

## DOMESTIC HOUSES AT COWEETA CREEK

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*This paper compares and contrasts the rebuilding sequences of late prehistoric and protohistoric Cherokee structures at the Coweeta Creek site in the upper Little Tennessee Valley of southwestern North Carolina. Several domestic structures dating to the 1600s were built and rebuilt in place, as was the public structure (or townhouse), whose six successive stages span the period from the mid- to late 1600s to the very early 1700s. By contrast, domestic structures dating to the fifteenth century demonstrate a less compact and a less formalized settlement plan. The formally planned town at Coweeta Creek—comprising the townhouse, town plaza, and domestic houses placed around the edges of the plaza—postdates early European contact in the southern Appalachians, and this paper argues that the formal settlement plan at Coweeta Creek created a sense of place that emphasized permanence in the midst of the destabilizing effects of European contact on native peoples of the Southeast.*

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This paper compares and contrasts the rebuilding sequences of public and domestic architecture at the Coweeta Creek site in southwestern North Carolina (Figure 1). This late prehistoric and protohistoric Cherokee settlement dates primarily from the fifteenth through early eighteenth centuries A.D., although there are some features and artifact finds that predate and postdate this time frame, and it is likely that the site was largely abandoned between its fifteenth-century and seventeenth-century occupations. Some structures at the site date to the fifteenth century A.D., but most date to the 1600s and early 1700s (Figure 2). A sequence of six stages of a public structure (known as a townhouse) was built and rebuilt in a single spot at this site, creating a low mound (Table 1; B. J. Egloff 1967; K. T. Egloff 1971; Keel, Egloff, and Egloff 2002; Rodning 2001a, 2002a, 2004, 2007a, 2008, in press, in prep; Rodning and VanDerwarker 2002). A dense palimpsest of postholes, hearths, burials, paired entrance trenches, and remnants of structure floors is visible on the site map in the areas around the plaza (Table 2; Rodning 2004; Ward and Davis 1999:183–190). In this paper, I briefly summarize the sequence of townhouses built at Coweeta Creek, and I discuss my approach toward identifying different domestic structures, and successive stages of those structures, at the site. Then I compare and contrast the shapes,

dimensions, and rebuilding sequences of different domestic houses at Coweeta Creek, and the burials placed inside and beside those structures, with an interest in long-term continuity and change in the built environment at this site. Combined with what we know about the conservatism and consistency in the placement and alignment of the Coweeta Creek townhouse, patterns in architectural data from other areas of the site also shed light upon the relationship between people and place in the southern Appalachians, during the period just before and after European contact in southeastern North America.

Scholars have documented myriad cultural changes experienced by native peoples in the Southeast after European contact as well as examples of cultural continuity, especially in areas of the Southeast that were remote from early colonial settlements, such as the southern Appalachians. The compounding effects of the slave trade, new forms of and new scales of warfare, disease epidemics, the formation of multiethnic communities, and the movements of whole communities and whole tribes led to major changes in the cultural landscape and geopolitics of eastern North America (Ethridge 1984, 2006; Bowne 2000, 2005, 2006; Hudson 2002; Kelton 2002; Milner, Anderson, and Smith 2001; Schroedl 2000, 2001; Smith 1989, 1994, 2002). The introduction of European domesticates and the selective but widespread adoption of them by native groups in the Southeast altered relationships between people and their environments to some extent, although some “new” plants—including peaches and watermelons—were probably very easily incorporated into longstanding practices of farming, gardening, and gathering (Gremillion 1993, 1995, 2002; Hatley 1989, 2006; Waselkov 1997). The scale of social and political organization and centralization shifted from regional chiefdoms before contact to more loosely organized confederacies after contact (Galloway 1994, 1995, 2002; King 2002; Knight 1994; Perttula 2002a, 2002b; Smith 2000, 2001). The introduction of European trade goods, and their circulation through native exchange networks, further affected social relations and power dynamics in native societies of the Southeast (Braund 1993; Davis and Ward 1991; Hahn 2002; Harmon 1986; Ward and Davis 2001; Waselkov 1989, 1992, 1993, 1994; Wesson 1999, 2002). In the long run, one effect of all these developments was that the nucleated settlements typical of the late prehistoric Southeast gave way to spatially dispersed settlement patterns, with much greater distances between houses than before European contact (Ethridge 2003; Goodwin 1977; Scott 2007;

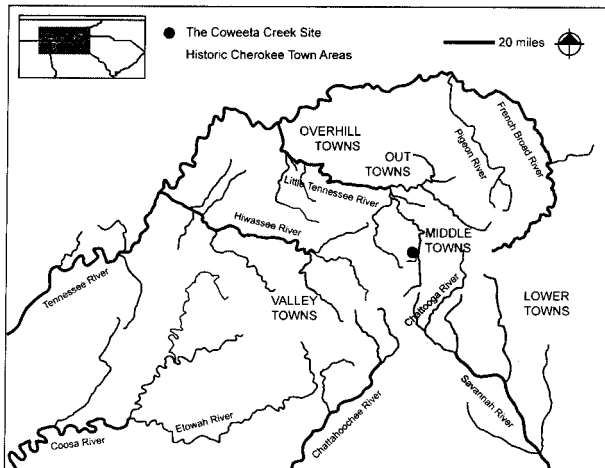


Figure 1. Historic Cherokee town groups and the Coweeta Creek site in southwestern North Carolina.

Wilms 1974; but see Williams and Shapiro 1996 and Williams 1994 for discussions of dispersed settlement systems in the late prehistoric Oconee River Valley in Georgia). Spatial dispersal of houses may have been an effective response to the threats of slave raids and attacks during which houses or whole settlements were burned down, and townhouses continued to serve as focal points of community life even after settlements became more spread out in the eighteenth century (Smith 1987:95; Wright 1981:81).

Archaeologists have often noted the changes wrought by European contact in architecture, settlement layout, and other aspects of native lifeways in the Southeast and elsewhere. On the other hand, architecture and the built environment connect people to place, and they give people and groups—whether households, or whole towns, or regional communities—anchors to the landscapes in which they live. Architecture is visible, tangible, and renewable, and the placement and alignment of structures and outdoor spaces within settlements can create a sense of stability and permanence in a changing world by connecting architectural spaces to past manifestations of specific structures and to past generations of a household or a community in general. Such linkages between past and present are manifested in the placement of burials inside public and domestic structures at Coweeta Creek (Rodning 2001a) and in the sequence of townhouses at the site (Rodning 2002a). Continuity in placement and alignment of domestic structures is also apparent at Coweeta Creek, and after the following summary of the townhouse sequence at the site, the primary aim of this paper is to identify distinct structures and stages of structures in areas of the site surrounding the townhouse and plaza. The following discussion focuses on remnants of public and domestic architecture at Coweeta Creek uncovered during excavations at the site by

the Research Laboratories of Archaeology (RLA) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), from 1965 through 1971 (B. J. Egloff 1967; K. T. Egloff 1971; Keel et al. 2002).<sup>1</sup> These excavations were conducted by the RLA as part of its Cherokee Archaeological Project, which was funded by the National Science Foundation and included surveys and excavations by UNC researchers and students throughout western North Carolina, all focused on the general topic of the long-term development of Cherokee culture in the cultural and geographic province known as the Appalachian Summit (Coe 1961; Dickens 1976, 1978; Keel 1976, 2002; Purrington 1983; Ward and Davis 1999:17–18, 138–139, 183–190).<sup>2</sup>

### Public Architecture

Townhouses are a form of public architecture with a long history in the southern Appalachians (Duncan and Riggs 2003; Schroedl 1978, 1986, 2000, 2001; Smith 1979; Sullivan 1987, 1995). Townhouses resembled domestic houses in architectural design and materials, except of course that townhouses were much larger than dwellings. Townhouses were post-in-ground, wattle-and-daub structures, with central hearths, an arrangement of roof support posts near those hearths, and log roof beams that supported roofs made of bark, thatch, and earth.

Six stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse were built and rebuilt in a single spot, creating a low mound, but one that was not recognized as such from the ground surface (Rodning 2002a, 2004, 2007a, 2008). The original doorway of Structure 1 was moved from the middle of the southeastern wall to the southernmost corner of the second stage of this building, but the “new” entryway paralleled the first, and it was kept in place in the last five stages of the townhouse. The four interior roof support posts near the central hearth in Structure 1 were kept in place for at least the first four stages of the townhouse, although the locations and arrangement of roof support posts in the last two stages are not clear, and there may have been more than four roof supports, and a different arrangement of them around the hearth. The last two stages were somewhat larger (52 × 52 ft) and more round at the corners than were the first four (48 × 48 ft). Despite these changes, each stage of the townhouse basically replicates its predecessors, and each manifestation of the townhouse preserves the placement and alignment of the first townhouse and its hearth, and the alignment (if not the placement) of its original entryway. The townhouse at Coweeta Creek resembles the series of four late prehistoric townhouses found at the Ledford Island site in the lower Hiwassee Valley (Sullivan 1987; Schroedl 1998, 2000, 2001), the sixteenth-century public

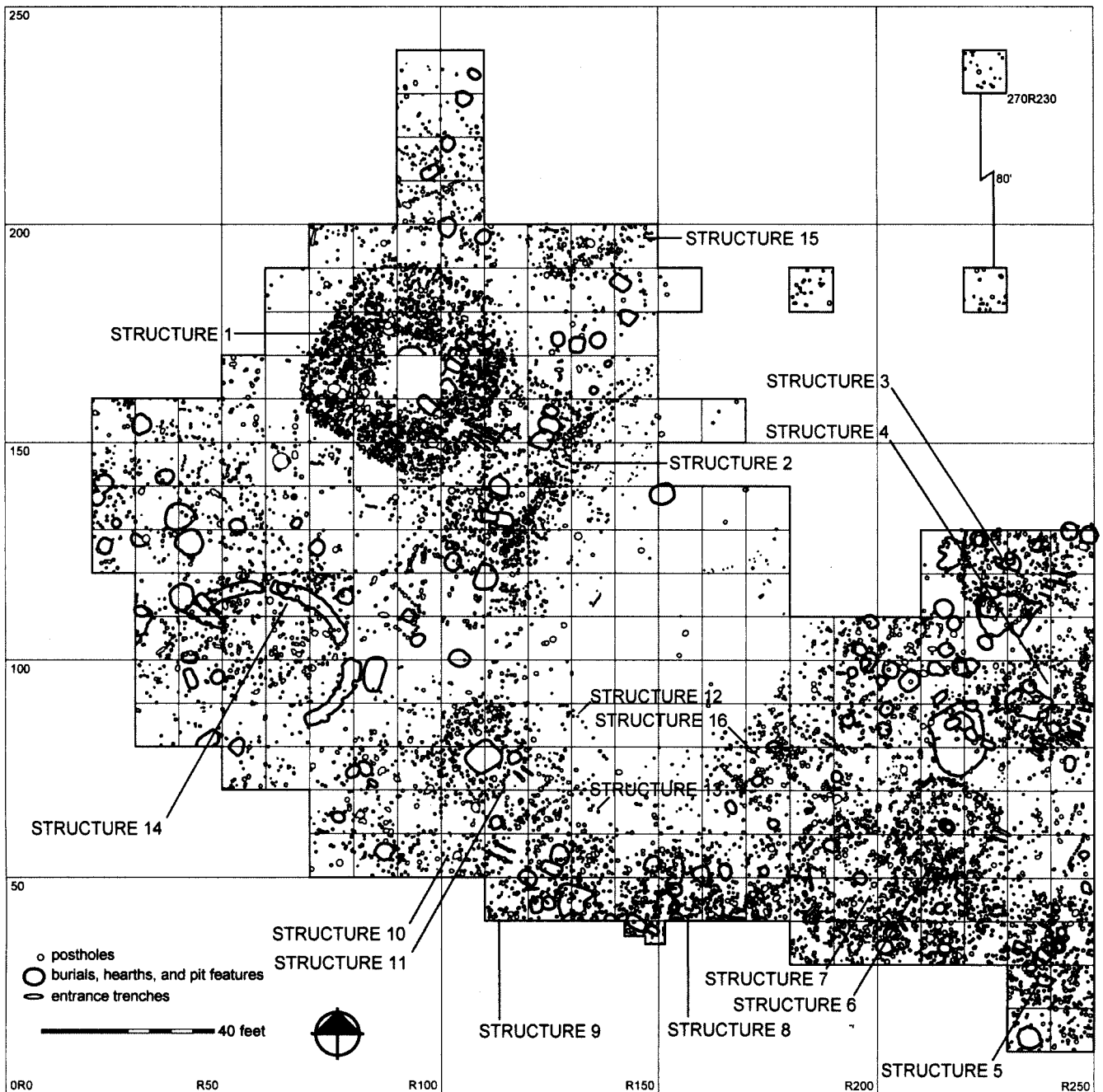


Figure 2. Posthole clusters and structures at the Coweeta Creek site.

structure at the King site in Georgia (Hally and Kelly 1998), and the footprint of a much larger version of the same kind of public structure in the mound at Kituwha, one of the Cherokee Out Towns along the Tuckasegee River (Riggs and Shumate 2003).

The last stage of the Coweeta Creek townhouse dates to the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century. European trade goods such as glass beads, kaolin pipes, and brass beads and buttons—and charred peach pits—are associated with the last stage of the townhouse, all of which are consistent with this

time frame. Date estimates of the kaolin pipe assemblage based on stem bore hole diameters fall within the early 1700s (Table 3), and the radiocarbon date from a charcoal sample from the floor of the last stage of the townhouse has a calibrated intercept in the late 1600s (Table 4).

The first stage of the Coweeta Creek townhouse probably dates to the mid- to late 1600s, or to the late 1500s, at the earliest. A radiocarbon date on a charcoal sample from the first stage of the townhouse has a calibrated intercept in the late 1400s, but its date ranges

Table 1. Public structures at Coweeta Creek.

	Center	Hearth	Door-way	Length <sup>1</sup>	Width <sup>1</sup>	Area <sup>1</sup>
Structure 1	165R95					
Latest						
1F	165R95	Feature 8	Southeast	52	52	2,704
1E	165R95	Feature 8	Southeast	52	52	2,704
1D	165R95	Feature 19	Southeast	48	48	2,304
1C	165R95	Feature 19	Southeast	48	48	2,304
1B	165R95	Feature 19	Southeast	48	48	2,304
1A	165R95	Feature 19	Southeast	48	48	2,304
Earliest						
Average				49	49	2,437
Structure 2	145R115			40	15	600

<sup>1</sup> Feet and square feet.

extend into the 1600s. There is no indication that there was any hiatus between any of the stages of the townhouse. In other words, the townhouse was rebuilt soon after (if not immediately after) each stage was burned down. Rebuilding the townhouse may have corresponded to the deaths of a prominent person or prominent persons in the community, or to put it more generally, burying the old and building a new townhouse may have been related to the succession from one generation to another of town leadership. I consider it reasonable to estimate the average lifespan of one stage of the townhouse at somewhere between 10 and 20 years, if not 15 to 25 years.<sup>3</sup> Given the date for the last stage of the townhouse, an estimated date for the first stage of the townhouse would be somewhere in the early to mid-seventeenth century. This suggested

date is consistent with the characteristics of ceramics associated with early floors of the townhouse (Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2004; Wilson and Rodning 2002). The entire townhouse sequence therefore post-dates sixteenth-century Spanish explorations of the southern Appalachians, but it largely predates the deerskin trade between eighteenth-century English colonists and native peoples of the Southeast (Beck 1997; Beck and Moore 2002; Beck, Moore, and Rodning 2006; Booker, Hudson, and Rankin 1992; Corkran 1962, 1967; Crane 1929; Davis 2002; Dickens 1967, 1979; Duncan and Riggs 2003; Gallay 2002; Goodwin 1977; Hatley 1989, 1993, 2006; Hill 1997; Hoffman 1994a, 1994b; Hudson 1976, 1994, 1997, 2005; Levy, May, and Moore 1990; Martin 1994; Merrell 1984, 1989, 2006; Moore 2002a; Moore, Beck, and Rodning 2005; Rodning 2001b, 2002b, 2002c; Schroedl 1986, 2000, 2001; Waskellov 1989; Worth 1994).

Beside each stage of the Coweeta Creek townhouse (Structure 1) was a ramada (or "summer" townhouse), represented by the rectangular array of postholes (Structure 2) beside the entryway into the townhouse itself (Figure 2). The same pairing of townhouses and summer townhouses is seen at several eighteenth-century Cherokee sites (Baden 1983; Chapman 1985; Russ and Chapman 1983; Schroedl 1986; Sullivan 1987, 1995). Unlike the pairing of the townhouse and ramada at Coweeta Creek, there are no comparable pairings of domestic structures and ramadas at the site—or none that have been recognized as yet—but there are ramadas

Table 2. Domestic structures at Coweeta Creek.

Structure	Shape	Center	Hearth	Door	Length <sup>1</sup>	Width <sup>1</sup>	Diam <sup>1</sup>	Area <sup>1</sup>	Cluster
3C	Square	124R231	Fea 82	SE	21	21	-	441	B
3B		123R231	Fea 95	-	-	-	-	-	B
3A		123R230	Fea 94	-	-	-	-	-	B
			(Fea 92)	-	-	-	-	-	B
4B	Square	91R237	Fea 90	SE	18	18	-	324	C
4A		91R237	Fea 101	-	-	-	-	-	C
5E	Square	34R242	Fea 100	SE?	23	23	-	529	D
5D		35R243	Fea 103	-	-	-	-	-	D
5C		35R241	Fea 104	-	-	-	-	-	D
5B		38R243	Fea 105	-	-	-	-	-	D
5A		36R244	Fea 106	-	-	-	-	-	D
6B	Square	62R216	Fea 66	SE	20	20	-	400	E
6A		62R216	Fea 68	-	-	-	-	-	E
7D	Round	50R196	Fea 67	SE/SW?	-	-	29	660	E
7C		43R214	Fea 64	E	-	-	-	-	E
7B		52R174	Fea 69	?	-	-	-	-	E
7A		40R173	(40R173)	?	-	-	-	-	E
8C	Square	43R154	Fea 61	E	23	22	-	506	F
8B		41R154	Fea 60	-	-	-	-	-	F
8A		44R154	Fea 62	-	-	-	-	-	F
9B	Round	41R131	Fea 57	?	-	-	32	804	F
9A		41R139	Fea 63	?	-	-	-	-	F
10	?	63R101	?	SE	-	-	-	-	G
11	Rectangle	79R110	Bur 37	SE	21	19	-	399	G
12	?	80R120	?	SE	30	30	-	900	G
13	?	60R130	?	?	-	-	-	-	G
14	?	116R64	?	?	-	-	-	-	H
15	Square	200R130	?	?	-	-	-	-	I
16	Rectangle	78R173	None	NW?	15	8	-	120	J

<sup>1</sup> Feet and square feet.

Table 3. Estimated dates for kaolin pipe assemblages at Coweeta Creek.<sup>1</sup>

Context	Kaolin Pipe Fragments	Pipe Stem Fragments	Date <sup>2</sup>	Date <sup>3</sup>
Plow zone/surface/other	108	75	-	-
Feature 73	1	1	-	-
Feature 72	5	2	-	-
Feature 71	3	2	-	-
Structure 1F	46	31	1716	1670-1710
Structure 1E	1	0	-	-
Structure 1D	4	4	-	-
Structure 1B	4	3	-	-
Structure 1A	2	2	-	-
Townhouse hearth	6	2	-	-
Townhouse (other)	16	12	-	-
Townhouse total	79	54	1713	1670-1710
Plaza	5	2	1702	1670-1710
Total site assemblage	201	136	1712	1670-1710

<sup>1</sup> See also Rodning 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Following Binford 1962, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> Following Harrington 1951, 1954.

along the southeastern edge of the plaza across from the townhouse and its ramada. Excavations at a small site near the confluence of Alarka Creek and the Little Tennessee River, roughly 20 miles north of (downstream from) the Coweeta Creek site, have uncovered a paired winter house and an adjacent summer structure, representing a late-seventeenth-century Cherokee

farmstead (Shumate, Riggs, and Kimball 2003). These structures at Alarka resemble the townhouse and ramada at Coweeta Creek, although the domestic houses at Alarka are smaller than townhouses, and Alarka is a relatively isolated single-household site rather than a nucleated settlement like Coweeta Creek.

Adjacent to the Coweeta Creek townhouse and its ramada was a plaza, which was covered with deposits of sand and clay (Figure 2). The plaza was probably first built when the townhouse itself was first built, and then was maintained as such throughout the history of building and rebuilding the townhouse itself. Glass beads and kaolin pipe stems are associated with some of these deposits in the plaza area of the site, indicating that the plaza was still in use in late 1600s and early 1700s, when the last stages of the townhouse were built, but after most (or all) of the domestic houses at the site had been abandoned.

Although not often thought of as public architecture per se (but see Smith 1987:94-97), log stockades are present at many Mississippian settlements in the greater southern Appalachians, and they do represent construction by entire communities, as do townhouses or other forms of public architecture. There is no clear evidence of a log stockade at the Coweeta Creek site, although there are examples of stockades at other sites

Table 4. Radiocarbon dates from Coweeta Creek.<sup>1</sup>

Context	Measured Radiocarbon Age	Conventional Radiocarbon Age	Intercept	<sup>13</sup> C/ <sup>12</sup> C	1-sigma (68% Probability)	2-sigma (95% Probability)	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 1D	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 (AMS)
Structure 1A	360 ± 40 B.P.	380 ± 40 B.P.	cal A.D. 1470	-24.0	cal A.D. 1450-1520 cal A.D. 1590-1620	cal A.D. 1440-1640	Beta-243961 (AMS)
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	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 7D	450 ± 60 B.P.	450 ± 60 B.P.	cal A.D. 1440	-25.1	cal A.D. 1420-1470	cal A.D. 1400-1520 cal A.D. 1580-1630	Beta-175803
Structure 7D	560 ± 70 B.P.	520 ± 70 B.P.	cal A.D. 1420	-27.0	cal A.D. 1400-1440	cal A.D. 1300-1480	Beta-167070
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

<sup>1</sup> See also Rodning 2008.

in western North Carolina (Warren Wilson and Garden Creek), northern Georgia (King), and eastern Tennessee (Ledford Island, Mouse Creeks, and Rymer) (Dickens 1978; Hally and Kelly 1998; Polhemus 1987, 1990; Schroedl 1998; Sullivan 1987, 1995). Given the frequency of stockades at late prehistoric sites, and given the compact arrangement of structures at Coweeta Creek, it is generally thought that there was indeed a log stockade that enclosed the settlement at Coweeta Creek (Ward and Davis 1999:186–187). The absence of evidence for a log stockade at Coweeta Creek may be attributable to the fact that excavations did not uncover enough of the site, and that the stockade was simply located outside the limits of those excavations. The log stockades at the Ledford Island site in eastern Tennessee and the King site in northwestern Georgia are both placed at considerable distances from the public structures at those sites (Hally 1988, 1994, 2008; Hally and Kelly 1998; Sullivan 1987, 1995), and it is possible that excavations at Coweeta Creek simply did not extend far enough away from the townhouse to capture evidence of a stockade. On the other hand, the series of stockades at the Warren Wilson site in western North Carolina are located close to domestic structures and the plaza at that Mississippi period, Pisgah phase village site, which contains no other examples of public architecture (Dickens 1976; Moore 2002b; Ward and Davis 1999:160–178). Given the presence of the townhouse at the Coweeta Creek site, and given the mechanisms for interaction and integration necessary to build and to maintain a townhouse, it seems likely that this town would have built a stockade if one were necessary or desirable. Given the frequency of stockades at late prehistoric sites in the southern Appalachians in general, it is likely that a stockade was present at Coweeta Creek as well. Further investigations at the site could potentially help resolve the question of whether this settlement was enclosed by a stockade or not.

The northeast/southwest axes formed by the townhouse ramada and the plaza at Coweeta Creek are parallel to each other, the northwest/southeast axis formed by the townhouse entryway is perpendicular to them, and nearly all (if not all) of the structures at Coweeta Creek adhere to the alignments that correspond to these axes (Figure 2). Virtually all of the structures at the site have entryways that open toward the southeast, thereby adhering to these NW/SE and NE/SW axes, although there is some variation in the precise angle of these entryways. The orientation of the townhouse and most of the domestic houses at the site is basically the same, and even those with a slightly different alignment are only “off” this axis by 10 degrees or less.

Despite the relative consistency in the alignment and placement of both public and domestic architecture at

the Coweeta Creek site, each structure has its own history, and, presumably, this history is related to the history of the groups associated with particular houses, and in the case of the townhouse, the history of the community as a whole. Successive stages of the townhouse demonstrate greater consistency than do stages of domestic structures at the site, probably because rebuilding a townhouse involved an entire community, whereas rebuilding a dwelling involved only a single household or a small number of households. Although there are some changes in the townhouse from its first to last stage, there is overwhelming continuity in the placement and alignment through time, and each of its manifestations is basically the same structure as its predecessors and successors. Many households would have had a stake in the placement and the architectural history of a townhouse—encouraging conservatism and continuity—but there was probably greater room for “movement” of domestic houses (or abandonment of them). Decisions about when and how to renovate or to rebuild a domestic structure would have been guided by the needs and the generational cycles of the affected households rather than the whole town.

### Domestic Structures

Domestic houses at late prehistoric sites in the southern Appalachians are typically square structures with rounded corners and one doorway placed along a side or at a corner (Dickens 1976, 1978; Hally 1988, 1994; Hally and Kelly 1998; Keel 1976; Moore 2002b; Polhemus 1987, 1990; Schroedl 1998; Sullivan 1987). A clay hearth is placed at or near the center of each structure. A set of roof support posts, typically four of them, is generally found relatively close to the central hearth, and on average, roof support posts are larger and deeper than the posts that formed the walls, entryways, partitions, and benches inside them. It can be difficult to connect the dots between wall posts at sites like Coweeta Creek, and to differentiate posts from one structure or another, but the presence of structures can be discerned by identifying hearths and the corresponding sets of roof support posts.<sup>4</sup> Figure 3 is a map of hearths, entryways, and postholes deeper than 24 in below the top of subsoil, which shows several arrangements of up to four postholes that probably represent the roof supports inside domestic structures. Figure 4 is a map of hearths, entryways, and postholes greater than 18 in deep, and visible here are more sets of probable roof supports as well as the general outlines of some structures. There is considerable “noise” in the Coweeta Creek site map, simply because there is a great deal of overlap in the posthole patterns representing different stages of different

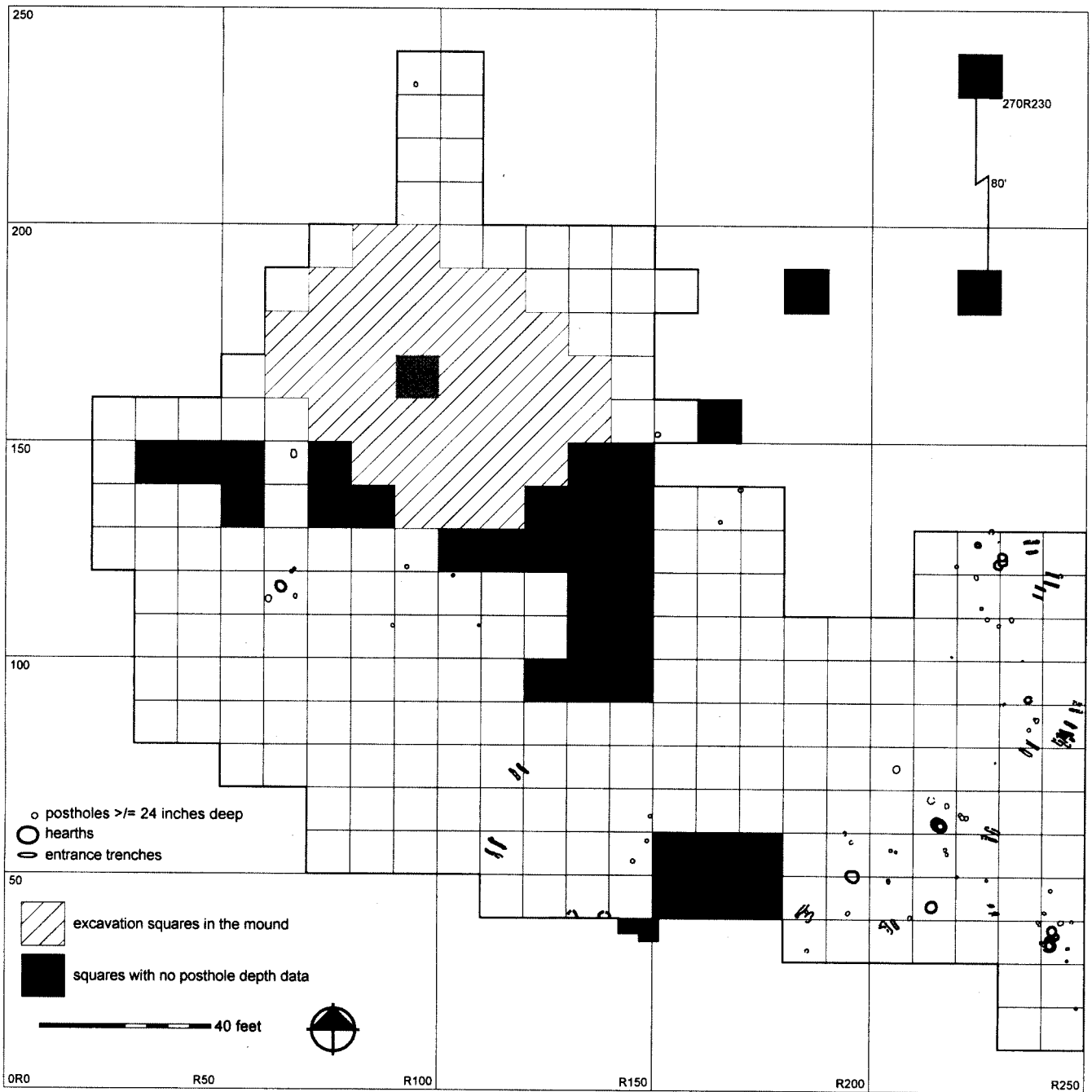


Figure 3. Postholes  $\geq 24$  in deep.

structures, but maps showing just the “deep” postholes (which often show sets of two, three, and, in some cases, four roof supports around hearths) help clarify the locations of structures at the site.

Another strategy for identifying dwellings, and successive stages of those structures, at the Coweeta Creek site is to “zoom in” on discrete posthole clusters visible on the site map (Rodning 2004). Figure 2 shows the posthole clusters as I define them, and the following discussions focus on each posthole cluster and the structures and features found within them.

Table 1 summarizes the dimensions and the numbers of stages of the townhouse. Table 2 summarizes the domestic structures that I identify in areas around the townhouse and plaza at the site, and it indicates the structure numbers (3, 4, 5, etc.) associated with specific posthole clusters (B, C, D, etc.). Table 5 lists the features identified at the site and the general identifications of those features.

Domestic structures are dated based on architectural similarities or dissimilarities to the Coweeta Creek townhouse, the ceramics found on structure floors, and

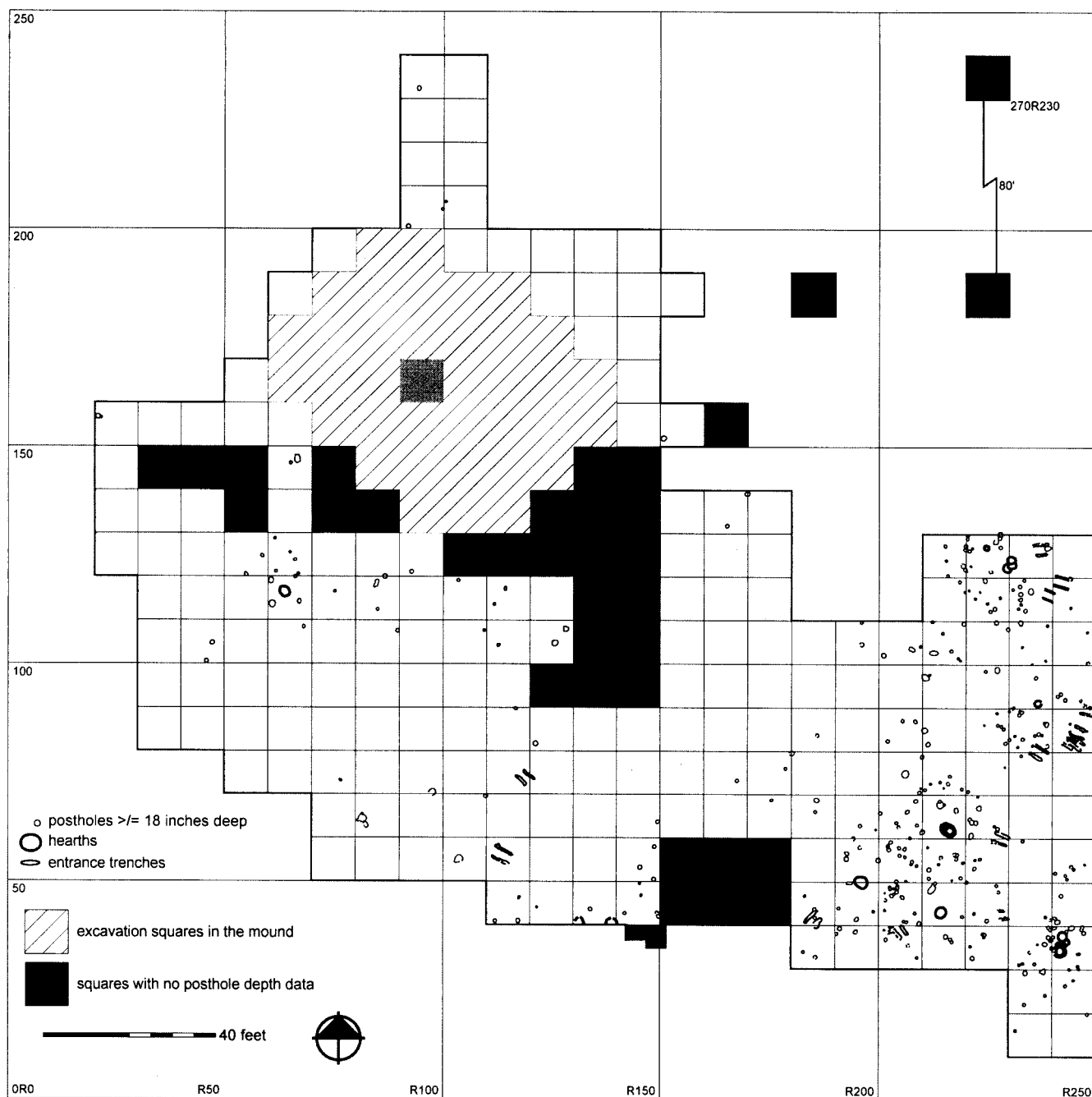


Figure 4. Postholes  $\geq 18$  in deep.

in one case, the radiocarbon dates of samples collected from the structure floor (Rodning 2008). Aboriginal pottery—attributable to the Qualla series—from Structure 1 and from the last stage of Structure 7 demonstrate significant differences, for example, and, therefore, houses similar to Structure 1 or Structure 7 are dated correspondingly. One structure (Structure 14) is thought to date to the late period of settlement at the site because of differences between it and the posthole patterns of other domestic structures at the site and

because of the presence of European trade goods in pit features close to Structure 14.

*Cluster B*

Cluster B includes postholes from Structure 3 (Figure 5). This structure is roughly  $21 \times 21$  ft with rounded corners and several pairs of entrance trenches along its southeastern edge. Postholes outside the doorway to this structure may represent ramadas or



Table 5. Excavated features at Coweeta Creek.

Feature Type	Feature Numbers
Pits/basins (N = 42)	14, 15, 16, 18, 32, 33, 34, 35, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 55, 65, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 83, 88, 91, 93, 96, 98, 99, 100
Hearths (N = 26)	8, 19, 52, 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 82, 90, 92, 94, 95, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106, hearth on top of Burial 18, hearth on top of Burial 37, hearth at 40R173?
Firepits (N = 4)	29, 30, 31, 38
Ditches/trenches (N = 5)	36, 37, 49, 53, 54
Pots	22, 23, 27, 59
Thatch	17, 20, 28
Clay	10
Rocks	4, 24, 25, 26
Daub	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13
Roof fall	58, 84, 89
Wall fall	97
Fill	79, 85, 86, 87
Large postholes	56, 107
Modern disturbances	3, 12

some other form of outbuilding, but this suggestion is speculative. There are three successive stages of the hearth (Features 85, 94, and 95) at the center of Structure 3, and a fourth hearth that may have been associated with a fourth stage (perhaps an early stage) of this building, which was offset from its other stages. The arrangement of four deep postholes around the three successive stages of the central hearth represent roof support posts inside Structure 3, and at least five burials are associated with this house.

Cluster C

Cluster C includes postholes associated with Structure 4 (Figure 6). This structure is roughly 18 x 18 ft with rounded corners. As many as five pairs of entrance trenches are present, all opening to the

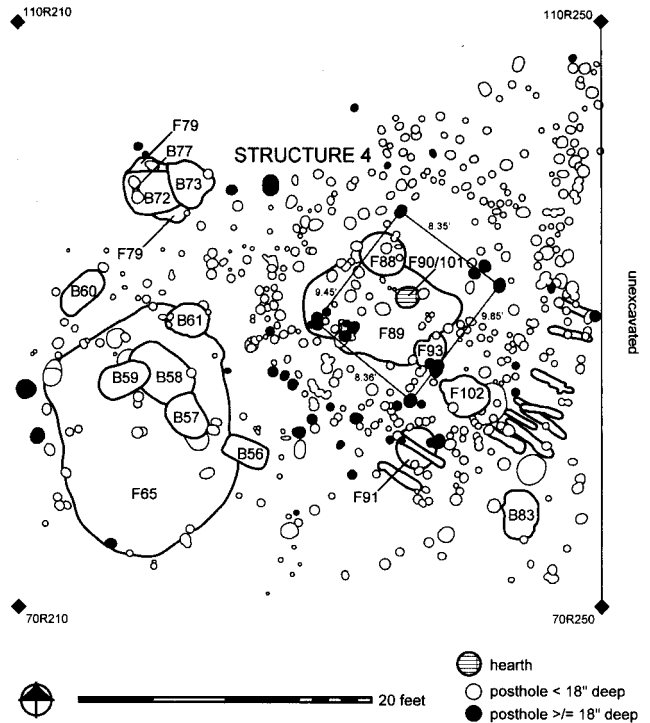


Figure 6. Cluster C, which includes Structure 4.

southeast, and most stages of this entryway are placed near the middle of the southeastern wall of the structure. There are two successive stages of a central hearth in this structure (Features 90 and 101) with an arrangement of four roof support posts around them. Posthole patterns in areas around the structure may be associated with ramadas or outbuildings of some kind, and concentrations of postholes northeast of Structure 4 may represent another stage of Structure 4 or another building entirely. There are no burials inside this structure, but there are 10 burials in areas around it. I think these burials are contemporaneous with Structure 4 and other nearby dwellings, and that the individuals in these burials are members of households associated with nearby structures. I base this assertion primarily on the spatial proximity of these burials to Structure 4, the fact that they are all intrusive into Feature 65 (radiocarbon dates and ceramic evidence place Feature 65 itself sometime between the late twelfth or, more likely, the fifteenth century A.D. [Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2008]), and the fact that many of these burials are placed along the axis formed by the original doorway to the townhouse, which when extended through Structure 2 and across the plaza, forms a pathway between Structures 4 and 6.

Cluster D

Cluster D includes the remnants of another domestic structure, although posthole patterns here are not as

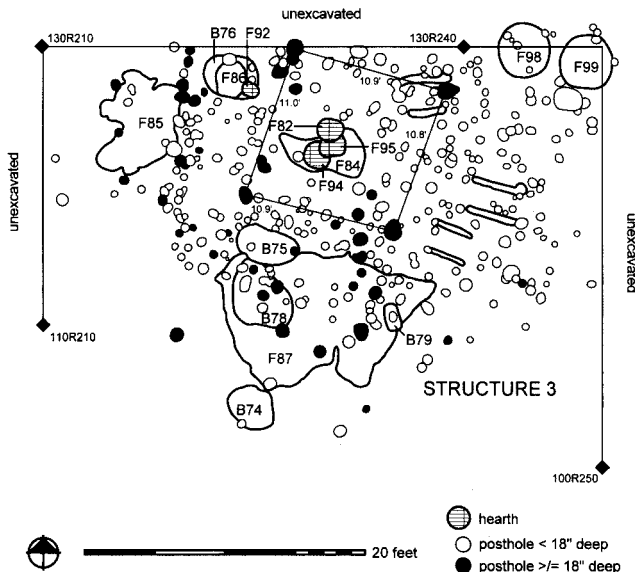


Figure 5. Cluster B, which includes Structure 3.

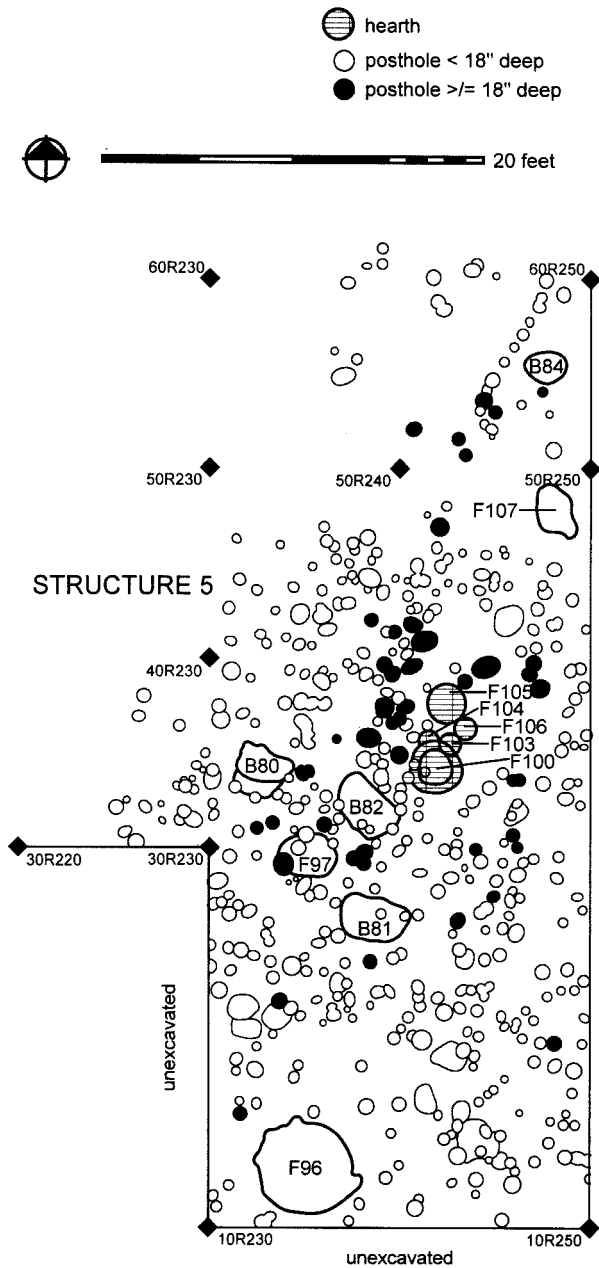


Figure 7. Cluster D, which includes Structure 5.

clearly defined as those in Clusters B and C, but Structure 5 is roughly 23 × 23 ft with rounded corners (Figure 7). No entrance trenches are apparent in Cluster D, although I consider it likely that they opened toward the southeast like others at the site, and that the entryways would have been located just slightly farther east than the edges of the excavated area. Five stages of a hearth (Features 100, 103, 104, 105, and 106) are present in Cluster D, which I take as an indication that there was a series of five successive stages of this house built at this spot (Figure 8). There are several deep postholes in Cluster D, some of which probably represent roof support posts, although the arrangements of roof supports around the central

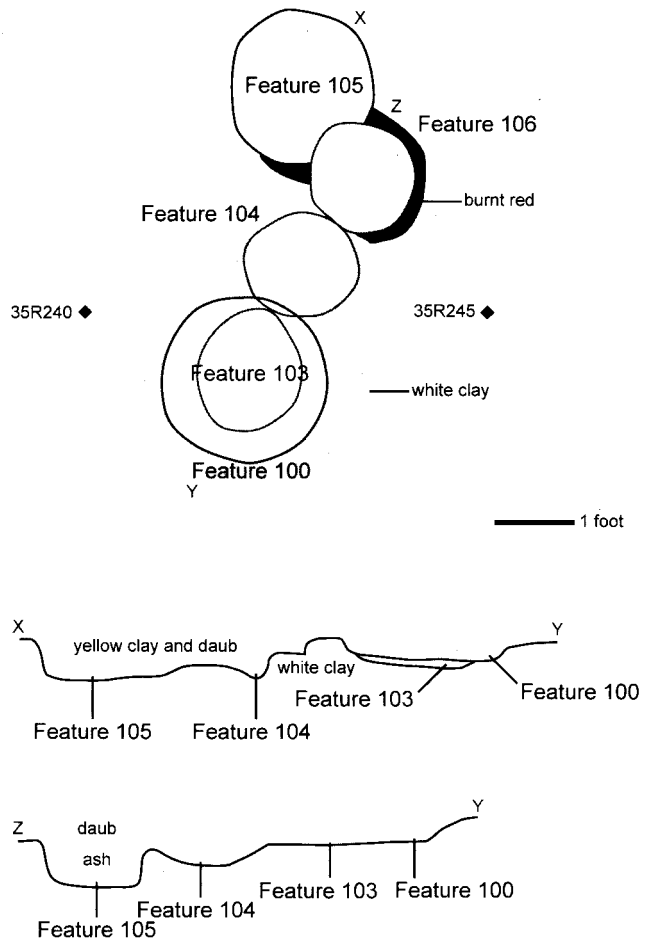


Figure 8. Sequence of hearths in Structure 5.

hearth in Structure 5 are not as clearly discernible as those in Structures 3 and 4. Feature 96 is a large circular pit that is located south of Structure 5. One radiocarbon date and ceramics from Feature 96 place it in the seventeenth century (Table 3). The structure itself probably dates to the seventeenth century as well, given the architectural similarities among Structures 3, 4, 5, and 6, and the seventeenth-century pottery found on the floor of Structure 6 itself (Rodning 2004:332–333, 2008). Three burials are located inside Structure 5. Burial 84 is located outside of, and 10 ft north of, this structure, and it is noteworthy here because it is the only burial at the site with European artifacts—four opaque turquoise blue glass beads—as grave goods. The presence of these beads is consistent with the temporal placement of the burial itself in the seventeenth or early eighteenth century, although it could date earlier or later than that span of time (Smith 1987:32–33).

#### Cluster E

West and northwest of Structure 5 is Cluster E, which includes remnants of at least two different houses,

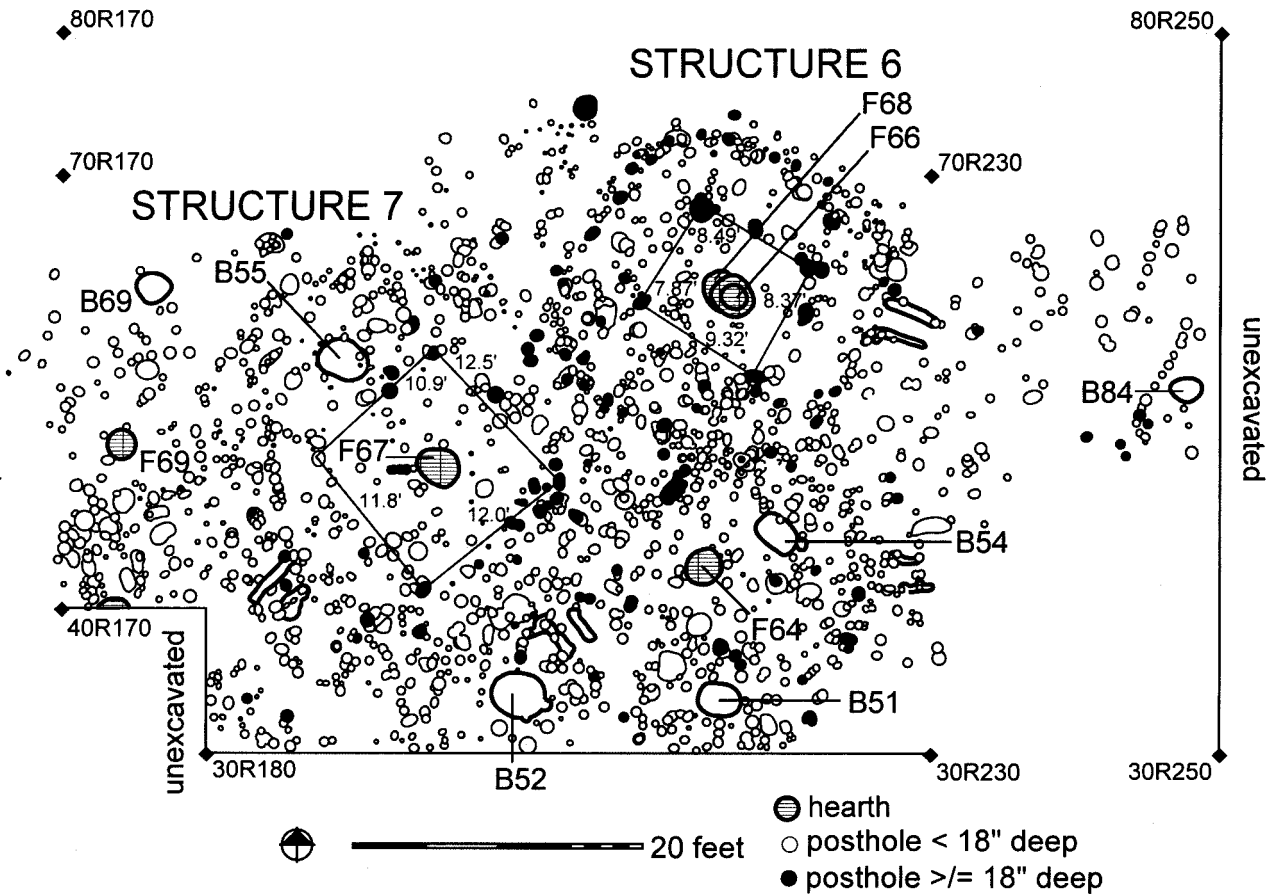


Figure 9. Cluster E, which includes Structures 6 and 7.

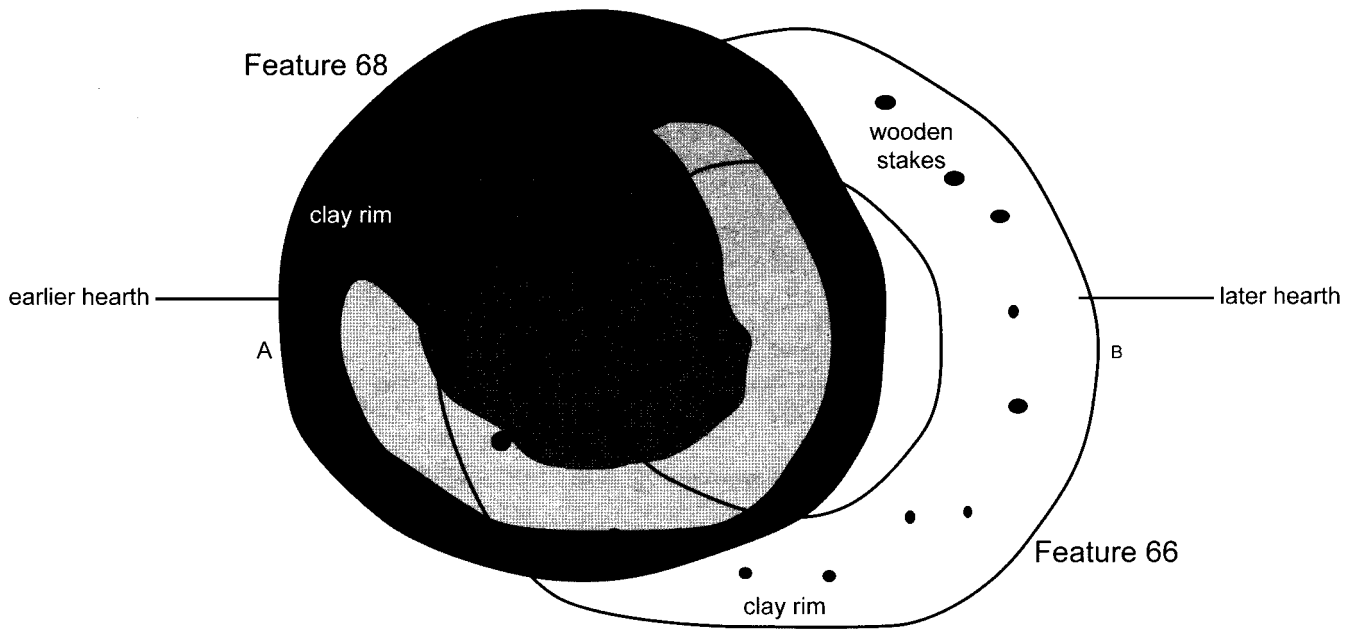
rather than just a series of stages of a single structure (Figure 9). Structure 6 is comparable in its design and dimensions to Structures 3 and 4. It is 20 × 20 ft with rounded corners and an entryway along its southeastern side, two successive stages of a central hearth (Features 66 and 68), and a set of four roof support posts. Structure 7 represents a different kind of house. It is an estimated 29 ft in diameter, it is more rounded than are Structures 3 through 6, its roof support posts are spaced farther apart than those in Structures 3 through 6, and one stage of the structure may even have had a doorway opening to the southwest rather than to the southeast.

Structure 6 is shown in the upper right section of Figure 9. The northwestern and northeastern edges of Structure 6 are easily recognized, as is its southeastern side, where the entryway is situated. The southwestern edge of the structure is harder to identify, because of the overlap with postholes from Structure 7, but field notes and maps make it clear that Structure 6 postdates Structure 7, and that Structure 6 is square with rounded corners, like the townhouse, which as we have seen can be dated to the seventeenth century. There are two successive stages of a central hearth in Structure 6, with identifiable roof support posts around them (Figure 9).

Ceramics found on the floor of the last stage of Structure 6—including sherds with curvilinear complicated stamping, bold geometric designs on cazuelas, and pinched and notched rim strips—can be dated to the seventeenth century (Dickens 1979; Hally 1986; Riggs and Rodning 2002; Rodning 2004:332–333, 2008; Ward and Davis 1999), and they demonstrate similar characteristics as the ceramic assemblage from Feature 96, for which there is one radiocarbon date that also falls within the seventeenth century (Table 3). One wrought iron nail is associated with Feature 68, the first stage of the hearth in Structure 6 (Figure 10). The presence of this artifact indicates that the first stage of Structure 6 dates no earlier than the 1500s, but it could also date to the 1600s, and the oak stakes in Feature 66 (the second stage of the same hearth) are comparable to the cane stakes seen in the hearth of the Cherokee structure at the Tuckasegee site, which dates to the early eighteenth century (Keel 1976:28–34).

Structure 7 is shown in the lower left section of Figure 9. Much of the floor of the last stage of this house was preserved. Several pots, vessel sections, stone tools, wooden artifacts, and sections of charred cane were found amid the charred timbers and other burnt debris lying on this floor. There are no sequences

65R215 ♦



60R215 ♦

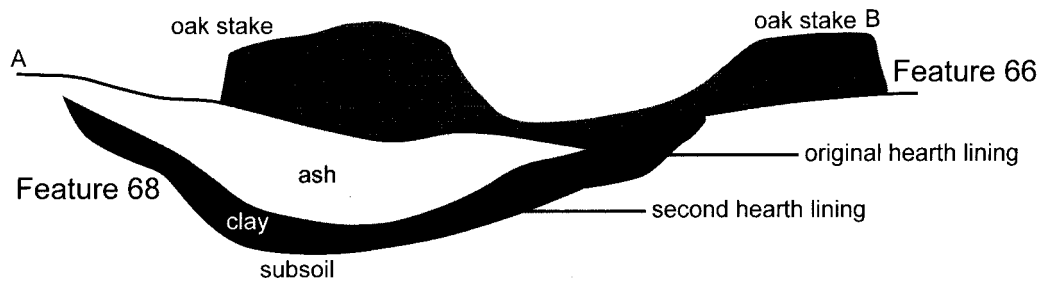


Figure 10. Sequence of hearths in Structure 6.

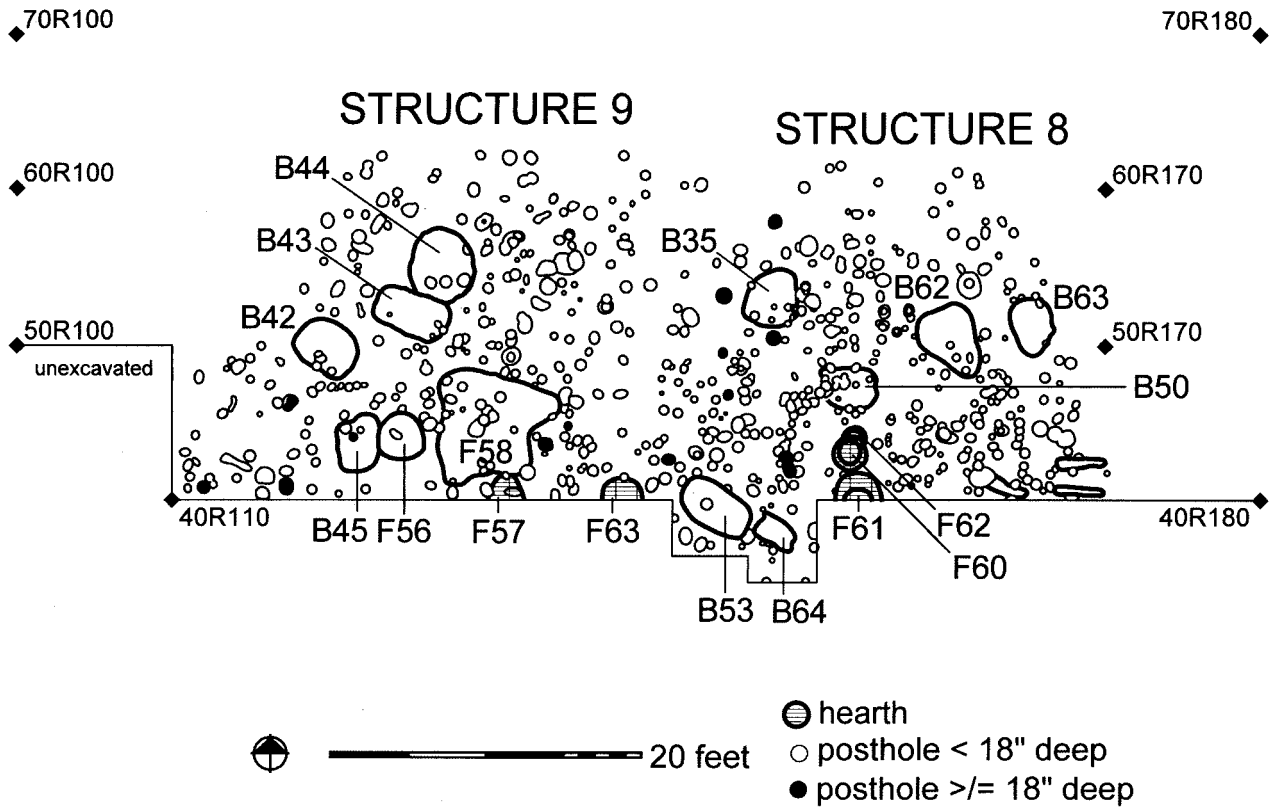


Figure 11. Cluster F, which includes Structures 8 and 9.

of central hearths in Structure 7, unlike those seen in Structures 3 through 6. The hearth associated with the last stage of Structure 7 is Feature 67, and deep postholes around Feature 67 probably represent roof support posts. There is one pair of entrance trenches near the southeastern edge of Structure 7, and one pair of possible entrance trenches near its southwestern edge. Except for those associated with Structure 6 to its northeast, and the ramadas in Cluster J to its north, the postholes in Cluster E that are outside the last stage of Structure 7 are probably associated with earlier stages of the same structure.

Feature 67 is the hearth associated with the last stage of Structure 7. Features 64 and 69 are hearths associated with earlier stages of Structure 7—as is a hearth south of Feature 69 that was never given a formal feature designation in the field—and the presence of deep postholes (roof support posts) around Feature 64 is additional evidence for identifying it as a central hearth inside a structure. The posthole patterns associated with Features 64 and 69 are truncated by Structures 6 and 8 and by the last stage of Structure 7.

The posthole pattern representing Structure 6 truncates the posthole pattern representing the last stage of Structure 7. Radiocarbon dates and ceramics—including plain and everted jar rims, sandy pastes, and an absence of cazuelas with geometric incised designs

typical of the 1500s and 1600s—all indicate that the last stage of Structure 7 probably dates to the 1400s (Rodning 2004:278–291, 2008:24–29). By contrast, ceramics from the floor of Structure 6, and its architectural similarities to the townhouse and other domestic structures thought to date to the seventeenth century, place it in the 1600s (Rodning 2004:331–337; 2008:32–35).

The shapes, dimensions, and rebuilding sequences of Structures 6 and 7 demonstrate significant differences between the fifteenth-century and seventeenth-century built environment at the site. Structure 6 is square with rounded corners, it was built and rebuilt in place—as were Structures 3, 4, 5, and 8 (see below)—and these subrectangular structures range from 18 to 23 ft per side. Structures 7 and 9 (see below), on the other hand, are more round, are roughly 29 and 32 ft in diameter, and are built and rebuilt in an offset pattern, creating sprawling arrays of postholes, like that seen in Cluster E, that differ from those seen in Clusters B and C and differ from the discrete concentration of postholes associated with Structure 6. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, therefore, house size decreased. During this period, furthermore, rebuilding practices anchored houses (and the townhouse) more and more closely to specific points within a formally planned settlement.

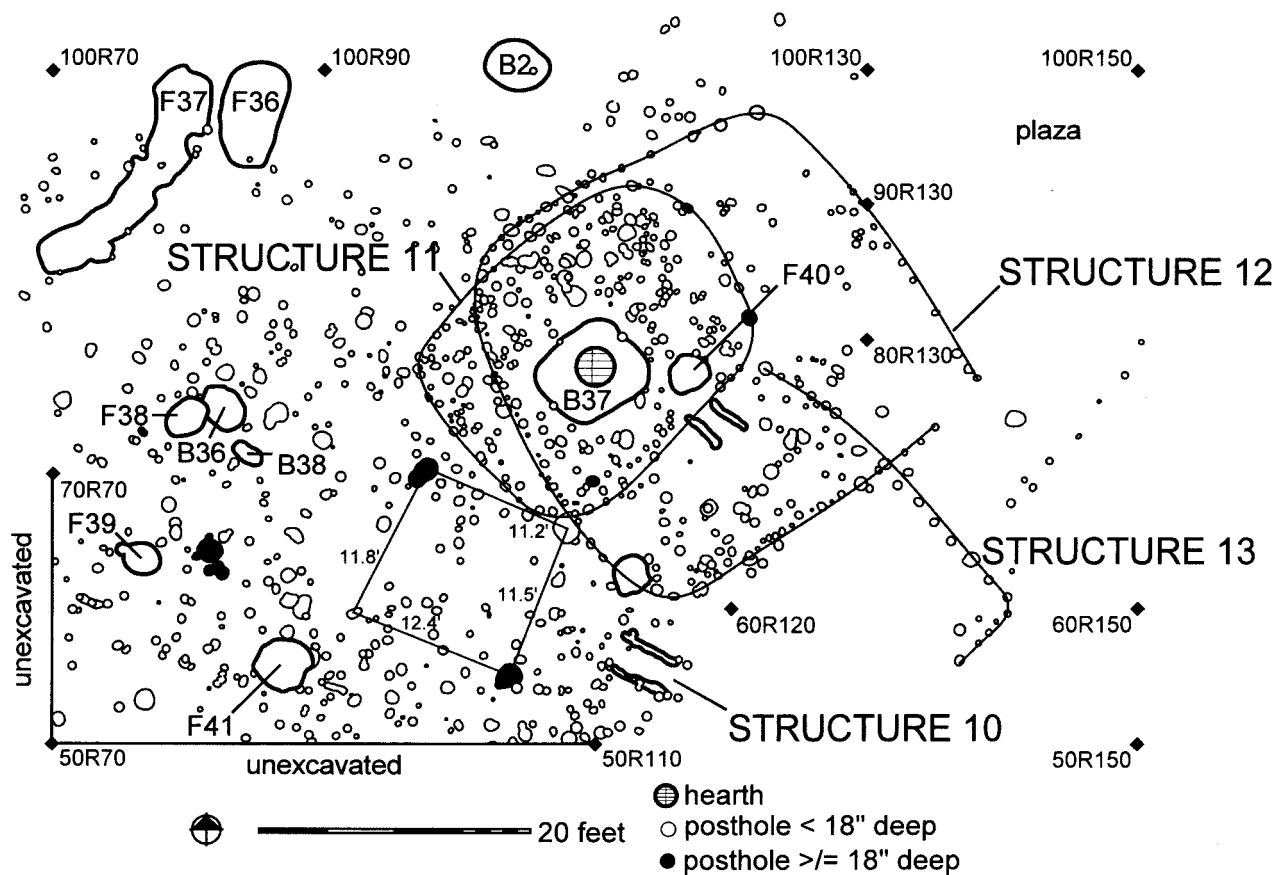


Figure 12. Cluster G, which includes Structures 10, 11, 12, and 13.

*Cluster F*

West of Structure 7 is Cluster F, which includes remnants of two domestic houses, Structures 8 and 9 (Figure 11). Structure 8 is 22 × 23 ft<sup>2</sup> with rounded corners, it has an entryway along its southeastern side, and it has three successive stages of a central hearth. It resembles Structure 6 and, therefore, I think Structures 6 and 8 are roughly contemporaneous with each other. Structure 9 has an estimated diameter of 32 ft, an estimate based on my measurements of roughly 16 ft from its hearth to its northwestern edge. This building resembles Structure 7, and, therefore, I conclude that Structures 7 and 9 are roughly contemporaneous.

Structure 8 corresponds to the dense scatter of postholes on the east side of Cluster F. There are six burials inside this structure, more than are found inside any other domestic structure at the site, and two of these burials include grave goods. There are three stages of a central hearth in Structure 8, and while they are not located in precisely the same spot, they do represent three stages of a single hearth. This sequence contrasts the wholesale movement of the hearth and the corresponding shifts in the exact placement of successive stages of Structure 7. Some deep postholes west of the hearth may represent roof support posts,

but there are no available data on the depth of postholes in the eastern half of the structure.

Structure 9 is on the west side of Cluster F. The posthole pattern associated with Structure 9 is truncated by that of Structure 8. There are two hearths—Features 57 and 63—in Cluster F that are probably associated with different stages of the hearth in Structure 9. Feature 56 is a large posthole that may represent one of a set of roof support posts inside this structure. Feature 58 is midden accumulation on the floor. One or more mortuary items are associated with each of the four burials (42, 43, 44, and 45) inside this structure, and these artifacts include shell beads, a shell pin, a ground stone celt, and turtle shell rattles (Rodning 2001a:88–91). The concentration of grave goods in these burials contrasts the typical pattern for burials inside and beside domestic houses at the site, as burials in domestic structures generally have one type of associated grave goods, or none (Rodning 2001a:92–93).

*Cluster G*

Cluster G includes postholes from at least two structures, and probably two others, near the southwestern end of the plaza (Figure 12).

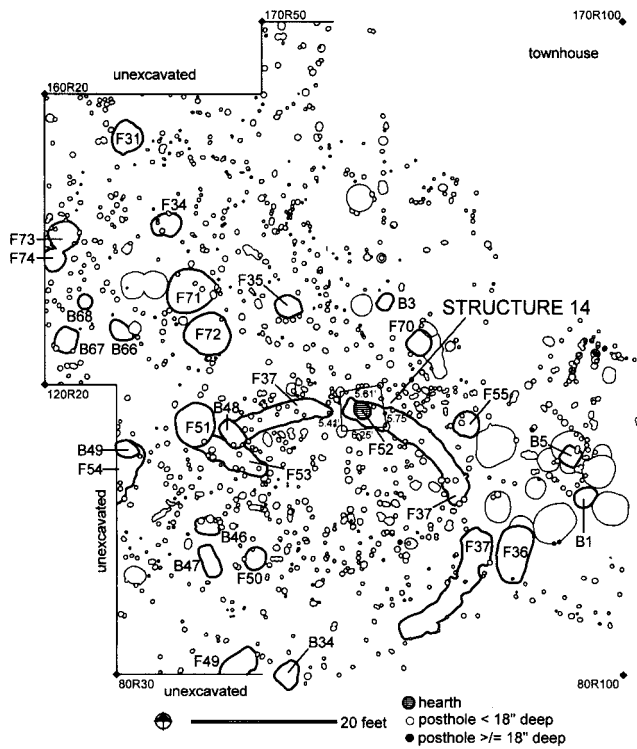


Figure 13. Cluster H, which includes Structure 14.

According to field notes, the pair of entrance trenches just north of grid point 50R110 is not associated with Structure 9. An arrangement of deep postholes west of this entryway, probably representing a set of roof supports from a structure, is shown in Figure 12. No hearth is situated in this area, but the presence of a set of roof supports and a pair of entrance trenches, which open to the southeast like many other entryways at this site, leads me to conclude that there was a structure here, as noted in the lower section of Figure 12. Therefore, I label this building Structure 10. However, I cannot identify the edges of Structure 10. Postholes that may be related to this particular structure are difficult to differentiate from those related to other structures or enclosures in Cluster G.

Another structure in Cluster G, associated with the pair of entrance trenches near grid point 75R120, is represented by the concentration of postholes around Burial 37 and Feature 40. I designate this building Structure 11, which is roughly  $19 \times 21$  ft, and the hearth in Structure 11 was placed on top of Burial 37. Although potsherds found in the fill of Burial 37 only give us *terminus post quem* dates for the burial and the structure, the plain jar rims, coarse plain surface treatments, and compact sandy pastes seen in these sherds are all good fifteenth-century markers, and, therefore, it is very plausible that Structure 11 may date to the fifteenth century. Other linear arrays of postholes that overlap with Structure 11 represent other structures or outdoor enclosures. One of these linear arrays

forms a rectangle, some  $30 \times 30$  ft (Structure 12), with an apparent entryway represented by a gap in the postholes near its easternmost corner (Figure 12). A hearth and a set of roof supports associated with this structure cannot be identified, and, therefore, Structure 12 probably represents an outdoor enclosure rather than a roofed structure. The chronological relationship between Structures 11 and 12 is not clear.

Another such structure or enclosure (Structure 13) may be represented by another line of postholes in Cluster G (Figure 12), which continues southeast and into the area designated Cluster F (Figure 11), where it then is difficult to trace through the postholes associated with Structures 8 and 9 (Figure 9). This line of postholes intersects Structures 12, and perhaps Structure 11. Given its resemblance to Structure 12, it is designated Structure 13.

Several features and burials are present in areas around these structures in Cluster G, especially in the area southwest of Structure 11 and west of Structure 10. Burial 2 is actually close to the edge of the townhouse ramada (see Figure 2), and thus it may be one of the several graves—including Burials 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8—that are located around the outer edges of the townhouse (see Figure 2). The relationships between Features 39 and 41, and Burials 36 and 38, and the structures in Cluster G are unknown. Feature 38 is identified as an outdoor firepit, because of the presence of charcoal, burnt clay, and ash in its fill, but it differs from the formally prepared hearths seen inside houses.

#### Cluster H

Cluster H covers most of the area southwest of the townhouse and plaza (Figure 13). The densest concentration of postholes within Cluster H surrounds a hearth (Feature 52), and an arrangement of four deep postholes near this hearth probably represents a set of interior roof supports. The other major element of Cluster H includes a semicircular ditch (Feature 37) and other related trench features.

Feature 37 includes three discontinuous segments that together are 65 ft long and that enclose an area of roughly  $750 \text{ ft}^2$ . The fill of Feature 37 closely resembles the prefound humus underneath the earliest stage of the townhouse, indicating that these ditch segments probably are contemporaneous with or earlier than the first townhouse. Other trenches in this area—Features 36, 49, 53, and 54—may be related to Feature 37 in some way. These features are shallow trenches, ranging from 2.5 to 4.5 ft wide and from roughly 3 to 8 in deep. Features 51, 55, and 70 are all circular pits around the outer edge of Feature 37 and inside the arc formed by Feature 37 is Feature 50, another circular pit.

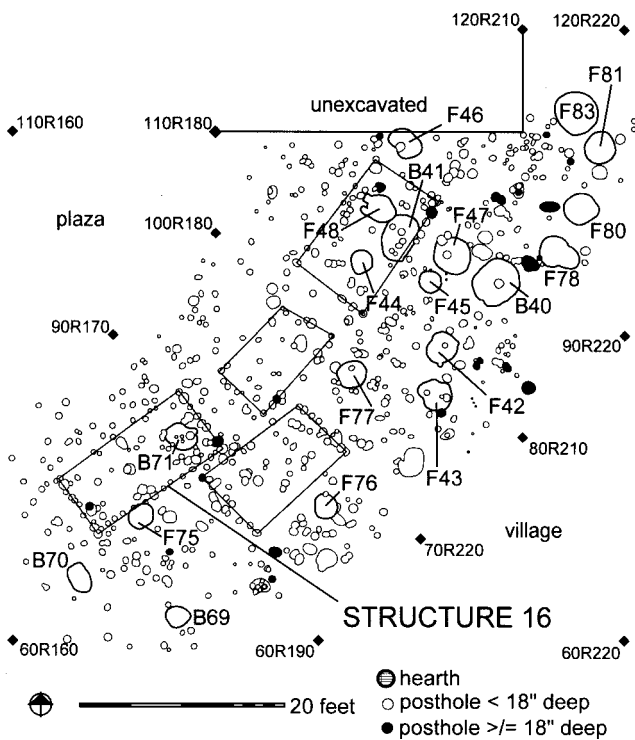


Figure 14. Cluster J, which includes Structure 16.

Several other pit features are present in the area north of Feature 37. Features 34 and 35 contained large amounts of charcoal and ash, and they may have been used as receptacles for the ritual disposal of debris from the townhouse hearth. Feature 31 probably represents an outdoor firepit, comparable to Features 30 and 38, all of which contained fire-cracked rock, charcoal, ash, and artifacts in them. Features 71, 72, 73, and 74 are all circular pits with abundant amounts of European trade goods and aboriginal artifacts. The presence of European trade goods (kaolin pipes, glass beads, brass items) here suggests cultural activity in this part of the site during the late 1600s or early 1700s, probably at a much later point in time than activities associated with Feature 37.

Several burials are present in the area around Feature 37. The chronological relationship between the burials in this area of the site and Feature 37 is not clear. There is no convincing evidence that Feature 37 itself was directly related to mortuary activities or the placement of these burials themselves.

Feature 37 could represent a foundation for a structure or an unroofed enclosure of some kind, but it is more likely a remnant of a ditch that surrounded a low mound (Rodning 2007b; Brett Riggs, personal communication 2005). Mark Harrington (1922) excavated several mounds at the mouth of the Little Tennessee River in eastern Tennessee during the early twentieth century. His photographs and drawings of several mounds clearly show low conical mounds

surrounded by ditches and, outside those ditches, earthen embankments. If such an earthwork were eroded and deflated through time, or truncated by plowing, all that would be visible archaeologically would be the bottoms of the ditches surrounding the mounds themselves. Feature 37 may represent the bottom of the ditch surrounding a low mound that was visible for much of the history of settlement at Coweeta Creek, and this "missing" mound perhaps was a landmark that guided the later placement of the townhouse and plaza at the site.

Feature 37 probably predates all the structures at the site (Rodning 2007b). An analogous semicircular ditch feature—some 36 ft in diameter—is found near the platform mound and plaza at the Town Creek site in the North Carolina Piedmont, and the ditch at Town Creek is thought to date to the Late Woodland period (Boudreaux 2007:46–49). Another ditch feature has been found at the Townsend site in eastern Tennessee, and it is thought to date to the Woodland period (Cameron Howell, personal communication 2007). An oval ditch feature has also been excavated at the Cullowhee Valley School site in the Tuckasee Valley, less than 30 miles northeast of the Coweeta Creek site (Ashcraft 1996). The presence of Napier series pottery at Cullowhee would be consistent with a posited Woodland period date for the site as a whole or the ditch in particular, although the presence of Savannah River stemmed points at the site may also indicate Late Archaic occupation of the site (David Moore, personal communication 2007).

One hearth (Feature 52) is intrusive into Feature 37. An arrangement of four deep postholes around this hearth probably represents a set of four roof support posts. The cloud of postholes around Feature 52 represents a structure (Structure 14) that was built in this area of the site sometime after Feature 37 was no longer visible. This cloud of postholes is some 23 ft in diameter, which is comparable to the sizes of eighteenth-century Cherokee winter houses (Faulkner 1978; Russ and Chapman 1983:38; Schroedl 1986:267, 2000, 2001; but Baden 1983:127 reports an average diameter of 30 ft for circular winter houses at Tomotley). It is also comparable in size and shape to the eighteenth-century Cherokee structure at Tuckasee, some 20 miles northeast of Coweeta Creek (Keel 1976:28–34; Ward 2002; Ward and Davis 1999:268–271).

Structure 14 probably dates late in the history of settlement at the site, as it definitely postdates Feature 37, and there is no evidence for long sequences of structure building and rebuilding like those seen elsewhere at the site. Furthermore, there are higher concentrations of European trade goods from this area of the site than anywhere else other than the last stage of the townhouse, including kaolin pipes, glass beads, and brass artifacts from undisturbed contexts such as



Table 6. Distances between domestic structures and hearths at Coweeta Creek.

Structures	Distance Between Hearths
Structures 7 and 9	65 feet
Structures 6 and 8	65 feet
Structures 4 and 5	54 feet
Structures 4 and 6	36 feet
Structures 5 and 6	36 feet
Structures 3 and 4	32 feet

Features 71, 72, 73 and 74 (Rodning 2004:205–234; 2008). Given all these clues, it is likely that Structure 14 is contemporaneous with late stages of the townhouse, when Feature 37 or the mound associated with it was no longer visible, and when most of the houses in the area of the site south and east of the plaza had been abandoned (Rodning 2004:365–369, 2007a, 2007b, 2008).

The chronological placement of burials in this area of the site is unclear. The characteristics of sherds in the fill of several burial pits would be consistent with a date in the fifteenth century, but as these sherds give us *terminus post quem* dates for the burials themselves, the graves could also date much later. There is no ceramic evidence that definitively places any of these burials in the 1600s or 1700s. The spatial proximity of these burials to Structure 14 and pits such as Feature 72, which can be confidently dated to the end of the 1600s or the beginning of the 1700s, suggests the possibility that some burials in this area of the site date late in the history of this settlement. On the other hand, there is none of the clustering as is seen for burials in the townhouse or in other domestic structures at the site, suggesting they may not have been associated with Structure 14 and, perhaps, they predate Structure 14.

#### Cluster I

Cluster I includes postholes located in an area north of Structure 2 and near the northeastern corner of Structure 1 (Figure 2). This scatter of postholes is tentatively designated as Structure 15 because of its resemblance to the corners of other structures at the site. The chronological relationships between Structure 15 and successive stages of the townhouse are not clear. Frederick Gearing (1962:23) suggests that principal male elders of Cherokee towns lived in houses close to townhouses, both because they were closely associated with the townhouse and the events that took place inside it, and also because they deemphasized any household or clan affiliations in their roles as civic and spiritual leaders of the town as a whole. This point raises the intriguing possibility that Structure 15 at the Coweeta Creek site, which is located only 20 ft away from Structures 1 and 2, represents the dwelling of male town leaders. An alternative possibility is that

Structure 15 simply represents a more “normal” household, comparable to others at the site, except that its members were closely associated with public life and leadership in this Cherokee town. Another possibility is that Structure 15 is another townhouse, one that predates the first stage of Structure 1 or that postdates the last stage of Structure 1.

#### Cluster J

Cluster J includes postholes and pits in an area some 30 to 35 ft wide along the southeastern edge of the Coweeta Creek plaza (Figure 14). Linear arrays of postholes in this area beside the plaza are remnants of ramadas, comparable to but smaller than the townhouse ramada on the northwestern side of the plaza. Structure 16 is an easily discernible example of one such ramada. There are undoubtedly several others in this area of the site. Structure 16 is simply the only one assigned its own formal structure number. Ramadas in this area of the site may have served as an architectural parallel and counterpoint to the townhouse ramada, located on the northwestern side of the plaza. There is only one burial directly inside one of these ramadas, but undoubtedly, several if not all four burials in this area were associated with these ramadas and the activities that took place in this part of the site.

#### *The Townhouse (Cluster A) and Domestic Houses at Coweeta Creek*

Figure 2 shows all the structures present at the Coweeta Creek site, and while not all of these structures are contemporaneous, they generally correspond to an overarching set of alignments that guided the placement and arrangement of both public and domestic structures at the site. Were the townhouse and plaza built first, thereby putting these alignments in place, which then guided the placement and alignment of domestic structures at the site? Or did the townhouse and plaza fit within a conceptual map of the settlement that was already in place before they were built? I suggest that the answer is a combination of both of these scenarios. The townhouse did indeed mark a set of alignments that also guided the layout of the plaza and of domestic houses in areas around the plaza. I would even go so far as to say that this shared alignment—and the overarching similarities between the townhouse and the domestic structures at the site—symbolically connected houses to others in the community and to the townhouse itself, which was a metaphorical manifestation of the town as a whole. The conceptual map that guided the placement and alignment of the original townhouse was still in place when the last stages of the townhouse were built. At

this point in the early eighteenth century, most dwellings had been abandoned, except, perhaps, for Structure 14. The conceptual map that guided the placement and alignment of the townhouse and dwellings dating to the seventeenth century may even have been in place in some form before the townhouse was first built. Although there are different shapes and different rebuilding sequences of fifteenth-century and seventeenth-century structures at the site, the alignments of the entryways are similar. Perhaps Feature 37 represents an early landmark that guided the later placement of the townhouse and plaza, and the orientation of domestic structures at the site.

### Discussion

The past was always present in the built environment at Coweeta Creek, in the form of architecture that referenced preceding manifestations of structures and the orientations and alignments of those structures, and in the form of burials associated with them. The foregoing section has described the sequences of public and domestic architecture at the site, and the following discussion compares and contrasts those rebuilding sequences, and the burials present associated with different structures at the site. Variation in rebuilding sequences and in the burials inside different structures gives us clues about the development of the settlement plan through time.

Different types of rebuilding sequences seen in domestic structures at Coweeta Creek correspond with different degrees of spacing between those houses. Structures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 are square structures with rounded corners, range from 18 to 23 ft per side, and were built and rebuilt in place. These dwellings are comparable to Structure 1, and they share the same orientation as the townhouse. These rebuilding sequences are the same as that of Structure 1, with hearths and roof support posts kept mostly in place from one stage to another. Structures 7 and 9, by contrast, are circular structures, roughly 29 and 32 ft in diameter, and they are spaced 65 ft apart. The former kind of structure, those comparable to and presumably contemporaneous with the townhouse, are spaced between 30 and 65 ft apart (Figure 2). These numbers are based on relatively few measurements between structures—and, specifically, between the hearths of those structures—and so we should not place too much interpretive value on the numbers themselves (Table 6). These data nevertheless do indicate that the spacing between houses during the 1600s ranges from 30 to 52 ft, if we consider the measurement between Structures 6 and 8 as an outlier. The distance between Structures 6 and 8—65 ft—may have resulted in part from the presence nearby of the remnants of aban-

doned Structures 7 and 9, and it may be more accurate to say that the typical spacing between domestic structures during the 1600s is 30 to 40 ft.

Not only do these data indicate the presence of a more nucleated settlement in the 1600s than was present in the 1400s, but another major difference between these periods of settlement at Coweeta Creek is that there was a townhouse present here in the 1600s and at the beginning of the 1700s, whereas there is no evidence of public architecture from the fifteenth century. Even though individual domestic houses may have been built and rebuilt based on the needs and actions of individual households—rather than the community as a whole as in the case of building and rebuilding a townhouse—the layout of these houses always referenced the alignment and orientation of the original townhouse, townhouse ramada, and plaza. This patterning within the built environment connected houses and households to each other, and to the townhouse, as the center of public life within the community.

Even if I am right in dating Structures 7 and 9 to the 1400s, before the townhouse was built, and in dating Structures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 to the 1600s, there would have been other changes in the layout of this settlement, as specific stages of these houses were built, abandoned, and rebuilt. Differences in the numbers of stages of the hearths inside domestic structures give us some clues about which stages were built when. Based on the numbers of stages of hearths and entryways, there are three to five stages of Structures 3, 4, 5, and 8, but only two stages of Structure 6, which leads me to conclude that Structure 6 dates later than Structures 3, 4, 5, and 8, if we assume that all of these domestic structures were abandoned at roughly the same time. Meanwhile, the absence of burials from Structure 6 also leads me to think that it was built late in the history of domestic settlement at Coweeta Creek, and the shorter period between the construction and abandonment of this building means there were fewer deaths in this household than in others with longer construction sequences. Conversely, the presence of six burials inside Structure 8 leads me to think that it was one of the first of the seventeenth-century houses at Coweeta Creek, and its proximity to remnants of fifteenth-century houses (Structures 7 and 9) may be no accident.

Another interesting pattern that differentiates Structure 8 from Structures 3, 4, 5, and 6 is that two of its six burials are associated with grave goods, including a mature adult woman with a clay pipe, and an indeterminate young adult with a shell mask gorget. Only one other burial inside Structures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 has any grave goods (Burial 63, an adult woman with one clay pipe), although several fragments of animal bone were found in Burial 37, which is associated with

Structure 11, and turtle shell rattles and shell beads were found in Burial 40, which is associated with the ramadas on the southeastern edge of the plaza. The presence of grave goods in the burials inside Structure 8 is even more noteworthy given the proximity of this house to Structure 9, which, again, dates to the fifteenth (rather than the seventeenth) century but also has several burials in it, all of which are associated with grave goods. Based on the proximity of Structures 8 and 9, and the relative concentrations of grave goods in burials associated with those structures, I suggest that the household associated with Structure 8 may have been a relatively high-status household within the seventeenth-century community at Coweeta Creek. Based on the numbers of burials in Structure 8 and the numbers of stages of its hearth, I suggest that it may also have been a founding household of the town at Coweeta Creek, and, perhaps, the seventeenth-century household associated with Structure 8 traced its ancestry back to the fifteenth-century household associated with Structure 9.

### Conclusions

The archaeological features shown on the Coweeta Creek site map are an outcome of a long history of settlement and changes in its built environment, and mapping the site at different points in the past is a difficult task. The townhouse sequence is relatively straightforward, because this public structure—and, presumably, the ramada beside it—was built and rebuilt in place. Domestic structures, and successive stages of them, are somewhat more difficult to pinpoint.

I suggest the following scenario for the history of the settlement at Coweeta Creek. A small mound with a ditch enclosing it, or perhaps a combination of a mound and embankment, may have been built in the area of the site where Feature 37 is located, and this landmark may predate all the other features and structures at Coweeta Creek. During the fifteenth century, several houses—probably comprising a small village—were built at the site. These houses include Structures 7 and 9, which were abandoned during the fifteenth century. The structures and enclosures along the southwestern edge of the plaza may date to this period or earlier, as there are no comparable structures anywhere else along the plaza that can be considered contemporaneous with the plaza itself. During the seventeenth century—the site may have been abandoned during the intervening period—the townhouse and plaza were built, as were most of the domestic structures seen around the edges of the plaza on the site map. Structures 3, 4, 5, and 8, and the ramadas built along the southeastern edge of the plaza, were probably built at about the same time as the first stage

of the townhouse. Structure 6 may have been built somewhat later. Most of the domestic structures were abandoned by the late seventeenth century, but the townhouse (and, presumably, the plaza too) was still present at the beginning of the eighteenth century. A single domestic house (Structure 14) may date to the early eighteenth century, and the ramadas beside the plaza were probably still in place, because the plaza itself was still in use, although most households associated with this town had dispersed into the surrounding area and perhaps to other known archaeological sites in the vicinity of Coweeta Creek.

I conclude here by emphasizing that the nucleated settlement at Coweeta Creek—with the townhouse, plaza, and closely spaced domestic structures around the plaza—most likely dates to the seventeenth century, after Spanish contact in the Southeast but before the spread of English trade networks to the southern Appalachians. As has been demonstrated by others (Goodwin 1977; Hill 1997; Pillsbury 1983; Schroedl 2000, 2001; Sullivan 1995; Wilms 1974, 1991), the built environment of Cherokee towns changed dramatically—in the long run—after early stages of European contact, and by the late eighteenth century, nucleated towns typical of late prehistory in the southern Appalachians had given way to a pattern of dispersed communities in which households were spaced widely across the landscape. This pattern is also seen in the history of Creek towns in other parts of the Southeast (Ethridge 2003; Smith 2000), where houses affiliated with a town were widely spaced along rivers for distances of several miles from each other. Undoubtedly, such changes in settlement patterns had major implications for the social dynamics within native towns, and the relationships people and towns formed with the places in which they lived. However, this spatial dispersal—influenced at least in part by the slave trade and new forms of warfare, disease epidemics, the deerskin trade, or combinations of these and other forces—did not happen immediately after European contact in the Southeast.

Spanish explorations and colonization, beginning in the sixteenth century, led to considerable changes in the cultural landscape and social dynamics of native towns in the southern Appalachians. The formally planned town at Coweeta Creek—including the townhouse, townhouse ramada, town plaza, and several closely spaced houses in areas around the plaza—dates to the seventeenth century, after sixteenth-century Spanish expeditions but before the development of the eighteenth-century English deerskin trade that emanated westward from South Carolina. I conclude that the patterned placement and shared alignment of public and domestic structures at Coweeta Creek created close social ties among households within the community and close connections between households

and the leadership of the town as a whole. I suggest further that the rebuilding sequences seen in both the townhouse and dwellings at Coweeta Creek created a sense of permanence in connecting the built environment of the town to its past. Even when most of the dwellings had been abandoned, the life of the townhouse and plaza continued, and these major landmarks within the community continued to adhere to the placements and alignments that had long guided the layout of this settlement.

In many respects, the settlement layout at Coweeta Creek is a manifestation of a general pattern seen at Mississippian sites throughout the Southeast, with public structures and domestic houses placed around plazas. This pattern is visible at many late prehistoric sites in eastern Tennessee and northern Georgia (Gougeon 2007:137–140; Hally 1988, 1994; Schroedl 1998; Smith 1987:95–97; Sullivan 1987, 1995). Another manifestation of this general pattern is seen at the late prehistoric Warren Wilson site in western North Carolina, where several domestic houses were placed around a plaza and enclosed within a log stockade, although no public buildings have been recognized at this site (Dickens 1976, 1978; Moore 2002b).

Continuity of this pattern at protohistoric sites in the Southeast, and the “sense of place” manifested in them, can be seen, therefore, as a form of cultural persistence and resistance to early stages of European contact in North America. The breakdown of the general Mississippian town plan during the eighteenth century, if not earlier than that, may have been a major *source* of (and not merely an *outcome* of) cultural instability and change in the Native American Southeast. At the Coweeta Creek site, the late prehistoric nucleated community plan was in place during the seventeenth century, and it persisted through the late 1600s and early 1700s, in the form of late stages of the townhouse that referenced the “old” settlement layout, even though most or all of the domestic houses at Coweeta Creek had been abandoned.

Viewed from this perspective, the architecture and built environment at Coweeta Creek can be seen as a source of stability in the rapidly changing world of southeastern North America that followed early encounters between native peoples and Europeans. Not only are there sequences of townhouses and houses built and rebuilt in place, but these structures also fit into an overarching settlement plan, and one that may have included a log stockade that enclosed the settlement. Later stages of public and domestic structures at the site demonstrate adherence to this overarching settlement plan. None of the houses at Coweeta Creek has as many stages as the townhouse, but there is evidence in both architectural settings at Coweeta Creek for an emphasis on continuity in the

placement and alignment of structures and the overall layout of the settlement. Sequences of houses did not last as long as the sequence of townhouses, but both public and domestic structures were built and rebuilt to achieve permanence and to connect households to the same places where they and their predecessors, some of whom were buried in those spaces, had lived (Rodning 2002a, 2004, 2007a). Rather than merely being the backdrop for the practice of public and domestic life, the architecture and built environment at Coweeta Creek also served to balance the destabilizing effects of European contact in the Southeast. People at Coweeta Creek asserted connections to place, both at the scale of the whole town and at the scale of individual households within the town, through building and rebuilding structures in place and through burying people within those architectural spaces.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup>The UNC Research Laboratories of Anthropology was founded in 1939, and in 1997, it changed its name to the Research Laboratories of Archaeology.

<sup>2</sup>The Cherokee Archaeological Project, which included excavations at Warren Wilson, Garden Creek, and other sites in the Appalachian Summit, was funded by the National Science Foundation. The principal investigator was the late Joffre Lanning Coe, then director of the RLA, and professor of anthropology at UNC. Principal participants and field directors of excavations at Coweeta Creek included Brian Egloff and Bennie Keel. Many other graduate and undergraduate students from UNC participated in this fieldwork, and in work at other sites in western North Carolina as part of the Cherokee Project, including Keith Egloff, Leland Ferguson, John Halsey, Patricia Holden, Robert Keeler, Drew Mattson, the late Alexander “Sandy” Morrison III, Jefferson Reid, Jeannette Runquist, Steve Sensenig, and John Walthall. Notably, R. P. Stephen Davis Jr., now research associate at the RLA and adjunct research professor of anthropology at UNC, participated in processing artifacts from Coweeta Creek in the RLA lab on the UNC campus as an undergraduate. Meanwhile, Charles Frazier, author of the novels *Cold Mountain* and *Thirteen Moons*, participated in excavations at

Coweeta Creek as a high school student from a nearby town, before his freshman year at UNC.

<sup>3</sup>Published estimates for the longevity of aboriginal domestic structures in late prehistoric eastern North America range from about five to as much as 25 years, although 15 years (or less) is widely considered an upper limit for the expected duration of houses made of earth and wood (Cook 2005, 2007:447–449; Muller 1997:189–192; Pauketat 1989, 2003:45–47; Smith 1995:239–243; Warrick 1988). Public structures like the Coweeta Creek townhouse probably lasted somewhat longer than domestic structures because rebuilding public structures would demand the participation of an entire community, whereas domestic houses could have been built and rebuilt by individual households whenever necessary and whenever labor and necessary materials were available. These estimates of structure longevity are probably generally applicable to dwelling houses at Coweeta Creek as well.

<sup>4</sup>Vernon J. Knight Jr. (2007) and H. Trawick Ward (personal communication, 2003) have both emphasized the importance of associating particular postholes and other features with particular structures based on observations *in the field*, rather than, for example, connecting dots on site maps, as I am doing here. Knight emphasizes the importance of understanding the architectural design of structures in determining which postholes, for example, represent specific elements of a building. He correctly notes that there is considerable regularity in post dimensions and post spacing at many Mississippian sites in the Southeast, meaning that posthole patterns representing structures can be and should be identified as such in the field. Ward has cogently argued that posthole patterns representing structures should be so identified based on direct observations in the field of the fill characteristics of postholes, and their placement and spacing relative to each other and to other features. He and his colleagues and students have done just that in their own fieldwork. I agree with these viewpoints, and that broad horizontal exposures and field observations are the best way to identify discrete posthole patterns representing structures at aboriginal sites in North Carolina. I also think that we can draw some conclusions about the presence of and the dimensions of structures through analyses of site maps, as is done here for Coweeta Creek, especially when at least some of the relevant posthole patterns are clearly discernible.

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