MOUNDS, MYTHS, AND CHEROKEE TOWNHOUSES IN SOUTHWESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Christopher B. Rodning

This paper explores the role of public architecture in anchoring Cherokee communities to particular points within the southern Appalachian landscape in the wake of European contact in North America. Documentary evidence about Cherokee public structures known as townhouses demonstrates that they were settings for a variety of events related to public life in Cherokee towns, and that there were a variety of symbolic meanings associated with them. Archaeological evidence of Cherokee townhouses—especially the sequence of six townhouses at the Coweeta Creek site in southwestern North Carolina— demonstrates an emphasis on continuity in the placement and alignment of public architecture through time. Building and rebuilding these public structures in place, and the placement of burials within these architectural spaces, created enduring attachments between Cherokee towns and the places in which they lived, in the midst of the geopolitical instability created by European contact in eastern North America.

Este artículo investiga el papel que tuvo la arquitectura pública a la hora de conectar a las comunidades cheroquis con puntos específicos en el entorno natural de los Apalaches del Sur, después del contacto con los europeos en América del Norte. La evidencia documental sobre las estructuras públicas cheroquis, denominadas casas principales (townhouses), indica que eran el lugar donde se llevaban a cabo varios eventos relacionados con la vida pública en las poblaciones cheroquis y que había diversos significados simbólicos asociados con ellas. La evidencia arqueológica de las casas principales cheroquis— especialmente la secuencia de seis casas principales en Coweta Creek, al suroeste de Carolina del Norte—hacen un énfasis en la continuidad de su emplazamiento y del alineamiento de la arquitectura pública a través del tiempo. En medio de la inestabilidad geopolítica producida por el contacto con los europeos en América del Norte, la construcción y reedificación de estas estructuras públicas en el mismo sitio y la ubicación de entierros dentro de estos espacios arquitectónicos, crearon vínculos duraderos entre las poblaciones cheroquis y los lugares que habitaban.

At the time of European contact in southeastern North America, dozens of Cherokee towns dotted the southern Appalachians (Figure 1; Dickens 1979; Duncan and Riggs 2003; Goodwin 1977; Hatley 1989, 1993; Hill 1997; Hudson 1976; Mooney 1889, 1900; Schroedl 2000, 2001; Smith 1979; Waselkov and Braund 1995). These towns were communities of people, first and foremost, rather than specific points on the landscape (Fogelson 1977:191; Gilbert 1943; Persico 1979:106; Sturm 2002:36–39), and households within towns participated in shared public events, civic duties, and leadership roles (Gearing 1958, 1962; Schroedl 2000, 2001). Public structures known as townhouses were symbolic manifestations of Cherokee towns, they were architectural landmarks, and they were settings for the practice of Cherokee public life.[1] Understanding the townhouse, then, is an important part of understanding Cherokee identity and interactions in the Contact-period Southeast. What did townhouses look like, and how were they built? What were the life spans of townhouses, and how were they abandoned and rebuilt? What meanings were attached to these architectural spaces? What relationships between people and place were materialized in these public structures? This paper explores these topics by considering ethnohistoric and archaeological evidence of Cherokee townhouses. In particular, it will focus on a series of townhouses found at the Coweeta Creek site (31MA34), along the upper Little Tennessee River in southwestern North Carolina (Figure 2; Dickens 1976:100–101, 1978, 1979; Egloff 1967; Egloff

Christopher B. Rodning ■ Department of Anthropology, Tulane University, 7041 Freret Street, New Orleans, LA 70118, (crodning@tulane.edu)
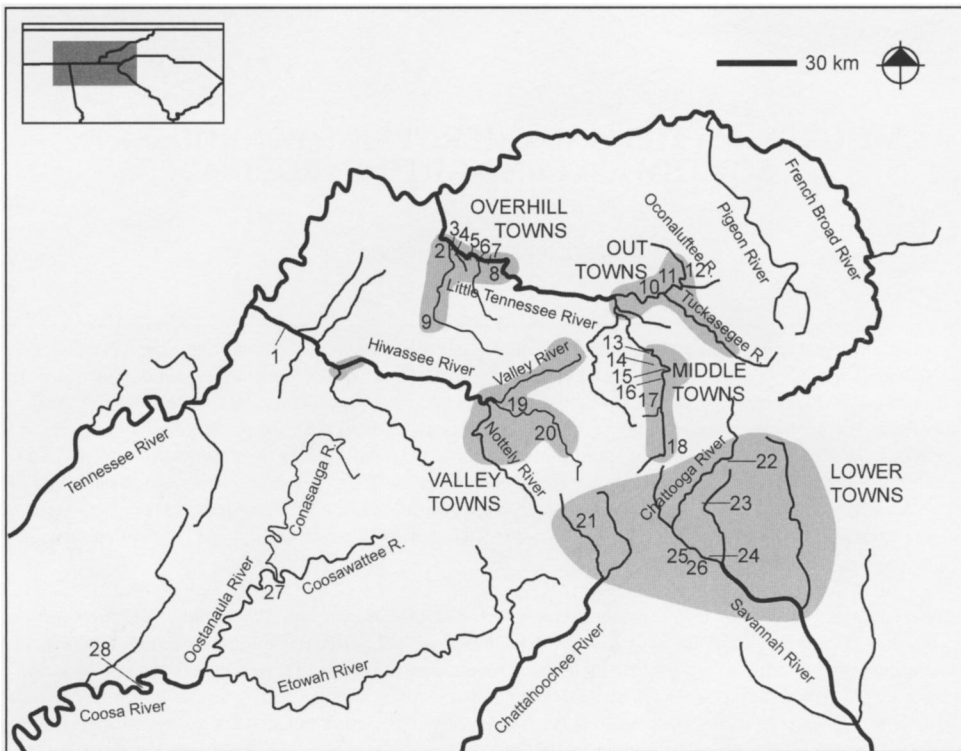
Figure 1. Selected archaeological sites and groups of historic Cherokee towns in southern Appalachia (after Dickens 1979; Duncan and Riggs 2003:17; Hally 1994:168; Rodning 2001a:78, 2001b:239, 2002b:156, 2002c:68, 2008:11; Schroedl 2000:205, 2001:279; Smith 1979). Townhouses have been identified archaeologically at sites listed in italics, and ethnohistoric evidence suggests that townhouses were present at some other sites noted here, as well (Baden 1983; Chapman 1985; Dickens 1976, 1978; Duncan and Riggs 2003; Goodwin 1977; Hally 1988, 1994, 2008; Hally and Kelly 1998; Keel 1976; Russ and Chapman 1983; Schroedl 2000, 2001; Sullivan 1987, 1995; Ward and Davis 1999; Wynn 1990). Sites shown here include: (1) *Ledford Island*, (2) *Mialoquo*, (3) *Tomotley*, (4) *Toqua*, (5) *Chota-Tanasee*, (6) Citico, (7) Chilhowee, (8) Tallassee, (9) Great Tellico/Chatuga, (10) *Kituwha*, (11) Birdtown, (12) Nununyi, (13) Cowee, (14) Joree, (15) Whatoga, (16) Nequassee, (17) *Coweeta Creek*, (18) Old Estatoe, (19) Peachtree (Hiwassee), (20) Spike Buck (Quanasee), (21) Nacoochee, (22) *Chattooga*, (23) Keowee, (24) Chauga, (25) Estatoe, (26) Tugalo, (27) New Echota, and (28) the King site.

1971; Keel 1976:33–34; Riggs and Rodning 2002:37–45; Rodning 1996, 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2004, 2007, 2008; Rodning and VanDerwarker 2002; Ward and Davis 1999:183–190; Wilson and Rodning 2002).

Archaeologists have excavated several eighteenth-century Cherokee townhouses, as well as public structures at sites in the southern Appalachians dating from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries A.D. The sequence of townhouses at Coweeta Creek gives us a case in which six successive stages of a townhouse were built and rebuilt in a single place, creating a mound composed of the burned and buried remnants of each successive generation of this public structure. The sequence of townhouses at Coweeta Creek form a

mound analogous to those at late prehistoric sites across southeastern North America, though without the mound fill. Most stages of this townhouse date to the seventeenth century and therefore fall within the protohistoric period, after sixteenth-century Spanish entradas and before eighteenth-century English trade with native peoples of the Southeast. Given this temporal placement, the Coweeta Creek townhouse is an example of how one Cherokee community materialized its identity as a town in the aftermath of early encounters with European colonists and European trade goods. European contact led to considerable changes in native lifeways and landscapes in the Southeast. Creating and affirming connections to places, and creating a sense of permanence in a dramatically
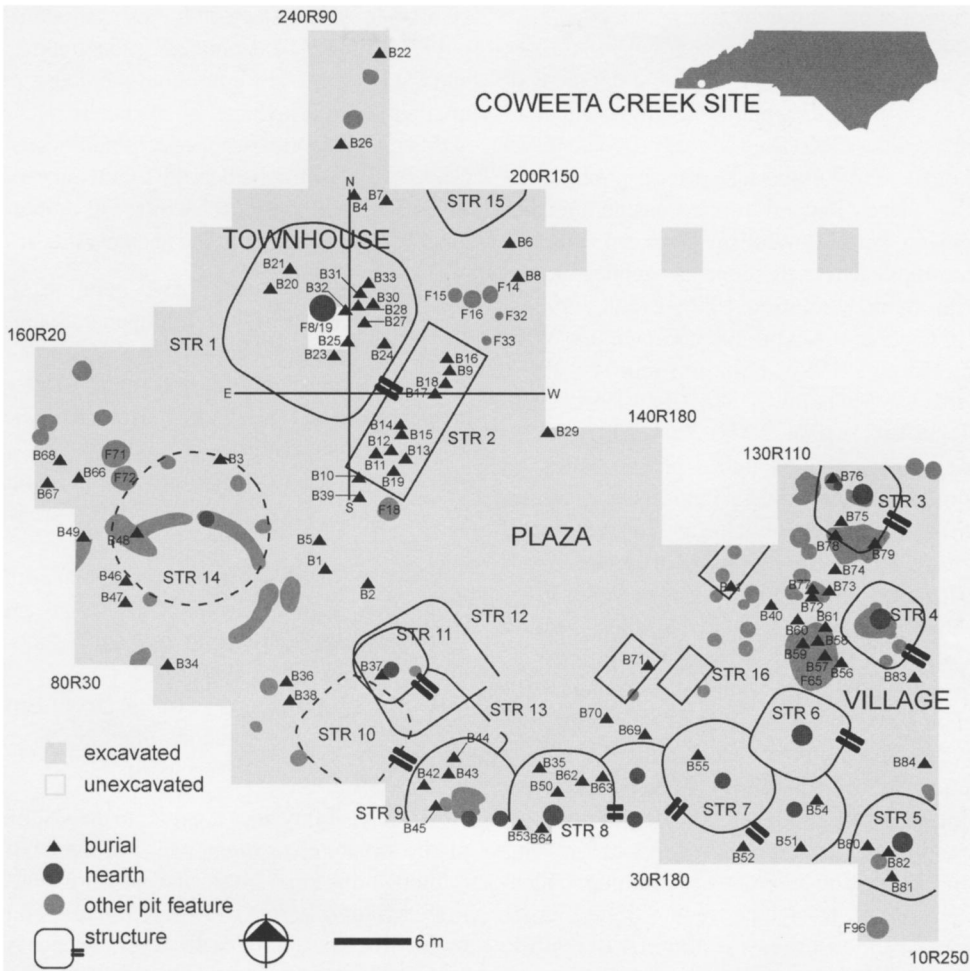
Figure 2. Schematic map of the Coweeta Creek site in southwestern North Carolina (after Rodning 2001a:79, 2002a:12).

changing cultural landscape, is one of many prac-
tices through which native people in the southern
Appalachians responded to the destabilizing effects
of European contact. I refer to this process as
"emplacement." I define emplacement in this sense
as the set of practices by which a community
attaches itself to a particular place through formal
settlement plans, architecture, burials, and other
material additions to the landscape.

The following section of this paper considers
archaeological approaches to public architecture,
in general, as background to my focus on the ways
that townhouses created attachments between
Cherokee towns and specific places in the south-
ern Appalachian landscape. I then summarize eth-
nohistoric evidence and oral traditions about
Cherokee townhouses, as well as archaeological

evidence about public architecture at late prehis-
toric and eighteenth-century sites, and I discuss the
Coweeta Creek settlement plan and the series of
townhouses present at the site. I then consider par-
allels between archaeological remnants of public
structures at Coweeta Creek and ethnohistoric evi-
dence about Cherokee townhouses, and I conclude
by relating this form of architecture to native
responses to the effects of European contact in the
southern Appalachians.

The Archaeology of Public Architecture

Archaeological interpretations of public architec-
ture have taken many different approaches. Some
are concerned with identifying the amounts of time
and energy invested in the construction and recon-

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struction of public buildings and monuments (Trigger 1990), while others (Adler and Wilshusen 1990; Kirch 1990) consider the managerial demands of building and rebuilding public structures and monuments. Kidder (2004) and Moore (1996a, 1996b) focus on the activities that take place in public structures and plazas. Recently, much consideration has been given to the symbolism of monuments and relationships between monumental architecture and cultural memory (Barrett 1990; Bradley 1998a, 1998b; Creel and Anyon 2003; Crown and Wills 2003; Hingley 1996; Pauketat and Alt 2003; Richards 1996; Thomas 1990; Tilley 1994, 1996; Van Dyke 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009). Landscape approaches have sought to place mounds and monuments within broader landscapes of settlement for both mobile hunter-gatherer groups and sedentary farming societies (Bernardini 2004; Buikstra and Charles 1999; Charles 1992, 1995; Dillehay 1990; Sherratt 1990). Similarly, Snead and Preucel (1999) and Swanson (2003) focus on the spatial distributions of shrines and other small-scale additions to the landscape. This paper considers public architecture as a form of symbolic communication mediating social relations, power relations, and connections between people and places. Public architecture creates venues for events during which social relations and community identity are created, re-created, renewed, and reproduced. Archaeological remnants of public architecture, therefore, offer clues about the spatial and social structure of past communities, and the ways that people relate to the places and the landscapes in which they live. Evidence about how public structures are renovated and rebuilt, meanwhile, gives us clues about the relationship between the past and present in the formation of community identity.

As Jerry Moore (1996a:15) has demonstrated in his study of prehispanic public architecture in the Andes, "it is possible for archaeologists to make limited, but significant, inferences about the composition of the social group and basis of social order from analyses of prehistoric architecture." Public architecture is guided by different sets of considerations than domestic architecture, and building and maintaining public structures demands interaction among several different households or even several different communities (Moore 1996a:220–221). Whereas the form, placement,

symbolism, and history of domestic structures are guided by domestic economy, residential patterns, and the life cycles of household members, public architecture is influenced by the needs, decisions, actions, and histories of entire communities. Moore (1996a:139–140) considers the following variables in his approach to the archaeology of monuments and ritual architecture in the ancient Andes:

- Permanence, the anticipated duration of specific structures, whether multigenerational, generational, episodic, or ephemeral;
- Scale, which encompasses the dimensions of structures and the relative sizes of public and domestic structures;
- Centrality, or the location of public structures relative to plazas, domestic activity areas, and dwellings;
- Ubiquity, the frequency of particular forms of public structures, and whether they are present in only some settlements or neighborhoods, in many, or in all; and
- Visibility, the closeness (or distance) between participants and audience members at events that take place in public spaces.

Note that visibility does not refer to the visibility of public structures or monuments on the landscape (although this topic would also be worth considering). Moore (1996a:165–167) relates temporal trends in these variables to the development of social ranking and ritual control in Andean polities.

Moore's (1996a) study of Andean public architecture focuses on changes in monumental architecture from 5900 B.C. to A.D. 1470. The length of this period, the study area, the dimensions of public architecture in the Andes, and the scale of sociopolitical complexity and integration in that region are all considerably different than those of interest here. Moore's approach to Andean monuments is nevertheless applicable to the study of Cherokee townhouses in the southern Appalachians. Public architecture marks specific points on the landscape that are differentiated from the settings of everyday domestic life. Some monuments and public structures make reference to the recent past, some mark the burials of the dead, and some make references to the ancestral or mythical past. All of these functions—and, probably, others—were served by Cherokee townhouses. Given the climate and environment of the south-

ern Appalachians, and the perishable nature of architectural materials available to Cherokee groups in such an environment, this paper focuses primarily on Moore's (1996a) variable of permanence. Individual stages of townhouses could not have been built to last very long, but there were practices related to building and rebuilding townhouses that created a sense of permanence out of impermanent raw materials. This sense of permanence in townhouses—and the relationships formed between people and place through these structures—may have been especially significant to Cherokee towns in the aftermath of European contact in the Southeast. Native peoples experienced dramatic cultural changes during that period, and these changes affected even Cherokee towns in their relatively remote setting, located in mountain ranges at some distance from the concentrations of early European colonial settlement in coastal areas, and removed from the sites of early Spanish and English contacts with native groups of the Southeast in the 1500s and 1600s.

Cherokee Townhouses and Domestic Houses

Some historic Cherokee townhouses were quite large, especially when considering that they were timber-frame structures, and ranged from 14 to 19 m in diameter (Schroedl, ed. 1986:540). However, most Cherokee townhouses were relatively small and (in strictly relative terms) were basically larger versions of Cherokee dwellings (Schroedl, ed. 1986:541). While not monumental in absolute size, these public structures were monumental in terms of symbolism; they materialized and communicated the status of local households as a community, and as a town.

Late prehistoric and protohistoric aboriginal townhouses in the southern Appalachians were, as Lynne Sullivan (1987:28) has aptly put it, "houses writ large."[2] Indeed, this view about public and domestic architecture is probably applicable to other areas in the Southeast as well. Domestic houses, of course, housed families, and they created settings for the practice of daily domestic activities and social gatherings. Townhouses, on the other hand, symbolically "housed" entire communities.[3] The architectural manifestation of a town, then, was a larger version of a household dwelling. Although resembling each other in architectural design and materials, townhouses and houses were

associated with different types of groups, and different scales of group identity. How, then, was the architectural form of a house adapted as public architecture and as a material symbol for the presence of a town in the Cherokee landscape? Both houses and townhouses were built of wood and earth, with roofs of bark or thatch, and structures made of such perishable materials would have needed some upkeep and maintenance. What practices of renovation and rebuilding ensured that townhouses—as material symbols of Cherokee towns themselves—outlasted the lives of single stages of structures made of perishable materials? And, importantly, how do these architectural practices relate to European contact? Major geopolitical developments in this period are summarized in the following section of this paper, as is documentary and archaeological evidence about Cherokee townhouses.

Cherokee Towns and Townhouses

European Contact

The history of Cherokee towns during the eighteenth century, like the history of other native groups in the Southeast, was greatly shaped by trade and warfare with English colonists. The earliest presence of Europeans only indirectly affected Cherokee communities. During the sixteenth century, before the spread of the slave trade and the deerskin trade, several Spanish expeditions traversed the southern Appalachians (Beck et al. 2006; Booker et al. 1992; Hudson 1997:185–199, 2005:85–88, 94–99; Hudson et al. 1985; Levy et al. 1990; Moore et al. 2005; Schroedl 2000, 2001; Smith 1987, 1989, 1994, 2000, 2001, 2002), and some late-sixteenth-century Spanish expeditions may have reached areas close to the southern Appalachians as well (Worth 1994). The routes of these Spanish expeditions largely bypassed Cherokee town areas (Beck 1997), and there was minimal direct interaction between these Spanish expeditions and Cherokee towns, but Spanish items did circulate through Native American trade networks in the Southeast during the seventeenth century (Waselkov 1989). Episodes of direct and indirect contact (sensu Smith 1987) drastically altered the geopolitics of the sixteenth-century Southeast (see Hudson 2002). Chronicles of

sixteenth-century Spanish expeditions, and the accounts written by and maps drawn by eighteenth-century English colonists, lend some insight into the landscape and lifeways of native groups in the greater southern Appalachians, but archaeological sites are the primary source of data on Cherokee towns during the protohistoric period, from the mid-to-late 1500s through the early 1700s.

The deerskin trade was first established by English colonists from Charles Town, South Carolina, in the late 1600s, and spread quickly to the southern Appalachians (Corkran 1962, 1967; Crane 1929; Harmon 1986; Hatley 1989, 1991, 1993; Hill 1997; Schroedl 2000, 2001; Woodward 1963). During the 1700s it was the source of several conflicts among the Cherokee, the Carolina colony, and the native allies of the Carolina colony (Dickens 1967; Goodwin 1977; Hatley 1993; King and Evans 1977). European enslavement of Native Americans, and new patterns of raiding through which Native American warriors acquired war captives to sell as slaves to European colonists, provided another framework for interactions. These, coupled with the new forms of conflict, warfare, and alliances that developed with them, led to considerable cultural change throughout the Eastern Woodlands during the 1600s and 1700s (Axtell 1997; Bowne 2000, 2005, 2006; Ethridge 1984, 2006; Gallay 2002; Lapham 2005; Martin 1994; Milner et al. 2001; Perdue 1998:66–70; Smith 1989, 1994, 2002; Thornton 1990).

Documentary Evidence

Townhouses were hubs of public life in Cherokee towns during the eighteenth century. Documentary evidence about Cherokee townhouses lends insight into the range of events that took place inside townhouses and on the plazas adjacent to them, and into the broader significance and symbolism of Cherokee townhouses. Acknowledging the potential problems in drawing upon oral tradition and oral history as an interpretive framework in archaeology (Mason 2000, 2009), references to townhouses in Cherokee myths and legends recorded in western North Carolina during the late 1800s by James Mooney—an ethnologist affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution—shed additional light on this form of public architecture. Towns were groups of people, rather than particular points on the landscape where people lived, but townhouses mani-

fested architectural connections between Cherokee towns and places.

During the eighteenth century, there were 50–60 known Cherokee settlements with townhouses spread across the five areas in which the Lower, Middle, Out, Valley, and Overhill Cherokee towns were concentrated (Figure 1; Baden 1983; Dickens 1979:ix; Duncan and Riggs 2003; Goodwin 1977; Hill 1997; Russ and Chapman 1983; Schroedl 2000, 2001; Smith 1979; Waselkov and Braund 1995:87–88). These town divisions were evident to Carolina colonists and traders; people in these different town divisions spoke different dialects of the Cherokee language, and in at least some cases, towns in these different areas acted in concert with each other (Duncan and Riggs 2003:16–17; King 1979:ix; Mooney 1900:15-17; Schroedl 2000, 2001; Smith 1979). Town size varied, but typically included between 10 and 60 households, or roughly 100 to 600 people (Schroedl 2000:206). In some cases, town names "moved" across the landscape, when an entire community moved from one setting to another. Examples of Cherokee town names such as "Great Tellico" and "Old Estatoe" indicate that relations between towns—i.e., relative ages and statuses of different towns—were sometimes significant (Smith 1979).

People formed a town by building and keeping a townhouse. Only those settlements with townhouses were considered towns (Smith 1979:47). Architecturally, townhouses were public structures that created venues for events related to trade, diplomacy, warfare, community identity, and social ties within communities, and interactions with European colonists and with people from other native communities. Symbolically, townhouses "housed" towns, anchoring them within the southern Appalachian landscape, and manifesting the status of a local group of households as a town. The adjacent Overhill settlements of Chatuga and Great Tellico, located along the lower Little Tennessee and Tellico rivers in eastern Tennessee (Shroedl, ed. 1986:531–548), each kept a townhouse, even though there was no clearcut spatial boundary between them. Each community had its own townhouse, and, therefore, its own independent identity as a town (Chambers 2006:92; Schroedl 1978:214; Williams 1928:98–99).

Many gatherings with "outsiders" took place in Cherokee townhouses and on town plazas adjacent

to townhouses themselves (Hill 1997:70; King, ed. 2007; Randolph 1973:142–154; Salley 1936:16; Schroedl, ed. 1986:8–9, 12–13; Williams 1927:59, 1928:95–96, 136). These events included meetings between leaders of one or more Cherokee towns and English traders, travelers, or soldiers. While not recorded specifically by English colonists, it is likely that similar events involving people from "host" towns and representatives from "other" native towns took place in Cherokee townhouses, as well. Townhouses also served as town-wide venues for public events. As William Bartram witnessed during his 1775 visit to the Middle Cherokee town of Cowee, near the Coweeta Creek site, the townhouse at Cowee was the setting for events related to the preparation for a ballgame that was to take place the following day (Bartram did not stay to watch the game).

According to Bartram, the Cowee townhouse was a wooden structure, roughly six meters tall and built atop a much older earthen mound more than nine meters high (Waselkov and Braund 1995:84–85). The visually striking combination of the height of the mound and the dimensions of the townhouse itself, differentiating it from the 100 or more dwellings in the surrounding area, clearly impressed Bartram, who also noted that the townhouse was "capable of accommodating several hundred people" (Waselkov and Braund 1995:84). This estimate was likewise ventured by Lieutenant Henry Timberlake. He visited several Overhill Cherokee towns and townhouses in eastern Tennessee in 1761 and 1762 (King 2007:17; Randolph 1973:142–154; Schroedl, ed. 1986:220) and described the townhouses as venues in which were "transacted all public business and diversions" (Williams 1927:59). Similar to Bartram's description, Timberlake noted that Cherokee townhouses were built of wood and covered with earth, giving them the "appearance of a small mountain at a little distance" (Williams 1927:59).

Oral Tradition

In addition to travelers' accounts, recorded oral tradition also sheds light upon the symbolic and even sacred meanings attached to these architectural spaces. In the late nineteenth century James Mooney recorded a Cherokee legend entitled "The Mounds and the Constant Fire" (Mooney 1900:395–397), in which the construction of an

earthen mound is described as follows. First, a circle of stones was placed on the ground surface, and a fire was built at the center of this circle. Then, a burial of a prominent town leader was placed near it, although in some cases several people—perhaps even leading men from each of the seven traditional clans—were buried. Women then brought baskets of earth to place atop the stones, the burials, and the fire. The earthen mound was then finished and smoothed off to create a surface for a townhouse. After a townhouse was built, one man, known as the fire keeper, tended the fire in the townhouse hearth and kept it burning constantly. An everlasting fire—first lit when mounds and townhouses were first built—is said to have been kept burning inside large mounds like those at the Nequassee and Kituwha town sites (Mooney 1900:395–397, 475–477, 501–503). During annual renewal rituals known as the Busk, or the "Green Corn Dance" (Gilbert 1943:327; Hill 1997:93; Mooney 1900:396; Wetmore 1983), the fires in domestic hearths were put out, then rekindled with fire from townhouse hearths. According to Mooney (1900:396), fire from townhouses like those at Nequassee and Kituwha was periodically given to other smaller towns in surrounding areas during events like the Busk. As is evident in this tradition, sharing the fire from townhouse hearths manifested social connections among households within towns, and perhaps even connections between towns. Alexander Longe, who lived in Cherokee country for several years in the early 1700s, noted that the fire from a townhouse hearth could only be taken outside its townhouse under special circumstances (Corkran 1969:36; Hill 1997:12). Frederick Gearing (1962:23) has noted that some male elders in Cherokee towns may have lived in houses close to townhouses, and perhaps the keepers of townhouse fire would have been among them.

In addition to the "real" townhouses in Cherokee towns, there were (and, presumably, still are) mythical townhouses inside the earthen mounds and mountains in Cherokee country. Townhouses are said to have been built and maintained by the Cherokee "Spirit Folk," or *Nunnehi* (Mooney 1900:330–335). The *Nunnehi* kept townhouses inside earthen mounds or on the bald peaks of mountain summits. One *Nunnehi* townhouse is said to have been located in a depression on the ground surface, which may have been the location of an

abandoned townhouse. One traditional tale—
"The Spirit Defenders of Nikwasi" (Mooney
1900:336–337)—recounts the emergence of myth-
ical warriors from the townhouse inside the
Nequassee mound[4] and the assistance they gave to
the "live" warriors who were losing a battle fol-
lowing a raid by an enemy. Mooney also recorded
references to the sounds of spoken voices in a myth-
ical townhouse under the Hiwassee River (Mooney
1900:336), the presence of a mythical townhouse
near the Notteley River in a hole through which
warm air (presumably from a townhouse hearth)
issued forth (Mooney 1900:332), and the sighting
of smoke rising out of the Kituwha mound by
Cherokee warriors encamped at that site during the
American Civil War (Mooney 1900:502).

Documentary evidence about Cherokee town-
houses and domestic structures is more thoroughly
reviewed elsewhere (Schroedl 1978; Schroedl, ed.
1986:219–228), but my summary here supports the
following general conclusions, and also the expec-
tations we may have of archaeological examples
of Cherokee townhouses:

- townhouses were built beside plazas;
- townhouses were architecturally comparable to
  but considerably larger than domestic structures;
- the burials of prominent and recently deceased
  persons—and, perhaps, primarily men—were
  placed in the ground as part of the construction
  of a townhouse;
- some townhouses were probably built on plat-
  form mounds with ancient construction histo-
  ries;
- townhouses, and the plazas beside them, were
  settings for dances, diplomatic events, and other
  activities related to the public lives of Cherokee
  people and Cherokee towns; and
- townhouses materialized and communicated the
  identity of a group of households as a town, and
  the fires inside townhouse hearths were the spir-
  itual essence and vitality of towns themselves
  (Brett Riggs, personal communication 2007;
  Gerald Schroedl, personal communication
  2008);

Of course, we should not assume that the mean-
ings and functions of Cherokee townhouses were
consistent through time, nor should we assume that
townhouses were understood or used in the same
ways in different areas. Accounts like Bartram's

description of Cherokee towns and the Cowee
townhouse refer to one part of the southern
Appalachians in the late 1700s, by which point
Cherokee towns had experienced considerable
change in the wake of European contact, and,
specifically, conflicts with English colonies and
colonists during the eighteenth century. And while
the traditional knowledge recorded in Mooney's
collection of myths and tales is very rich, it is drawn
from his interviews with Cherokee elders in the late
1800s, well after European contact and after the
forced removal of many Cherokee people out of
their southern Appalachian homeland.

Archaeological Evidence

On the other hand, we can and should use docu-
mentary sources and oral traditions as guides to
interpreting archaeological evidence of Cherokee
townhouses (Echo-Hawk 2000; Howey and
O'Shea 2006, 2009). During the eighteenth century,
townhouses were circular or octagonal timber-
frame structures, with bark/thatch/earth-covered
roofs and wattle-and-daub walls, with benches lin-
ing the interior walls,[5] and with narrow entryways
that probably cut through earthen embankments.
Townhouses ranged from 14–19 m in diameter,
while the rectangular ramadas (or "summer town-
houses") beside them were 4–6 m wide and 9–16
m long (Schroedl, ed. 1986:539–540; Schroedl
2000:204). These dimensions are considerably
larger than those of domestic structures known as
"winter houses," which were only 6–9 m in diam-
eter, and rectangular "summer houses" 3–6 m wide
and 8–9 m long (Schroedl, ed. 1986:541; Schroedl
2000:206). Each townhouse had one entryway.
Arrangements of four or eight main roof support
posts were placed around the central hearths inside
townhouses. These posts helped support roofs, and,
specifically, the sections of roofs where daubed
smokeholes were placed above central hearths.
Townhouses with four roof supports tend to pre-
date those with eight. Meanwhile, eighteenth-
century townhouses are, on average, larger than
those dating to earlier periods—the average diam-
eter of eighteenth-century townhouses is roughly
16.54 m, and the average diameter of townhouses
dating between 1400 and 1700 is roughly 14.89 m.

Eighteenth-century townhouses are best known
from Overhill Cherokee sites in eastern Tennessee
(Figure 1). From the account of Timberlake's visit

to the Overhill Cherokee settlements (King 2007; Williams 1927), and from Timberlake's map and other documentary sources, it is evident that there were townhouses at the sites associated with Chota, Tanasee, Toqua, Citico, Chilhowee, Tallassee, and Tomotley, and probably at Tuskegee, Chatuga, and Great Tellico as well (Schroedl 1986, 2000, 2001; Schroedl, ed. 1986:5–16). Archaeologically, townhouses have been identified at Chota-Tanasee, Toqua, Mialoquo, and Tomotley (Baden 1983: 127–130; Chapman 1985; Russ and Chapman 1983: 51–54; Schroedl 1978; Schroedl, ed. 1986: 263–266). Excavations at Citico and Tuskegee did not uncover any public structures, despite eighteenth-century written references to these settlements as "towns" that must have had townhouses.[6] Townhouses at Chota-Tanasee and Tomotley were circular buildings, with rectangular ramadas (or "summer townhouses") adjacent to them—postholes were present outside the octagonal townhouses at Toqua and Mialoquo, but no clear "summer townhouse" patterns have been recognized. One to two stages of these townhouses were present at these sites. At Chota-Tanasee, the second stage of the townhouse (18.29 m in diameter), with eight roof support posts, was built atop the remnants of the first stage (15.85 m in diameter), which had four roof support posts (Schroedl, ed. 1986:539–540); archaeomagnetic dates suggest an interval of 25 years between the construction of the first and second stages of this public structure (Schroedl 1978:208–210). The two townhouses at Toqua were built approximately 167 meters apart from each other—the first was 17.06 m in diameter, and the second was 15.85 m in diameter (Schroedl 1978:209–211). Neither of the Toqua townhouses were built on the late prehistoric Mississippian mounds at this site, perhaps because the eighteenth-century Cherokee town did not trace its ancestry back to the late prehistoric residents of this particular place. As evident at Chota-Tanasee and Toqua, pairs of circular "winter" houses and rectangular "summer" houses were comparable to but smaller than townhouses. The only graves associated with eighteenth-century Overhill Cherokee townhouses are five burials placed near the edges of the "summer townhouse" at Chota-Tanasee—four have been identified as burials of adult males, and the age and sex of the individual in the other burial is indeterminate (Schroedl, ed. 1986:134–138, 204, 230).[7]

The Lower Cherokee settlement at the Chattooga site in northwestern South Carolina gives us an example of a site with a series of five townhouses, four of which were superimposed on each other (Figure 1; Howard 1997; Schroedl 1994, 2000:213–214, 2001:287–289). The first two stages in the sequence of superimposed Chattooga townhouses date to the late 1600s and were between 14 and 16 m square, with four roof support posts. The latter two stages were 17 by 17 m square, with eight roof support posts—the last stage probably dates to the 1730s. One or more rectangular ramadas, or "summer townhouses," were present near the Chattooga townhouse, and the adjacent plaza was covered with gravel. Domestic structures and activity areas at Chattooga were placed beyond the edges of the plaza in a dispersed settlement layout.

Chattooga is close to other Lower Cherokee settlements such as Chauga, Tugalo, and Estatoe, all of which are thought to have been the locations of eighteenth-century towns (Figure 1; Hally 1986; Kelly and de Baillou 1960; Kelly and Neitzel 1961; Smith 1992; Wynn 1990). Multiple-stage mounds are present at Chauga, Tugalo, and Estatoe (Anderson 1994:205–217, 302–309, 360–361; Hally 1986; Schroedl 2000:13), although structures associated with these mounds differ from the characteristics of townhouses discussed here. These structures are not included in this discussion because the late stages of these mounds and structures associated with them were poorly preserved in many cases, and it is not known whether buildings on early mound stages are public or domestic structures—if they are domestic structures, they may represent elite dwellings, rather than true public buildings.

Although it is located outside the area of eighteenth-century Cherokee towns, the mid-sixteenth-century King site in Georgia offers an important example of a single-stage public structure, very similar to seventeenth-century townhouses like those at the Chattooga and Coweeta Creek sites (Figure 1; Hally 1988, 1994, 2004, 2008:120–183; Hally and Kelly 1998:49–54). The King site townhouse (Structure 17) is 14.57 by 14.54 m square, with rounded corners and eight roof support posts, and it seems to have been built in a shallow basin (Hally 2008:131). Ten burials were placed inside King's Structure 17, several of

which are known to be or thought to be adult males, and several with elaborate assemblages of grave goods (Hally 2008:519–525). This structure is placed near the northern edge of the King site plaza (Hally 2008:122–126). Postholes in the area north of Structure 17 at the King site may represent a ramada, or "pavilion" (Hally 2008:145–152), comparable to the "summer" townhouses at eighteenth-century Overhill Cherokee sites; 11 burials are present in this area of the site. Another small square building (Structure 16) adjacent to Structure 17 at the King site may be an additional public structure, or the residence of a chief or a chiefly household within the community (Hally 2008:139–145). The King site townhouse (Structure 17) was burned down, but it was not rebuilt (Hally 2008:139).

The townhouse at the Ledford Island site in eastern Tennessee was built in a basin, was square with rounded corners, and was roughly 15.25 m across (Figure 1; Hally 2008:132–133, 137–138; Lewis et al. 1995:529–530; Schroedl 1998:84–85, 2001:287; Sullivan 1987:21–24, 26–28, 1995). At least four, and perhaps five, stages of this public structure (Feature 36 at Ledford Island) are identifiable from overlapping posthole patterns, the presence of several floors, and a series of central hearths (Lewis et al. 1995:71). The number of roof support posts is indeterminate. Large pits southwest of the townhouse were filled with ash and charcoal. The contents of these pits are interpreted as debris from the townhouse hearth (Lewis et al. 1995:530). There was no ramada beside the entryway into the townhouse, and only one infant burial inside it, although there are several clusters of burials at the edges of the plaza. The single radiocarbon date from a pit feature at this site places it—and, presumably, the series of townhouses—in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Sullivan 1987:18–19).

It is possible that townhouses comparable to those discussed here were also present at the Nacoochee mound site along the headwaters of the Chattahoochee River in Georgia, and at the Peachtree mound and village site in the upper Hiwassee Valley of southwestern North Carolina (Figure 1; Dickens 1967; Duncan and Riggs 2003:16–17, 195–198, 322–324; Heye et al. 1918; Setzler and Jennings 1941; Ward and Davis 1999:176, 180, 264; Wynn 1990).[8] However, these sites were excavated in the early twentieth century

and details of their wooden structures were not recovered. Similarly, there probably was a town-house at the Spike Buck mound site in the upper Hiwassee Valley, not far from Peachtree, but none has been identified to date.

Moving away from eighteenth-century Cherokee town areas, but with reference to important examples of public buildings in the Southeast, a circular structure some 15.24 m in diameter at the Joe Bell site, in the Oconee Valley of Georgia, has been identified as an early seventeenth-century townhouse (Williams 1994:192–193). The Apalachee council house adjacent to the seventeenth-century Spanish mission settlement of San Luis, in modern Tallahassee, vastly exceeds the scale of most Cherokee townhouses, with a diameter of roughly 37 m, and with eight major roof support posts (Hann 1988:38–39, 112–113, 206–208; Hann and McEwan 1998:68–78; Shapiro and Hann 1990:518–521).[9] This circular building—built mostly with native materials and techniques—was first built in 1656, and it was rebuilt at least once and probably twice before 1704, meaning that each stage lasted for roughly 15–20 years (Hann 1994:348–349; Shapiro and Hann 1990:520). As was the case with Cherokee townhouses (Hill 1997:68–74; Perdue 1998:35, 46; Persico 1979:92–95), there were daily gatherings of adult men in the Apalachee townhouse, as well as periodic rituals involving larger segments of the native community. There is one archaeologically known Cherokee townhouse built at a comparable scale—dating to the 1820s and 1830s, the townhouse at New Echota, Georgia, was roughly 37 m in diameter (Figure 1; de Baillou 1955:28-29). New Echota was the capital of the Cherokee republic in Georgia just before the forced removal of the Cherokee to Oklahoma. As such, its townhouse served a somewhat different purpose than the smaller public structures typical of those from the 1600s and 1700s (Persico 1979; Schroedl 2000, 2001).

As summarized here, archaeologists have excavated several Cherokee townhouses dating to the 1700s and 1800s (Schroedl 2000, 2001), as well as late prehistoric and sixteenth-century townhouses at sites such as Ledford Island and King (Hally 1988, 1994, 2008; Sullivan 1987). But what did townhouses look like during the seventeenth century? What cycles of building and rebuilding townhouses are typical of this period? Excavations at
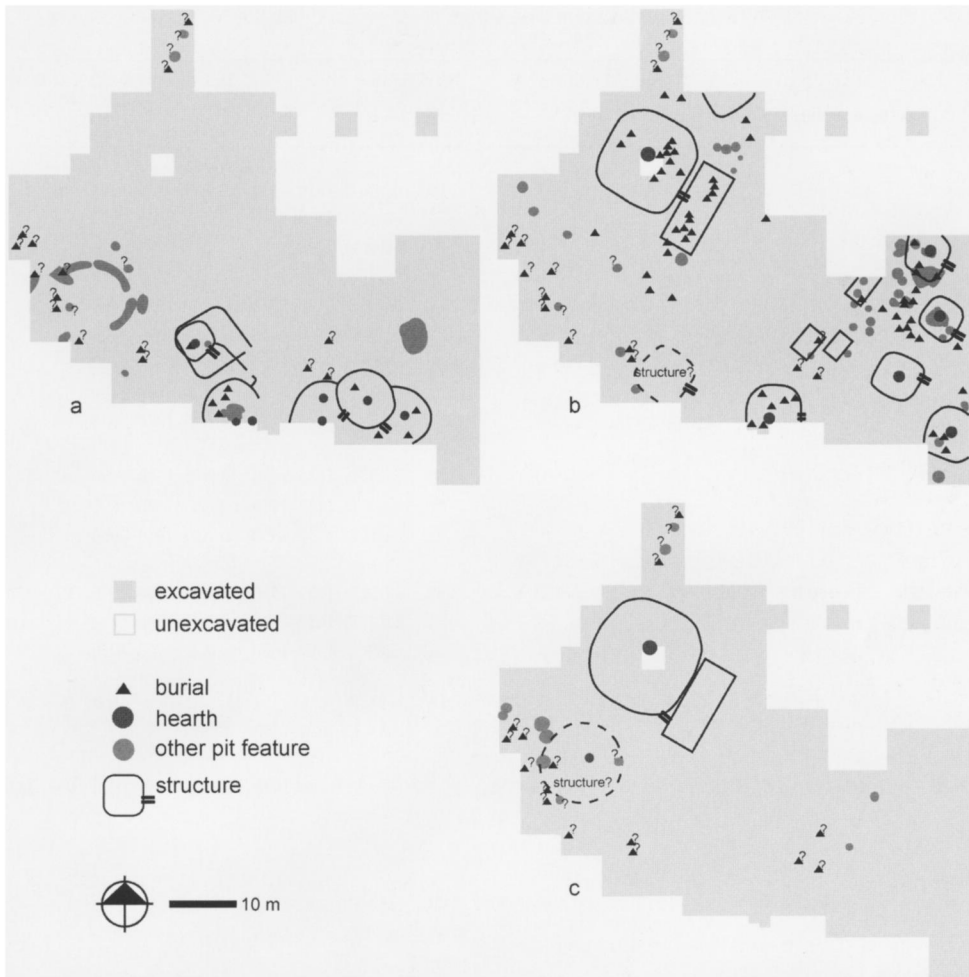
Figure 3. Evolution of the settlement plan at the Coweeta Creek site, (a) Early Qualla phase, fifteenth century A.D., (b) Middle Qualla phase, seventeenth century A.D., (c) Late Qualla phase, early eighteenth century A.D. (after Rodning 2007:471).

the Chattooga site in northwestern South Carolina have unearthed important information about a sequence of townhouses dating from the late 1600s to the early 1700s (Schroedl 2000). The Coweeta Creek site gives us another example of a series of townhouses, built and rebuilt in place, during the protohistoric period.

Townhouses at Coweeta Creek

The Coweeta Creek site, located within the Middle Cherokee town area in southwestern North Carolina, was excavated by the Research Laboratories of Anthropology (RLA) at the University of North Carolina (UNC) as part of its Cherokee Archaeo-

logical Project in the 1960s and early 1970s (Coe 1961; Dickens 1967, 1976, 1978, 1979; Egloff 1967; Egloff 1971; Keel 1976, 2002; Keel et al. 2002; Rodning 2004, 2008; Rodning and VanDerwarker 2002). Excavations unearthed the remnants of a series of townhouses, a town plaza, residential structures, and domestic activity areas around the plaza, and dozens of hearths, pit features, and burials (Figure 2). Some structures and features date to the fifteenth century or earlier, while others date to the 1600s, and the last stage of the townhouse was probably abandoned in the very early 1700s (Figure 3). The site is located some 550 meters north of and downstream from the mouth of Coweeta Creek and its confluence with the Little Tennessee

Table 1. Radiocarbon Dates from the Coweeta Creek Site

Context	Measured Radiocarbon Age	Conventional Radiocarbon Age	Intercept	C13/C12	One-Sigma	Two-Sigma	Sample
Feature 72	220 ± 60 B.P.	200 ± 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1670	-25.9	cal A.D. 1650–1680 cal A.D. 1730–1810 cal A.D. 1930–1950	cal A.D. 1530–1560 cal A.D. 1630–1950	Beta-167072
Structure 1F	220 ± 50 B.P.	210 ± 50 B.P.	cal A.D. 1660	-25.9	cal A.D. 1650–1680 cal A.D. 1740–1800 cal A.D. 1930–1950	cal A.D. 1530–1550 cal A.D. 1630–1700 cal A.D. 1720–1820 cal A.D. 1840–1880 cal A.D. 1920–1950	Beta-167067
Structure 1C	230 ± 60 B.P.	210 ± 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1660	-26.2	cal A.D. 1650–1680 cal A.D. 1740–1810 cal A.D. 1930–1950	cal A.D. 1520–1580 cal A.D. 1630–1890 cal A.D. 1910–1950	Beta-167068
Structure 7D	280 ± 60 B.P.	250 ± 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1650	-26.8	cal A.D. 1530–1550 cal A.D. 1630–1670 cal A.D. 1780–1800	cal A.D. 1490–1690 cal A.D. 1730–1810 cal A.D. 1920–1950	Beta-175805
Feature 96	300 ± 40 B.P.	290 ± 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1640	-25.8	cal A.D. 1520–1580 cal A.D. 1630–1650	cal A.D. 1490–1660	Beta-167073
Structure 1A	350 ± 40 B.P.	340 ± 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1520 cal A.D. 1590 cal A.D. 1620	-25.7	cal A.D. 1470–1640	cal A.D. 1450–1650	Beta-243960
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
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
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
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. 1580–1630	cal A.D. 1400–1520	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
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

River. It is close to the location of the eighteenth-century town of Echoee and it is also in the general vicinity of one of the probable locations of the eighteenth-century town of Tessentee (Goodwin 1977; Smith 1979).

Figure 2 is a schematic map of all the structures, hearths, burials, and other pit features found at Coweeta Creek.[10] Surface surveys at the site recovered artifacts from an area of some 12,000 m², but the area of excavations was only 2536 m². It is therefore likely that there were (or are) more structures present beyond the edges of excavations. Table 1 lists the 14 currently available radiocarbon dates from the site. These include: five dates from three stages of the townhouse (Structure 1A, 1D, and 1F);[11] four dates from the last stage of a domestic house (Structure 7D);[12] one date each from the second and last stages of structures 4 and 6; and a date from each of three pit features (Features 65, 72, and 96) (Rodning 2004:192–205). Figure 3 summarizes the evolution of the settlement plan at Coweeta Creek. The site is attributed to the Qualla phase, the archaeological manifestation of historic Cherokee groups in southwestern North Carolina (Dickens 1976, 1978, 1979; Egloff 1967; Greene 1996; Keel 1976; Purrington 1983; Rodning 2004:356–369, 2008). A settlement was present at this site in the fifteenth century A.D. The settlement was probably a spatially dispersed village with several houses like structures 7 and 9. A formal town plan was put into place sometime in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century A.D. This probably occurred after a period of abandonment; there is a distinct break marked by ceramics associated with fifteenth-century and seventeenth-century structure floors and pit features (Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008). Six stages of the townhouse—including Structure 1 as the main building and Structure 2 as the rectangular ramada between it and the plaza—were built and rebuilt in the same spot at the site, forming a low mound (Figure 4). Several domestic houses, including structures 3–6 and Structure 8, were contemporaneous with early stages of the townhouse; all reflect similarities in architectural form and alignment, similarities in pottery from those structure floors, and general overlap in radiocarbon date ranges. The last stages of the townhouse postdate the abandonment of most domestic houses at the site, as evident from radiocarbon dates, the presence of

European trade goods in late stages of the townhouse, and the general absence of European artifacts from domestic structures and nearby pit features. The association of glass beads, kaolin pipe fragments, brass items, and other historic trade goods with the last stage of Structure 1 indicates that the townhouse was still standing in the very early eighteenth century. Based on stratigraphic associations and spatial proximity to structures, and also on ceramics from burial pit fill, some burials at the site can be dated to the early stage of settlement here. Most, however, date to its middle stage, and the burials in the townhouse are associated with its early manifestations (Figure 5).

Each stage of the townhouse includes preserved sections of each respective floor, the central hearth, postholes representing interior roof support posts, paired trenches representing the foundations of entryways, and arrangements of postholes representing wall posts (Figure 6). Paired entrance trenches like those associated with the townhouse and with domestic houses at Coweeta Creek are present at numerous late prehistoric and postcontact sites in the greater southern Appalachians (Dickens 1976, 1978; Hally 1988, 1994; Keel 1976; Moore 2002a, 2002b; Polhemus 1990; Schroedl 1998; Sullivan 1987, 1995). It is widely thought that earthen embankments were placed around the outer edges of these structures, and the paired entrance trenches are interpreted as the foundations of entryways that were sturdy enough to cut through those embankments (Hally 2002, 2008:73–77, 130; Polhemus 1987:200).

The first stage of the townhouse (Structure 1A) was built in a slight depression in the ground, as evident from the slope of the floor itself, and the presence of a thick deposit of premound humus around the outer edges of the structure (Figure 4). The premound humus was probably heaped around the edges of the townhouse as the ground surface was removed in an effort to create a clean and, perhaps, ritually pure floor. The hearth was placed at the center of the structure, with four roof support posts around it. The placement of hearth and roof supports was largely intact throughout the sequence of townhouses seen here, although the number of roof support posts may have changed in late stages of the structure.

Figure 5a is a map of the postholes and pits at the bottom of the townhouse mound (Rodning
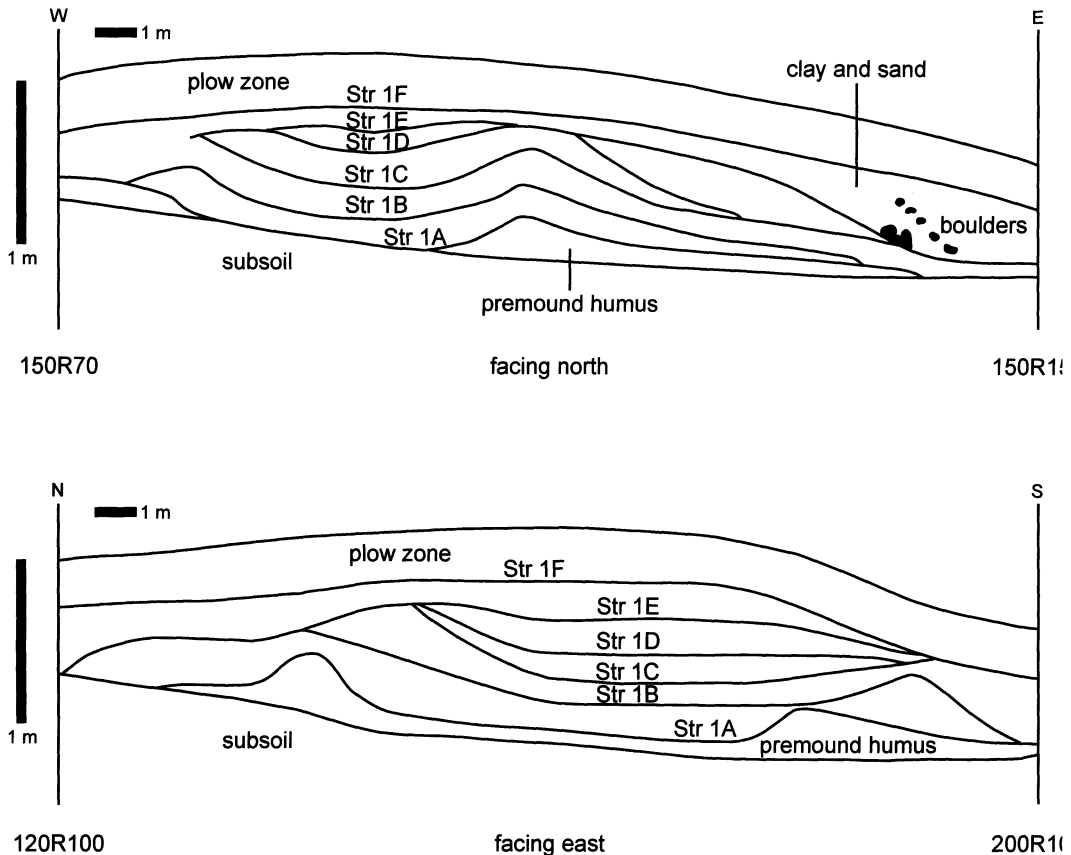
Figure 4. Stratigraphy of the townhouse mound at Coweeta Creek (after Rodning 2002a:12). Note the different vertical and horizontal scales. The locations of the stratigraphic profiles N-S and W-E are marked on Figure 2.

2002a:13, 2004:119). Figure 5a includes postholes and pits that represent the first stage of the townhouse (Structure 1A), although some of the postholes shown here are probably associated with later stages of the structure. The entryway is placed in the middle of the southeastern wall, with clusters of burials on each side. The rectangular array of postholes in the area beside the entryway to the townhouse represents the townhouse ramada. Most if not all of the burials inside the townhouse are associated with its first stage. The associations of burials in the ramada with particular stages of the townhouse are somewhat ambiguous, but they are not associated with the late stages of the structure (Figure 6).

Many of the burials placed inside and beside the Coweeta Creek townhouse are those of adult males (Table 2; Rodning 2001a, 2002a, 2004). Not all individuals buried here are men—the burials of several children are located inside and beside the

townhouse, and the burial of one adult woman is located inside the structure, between the doorway and the hearth. Burials in the townhouse are associated with greater amounts, and a greater variety, of grave goods than those in other parts of the site. Grave goods are associated with 63 percent ($N = 15$, 24 burials, 26 individuals) of the burials in the townhouse, townhouse ramada, and plaza, as opposed to 24 percent ($N = 14$, 59 burials, 62 individuals) of burials in other parts of the site (Table 3). Of the 15 townhouse burials with nonperishable grave goods, the number of different types of grave goods ranges from zero to nine, as compared to a range of zero to two types for burials elsewhere at the site (Table 3). I conclude from the numbers and diversity of grave goods in the townhouse burials at Coweeta Creek that a greater number of social statuses and roles was marked in burials of people in the townhouse than for those buried inside and beside domestic structures at the site (Rodning
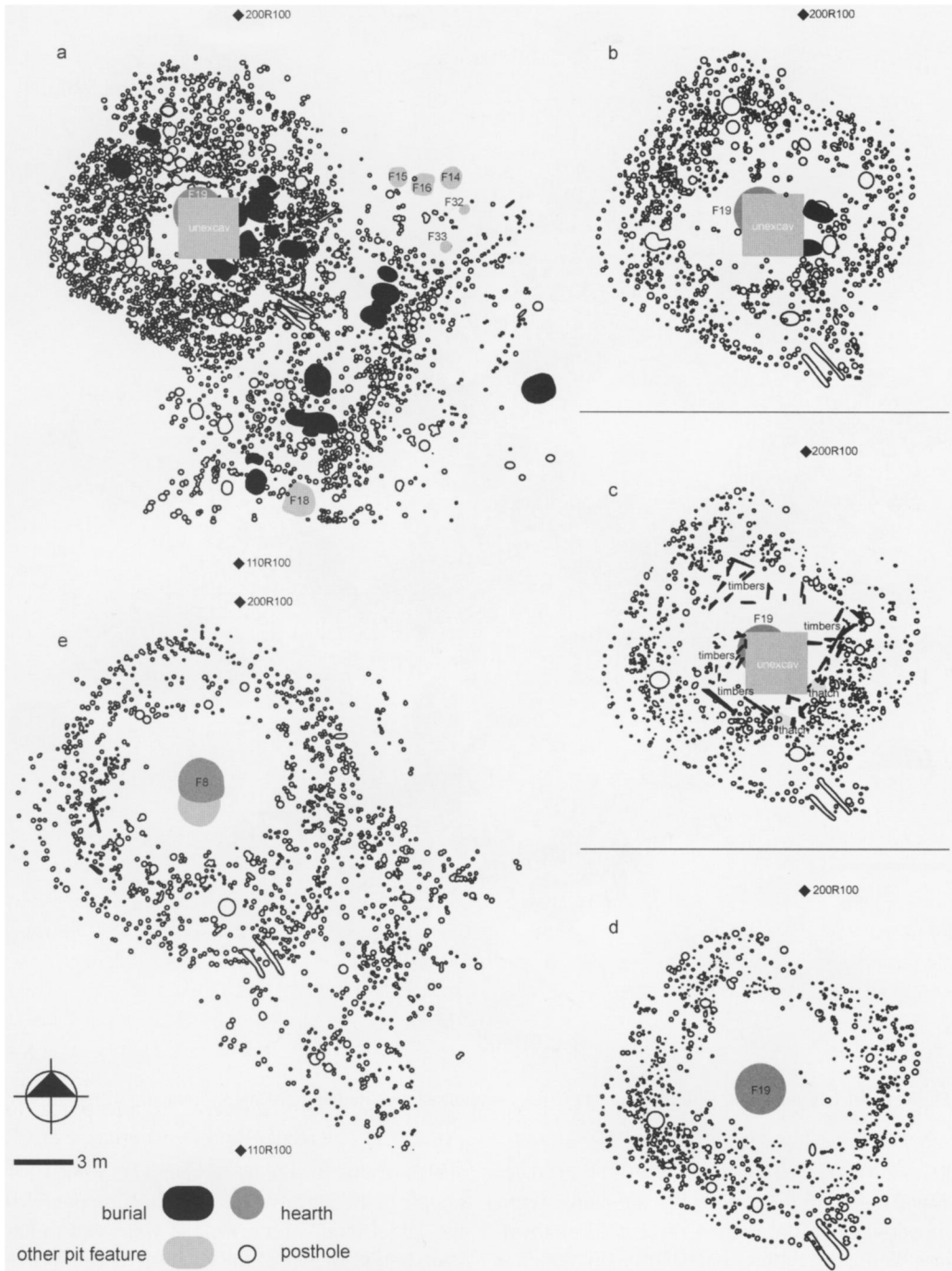
Figure 5. Successive stages of the townhouse at Coweeta Creek, (a) first stage, (b) second stage, (c) third stage, (d) fourth stage, (e) fifth and sixth stages (after Rodning 2007:475).
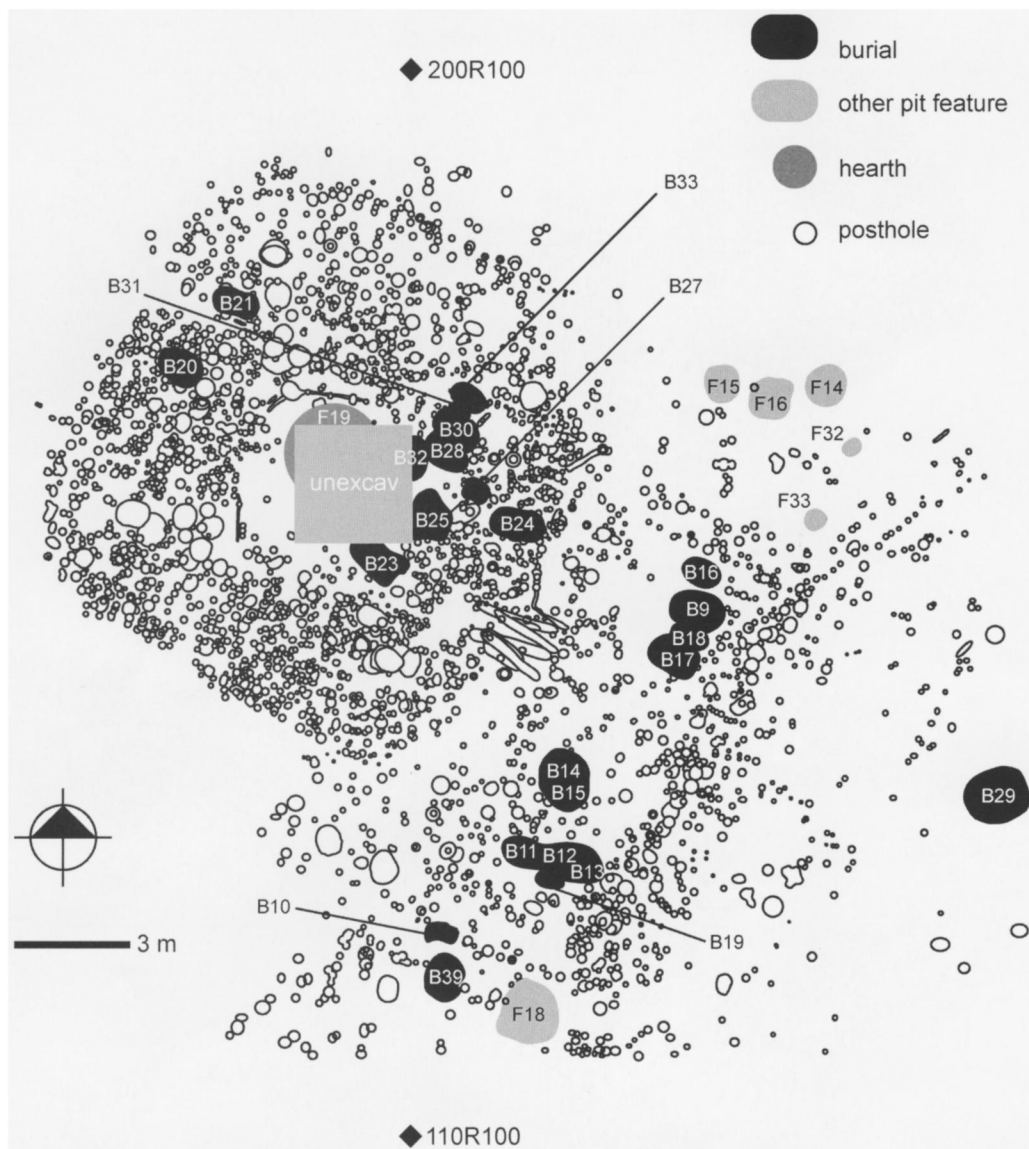
Figure 6. Burials associated with the Coweeta Creek townhouse (after Rodning 2002a:13). Compare with Figure 5.

2001a, 2002a). The concentration of adult males in townhouse burials suggests that the statuses entitling people to burial in the Coweeta Creek townhouse were accessible primarily to men, which is consistent with documentary evidence about the roles of men as leaders of eighteenth-century Cherokee towns (Gearing 1958, 1962:3–6; Perdue 1998; Persico 1979; Sattler 1995; Sullivan 1995, 2001, 2006; Sullivan and Rodning 2001). All of the burials in the Coweeta Creek townhouse, and in the ramada beside it, are associated with the early

stages of this townhouse (Figure 7). Some of the people in these graves are probably comparable to the "chief men" of a town that were said to have been buried as part of the construction of a townhouse (Mooney 1900:396), and they may have belonged to the category of "Beloved Men" (Gearing 1962:18), the title conferred upon some male elders in eighteenth-century Cherokee towns.

Mooney (1900:396) records the practice of lighting a fire during the placement of burials in the ground before the construction of a townhouse.

Table 2. Burials at the Coweeta Creek Site

Area[1]	Number[2]	Sex[3]	Age[4]	Nonperishable Grave Goods[5]
O	1	I	>40 years	
O	2	I	>30 years	
O	3	U	6.5 $\pm$ 2 years	
O	4	M	>35 years	
O	5	U	8.5 $\pm$ 2 years	
O	6	M	42 $\pm$ 5 years	1 ground stone celt, 2 busycon shell ear pins[6]
O	7	F	>30 years	
O	8	M	30 $\pm$ 5 years	
R	9	M	37 $\pm$ 6 years	1 basket, 7 chipped stone arrowheads, pieces of mica, pieces of ochre, 91 columella beads, 11 olivella beads, 4 busycon shell ear pins, 14 drilled pearls, 1 stone disc
R	10	U	5 years $\pm$ 16 months	
R	11	M	50 $\pm$ 10 years	
R	12	M	30 $\pm$ 5 years	32 shell beads
R	13	I	19 $\pm$ 3 years	
R	14	M	37 $\pm$ 5 years	
R	15	M	37 $\pm$ 7 years	6 shell beads
R	16	U	5 years $\pm$ 16 months	1 engraved shell mask gorget,[6] 8 columella beads
R	17	M	44 $\pm$ 5 years	1 circular engraved shell gorget,[6] 1 stone pipe, 2 busycon shell ear pins
R	18	M	40 $\pm$ 10 years	1 bone pin
R	19	U	1 year $\pm$ 4 months	3 shell pendants, 4 columella beads, 5 olivella beads
T	20	I	>30 years	
T	21a[8]	I	>18 years	1 shell bead
T	21b[8]	I	>40 years	
T	21c[8]	U	1 year $\pm$ 4 months	
O	22	U	2 years $\pm$ 8 months	
T	23	M?	25 $\pm$ 5 years	1 shell mask gorget,[7] 2 columella beads
T	24	F	32 $\pm$ 5 years	
T	25	M	27 $\pm$ 6 years	
O	26	F?	43 $\pm$ 9 years	
T	27	U	4.5 years $\pm$ 14 months	1 shell mask gorget,[7] 2 busycon shell ear pins, 14 drilled pearls, 1 clay pot
T	28	M?	30 $\pm$ 10 years	
P	29	I	>30 years	
T	30	M?	23 $\pm$ 3 years	1 shell mask gorget[7]
T	31	U	3 $\pm$ 2 months	4 shell pendants, 12 columella beads
T	32	M?	25 $\pm$ 4 years	2 busycon shell ear pins
T	33	M	35 $\pm$ 5 years	2 shell beads
O	34	U	3 $\pm$ 1 years	
O	35	M	>40 years	
O	36	F	39 $\pm$ 5 years	
O	37	F	>30 years	animal bone fragments
O	37a[8]	M	35 $\pm$ 5 years	
O	38	U	7 $\pm$ 2 years	1 clay pot
R	39	U	13 $\pm$ 2.5 years	
O	40	I	>18 years	1 clay pipe, 2 shell bead fragments
O	41	F	23 $\pm$ 3 years	1 turtle shell rattle, 24 shell bead fragments

Table 2. Burials at the Coweeta Creek Site (Continued)

Area[1]	Number[2]	Sex[3]	Age[4]	Nonperishable Grave Goods[5]
O	42	F	40 ± 5 years	1 ground stone celt, 75 columella shell beads
O	43	F	17 ± 3 years	2 turtle shell rattles
O	44	M	30 ± 5 years	25 columella shell beads
O	45	F	20 ± 3 years	1 shell hair pin
O	46	I	16 ± 3 years	
O	47	I	19 ± 3 years	
O	48	M	>30 years	
O	49	U	3 ± 1 years	
O	50	M	41 ± 5 years	
O	51	U	10 ± 2.5 years	1 shell mask gorget[7]
O	52	I	32 ± 7 years	
O	53	M	30 ± 5 years	
O	54	F	18 ± 3 years	
O	55	M	30 ± 10 years	
O	56	U	8 ± 2 years	
O	57	F	27 ± 5 years	
O	58	M	21 ± 3 years	
O	59	I	16.5 ± 2 years	
O	60	F?	>30 years	
O	61a[8]	I	>21 years	
O	61b[8]	U	9 _ 3 months	
O	62	I	16 ± 3 years	1 shell mask gorget[7]
O	63	F?	>30 years	1 clay pipe
O	64	U	14 ± 3 years	
O	66	I	>21 years	
O	67	I	17 ± 3 years	1 shell bead
O	68	U	3 ± 1 years	
O	69	U	4 ± 1 years	
O	70	U	1.5 years ± 6 months	
O	71	U	7 ± 2 years	
O	72	F?	>30 years	
O	73	M	>30 years	
O	74	M	>30 years	
O	75a[8]	M	35 ± 5 years	quartz pebbles
O	75b[8]	M	>18 years	
O	76	I	25 ± 5 years	
O	77	U	2.5 years ± 10 months	
O	78	M	>30 years	
O	79	U	neonate	
O	80	U	4.5 ± 1 years	2 stone discs
O	81	F	38 ± 5 years	
O	82	U	3 _ 1 years+	
O	83	U	7.5 ± 2 years	
O	84	U	neonate	4 opaque turquoise blue glass beads

Table 2. Burials at the Coweeta Creek Site (Continued)

[1] T = inside townhouse, R = townhouse ramada, P = plaza, O = other areas at the site.

[2] There was no burial designated Burial 65.

[3] M = male, F = female, I = adult (>15 years) of indeterminate sex, U = subadult (<15 years) of unknown sex.

[4] Age and sex determinations by Patricia Lambert (Davis et al. 1996).

[5] Data compiled from Davis et al. (1996).

[6] See Ward and Davis 1999:188.

[7] See Smith and Smith 1989.

[8] During laboratory analyses of human remains from burials 21, 37, 61, and 75, remains of multiple individuals were identified (Davis et al. 1996).

With this in mind, it is interesting to note the presence of a hearth or a firepit atop one of the burials in the ramada—the burial of an adult male—beside the original doorway into the townhouse (Figure 8). Perhaps a fire was built on the ground above this burial, as part of events associated with the original construction of the townhouse, or with a later stage of construction.

Mooney (1900:396) and others have noted the sacred and even symbolic meanings of the fires kept in townhouse hearths. Townhouse hearths themselves must have been periodically renovated, cleaned out, and rekindled, creating the need to dispose of debris from those hearths. There are five pit features (14, 15, 16, 32, and 33) near the townhouse, located between nine and 12 m northeast of its entryway, whose contents included concentrations of ash and charcoal (Figure 6; Rodning 2004:128–132). These pits may have been receptacles for the disposal of debris from the townhouse hearth. Possible late prehistoric examples of such deposits include the several large pits filled with ash and charcoal that are located near the townhouse at the Ledford Island site (Lewis et al. 1995:529–530).

Gearing (1962:23) has noted that some male elders who were "foremost officials" in Cherokee towns, and who were key participants in townhouse events, lived in houses that were located close to the townhouses themselves. Just north of Structure 2 at Coweeta Creek is a posthole pattern that probably represents the corner of a building (Structure 15). This may have been the house of those involved in tending to the hearth or to the townhouse more generally (Figure 2). Given the limits of excavations at the Coweeta Creek site little more can be said about Structure 15 itself, but it is worth noting the presence of Burial 6 in the area between it and Structure 2 (Figure 2). The male elder in Burial 6 was buried with a ground stone celt and a pair of busycon columella ear pins (Figure 9). If these grave goods are an indication of his status (in life or in death), and if the placement of his grave near the Coweeta Creek townhouse (between it and his possible residence) is an indication of the close relationship between this individual and the townhouse itself, then Burial 6 may represent an individual comparable to the "foremost officials" noted by Gearing (1962:23), or, perhaps, an individual like the "fire maker" noted by Mooney (1900:396). During the eighteenth century, younger adult males in Cherokee towns, typically, would have participated in warfare, hunting, trade, diplomacy, and other activities that took them away from their

Table 3. Frequency of Grave Goods in Burials at the Coweeta Creek Site

	Townhouse, Ramada, Plaza	Other Areas of the Site
Number of burials	24	59
Burials with grave goods	15	14
Percentage of burials with grave goods	63%	24%
Types of grave goods per burial	0–9	0–2

160R100

daub

floor of Structure 1D

light sand

floor of Structure 1C

dark sand

posthole

floor of Structure 1B

mottled brown clay

floor of Structure 1A

subsoil

subsoil

yellow clay

posthole   brown clay

mottled yellow clay

Burial 25

30 cm

165R100

daub

floor of Structure 1D

light sand

floor of Structure 1C

dark sand

floor of Structure 1B

white clay

floor of Structure 1A

mottled yellow clay

subsoil

subsoil

gray ash

mottled yellow clay

Burial 32

Figure 7. Stratigraphic relationships between selected burials 25 and 32 and the Coweeta Creek townhouse. These burials are either associated with the floor of the earliest identified stage of the townhouse, or, perhaps, they even predate the floor itself. In any case, these and other burials inside the townhouse are associated either with the original construction of the townhouse, or they are associated with early stages of this public structure.
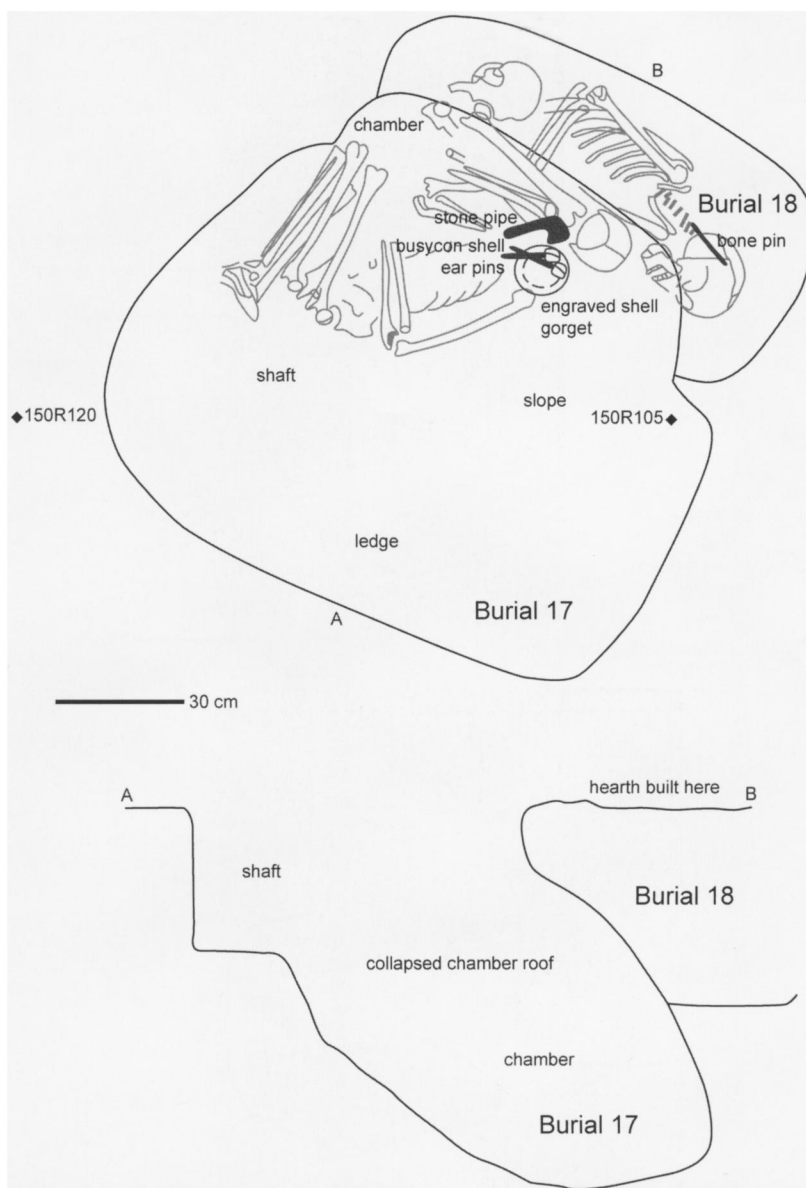
Figure 8. Burials in the ramada beside the original entryway into the Coweeta Creek townhouse (Burial 18 predates the hearth and Burial 17, but it is not clear whether the hearth predates or postdates Burial 17).

hometowns (Perdue 1998; Persico 1979; Sattler 1995). Many key participants in council deliberations and other events that took place in Cherokee townhouses—including those men who were keepers of the fires in townhouse hearths—were older adult males, like the individual in Burial 6 at Coweeta Creek (Gearing 1962:18; Schroedl, ed. 1986:204).

Figure 5b shows the posthole pattern repre-

senting the second stage of the townhouse (Structure 1B), which is similar to its predecessor in many respects, except for the movement of the entryway to the southern corner (Rodning 2002a:14, 2004:121). Several burials are placed beside the original entryway into the townhouse (Figure 5a). Those burials would have been placed in the ground when the entryway adjacent to them was in use, or perhaps even before it was built. Entering and exit-
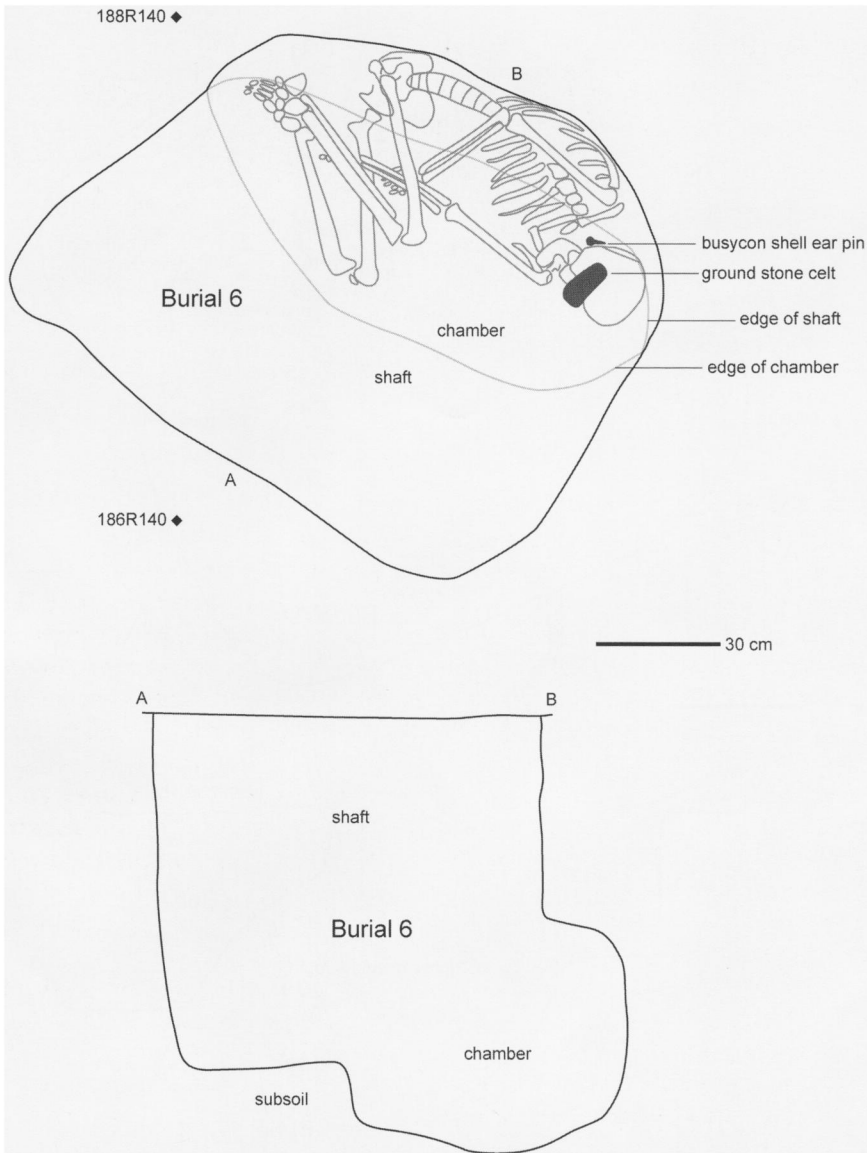
Figure 9. Burial of a male elder in the area between Structure 2 and Structure 15 at the Coweeta Creek site.

ing the townhouse would have involved moving directly past these burials, perhaps evoking memories of those persons and other past community members in the process. Other burials are placed close to the corner entryways associated with the second through sixth stages of the townhouse (Figure 5b), though the burials themselves are likely associated with the second stage of the townhouse. Moving the entryway from the middle to the corner of the structure seems to have prompted the placement of another set of burials on both sides

of the new doorway. There are greater numbers of grave goods found in the burials (9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18) beside the original entryway than in burials (10, 11, 12, 13, 19, 39) near the corner entryway (Table 2). Those individuals buried near the corner entryway may have been deemed to have "lesser" status in some sense than those buried beside the original entryway (Figure 6).

Figures 5c and 5d illustrate the third and fourth stages of the townhouse, and Figure 5e shows the posthole pattern representing its fifth (penultimate)
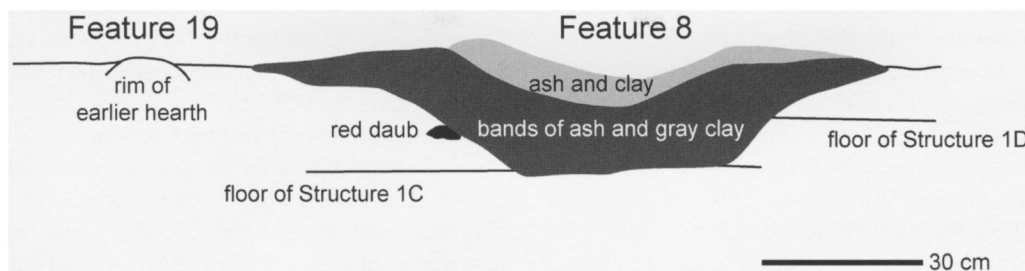
Figure 10. Profile views of hearths associated with the first four (Feature 18) and the last two (Feature 9) stages of the hearth in the Coweeta Creek townhouse.

and sixth (last) stages (Rodning 2002a:14–16, 2004:122–125). Ramadas were present beside these last stages of the townhouse (Figure 5e). Although not shown in figures 5b through 5d, ramadas presumably were associated with these stages of the townhouse, since they were associated with the first and last stages, respectively, and postholes were encountered at intervening levels during excavations of this portion of the townhouse mound. The entryway of the last stage of the townhouse shared the same alignment as the original, even though the entryway had been moved to the corner of the structure when its second stage was built. Compared with the first four stages, which were 14.63 m square, the last two were roughly 15.85 m square, and the corners of the last two were somewhat more rounded than their predecessors. Roof support posts are more difficult to identify in these last two stages of the townhouse than the consistent pattern of four roof supports in the four preceding stages, and perhaps there were seven or eight roof supports in addition to the large post placed near the doorway. In other respects— hearth placement (Figure 10), the structure location and alignment (Figure 5), and general size and shape—these last stages resembled their predecessors. Indeed, they stood on top of the burned and buried remnants of those earlier stages, and on top of the burials placed inside them.

In size, shape, post spacing, and placements of hearths, entryways, and roof supports the townhouses at Coweeta Creek resemble those at Ledford Island, King, and Chattooga. Wall posts range from seven to 23 cm in diameter. Those posts identified as roof supports are considerably larger,

between 30 and 60 cm in diameter. There are dense concentrations of postholes shown in Figure 5a, but the posts visible at the bottom of the townhouse mound, of course, are attributable to several different stages of the townhouse. By contrast, as seen in Figure 5b, 5c, and 5d, the posthole patterns associated with the second, third, and fourth stages of the townhouse do not show many signs of post replacement. Some renovation was undoubtedly done between rebuilding episodes, but it appears to have occurred infrequently. There is no indication that there were long gaps between successive stages of the townhouse; each stage was probably built soon, if not immediately, after its predecessor was abandoned.

Each stage of the townhouse was burned down. In the case of at least the first five stages, sand was placed across the burnt remnants of each stage to create a surface for building a successor. This history of burning, burying, and rebuilding the townhouse created a low mound composed of the burnt and buried remnants of its successive stages, and the lenses of sand between them (Figure 4; compare with Krause 1996; Schambach 1996). This mound was not built as a tall platform, although the layercake of townhouses did grow somewhat taller from early to later stages, and white clay and boulders were placed across the area underneath and beside the ramada, in the space between the plaza and the entryway into the townhouse itself (Figure 4).

Each stage of the townhouse probably spanned some 15–20 years. This is slightly less than the proposed longevity of the first stage of the Chota-Tanasee townhouse as determined by

archaeomagnetic dates (Schroedl 1978:210), it is comparable to the historically documented intervals between each stage of the Apalachee council house at San Luis (Hann 1994:347–349), and it is not much longer than estimates for the longevity of late prehistoric domestic structures in the Southeast (Cook 2005:383, 2007:448; Muller 1997:189–190; Pauketat 1989:305, 2003:45–47). European trade goods—including dated glass bead types and kaolin pipe stem fragments whose dates can be estimated (Rodning 2004:205–224)—and the radiocarbon date from the *last* stage of the townhouse all place it at roughly A.D. 1700. The calibrated intercepts of radiocarbon dates for the *first* stage of the townhouse cluster close to A.D. 1500, but the one-sigma and two-sigma ranges of these three assays extend past A.D. 1600. If we date the first townhouse to approximately 1500, and if we assume the last townhouse was still in use shortly after 1700, we would estimate some 30–35 years between rebuilding episodes. This seems too long, given the perishable architectural materials with which these structures were built. If we date the first townhouse to sometime between 1600 and 1650, we would derive an estimate of 15–20 years for the life span of each stage of the townhouse. I favor the latter scenario in which the first townhouse dates to the first half of the seventeenth century. This also is consistent with the characteristics of potsherds found at those levels of the townhouse mound (Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2004:287–292, 2008), and it means that the first townhouse in this sequence was built after early episodes of European contact in the Southeast.

This proposed longevity for individual stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse is consistent with the dearth of post replacements between structure rebuilding episodes. Individual post replacements, as already noted, seem to have been rare. My proposed interval of 15–20 years per stage of the Coweeta Creek townhouse is at the long end of estimates for post duration and structure longevity at native settlements in eastern North America (Cook 2005; Warrick 1988), but townhouses probably had slightly longer lives than domestic houses. This estimate is comparable to an upper limit estimated by Hally (2008:139) for the public structure at the King site, and the estimate by Schroedl (1978:210) for the townhouses at Chota-Tanasee. While longevity of architectural material would have been

a consideration (see Roper 2005), it is likely that the periodicity of townhouse rebuilding events corresponded to generational succession in town leadership (see Hally 2008:139).

Some structures at Coweeta Creek predate the series of townhouses at the site (Figure 3; Rodning 2004, 2007, 2008). A settlement was present at Coweeta Creek in the fifteenth century, and perhaps earlier than that. A townhouse was first built when the Coweeta Creek community grew to the point at which it became a town, and constructing the townhouse was a critical step in anchoring this Cherokee town to a particular place.

Many of the domestic structures at Coweeta Creek were contemporaneous with early stages of the townhouse. This contemporaneity is evident from radiocarbon date ranges, similarities in architectural form, similarities in associated ceramic assemblages, and in the shared alignments of these structures and the consistent southeast-northwest orientations of their entryways (Figure 2). These alignments and orientations were preserved in late stages of the townhouse, after most or all of the domestic structures at the site had been abandoned (Figure 3).

Building and rebuilding the Coweeta Creek townhouse—and maintaining the townhouse during intervals between rebuilding events—depended on the cooperative efforts of people from different households in the surrounding community. Whether such efforts were customary and voluntary or compelled by town leaders—or both—events related to the life of the townhouse would have created and renewed social ties among households and their collective identity as a town. The fire kept in a townhouse hearth manifested the vitality of the surrounding community as a town, and the townhouse itself served as a landmark for the presence of a town in the landscape. Embedded within the Coweeta Creek townhouse, of course, were buried remnants of early townhouses, and the burials of select townspeople. If the Coweeta Creek townhouse were rebuilt at an interval of 15–20 years, many members of the community would have experienced several rebuilding events during their lifetimes. Each rebuilding event was linked spatially to the preceding stage of the townhouse, and the people buried in it. The materiality and the continuity in placement of the Coweeta Creek townhouse linked the community

in the present to its past, and by extension to its future.

Discussion

Archaeological evidence from several sites, documentary evidence, and Cherokee oral tradition about mounds and townhouses enriches our interpretation of the meanings that the Coweeta Creek townhouse had to the surrounding community. The symbolism of these public structures emphasized a connection between people and place as well as the cycle of life, death, burial, and renewal, both of the townhouse as a structure and of the town as a community. The following discussion relates archaeological evidence from Coweeta Creek to findings from other sites, as well as to documentary sources and oral tradition that help us understand plazas, public and domestic architecture, townhouse hearths, earthen mounds, and the function and symbolism of Cherokee townhouses.

Townhouses and Plazas

Most archaeologically known townhouses in the greater southern Appalachians were built beside plazas. Plazas have not been definitively identified at some eighteenth-century Cherokee settlements, in part because those settlements were not as compact as late prehistoric and seventeenth-century settlements, and the edges of plazas were less clearly delineated at eighteenth-century sites. At sites such as Coweeta Creek, Ledford Island, and King, the edges of plazas are more clearly visible because domestic structures are placed around these edges. At Chattooga, a layer of gravel covered at least part of the plaza, and at Coweeta Creek, deposits of sand and clay covered at least part of the plaza. Written accounts of visits to eighteenth-century Cherokee towns commonly refer to large public gatherings taking place in open areas beside townhouses, and we can be confident that, in general, townhouses were built beside large outdoor plazas. This placement made townhouses easily visible elements of the built environment, both from the perspective of local residents and from the perspective of visitors and newcomers entering towns.

Townhouses and Domestic Houses

From late prehistory through the eighteenth century, townhouses were, basically, larger-sized versions of domestic structures. Townhouses at Coweeta Creek, Ledford Island, and King, for example, very closely resemble the domestic structures at these respective sites. At the eighteenth-century Overhill Cherokee settlement of Chota-Tanasee, the circular townhouse and the rectangular ramada (or "summer townhouse") adjacent to it are analogous to the paired domestic structures at the site—including circular "winter" houses and rectangular "summer" houses. At all of these sites, townhouses were, architecturally and symbolically, "houses writ large" (Figure 2; Sullivan 1987:28). At Coweeta Creek, connections between houses and the townhouse are further evident in the shared alignments of the entrance passages to domestic and public structures at the site (Rodning 2007).

According to Mooney (1900:396), the ground surface was carefully prepared before the construction of a Cherokee townhouse. The first stage of the Coweeta Creek townhouse was placed in a slight depression, and premound humus scooped out of that depression was piled up as an earthen embankment around the edges of the townhouse. Later manifestations of the Coweeta Creek townhouse were built atop the burned and buried remnants of earlier stages, which were covered by layers of sand. Interestingly, eighteenth-century Cherokee townhouses apparently were not built in basins, but as is evident at Ledford Island, and probably at the King site as well, late prehistoric townhouses were. It seems likely that ground surfaces were carefully prepared before constructing eighteenth-century townhouses, just not in the form of basins—and perhaps not the earthen embankments—that are typical of late prehistoric architecture in the greater southern Appalachians (Hally 2002, 2008:68–70).

Public Life in Townhouses

Townhouses and plazas were venues for diplomatic events, town councils, dances, feasts, and other activities that were part of public life in Cherokee towns. The townhouse at Coweeta Creek was broadly comparable to public structures at late prehistoric and eighteenth-century Cherokee settlements in southern Appalachia; they were similar in size and in the placement of each townhouse beside a ramada and a plaza. Several stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse predate the eighteenth century,

but it is likely that activities that took place in seventeenth-century townhouses were broadly comparable to those that are recorded in eighteenth-century documentary sources and contributed to the identity and vitality of the local community

Burials in Townhouses

Burials are associated with the townhouses at King, Coweeta Creek, and Chota-Tanasee, but not with other townhouses. At both Ledford Island and King, groups of burials were placed in the plazas near the townhouses at those respective sites. At Coweeta Creek, most of the individuals buried in the townhouse and in the townhouse ramada are adult males and children, and there are greater numbers of and greater diversity of grave goods in the townhouse than in burials elsewhere at the site (Rodning 2001a, 2002a). As at Coweeta Creek, there were many adult males buried in the King site townhouse, and several of these burials have elaborate sets of grave goods (Hally 2004, 2008). At Chota-Tanasee, there were several burials in or near the "summer" townhouse, several of which were adult males.

According to Mooney (1900:396), several principal personages within a community were buried before a Cherokee townhouse was first built. A manifestation of this general practice may be evident in burials in the Coweeta Creek townhouse, given the association of burials in the townhouse and in the adjacent ramada with early stages of these public structures. Adults buried in these spaces—most of whom, again, are identified as males—probably represent principal people in the community, perhaps comparable to the mythical warriors and town protectors in the Nequassee mound myth.

Archaeological evidence from Coweeta Creek makes it clear that some children were buried in and beside townhouses, perhaps because of close kin ties with the adult male warriors and town leaders buried close to them. It makes some sense that widely respected and accomplished warriors and town leaders would have been entitled to burial within a townhouse, making them part of the history and built environment of the community as a whole. Perhaps the children buried in the Coweeta Creek townhouse were thought to represent, at least symbolically, the future of the town and its leadership, while older adults buried in this space were thought to represent its past. From this perspective,

it seems that the past and the future—manifested in burials, in buried stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse, and in stages of the townhouse that had not yet been built—were connected to the present, in the form of the townhouse itself, and the fire kept in its hearth.

Sacred Fire, Sacred Hearth

Mooney (1900:396) notes that a fire was lit during the placement of burials in the ground before a townhouse was built. Excavations at Coweeta Creek uncovered a hearth on top of one burial in the ramada beside an early stage of the townhouse—perhaps from a fire kindled during the construction of an early stage of the townhouse.

An everlasting fire is said to have burned—and to burn still to this day—inside the mounds at Kituwha and Nequassee, and perhaps at other Cherokee settlements. The hearth inside the Coweeta Creek townhouse was kept in place in each manifestation of the townhouse, directly connecting the last stage of the hearth to its first stage. While the *fires* kept in townhouse hearths were carefully tended and periodically rekindled, the life of the *hearth* in the Coweeta Creek townhouse was preserved and renewed with each new stage of the townhouse itself. This continuity was also manifested in the consistency—through at least four stages of the townhouse—in the placement of the four roof support posts in the area surrounding the hearth. Those posts connected floor and roof, earth and sky, and past and present (cf. Pauls 2005; Prine 2000; Shafer 1995). Though continuity in placement of these architectural features was probably related in part to practical considerations (such as the reuse of post pits and of the hearth itself), hearths and roof support posts in townhouses also symbolically connected successive stages of a townhouse to each other (Brett Riggs, personal communication, 2005).

Life History of Towns and Townhouses

Townhouses were symbolic manifestations of towns, and building and rebuilding Cherokee townhouses represented the cycle of death and renewal of those towns. Townhouses at Coweeta Creek were buried as later stages of them were built, just as people themselves were buried in the ground, both inside and beside the townhouse, and inside and beside domestic houses at the Coweeta Creek site.

The close connection between people and place—as seen in the sequences of superimposed townhouses at Coweeta Creek and at Chattoga—may have been emphasized by Cherokee towns as one response to European contact in the southern Appalachians, and to the destabilizing effects of European contact on Cherokee and other peoples of southeastern North America. There is at least one known late prehistoric example of this practice—the multiple stages of the townhouse at Ledford Island.

Townhouses and Mounds

During his visit to Cherokee towns in 1775, William Bartram (Waselkov and Braund 1995:84) noted the placement of the Cowee townhouse on the summit of an ancient earthen platform mound, and he also noted remnants of a townhouse on the summit of a mound at the location of abandoned town (Waselkov and Braund 1995:76). Other Cherokee townhouses may have been built on the summits of late prehistoric platform mounds. It is possible that townhouses were placed on mounds at the Middle Cherokee towns of Whatoga and Nequassee; at the Cherokee Out town sites of Kituwha, Birdtown, and Nununyi (Greene 1996); at the Lower Cherokee settlements of Chauga, Tugalo, and Estatoe (Hally 1986); at the Peachtree and Spike Buck mounds in the upper Hiwassee Valley (Duncan and Riggs 2003:195–198); and at the Nacoochee mound in northern Georgia (Wynn 1990). There is no definitive archaeological evidence from any of these sites, however, for the presence of Cherokee townhouses on the summits of these platform mounds. Excavations have never been conducted at Whatoga or Nequassee. Relic collectors dug portions of the Nununyi, Birdtown, Kituwha, and Peachtree mounds in the late nineteenth century (Ward and Davis 1999:6), and the mounds at Peachtree (Setzler and Jennings 1941) and Nacoochee (Heye et al. 1918) were excavated in the early twentieth century—but clear structural plans were not identified in these mounds. Structures are associated with several stages of the Tugalo, Chauga, and Estatoe mounds (Anderson 1994:205–217, 302–209; Kelly and de Baillou 1960; Kelly and Neitzel 1961), but those structures do not resemble the townhouses described in this paper, it is unclear whether they represent public structures or elite residences, and the upper stages

of these mounds (and any structures present on them) were very poorly preserved.

The one site where there is convincing archaeological evidence for the placement of a Cherokee townhouse on an earthen mound comes from Kituwha, located on the Tuckasegee River in southwestern North Carolina, and the site of one of the seven sacred "Mother Towns" of the Cherokee people (Duncan and Riggs 2003:72–74; Greene 1996; Mooney 1900:182, 509, 525). Geophysical surveys of the Kituwha mound have identified the footprint of a townhouse, very similar to the Coweeta Creek townhouse, but somewhat larger (Riggs and Shumate 2003; Riggs et al. 1998). It is not known if there is a single townhouse in the Kituwha mound, or a sequence of townhouses like that at Coweeta Creek.

The sequence of townhouses at Coweeta Creek form a mound, but one without the stages of mound fill seen at Mississippian platform mounds in the Southeast. Whether placed on mound summits—as at Cowee—or at sites without platform mounds such as Coweeta Creek, Chattooga, and Chota-Tanasee, townhouses anchored towns to places, and connected them to the past.

Townhouses as Landmarks

Cherokee towns were, first and foremost, communities of people, rather than particular points on the southern Appalachian landscape, but the architecture of townhouses enabled towns to connect themselves to particular places. As evident at Coweeta Creek during the 1600s and early 1700s, this connection emphasized continuity in the placement of a townhouse and plaza. The same emphasis on continuity may have been manifested in the placement of the Cowee townhouse on an older earthen mound, as William Bartram found it in the late eighteenth century. By contrast, elsewhere in the southern Appalachians, in the Overhill Cherokee settlement areas, eighteenth-century townhouses were not placed on mounds, even though they still served as visible and meaningful landmarks for the towns who built them.

Conclusions

Earthen mounds and townhouses were part of the greater southern Appalachian landscape before European contact in the Southeast, and the mean-

ings of mounds and townhouses have roots in the ancient past. Sequences of townhouses, as seen at Coweeta Creek, are evidence of close connections between a town and the place(s) where a town would put its townhouse. Events that were critical to the public life of this town took place within an architectural space in which there were material links between the present and the past. Evidence from Coweeta Creek indicates that its townhouse may have been (re)built once every 15–20 years, if not more frequently. This periodicity of Cherokee townhouses means that some people may have experienced several such events during the course of their lifetimes. Although any given stage of the townhouse did not last very long, there is a sense of permanence in the redundant placement and alignment of the structure itself, of its entryway, and of its hearth and roof support posts. The redundancy in placement and alignment of the townhouse anchored the community to this place and connected them to the people—and the townhouses— that were literally and metaphorically buried in the townhouse mound. Interestingly, most archaeological examples of eighteenth-century townhouses are single-stage buildings, or buildings that were rebuilt once or twice, rather than the long sequences seen at sites like Coweeta Creek, Chattooga, and Ledford Island. Most, if not all, stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse date sometime between the late sixteenth and early eighteenth century, as is the case with the Cherokee townhouses at Chattooga. Why was this pattern of townhouse building and rebuilding emphasized during this particular period? What role did it play in native responses to European contact in the Southeast?

Evidence of long-term townhouse sequences, like that at the Coweeta Creek site, predates the seventeenth century. There are certainly long sequences of mound construction at late prehistoric sites all over southeastern North America, although the periodicity of moundbuilding events at many Mississippian mound sites is probably somewhat longer than the 15–20 years estimated for the townhouse sequence at Coweeta Creek (Blitz and Livingood 2004; Knight 1986, 1989; Lindauer and Blitz 1997). Rebuilding townhouses in place gave native towns an architectural means of attaching themselves to particular points in the landscape as at Coweeta Creek, Chattooga, and Ledford Island. The practice of burying the dead

in townhouses—especially evident in townhouses dating to the 1500s and 1600s—simply accentuated the closeness and permanence of these attachments between people and places. This pattern is evident in the early stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse, dating to the 1600s, and in the mid-sixteenth-century public structure at the King site (Hally 2008:519-525). Burials are less common in historic Cherokee townhouses in eastern Tennessee, and, therefore, the burial of town leaders in townhouses seems to have been a practice that was largely abandoned by the eighteenth century, even if it lived on in historical myths and cultural memory recorded by James Mooney in the late 1800s. From the late 1600s through the 1700s, it became increasingly common for Cherokee households and entire towns to move locations, in response to conflicts and in response to trade opportunities (Marcoux 2008). Mobility was critical in the eighteenth century, and, increasingly, people lived in places different than those where their parents' and grandparents' generations had lived, making it less meaningful and perhaps even unnecessary to bury important community members within townhouses, except in rare instances.

The sequence of townhouses at Coweeta Creek, and similar sequences at other sites, can be seen as an outcome of a strategy of emplacement, through which native towns asserted claims to and connections to particular places, in the midst of widespread instability in the Southeast in the aftermath of European contact. During the mid-to-late sixteenth century, the presence of Spaniards in the Southeast—and the short-lived alliances formed between them and native groups—altered geopolitics and the cultural landscape of the Southeast, even though Spanish expeditions did not visit Cherokee towns themselves (Hudson 1976, 1997, 2002, 2005). Even before the Cherokee became enmeshed in the deerskin trade with English colonists from South Carolina in the eighteenth century, they and other native peoples of eastern North America had been affected by warfare, the slave trade, widespread migrations, and other seventeenth-century developments (Smith 1987, 1989, 1994, 2002). Emplacement, rooted in traditional architectural practices, was one response to these historical trends and the geopolitical instability created by them. The symbolism of Cherokee townhouses, and the role of townhouses in

anchoring people to places and to the southern Appalachian landscape, gave Cherokee groups the means by which to assert and to maintain a sense of community—and a sense of place—in the aftermath of European contact.

The architectural manifestation of emplacement predates European contact in the Southeast, in the form of multistage platform mounds and buildings (Marvin Smith, personal communication 2008). Compared to late prehistoric platform mounds, the Coweeta Creek townhouse is smaller in scale, though the shape of the Coweeta Creek townhouse—square with rounded corners—resembles the general shape of many Mississippian platform mounds (Knight 1989). There are also no major (mound-building) stages between successive (structure-building) stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse. The townhouse mound is an example of moundbuilding without mound fill.

The pattern of emplacement at Coweeta Creek contrasts the greater mobility of Creek towns in Alabama and Georgia after European contact in southeastern North America (Dimmick 1989; Ethridge 2003; Lolley 1996; Smith 2000, 2001; Marvin Smith, personal communication 2008). By the 1600s, many Creek towns began moving from one location to another once every 10–20 years, or more often in some cases—this periodicity of movement perhaps meant that townhouses were no longer rebuilt because towns themselves moved more often than townhouses needed replacement. By the eighteenth century, many Cherokee communities were similarly mobile. Many people from the Middle and Lower towns moved to the Overhill settlements in eastern Tennessee. By contrast, for much of the 1600s the Cherokee town at Coweeta Creek stayed put, or at least its townhouse did, as did Cowee and Nequassee. By the beginning of the 1700s, most or all of the domestic houses at Coweeta Creek had been abandoned, but the local Cherokee community continued to keep its townhouse atop the burnt and buried remnants of its predecessors. These older traditions, however, took modified form in the eighteenth century.

Sequences of townhouses like that seen at Coweeta Creek may be far more common at late prehistoric and protohistoric Cherokee settlements in southwestern North Carolina than we currently see archaeologically. The townhouse mound at Coweeta Creek was difficult to identify without extensive excavation. Archaeological surveys have recorded dozens of other late prehistoric and protohistoric settlements in the upper Little Tennessee Valley and neighboring areas. Several sites are located near the confluences of the upper Little Tennessee and its tributary streams, as is the case with Coweeta Creek. It is likely that there are other sequences of townhouses at some of those other sites, and there may be sequences of townhouses still present in the large earthen mounds at Nequassee, Cowee, Whatoga, Kituwha, and other sites. The apparent similarities between townhouses at Coweeta Creek and Kituwha indicate that the townhouses at large Cherokee settlements (like Kituwha) and at smaller settlements (like Coweeta Creek) were differently scaled versions of the same architectural form. The town at Coweeta Creek was not an especially large town, nor is it likely that it was particularly powerful. Therefore, it may give us a model of a typical Cherokee town just before and after European contact. The strategy of emplacement by the Cherokee town at Coweeta Creek—manifested in the townhouse and in the persistence of its placement and alignment through several successive stages of this public structure—was probably comparable to the relationships formed between people and places elsewhere in the southern Appalachians during the protohistoric period.

Archaeological evidence, documentary sources, and oral tradition support a particular interpretation of the life history of the protohistoric Cherokee townhouse at the Coweeta Creek site in southwestern North Carolina. A surface was prepared for the townhouse, and principal people of the town were buried in this surface, both inside the structure and in the area beside its entryway where the ramada was built. A set of four roof support posts was placed around the central hearth, and these architectural elements were kept in place in several successive manifestations of this public structure. Each stage of the townhouse referenced its predecessors, and the people buried in them, and domestic houses at this settlement shared the same alignment and orientation as that of the townhouse itself. Even after several townhouse stages had been buried and replaced—even after households had dispersed into the surrounding area in the late 1600s or early 1700s—the townhouse remained. This structure served as a setting for a variety of events

during which the collective identity of the sur-
rounding community was asserted and renewed.
References to the past were part of this architec-
tural space and the activities that took place within
it. The townhouse at Coweeta Creek materialized
the identity of local households as a town; it
anchored the community to this particular place;
and it created a durable connection between the pre-
sent and the past in the built environment of this
Cherokee town in the upper Little Tennessee Val-
ley.

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Notes

1. Eighteenth-century English descriptions of Cherokee towns refer to public structures as "townhouses" or "town houses," and, sometimes, as "council houses," but "townhouse" is the term used most widely used in eighteenth-century written accounts and in the modern archaeological literature (King 2007:17; King and Evans 1977; Randolph 1973; Rodning 2002a; Schroedl 1978, 2000, 2001; Schroedl, ed. 1986; Smith 1979; Ward and Davis 1999; Waselkov and Braund 1995; Williams 1927, 1928, 1930).

2. Sullivan (1987) refers primarily to domestic and public architecture at Ledford Island and other late prehistoric sites

in eastern Tennessee, but her point is generally applicable to late prehistoric and protohistoric architecture at sites in western North Carolina. As others have noted (Schroedl 2001:287), there are striking similarities in the architecture and settlement plans of the Ledford Island and Coweeta Creek sites, and the sequence of townhouses at Coweeta Creek is a major focus of this paper.

3. In addition to serving as public structures for Cherokee towns, townhouses were also closely associated with the lives of adult men within the community. Warriors, most of whom were males, prepared themselves for war through events that took place in townhouses (Perdue 1998:35). Meanwhile, as discussed later in this paper, many burials in the Coweeta Creek townhouse were those of adult males (Rodning 2001a).

4. Written accounts of eighteenth-century raids by colonial militias suggest that the Middle Cherokee town of Nequassee included a settlement of dispersed houses and a townhouse that was described in firsthand accounts as "a large Dome" (King and Evans 1977:284; Ward and Davis 1999:271). I follow Duncan and Riggs (2003) and others in thinking that this "Nequassee" (which is also spelled as "Nikwasi" or "Nuquassee") corresponds to the archaeological site and the large earthen mound currently known by that same name, and located in Franklin, North Carolina.

5. Gerald Schroedl (ed. 1986; Schroedl 2000:220, personal communication 2008) notes that members of different clans in Cherokee towns sat in areas within townhouses reserved for those respective clans (see also Hally 2008:132–139). Historically, there were and are seven Cherokee clans, and octagonal townhouses may have included one side for each of those seven clans, plus an eighth side for the entryway (see also Gilbert 1943; Perdue 1998; Persico 1979).

6. Gerald Schroedl (personal communication 2008) suggests 100 people, or at least 10 houses, as a minimum threshold for a community that would necessitate a townhouse, and, thereby, would warrant identification as a town. When Henry Timberlake visited the Overhill Cherokee settlements in 1761, Tuskegee and 17 houses, and Mialoquo had 18 houses, but, apparently, neither Tuskegee nor Mialoquo had a townhouse (Guthe and Bistline 1978; Russ and Chapman 1983:19; Schroedl, ed. 1986:538). The Mialoquo townhouse was built after Timberlake's visit in 1761, perhaps after the migration of Lower and Middle Cherokee groups to the Overhill settlements following raids by colonial militias in 1760 and 1761, and growth in the population of Mialoquo and other towns (Russ and Chapman 1983:18).

7. One of these burials is almost certainly the grave of Oconostota, one of the great Cherokee town leaders of the eighteenth century, and one of the most influential and preeminent members of the Chota-Tanasee community (Kelly 1978b; King and Olinger 1972; Schroedl, ed. 1986:134–136).

8. There is some debate about which Lower and Valley towns—as known from maps and other documentary sources—are associated with these and other archaeological sites (Dickens 1967; Duncan and Riggs 2003; Goodwin 1977; Smith 1979; Ward 2002; Ward and Davis 1999). I am following the associations made by Duncan and Riggs (2003). They relate the Nacoochee mound site in Georgia with the town of Itsati, or Echota, and they place the

eighteenth-century town of Nacoochee at a nearby location to the south. They relate the Peachtree mound site in North Carolina with the eighteenth-century town of Hiwassee, and the nearby Spike Buck mound and village site with Quanassee. Other important statements about the associations between historically known Cherokee towns and archaeological sites are those by Smith (1979), Hally (1986), and Schroedl (ed. 1986).

9. Seventeenth-century Spanish accounts of Apalachee council houses refer to these public structures by the term *bujío* or *buhío* (Hann 1988:340–341; Shapiro and Hann 1990:516–517). This term has a comparable meaning in reference to communal structures in the Caribbean, although in its current usage in Spanish, it refers to a "hut" rather than something comparable to a "townhouse" (John Worth, personal communication 2007).

10. This schematic map is based on more detailed versions of the site map published elsewhere (Rodning 1996, 1999:13, 2001b:243, 2004:4, 2008:11; Rodning and VanDerwarker 2002:2; Ward and Davis 1999:185).

11. Previous discussions of the Coweeta Creek townhouse refer to specific stages by the designations used in the field to refer to different floors encountered during excava-tions (Rodning 2001a, 2002a, 2004; Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning and VanDerwarker 2002; VanDerwarker and Detwiler 2000, 2002; Wilson and Rodning 2002). In that system, "Floor 1" refers to the *last* stage of the townhouse, and "Floor 6" refers to the *first* stage. In this paper, designations of different stages of the townhouse are changed, such that "Floor 6" is now Structure 1A, and "Floor 1" is now Structure 1F. Structures 1B, 1C, 1D, and 1E represent the second, third, fourth, and fifth stages of the townhouse.

12. In similar fashion as designations for different stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse, successive stages of domestic structures are referred to by letter designations (Rodning 2004, 2008). Structure 7D refers to the fourth stage of a domestic house, and structures 4B and 6B refer to the second (and last) stages of those respective dwellings.

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation. 1. Publication title: *American Antiquity,* 2. Publication number: 0002-7316. 3. Filing date: October 1, 2009. 4. Issue Frequency: Four times yearly in January, April, July, and October. 5. Number of issues published annually: Four. 6. Annual Subscription Price: $209.00. 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: Society for American Archaeology, 900 Second St NE, Suite 12, Washington, DC 20002-3560; contact person: John Neikirk; telephone: 202/789-8200. 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters of General Business Office of Publisher: Society for American Archaeology, 900 Second St NE, Suite 12, Washington, DC 20002-3560; Editor: Alison Rautman, Center for Integrative Studies, 302 Berkey Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1111; Managing Editor: John Neikirk, Society for American Archaeology, 900 Second St NE, Suite 12, Washington, DC 20002-3560. 10. Owner: Society for American Archaeology, 900 Second St NE, Suite 12, Washington, DC 20002-3560. 11. Known bondholders mortgagees, and other security holders, etc.: None. 12. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income purposes has not changed during the preceding 12 months. 13. Publication name: *American Antiquity.* 14. Issue date for circulation data below: July 2009. 15. Extent and nature of circulation: Average no. copies each issue during the preceding 12 months: a. Total number of copies (net press run): 6675; b. Paid and/or requested circulation: (1) Paid/ requested outside-county mail subscriptions stated on form 3541: 6575; (2) Paid in-county mail subscriptions stated on form 3541: None; (3) Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-USPS paid distribution: None; (4) Other classes mailed through USPS: None; c. Total paid and/or requested circulation: 6575; d. Free distribution by mail: 10; e. Total free distribution: 10; f. Total distribution: 6586; g. Copies not distributed: 90; h. Total: 6675; i. Percent paid and/or requested circulation: 99.8%. Single issue published nearest to filing date: a. 6400; b. (1) 6255; (2) None; (3) None; (4) None; c. 6255; d. (1) 10; (2) None; (3) None; (4) None; e. 10; f. 6265; g. 135; h. 6400; i. 99.8%. 17. Signed by John Neikirk, Managing Editor, October 6, 2009.