

*Special Thematic Section*  
**REVISITING COWEETA CREEK**  
*edited by Christopher B. Rodning and Amber M. VanDerwarker*

**REVISITING COWEETA CREEK: RECONSTRUCTING ANCIENT CHEROKEE  
LIFEWAYS IN SOUTHWESTERN NORTH CAROLINA**

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*This review of the history of fieldwork at the Coweeta Creek site (31MA34) in southwestern North Carolina sets the stage for the case studies that follow. The Coweeta Creek site, a mound and associated village in the upper Little Tennessee Valley, was excavated from 1965 to 1971 by the Research Laboratories of Anthropology (RLA) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as part of the Cherokee Archaeological Project. The primary goal of this broader regional project by the RLA was to reconstruct the origins and development of Cherokee culture in the Appalachian Summit province of western North Carolina. Case studies included in this collection concentrate on select aspects of the archaeological record from Coweeta Creek to explore native lifeways at this ancient Cherokee town.*

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During the 1960s and 1970s, archaeologists affiliated with the Research Laboratories of Anthropology (RLA) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) conducted fieldwork at the Coweeta Creek site (31MA34) and other sites in southwestern North Carolina as part of a regional study of the origins and development of Cherokee culture (Figure 1; Coe 1961; Crouch 1974; Dickens 1976:6-9; Egloff 1967; Egloff 1971; Ferguson 1971; Holden 1966; Keel 1976:12-16; Runquist 1979; Ward 1985). Some thirty years later, RLA (now, the Research Laboratories of Archaeology) associates and UNC graduate students have been revisiting collections from Coweeta Creek with renewed interest in its material record of ancient Cherokee lifeways (Figure 2; Lambert 2000, 2001; Rodning 2001a, 2001b; Schroedl 2001a:209-210, 2001b:286-287; VanDerwarker and Detwiler 2000; Ward and Davis 1999:183-190).

The Coweeta Creek site includes a townhouse mound and village that dates to the protohistoric and perhaps the late prehistoric periods, although pinpointing the beginning and ending points of its long and complicated settlement history still demands further consideration. There was no recognized Middle Cherokee town at Coweeta Creek in the mid- and late eighteenth century when European colonists began describing and map-

ping this cultural landscape, but European trade goods are associated with late stages of the mound. The articles collected here exemplify recent interest in the archaeological record at the Coweeta Creek site. Our introduction briefly describes both the excavations conducted at Coweeta Creek between 1965 and 1971 and the significance of this fieldwork within the broader regional project of which it was a part.

### The Cherokee Archaeological Project

The Cherokee Archaeological Project sought to reconstruct the origins and development of Cherokee culture from prehistoric through historic periods in western North Carolina (Coe 1961; Dickens 1978). RLA archaeologists began conducting pedestrian surveys of river valleys in western North Carolina in the 1960s. Fieldwork in the region continued until the 1970s, and artifacts and records from this fieldwork have been curated by the RLA at the UNC campus. Archaeological literature resulting from these investigations concentrates primarily on the Woodland period mound and the Mississippi period mounds and village at Garden Creek, the Mississippian village at Warren Wilson, an eighteenth-century Cherokee structure on the Tucka-

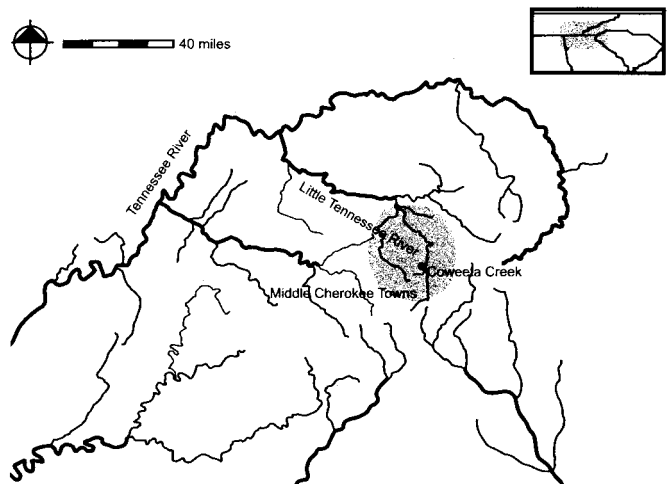


Figure 1. Location of the historic Middle Cherokee towns in southwestern North Carolina and the Coweeta Creek archaeological site.

segee River, and an eighteenth-century Cherokee cabin on the Hiwassee River. The protohistoric cultural landscape of southwestern North Carolina has received only cursory treatment. At present the most abundant source of evidence about native lifeways from the sixteenth through the early eighteenth centuries is the Coweeta Creek site, located north of the confluence of Coweeta Creek and the Little Tennessee River.

One outcome of UNC's Cherokee Archaeological Project has been an archaeological framework for culture history in western North Carolina. Culture historical phases from the Early Archaic through Early Historic periods have been outlined (Dickens 1976:9-15; Keel 1976:16-19, 213-232; see also Purrington 1983).

Much of the material culture recovered at Coweeta Creek is attributable to the Qualla phase, which spans the late fifteenth through early nineteenth centuries in southwestern North Carolina (Dickens 1978, 1979; Hally 1994:148-149). Surface treatments and rim modes of Qualla pottery resemble those of Mississippi period Pisgah-series pottery in western North Carolina, and those of the sixteenth-century Tugaloo and eighteenth-century Estatoe series of northeastern Georgia and northwestern South Carolina (Cable and Reed 2000:112-124; Egloff 1967; Greene 1995; Hally 1986:98-112; Ward and Davis 1999:178-179; Williams and Thompson 1999:97-99). Ceramics from sites that are clearly attributable to historic Cherokee settlements in western

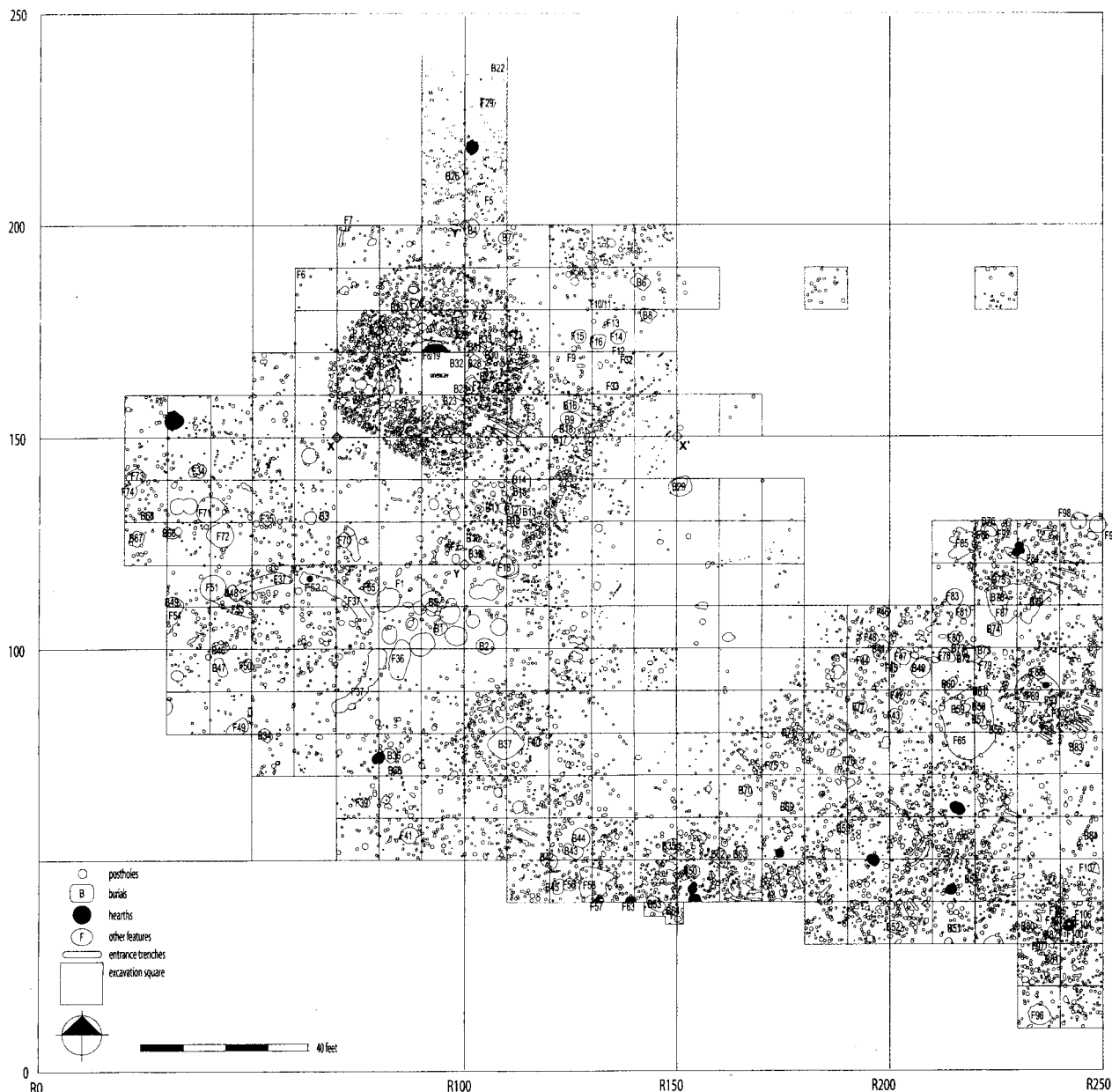


Figure 2. Map of the Coweeta Creek site (see also Egloff 1971:44). The points marked X-X' and Y-Y' are the endpoints of the mound-profile drawings shown in Figure 3.

North Carolina can be designated as Qualla. At present, the archaeological literature more clearly outlines the characteristics of late Qualla ceramics than those of earlier forms.

Another outcome of UNC's Cherokee Archaeological Project has been the careful dissection of selected sites in western North Carolina. Garden Creek has yielded insights about the evolution of Mississippian public architecture in western North Carolina, in addition to clues about Woodland period settlement (Anderson 1994:308-309; Dickens 1976:69-88; Keel 1976:153-158; Rudolph 1984:33-34; Walthall 1985; Ward and Davis 1999:171-178). Warren Wilson continues to reveal clues about the life history of a late prehistoric village and the architecture of Mississippian houses in western North Carolina, as well as Archaic period lifeways (Dickens 1976:94-101; Keel 1976:207-212; Ward 1985; Ward and Davis 1999:160-171). These and other sites have shed light on late prehistoric native lifeways in southwestern North Carolina from Archaic through Mississippi periods. Archaeology at Coweeta Creek promises to yield insights about native culture and community during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Surveys and excavations by the RLA in the upper Little Tennessee Valley followed the same methods and procedures as UNC fieldwork in other areas (see Keel, Egloff, and Egloff, this volume). Pedestrian surveys were conducted in fields chosen for good surface visibility and to which access had been granted by landowners. Surface collections from these surveys essentially are grab samples of artifacts, mostly potsherds and stone tools. Standard survey procedure involved walking entirely across sites to find their edges and to define any apparent concentrations of artifacts. Visual impressions of site boundaries and artifact concentrations were noted on maps drawn in the field. The large quantity of potsherds recovered from Coweeta Creek led to controlled surface collections, and to the excavation of several test pits that yielded considerable amounts of pottery. Most of the artifacts found on the ground surface at Coweeta Creek came from the mound, although several concentrations, which correspond roughly to the locations of domestic houses at the site, were present in the village (see Figure 2). The mound comprises several stages of a public architectural form known as a townhouse (Figure 3).

Positive results from surveys and test excavations at Coweeta Creek led to its selection for more extensive excavation comparable to the ongoing investigations at other sites in western North Carolina, such as Garden Creek and Warren Wilson. Hundreds of artifacts were present on the ground surface at Coweeta Creek, and further study promised to yield results comparable to 1964 excavations by the RLA at Tuckasegee (31JK12; Keel 1976:22-64) and Townson (31CE15; Dickens 1967:14-17), sites in neighboring river valleys, where rem-

nants of native architecture dating to the eighteenth century were uncovered. Surface collecting at Coweeta Creek recovered significantly more artifacts than were found at many other sites in the upper Little Tennessee Valley inspected by RLA archaeologists during the Cherokee Archaeological Project. The farmer and landowner offered access to the field along the Little Tennessee River, near the contemporary town of Otto where the Coweeta Creek site is located. Contiguous excavations commenced in June 1965, and fieldwork continued at Coweeta Creek until August 1971, during long field seasons that ran from the late spring through the fall each year.

### The Coweeta Creek Site

Excavation methods at Coweeta Creek also followed procedures established by RLA at its other projects in southwestern North Carolina (Dickens 1976; Keel 1976). A controlled surface collection grid was maintained, with the mound divided into four quadrants and nine other irregularly shaped surface collection zones in the area surrounding the mound. A datum was established and given an arbitrary elevation of 100 ft., and all horizontal and vertical readings at the site were taken relative to this datum. The grid references an origin at 0R0, with the first number referring to "feet north of the x-axis," and the second to "feet right of the y-axis," which pass through the origin. The original datum was placed at grid coordinate 40R230. A second datum was established at grid coordinate 140R110. Excavation squares

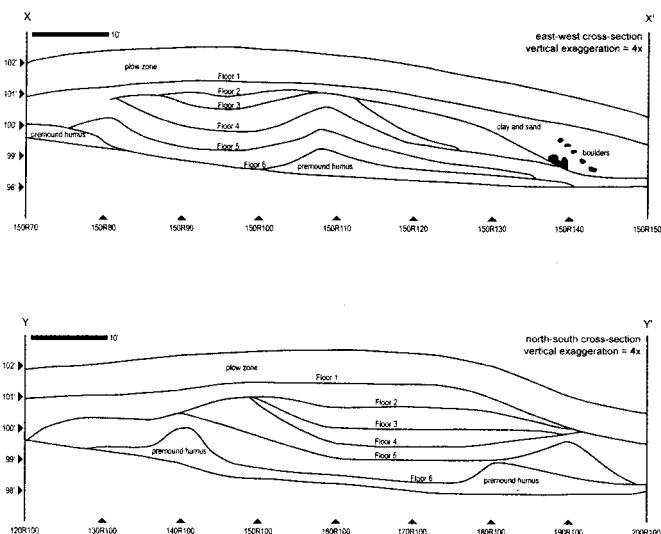


Figure 3. Profiles of the Coweeta Creek mound (see also Egloff 1971:57). Note that the vertical scales and horizontal scales in this drawing are different, which exaggerates the height and slope of mound deposits; the endpoints of these profile drawings are shown in the plan-view site map in Figure 2.

measuring 10 by 10 ft. were labeled according to the grid coordinates at their southeastern corners. Field crews established a grid and took measurements using English units of measure.

For squares in the mound, the plow zone was removed, then intact stratigraphic layers were mapped and excavated separately. In other parts of the site, the removal of plow zone exposed layers of sand covering the clay subsoil in the plaza, the remnants of structures in the village area, and hundreds of pits and postholes visible at the top of subsoil. All pits and postholes visible at the top of subsoil and at other recognized stratigraphic levels were mapped. Plow zone ranged in depth from roughly 4 to 10 in. Many but not all of the postholes were excavated. Numbers were assigned to 83 burials ("Burial 65" was not used), in which were found the skeletal remains of 88 individuals. Numbers were assigned to 106 features ("Feature 21" was not used), including architectural debris, pits, hearths, and ceramic vessel sections.

Plow zone was excavated with shovels, and intact structural floors and all burials and features were excavated with trowels. Nearly all of the deposits in excavation squares were screened through ½-in. mesh in mechanical or manual sifters, although a minimal amount of material—small portions of the plow zone and some of the daub debris—was not screened. In those few instances, deposits were carefully inspected by hand for artifacts. All fill from features and burials was water screened on site through ¼-, ⅛-, and ⅙-in. mesh. Few flotation samples were taken during excavations, the volumes of these samples are unknown, and to our knowledge none have been processed.

Excavations of the Coweeta Creek mound continued from 1965 to 1969. The mound, which stood some 4 ft. tall prior to excavation, represents the remnants of at least six stages of a public structure, the townhouse, with each manifestation built directly atop the dismantled and burned remnants of its predecessor. At most, several inches separated the packed floors of successive stages of this large structure. Beneath the upper two stages of this structure, the excavators left intact a 10 by 10 ft. block beside the hearth for the sake of future reference and for the stratigraphic clues visible in the profiles of this soil monolith.

By the end of the 1965 season of fieldwork at Coweeta Creek, posthole patterns from the last stage of the townhouse and the rectangular arbor beside its doorway had

been exposed. It was immediately apparent that remnants of earlier manifestations of this structure were present lower down in the mound, and that excavating the mound would be more complicated than originally thought. During the 1966 and 1967 seasons, squares encircling the mound were excavated to subsoil, effectively pedestaling the series of townhouses. Exploratory trenches in the northwest, southwest, southeast, and northeast corners of the mound in 1967 and 1968 offered additional guides for subsequent mound excavation; from that point forward, excavators removed deposits lying between floors and those lying directly on floors as separate proveniences. The fill between floors was dry sifted. All material collected from within roughly 1 in. of the floors themselves was water screened in the same manner as fill from features and burials. Much of the material recovered from the thin lenses of fill between floors is architectural rubble, including burned daub, charred wood, and burned sand and clay. Considerable numbers of potsherds and other artifacts, as well as archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological specimens, found their way into the floor debris deposits and into the lenses of fill between floors.

Most of the articles in this thematic collection draw comparisons between material culture derived from different deposits at Coweeta Creek, particularly from the townhouse. As such, we feel it important to consider briefly issues of site formation as they relate to the townhouse. To understand the formation of townhouse deposits, however, we also consider the formation of domestic deposits (Schiffer 1976, 1985). Here we present three possible scenarios for the formation of the townhouse floor deposits, along with a series of taphonomic indicators for evaluating these scenarios (Table 1). We then offer our current model for the creation of deposits within the mound.

The first scenario proposes that the debris dumped onto the floors of dismantled townhouses, between successive building stages, represents secondary or tertiary refuse transported from domestic areas elsewhere on the site (*sensu* Schiffer 1985:29). This refuse could have been scooped up from pit features or midden areas in the village, and deposited on top of dismantled stages of the townhouse before succeeding manifestations of the townhouse were built. If this scenario were accurate, we would expect to find potsherds relatively small to moderate in size.

Table 1. Possible scenarios and expectations for the formation of the townhouse floor deposits.

	Type of Refuse	Origin of Refuse	Ceramic Expectations
Scenario I	secondary/tertiary	trash pits/midden	small to moderately-sized sherds
Scenario II	tertiary	around townhouse	small sherds
Scenario III	primary/secondary	abandonment	large sherds

Table 2. Summary statistics of rim sherds by context.

	N	Mean <sup>a</sup>	s.d.
Townhouse floors <sup>b</sup>	140	48	34
Townhouse perimeter	142	32	14
Pit features	139	36	23

<sup>a</sup> Maximum length (mm)

<sup>b</sup> Statistically significant at 0.01 level

Our second scenario supposes that the debris dumped on townhouse floors represents tertiary fill from the plaza or the area immediately surrounding the townhouse (Schiffer 1985:29). These areas of the site must have been high-traffic areas, and artifacts originally deposited there would have been subject to considerable trampling, resulting in excessive breakage (Schiffer 1976, 1985). If this were the case, then we would expect to find potsherds from the townhouse floors to be smaller than those from intact pit features or midden dumps.

A third conceivable scenario proposes that townhouse deposits represent refuse associated with the destruction and rebuilding of the townhouse. This might include a combination of primary and secondary refuse relating to public events held in or around the townhouse (Schiffer 1985:24-29). Dismantling and covering an old townhouse and creating a space to build its successor could have occasioned a significant public gathering in which “old” townhouses were “buried” and social ties were renewed within the community (Knight 1981:48; Krause 1996:62; Schambach 1996:41). Given this scenario, we would expect townhouse potsherds to be significantly larger than those derived from ordinary domestic deposits in the village.

To test these expectations, we must compare the townhouse floor deposits with areas of the site likely to yield secondary and tertiary refuse, including various pit features and high-traffic areas such as those immediately adjacent to the townhouse. By making these comparisons, we hope to understand better the nature of townhouse deposits in relation to ordinary domestic trash.

To evaluate the scenarios outlined above, we measured the maximum length of rim sherds from all townhouse floors, fourteen pit features, and four 10 by 10 ft. squares adjacent to the townhouse (Figure 4). Pit features were selected at random from locations throughout the site, and squares adjacent to the townhouse were chosen to represent high-traffic areas in this public space. A two-sample t-test of maximum rim sherd length for all three contexts shows that rim sherds from the townhouse floors are significantly larger (at the 0.01 level, for both pooled and separate variances) than rim sherds from either the pit features or the units adjacent to the townhouse (Table 2). Rim sherd length did not differ significantly between the sampled pit features and the squares, suggesting that both samples derive from similar refuse disposal activities. We conclude that refuse deposited on the townhouse floors differs from refuse deposited in pit features and high-traffic areas adjacent to the townhouse.

Given the scenarios outlined above, it is probable that a significant portion of the refuse from the townhouse floor deposits represents secondary refuse, with a

minimal inclusion of some primary refuse. Indeed, it is wholly possible that these deposits represent a combination of some or all three of these scenarios. Each townhouse was likely swept clean during its tenure as the public architectural center for the surrounding town, thus minimizing the amount of material left lying on the floor during the course of everyday activities. Undoubtedly some of the material found in townhouse floor deposits directly relates to the “life” of each stage of this public structure. But it is also likely that much of this material was dumped onto the dismantled and burned remnants of “dead” townhouses, perhaps for symbolic reasons as well as for the practical purpose of creating a surface for a new townhouse. Nevertheless, the debris itself conceivably has multiple origins, including feasts that were part of townhouse renewal events and the disposal of debris from activities that occurred in the plaza and in domestic areas of the site.

The deposits lying on the floors of different stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse may have different origins. This is especially important to consider if indeed the last stages of the townhouse were buried and rebuilt after the village was largely, if not wholly, abandoned. Stratigraphic evidence indicates, however, that deposits between successive floors of the townhouse are comparable (Bennie C. Keel, personal communication 2002; Egloff 1971). There is some variation in the thickness of deposits, but this variation is minimal. It seems most likely that the patterns of dismantling, covering, and rebuilding the townhouse were relatively similar for all stages of the mound, which itself is an outcome of a series of structural episodes, rather than a mound built specifically as a substructural platform.

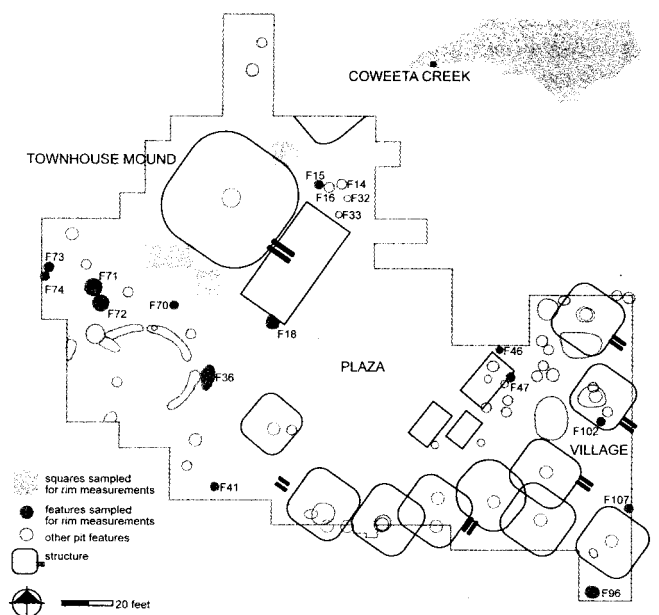


Figure 4. Schematic map of the Coweeta Creek site showing areas sampled for rim measurements.

Postholes pose another complication in reconstructing the taphonomy of mound deposits. Given the minimal thickness of fill episodes between successive floors, hundreds of postholes from later stages of the Coweeta Creek townhouse probably intruded into earlier levels of the mound and cut through one or more floors. Potsherds may have been intentionally placed in postholes as shims and others undoubtedly migrated downward as postholes filled. Similarly the rebuilding of the hearth, which was kept at the same spot in each stage of the townhouse, created intrusive features. For all these reasons, making clear cut analytical distinctions between materials found lying on floors or between floors of the Coweeta Creek townhouse is very difficult.

When excavation of the series of townhouses was completed, site investigations moved into areas surrounding the mound. At the eastern edge of the mound were remnants of covered ramadas that stood beside each manifestation of the townhouse. Layers of clay and clusters of river boulders in this part of the mound may be remnants of a ramp that sloped gently downward from the doorway of the townhouse to the plaza.

Beneath the plow zone in the plaza were lenses of sand and clay, remnants of landscaping in this area of town. European-made glass beads and kaolin pipe fragments were found in sand lenses in the plaza, as well as in overlying plow zone contexts. These lenses of sand and the artifacts within them most likely represent deposits from some of the latest events and activities that took place in the plaza, which was probably swept and otherwise maintained as a clean level surface as long as it remained in use by the community.

Excavation of the plaza and village area at Coweeta Creek occurred from 1969 to 1971. Isolated squares were dug north and northeast of the main excavation area in search of any signs of a stockade and to evaluate how much area might have been part of this settlement. Posthole patterns or other direct archaeological evidence of a log stockade have not been identified at the site. The compact arrangement of structures nevertheless suggests that a stockade surrounded the town. Several dwellings were uncovered in the village area. Surface collections covering some 3 ac. suggest that many more were likely present south and east of the excavations. The village may have covered much of the bottomland between the excavated areas and the river, which runs some 300 ft. east of the mound.

The scale of contiguous excavations at Coweeta Creek makes it one of the most extensively investigated native settlements in western North Carolina. Some 276 squares were excavated, which corresponds to an exposure of 27,600 square ft., mostly contiguous. As shown in Figure 2, squares 180R190 and 180R230 were placed north of the main excavation block. Square 270R230 is

not shown in Figure 2, but postholes were present at the top of subsoil in this square northeast of the mound.

Artifact collections from Coweeta Creek represent an abundant source of data about native lifeways in late prehistoric and protohistoric southwestern North Carolina. The specimen catalog from Coweeta Creek lists over 600,000 artifacts, including more than 500,000 potsherds and more than 10,000 lithic artifacts. European trade goods present in late stages of the Coweeta Creek mound and plaza include glass beads, kaolin pipe fragments, and some metal artifacts. These indicate that the last stages of the townhouse at Coweeta Creek were built during the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries. The style and spatial patterning of public and domestic architecture at Coweeta Creek suggest that a formally planned town was founded in the late sixteenth century or perhaps even earlier.

Structures at Coweeta Creek are similar to late prehistoric houses found at Mississippian towns and villages in western North Carolina and in the upper Tennessee Valley (Dickens 1978; Hally 1994:155; Hally and Kelly 1998:53; Polhemus 1990:126; Schroedl 2001b:286-287; Sullivan 1987; Ward and Davis 1999:162). There are, however, significant differences between the architecture and settlement plan of Coweeta Creek and those of historic Cherokee towns in the southern Appalachians (Schroedl 2001a:212-221; Sullivan 1995:104-106; Waselkov 1997:188-190). Paired summer ramadas and winter lodges are characteristic of Cherokee domestic architecture dating to the eighteenth century. At Coweeta Creek, postholes in the area between the plaza and village may represent lightly built ramadas comparable to historic Cherokee summer houses, but these ramadas are not specifically paired with other structures.

The townhouse and domestic houses at Coweeta Creek more closely resemble Mississippian structures in their design than eighteenth-century Cherokee architecture. Houses at Coweeta Creek are comparable to those at late prehistoric sites such as Warren Wilson and Ledford Island (Dickens 1978:123; Schroedl 1998:84; Sullivan 1987, 1995). Layout of the Coweeta Creek village also resembles Mississippian settlement plans more than the dispersed town plans characteristic of the eighteenth century. Clearly, the presence of European trade goods reflects the presence of some kind of settlement at Coweeta Creek at the dawn of the eighteenth century. By then, Coweeta Creek was probably very different from the nucleated town that existed at this locality in earlier centuries. Further assessment of the chronology and evolution of the settlement plan at Coweeta Creek is needed. Nevertheless, we know that its architecture and artifacts hold valuable clues about culture and community in southwestern North Carolina during the late prehistoric and early historic periods.

### Recent Interests in the Coweeta Creek Site

Collections from the Coweeta Creek site lend themselves to the study of many different aspects of native lifeways during these periods of Cherokee history. The original themes that motivated RLA fieldwork in western North Carolina in the 1960s and 1970s are still topics of considerable interest to contemporary archaeologists and ethnohistorians. Indeed, the relationship between historic Cherokee communities and ancestral groups represented by late prehistoric archaeological complexes remains an unresolved problem. The authors of the following articles have examined RLA collections from Coweeta Creek with interests in other anthropological issues, including themes different from those that guided fieldwork and interpretation by members of the Cherokee Archaeological Project.

One thread in recent interpretations of archaeology at Coweeta Creek has been the relationship between gender and leadership in southern Appalachia during the late prehistoric and historic periods (Sullivan and Rodning 2001). Many more adult men than women are present in graves within the Coweeta Creek townhouse, including one male elder with an engraved rattlesnake shell gorget and another with a quiver of seven arrows and a variety of other symbolically charged mortuary goods. The oldest women found in graves at Coweeta Creek were buried preferentially in and beside houses in the village, including one woman with a ground stone celt and two women with turtle shell rattles. Rodning (2001a) has interpreted these spatial patterns to reflect the privileged access of women and men in this community to different kinds of power, primarily through men's involvement in the practice of diplomacy and war between towns and women's roles as leaders of matrilineal clans and households within towns. This interpretation situates these complementary forms of power in events and activities that took place primarily within the settings of public and household architecture, respectively.

Another theme in recent archaeological considerations of Coweeta Creek is the study of ancient Cherokee foodways (VanDerwarker and Detwiler 2000). Archaeobotanical specimens reflect the reliance of this community on cultigens such as maize, beans, and squash, as well as foraged resources such as nuts, fruits, and wild grasses. Peach pits found in the Coweeta Creek townhouse mound reflect adoption of Old World foods introduced to the Southeast by Europeans. Bones of deer, bear, and turkey are abundant; there is no evidence that residents of Coweeta Creek kept domesticated livestock. Of course these data are critical for reconstructing subsistence practices of the community at Coweeta Creek. But social and ritual dimensions of foodways are also accessible through study of the Coweeta Creek collections. For example, the presence in

the townhouse of bear bones and charred seeds from *Ilex vomitoria*, the leaves of which were brewed into the tea known as Black Drink, may reflect public ritual practices. Relative frequencies of maize cupules and kernels in different parts of the site offer clues about the organization of food processing tasks (VanDerwarker and Detwiler, this volume), and the study of vessel assemblages (Wilson and Rodning, this volume) and grinding tools found at the site can add to our understanding of what, how, and where foods were prepared and eaten.

Studies of gender and foodways have been identified as profitable directions for archaeologists interested in areas such as southern Appalachia (Claassen 1997, 2001a, 2001b). This collection of case studies is shaped in part by our own interests in these topics. Success in revisiting Coweeta Creek with these and other themes in mind raises prospects for revisiting other excavated sites in western North Carolina through collections-based research.

Reviews of Cherokee archaeology in different areas of southern Appalachia have outlined several specific problems in studying archaeological cultures representing historic Cherokee peoples and their precontact ancestors (Dickens 1986; Hally 1986; Schroedl 1986, 2001a, 2001b). Archaeology at Coweeta Creek has much to contribute to dialogues and debates in this literature. What did Cherokee communities look like before nucleated town plans unraveled and were replaced by dispersed settlements characteristic of the late eighteenth century? How did social relationships within and between seventeenth-century towns and villages compare with eighteenth-century social dynamics and geopolitics? What was the nature of trade and exchange in southwestern North Carolina before and after the arrival of Europeans to the Southeast? How did the social composition of Mississippian and historic native households and communities in southwestern North Carolina compare to those in other parts of the Southeast? What kinds of activities took place in and around protohistoric Cherokee dwellings and townhouses, such as those at Coweeta Creek? What impacts would life in native towns such as Coweeta Creek have had on the woodland environments of southern Appalachia? Archaeological materials from Coweeta Creek represent significant data sets relevant to these and many other queries.

The following set of Coweeta Creek case studies hopefully will spark further interest in this remarkably rich Cherokee site. These articles are neither a formal site report nor a thorough list of what materials are present in collections from Coweeta Creek. Nevertheless they do contribute to a foundation for the continued study of native lifeways in late prehistoric and protohistoric southwestern North Carolina.

The articles in this collection specifically address the Coweeta Creek mound, which represents the ruins of several stages of a public structure. Rodning relates the architectural history of this townhouse to the nature of public life in the ancient town at Coweeta Creek. VanDerwarker and Detwiler compare and contrast the kinds and quantities of plant remains found on floors of the Coweeta Creek townhouse to those found in pits in both mound and village areas. They demonstrate a difference in disposal patterns between pit features in the village and near the townhouse, in addition to considering gendered patterns of food processing in public space. Wilson and Rodning identify the range of ceramic vessels made and used by people at the Coweeta Creek settlement. They offer a functional analysis of pottery assemblages as a baseline for future studies of Qualla phase pottery in the region. Lambert compares bioarchaeological indicators of health and life activity patterns at Coweeta Creek to those at two late prehistoric sites in western North Carolina, Warren Wilson and Garden Creek. Keel, Egloff, and Egloff, all principal members of RLA field investigations in western North Carolina in the 1960s and 1970s, contribute the final article in this collection, in which they reflect on the Cherokee Archaeological Project and its relevance for the continuing study of Cherokee archaeology.

### Notes

*Acknowledgments.* We are grateful for comments and guidance from Trawick Ward, Steve Davis, Vin Steponaitis, Brett Riggs, Greg Wilson, Brian Billman, Gerald Schroedl, Lynne Sullivan, Greg Waselkov, David Moore, Keith Egloff, Brian Egloff, Bennie Keel, and Bram Tucker. We appreciate the support of the UNC Research Laboratories of Archaeology, the UNC Department of Anthropology, the UNC Center for the Study of the American South, and the National Science Foundation.

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