landscaping plazas was sometimes comparable to the volumes of the mounds themselves (Holley et al. 1993; Lewis et al. 1998). The plaza at Coweeta Creek was at least partly covered with deposits of clay and sand, reflecting some degree of landscaping in this public space, perhaps associated with comparable efforts in building and maintaining the townhouse. Given references to large public gatherings that took place on Cherokee town plazas during the eighteenth century, the plaza at Coweeta Creek was almost certainly the setting for a variety of public events, and its placement beside the townhouse emphasized its role as a central point within the built environment of this Cherokee community. Unlike the clusters of burials seen in the plazas at late prehistoric and protohistoric settlements in northern Georgia (Hally 2008) and eastern Tennessee (Sullivan 1987), only one burial is clearly placed within the plaza at the Coweeta Creek site, but there are additional burials placed in the townhouse ramada along the northwestern edge of the plaza and burials associated with ramadas along the southeastern edge of the plaza. Based on the presence of some colonial trade goods in deposits covering the plaza, the plaza must have been in use as late as the late 1600s or early 1700s. Assuming that the plaza was in use throughout the period spanned by the sequence of townhouses at the site, then like each stage of the townhouse, the plaza preserved the axial alignments of public and domestic architecture from the early 1600s through the early 1700s and was kept in place after the abandonment of most of the domestic structures surrounding it.

Another marker of a center place at Coweeta Creek is the ditch enclosure (Feature 37), which may date to a very early point in the history of settlement at the site (Rodning 2007) and may have been an enduring landmark that guided the later placement of the townhouse and plaza nearby. While it appears segmented in plan-view maps, it is possible that it was a continuous enclosure in the past and that only some of the deeper sections of the ditch survived truncation by twentieth-century plowing and other earthmoving activities (Benyshek 2010). It is difficult to date the ditch enclosure at Coweeta Creek, given the low number of artifacts recovered from it, but it probably dates to no later than the fifteenth century, and it may date to much earlier, based on proposed dates of similar features at other sites in North Carolina (Ashcraft 1996; Boudreaux 2007a; Benyshek 2010). This ditch enclosure at the Coweeta Creek site was situated near the highest point in the otherwise level ground surface beside the Little Tennessee River, as was the townhouse. Given the presence of the ditch enclosure at Coweeta Creek, and the presence of similar features at several other sites, it is possible that such ditch enclosures are relatively common in southwestern North Carolina, as local landmarks and as settings for periodic social gatherings and ritual events. They may even be an early antecedent to townhouses themselves.

Other precursors to townhouses in the greater southern Appalachians include earth lodges (Boudreaux 2007a:1–3, 103–104, 114–115; Dickens 1976:75–87; Rudolph 1984), platform mounds (Dickens 1978; Kimball et al. 2010:44–47; Rudolph 1984), and large posts (Kimball et al. 2010:48–49). The large post found at the center of the Biltmore mound, dating to the Middle Woodland period (mid-first millennium A.D.), is an example of this kind of post, which was probably visible at a considerable distance from the mound itself, as were Cherokee townhouses during the 1600s and 1700s and the smoke emanating from Cherokee townhouse hearths. Similar postholes, interpreted as the settings for large posts with ceremonial and civic significance, have been identified at the Middle Woodland mound at Garden Creek (Chapman and Keel 1979; Keel 1976:78–89; Walthall 1985). Some townhouses were built on the summits of mounds, and some sites in North Carolina, northern Georgia, and eastern Tennessee, including Cherokee town sites from the eighteenth century, are known to have had large town posts (Boudreaux 2007a:54–55; Hally 2008:152–160; Moore 2002a:228–234; Schroedl 1986b:223–224). Like ditch enclosures, large posts and earthen mounds in southwestern North Carolina probably

marked places on the landscape for periodic social gatherings and ritual events, and, eventually, those places were marked not just by posts or mounds but by townhouses, as well.

Coweeta Creek and the Cherokee Landscape

Coweeta Creek was not a major mound center, like Cowee or Nequassee, nor was it a small rural settlement like the Alarka farmstead near the confluence of the Nantahala River and the Little Tennessee River (Shumate et al. 2005). The series of townhouses at Coweeta Creek resemble those at the Chattooga site in northwestern South Carolina (Schroedl 1994, 2000, 2001). Domestic structures at Coweeta Creek resemble those at late prehistoric sites such as Warren Wilson and Garden Creek, as well as houses known or thought to date to the seventeenth century at the Ravensford Tract and Kituhwa sites in the Tuckasegee drainage (Riggs and Shumate 2003; Keel 2007; Webb 2002), the Macon County Airport site in the Little Tennessee Valley (Benyshek and Webb 2009; Trinkley 2000), and at sites in Brasstown Valley, Georgia, near the headwaters of the Hiwassee River (Cable 2000; Cable and Reed 2000; Cable et al. 1997). The relatively widespread presence of the basic architectural forms seen at Coweeta Creek suggests that this site can be considered as representative of Cherokee settlements in southwestern North Carolina and in the southern Appalachians more generally. From this perspective, the site offers a glimpse of life in a typical Cherokee town during the 1600s and early 1700s, the period after Spanish entradas in the Southeast and before the widespread development of the English deerskin trade.

With this point in mind, the enduring placement of the townhouse and several houses at the site is all the more remarkable. Although the Coweeta Creek site map does reveal a dense concentration of structures around the town plaza, there would have been a great deal of space in the bottomlands along the river where the site is located for rebuilding structures in new settings. During the seventeenth century, rather than spreading structures out and placing them in new settings, the Coweeta Creek community chose to build and rebuild them in place. In the absence of direct evidence of a log stockade at the site, there is no clear edge that would have hemmed people in as they chose where to build and rebuild the townhouse and household dwellings. People chose to rebuild structures in place either because of the advantages of reusing an established ar-

chitectural footprint or because of the symbolism of keeping structures and the groups related to them in place, or some combination of these considerations. Whatever motivated people to rebuild structures in place—even if the settlement were indeed enclosed by a log stockade—one outcome of these building practices was that households and the town as a whole became anchored to particular points within the built environment and within the broader landscape. Another outcome of these practices was the consistent burial of the dead within and near the footprints of these structures. The presence of these burials added to the centripetal forces anchoring households and the town to these particular points in the landscape. Practices of rebuilding townhouses and townhouse hearths in place—as evident at the Coweeta Creek site from the 1600s and early 1700s—were still part of Cherokee cultural memory when Louis-Philippe visited Overhill Cherokee settlements in the late 1700s (Knight 2006:424; Schroedl 1978; Sturtevant 1978) and when James Mooney (1900a) recorded myths and legends related to him by Cherokee elders in western North Carolina in the late 1800s.

The presence of the ditch enclosure at Coweeta Creek is noteworthy here, as well, given its close proximity to the Coweeta Creek townhouse and plaza. Comparable ditch enclosures have been recognized at other sites in southwestern North Carolina (Benyshek 2010), and they may have been relatively common landmarks in the past. These enclosures formed center places for local groups before the development of townhouses as an architectural form and in settings in which people did not have the wherewithal or the need to build large earthen platform mounds and large ritual posts. It is not clear whether the ditch enclosure—or any embankment or mound associated with it—was still visible when the Coweeta Creek townhouse was first built, but the lack of structures overlapping the ditch enclosure indicates that it probably was, and that it probably guided the placement of the townhouse and plaza nearby. Ditch enclosures are well worth further study in southwestern North Carolina and surrounding areas, as are the large posts that may represent community landmarks and center places.

Cherokee Cultural History and the Coweeta Creek Site

Coweeta Creek dates largely to the period during which native groups in the Southeast responded to the aftermath of Spanish entradas (Hudson 2002),

Spanish goods circulated through aboriginal exchange networks (M. T. Smith 1987; Waselkov 1989a; Worth 2002), and the Native American slave trade and militaristic slaving societies such as the Westoes developed (Bowne 2005; Ethridge 2010; Gally 2002) but before the point at which Cherokee towns became enmeshed in the deerskin trade with English colonists from Virginia and South Carolina (Goodwin 1977; Hatley 1993). Archaeology at the Coweeta Creek site sheds light on the effects of these broader historical developments on one community in the colonial Southeast. Archaeologists have learned a great deal about Cherokee lifeways during the 1700s (Schroedl 1986a, 2000, 2001), but there are fewer analyses of protohistoric Cherokee settlements dating to the 1600s (but see Cable et al. 1997; Marcoux 2010a; Shumate et al. 2005). European traders and trade goods were relatively scarce in Cherokee towns before the early eighteenth century (Rothrock 1976), and Coweeta Creek dates to the point at which Cherokee groups first began developing trade relations with the South Carolina colony and first had direct access to colonial trade goods (Hatley 1993). Cherokee towns and the South Carolina colony developed a codependent relationship, in that Cherokee people became interested in, and, eventually, dependent upon English trade and trade goods, while Charles Town and the South Carolina colony were dependent upon Cherokee alliances for safety and security against the threats of attacks by native groups on the southern colonial frontier (Corkran 1962, 1967; Crane 2004; Hatley 1993). Cherokee groups in southwestern North Carolina had access to colonial trade goods as early as the mid-to-late seventeenth century (Rodning 2010b; Shumate et al. 2005), colonial traders had become a permanent presence in Cherokee towns by the first decade of the eighteenth century (Corkan 1969; Riggs 2012), and the South Carolina colony formalized trade relations with Cherokee towns and established formal trading posts in select Cherokee towns in the aftermath of the tumultuous Yamasee War (Rothrock 1976).

The period of the Yamasee War probably corresponds with the abandonment of the Coweeta Creek townhouse as a community center. By the late eighteenth century, remnants of abandoned settlements and old fields were present in the upper Little Tennessee Valley south of Nequassee and Echoee, but most of the Middle Cherokee settlements were concentrated in the area between Nequassee and Cowee (Waselkov and Braund 1995:76–77). Based on the historically known significance of Nequassee, Cowee, and Kituhwa, there probably were long-term sequences of townhouses at those mounds, but the

Coweeta Creek site represents one of the best-known archaeological cases of a cycle of building and rebuilding a townhouse in place (Riggs 2008; Riggs and Shumate 2003; Ward and Davis 1999:183–186).

The architecture and built environment at Coweeta Creek emphasizes emplacement, permanence of structures and settlements, and enduring connections between the community and this particular point on the landscape. Much later, as recorded during the late nineteenth century, Cherokee oral tradition spoke of earthen mounds, townhouses, burials, and hearths as anchors, connecting people to place (Mooney 1900a). By that point, the Cherokee landscape of southwestern North Carolina and surrounding areas had changed dramatically (Pillsbury 1983; Wilms 1974, 1991), but several aspects of Cherokee oral tradition are congruent with archaeological finds at Coweeta Creek and other sites.

Townhouses were center places, and from late prehistory through the seventeenth century, they were periodically burned down, buried, and rebuilt, as manifestations of the metaphorical death, rebirth, and renewal of the towns that built and maintained them. During the eighteenth century, native towns throughout the Southeast became less firmly anchored to particular points in the landscape. People and households moved from place to place more often than they had previously (Marcoux 2010a), and they spread out across the landscape farther and farther away from other households, and farther from townhouses that still served as focal points of community life in Cherokee towns. Townhouses gave groups of households an architectural adaptation with which they could attach themselves to particular places and could claim and display their status as towns, but as households and towns became more mobile in response to the conditions of life in the colonial Southeast, sequences of public structures became shorter (Marcoux 2010a). During late prehistory and the seventeenth century, townhouses emphasized permanence and cycles of building and rebuilding, but townhouses were a portable form of public architecture, as well, in the sense that a town could build a townhouse and a sacred hearth wherever it chose to reside, as outlined in the Cherokee historical myth “The Mounds and the Constant Fire” (Mooney 1900a).

As quoted at the start of this book, an oral tradition recorded by Alexander Longe in the early eighteenth century refers to an enchanted Cherokee town underneath a whirlpool in a river. According to the Cherokee elder cited by Longe, this enchanted town dates to about 10 years before English traders were

living in Cherokee towns, perhaps referring to the late seventeenth century. That time frame corresponds generally with the settlement at Coweeta Creek and the presence of a townhouse at the site. If the Coweeta Creek site can be considered an example of a typical Cherokee town during that period, it may be comparable to the template for the “enchanted” town of Agustoghe, as recorded by Longe. Within this enchanted town, there were no troubles and no shortages of food, and the people there neither grew old nor died (Corkran 1969:40). As Hatley (1993:3) argues, this enchanted town referred to a better place in Cherokee cultural memory—a period before English trade and the permanent presence of traders in Cherokee towns—and people could reach that better place through fasting and through entering the whirlpool in the river. As Hatley (1993:4) notes, the exact location of the enchanted town was not important, because there were many remnants and ruins of Cherokee towns in the landscape, and the story recorded by Longe could refer to any or all of them.

In the course of European contact and colonialism in the Americas, Native American societies experienced dramatic and often difficult challenges, as they adapted to new conditions and new circumstances and to environmental and cultural changes. Native North Americans experienced cultural upheavals related to the colonial slave trade and the new forms of warfare it sparked, to the development and collapse of trade relations between native and colonial groups, to the demographic effects of warfare and episodic disease epidemics, to the displacement of native groups by colonial settlers, and to breakdowns in traditional ways of life and native languages. Native peoples have adapted, and they have endured, but there is still more to learn about what effects contact and colonialism have had on native and colonial groups, and how Native Americans have affected the course of North American and world history.

Scholars have written about the dispossession of Native American lands, but less is known about the impacts of contact and colonialism on the senses of place that developed in the diverse environments of North America. There were many ways in which Cherokee people centered themselves within the southern Appalachian landscape and maintained close connections between people and place, and between the past and the present. Those connections and that sense of place were challenged in the course of contact with Spanish, French, and English colonists and traders, and later with Anglo settlers. The relationship between Cherokee towns and the Cherokee cultural landscape, and traditional knowledge about that landscape, had developed during the thousands

of years of Native American settlement in the southern Appalachians before European contact. These areas, from the Native American perspective, comprised the Old World. The breakdown in this relationship was one of several dramatic changes Native American groups experienced in the aftermath of European contact and colonialism in what became known as the New World.

As the Cherokee landscape changed during the 1700s and 1800s, people adapted to new conditions and circumstances (Riggs 1988, 1989, 1996, 1997, 1999), but aspects of an older cultural landscape have endured through the present. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians has recently purchased the land on which the Kituhwa and Cowee mounds sit and has recently supported archaeological study of Kituhwa and other Cherokee town sites in North Carolina (Riggs and Shumate 2003; Steere 2011; Webb and Benyshek 2009). People from the community periodically add dirt to the Kituhwa mound, and, undoubtedly, new layers of oral tradition and new forms of cultural memory about it and other mounds are taking shape. Mounds and townhouses have long been powerful center places for Cherokee towns, and they still are.

If the Coweeta Creek site is indeed representative of a Cherokee town, then many Cherokee towns probably embodied a comparable sense of place within the southern Appalachian landscape. Such connections between people and place were uprooted in the aftermath of European contact in North America. Cherokee towns and people became disconnected not just from the areas where they had lived, and the resource catchment zones around them, but also from the center places—mounds, townhouses, hearths, dwellings, and burials—that anchored them to the cultural landscape. Cherokee oral tradition and cultural memory have preserved some aspects of that sense of place, but, eventually, people stopped building mounds and townhouses, stopped maintaining constant fires in townhouse hearths, and stopped burying their dead underneath the settings of household and community life. The abandonment of such places, and related practices of placemaking, represents one of the many ways in which Cherokee and other Native American peoples have been displaced and dispossessed in the course of European contact and colonialism in North America.

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