

REVISITING PLATFORM MOUNDS AND TOWNHOUSES IN THE CHEROKEE HEARTLAND: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

BENJAMIN A. STEERE

Department of Anthropology, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC, USA

This article describes the development and initial results of the Western North Carolina Mounds and Towns Project, a collaborative endeavor initiated by the Tribal Historic Preservation Office of the Eastern Band of Cherokee and the Coweeta Long Term Ecological Research Program at the University of Georgia. The goal of this project is to generate new information about the distribution of late prehistoric mounds and historic period townhouses in western North Carolina. This ongoing research has produced updated location and chronological data for 15 Mississippian period mounds and historic Cherokee townhouses, and led to the discovery of a possible location for the Jasper Allen mound. Using these new data, I suggest that David Hally's model for the territorial size of Mississippian polities provides a useful framework for generating new research questions about social and political change in western North Carolina. I also posit that the cultural practice of rebuilding townhouses in place and on top of Mississippian period platform mounds, a process that Christopher Rodning describes as "emplacement," was common across western North Carolina. In terms of broader impacts, this project contributes positively to the development of indigenous archaeology in the Cherokee heartland.

KEYWORDS: *Cherokee Archaeology, Regional Analysis, Indigenous Archaeology, Townhouses, Mounds*

Prior to the late nineteenth century, the mountain valleys of western North Carolina were marked by dozens of platform mounds and townhouses built by Cherokee and their ancestors (Dickens 1976; Keel 1976; Kimball et al. 2010; Rodning 2009, 2010; Ward and Davis 1999). These monumental structures are important places on the Cherokee cultural landscape, but most have been damaged by looting, development, and modern agriculture. Additionally, while there has been excellent research on individual late prehistoric sites in the Cherokee heartland, such as the Coweeta Creek site (Rodning 2009, 2010), the Warren Wilson site (Dickens 1976, 1986; Moore 1986), the Biltmore Mound (Kimball et al. 2010, 2013), and the Garden Creek sites (Dickens 1976; Keel 1976; Wright 2013, 2014), there have been fewer attempts to understand changes in monumental architecture and settlement patterns at broader spatial and temporal scales (although readers should see Dickens [1978], Moore [1986], and Rudolph [1984] for early regional syntheses and Ward and Davis [1999] for an overview). Important archaeological research has been carried out in western North Carolina through cultural resource management projects, but this work is often overlooked as gray literature, and

is not incorporated into broader research frameworks (e.g., Riggs and Shumate [2003] on the Kituwah Mound and Benyshek et al. [2010] on a possible ceremonial Woodland period ditch on the Qualla Boundary). As a result, basic questions about the history of human settlement and the built environment that are fairly well understood in adjacent regions, such as eastern Tennessee and northwest Georgia, remain to be answered for western North Carolina (see Hally 2008; King 2003; Schroedl 2001:280–283; Sullivan 1987, 1995).

Archaeologists working in western North Carolina and the Eastern Band of Cherokee share a common concern about the need for an improved and expanded understanding of the archaeology of the Cherokee heartland. In recent years, the Eastern Band of Cherokee has collaborated with archaeologists to develop projects aimed at understanding and preserving archaeological sites in the Appalachian Summit region (Carroll 2013; Cooper 2009; Riggs 2002). This collaboration is representative of a broader movement referred to as indigenous archaeology, which is perhaps most concisely defined as archaeology done with, by, for, and about indigenous communities (see Cowell-Chapthaphonh et al. 2010; Croes 2010;

Riggs 2002; Watkins 2003; Wilcox 2009, 2010). Working with archaeologists, the Eastern Band of Cherokee has taken an active role in developing cultural resource management projects and academic research programs. Such projects make broad contributions to archaeological knowledge while also respecting traditional Cherokee beliefs about the treatment of sacred places, graves, and ceremonial objects, and contributing to the preservation of Cherokee culture.

The Western North Carolina Mounds and Towns Project, a collaborative archaeological research project initiated by the Tribal Historic Preservation Office of the Eastern Band of Cherokee (EBCI THPO) and the Coweeta Long Term Ecological Research Program (LTER) at the University of Georgia, is one such effort. The primary goal of this ongoing project is to create a GIS map and database documenting all the late prehistoric mound and townhouse sites in the 11 westernmost counties of North Carolina. This research is one of only a few attempts to systematically map the location of all the archaeologically identified late prehistoric mounds and Cherokee towns in the Cherokee heartland (see Dickens 1978; Gragson and Bolstad 2007).

This project uses a combination of archival research, archaeological survey, and community outreach to generate new information about poorly understood mound and town sites in western North Carolina. Important new findings from this project include the identification of a possible location for the Jasper Allen Mound, supporting evidence for the relocation of the Watauga Mound described by Bartram (1928), and refined dates of occupation for the Notley Mound and village site (3ICE5). A database and GIS layer containing spatial and chronological information for 25 confirmed and 25 possible Woodland and Mississippian period mounds and Cherokee townhouses was constructed, and has been used to yield new insight on regional-scale research questions.

This article describes the development and initial results of the Western North Carolina Mounds and Towns Project, focusing on the new information generated for understanding the nature of Mississippian period platform mounds and historic period Cherokee townhouses in the study area. I make two observations about the nature of the built environment in the Cherokee heartland. First, I suggest that the distribution of Mississippian period platform mounds in southwestern North Carolina is broadly similar to the pattern of platform mound spacing recorded in northern

Georgia. As a result, Hally's (1996, 2006) model for the territorial size of Mississippian polities may be a useful tool for generating new research questions about Mississippian period settlement in the region.

Second, I suggest that the cultural practice of rebuilding townhouses in place and on top of Mississippian period platform mounds, a process that Rodning (2009:629, 654–656) describes as “emplacement,” may have been common across southwestern North Carolina. Using the new evidence marshaled for this project, I argue that each of the three groups of eighteenth-century Cherokee towns in southwestern North Carolina, the Middle, Out, and Valley towns, may have been “anchored” by at least one townhouse constructed on top of a Mississippian period platform mound. From this birds-eye view, it seems the process of emplacement occurred not only at the scale of the individual settlement, but at a broader, regional scale.

MOUNDS AND TOWNHOUSES IN THE CHEROKEE HEARTLAND

Western North Carolina is the ancestral homeland of the Cherokee people. Today, about 60 percent of the 13,000 enrolled members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee live on the Qualla Boundary, an approximately 23,100 ha holding adjacent to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which includes the town of Cherokee, North Carolina (North Carolina Department of Administration 2014). This roughly 259 km² area represents a small fraction of the approximately 324,000 km² territory the Cherokees may have controlled in the early 1700s, based on archaeological evidence, early written accounts, and Cherokee oral history (Duncan and Riggs 2003:131; Finger 1984:4; Gragson and Bolstad 2007:438). Population estimates for the size of the Cherokee nation in the mid-to-late eighteenth century fall around 36,000 people living in approximately 60 towns in South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee (Duncan and Riggs 2003:13; Gragson and Bolstad 2007; Smith 1979). The members of today's Eastern Band are descendants of a group of approximately 1,000 Cherokees who survived late eighteenth-century wars with European and American forces and multiple smallpox epidemics, and then resisted removal in 1838. By the early twentieth century, these survivors had established the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians as a federally recognized tribe and sovereign

nation, with their lands held in trust by the federal government (Duncan and Riggs 2003:33–35; Finger 1984).

The study area for this project (Figure 1) includes the 11 westernmost counties of North Carolina, which were home to the Valley, Middle, and Out Towns of the Cherokee in the eighteenth century (Boulware 2011:19–21; Smith 1979). The 11 counties fall within the Southern Blue Ridge Province of the Appalachian Mountains (Fenneman 1938:37), and the terrain is dominated by steep mountains, sharp ridge tops, and narrow valleys. The major river drainages in the study area, from east to west, are the French Broad, Pigeon, Tuckasegee, Little Tennessee, and Hiwassee rivers. This area is generally considered to be the center of the Cherokee “heartland” (see Gragson and Bolstad 2007:438), and it includes the mother town of Kituwah, which, according to oral tradition, is the Cherokee place of origin (Mooney 1900:15).

Table 1 provides a general chronology for the late prehistoric and historic periods in the region. In western North Carolina and the surrounding Southern Appalachian region, mound building began during the Middle Woodland period, around A.D. 200 (Keel 1976; Kimball et al. 2010). The best-documented Woodland period mound sites in the Cherokee heartland include the Connestee phase Mound No. 2 (31HW2) at the Garden Creek site (Keel 1976) and the Biltmore Mound (31BN174), located on the grounds of the Biltmore Estate (Kimball et al. 2010, 2013). Both of these mounds apparently served as low platforms for ceremonial activities and contain artifacts typically associated with Middle Woodland period ceremonial and exchange systems (Keel 1976; Kimball et al. 2010, 2013; Wright 2013, 2014).

During the Mississippian period (A.D. 1000–1500), indigenous people in western North Carolina, following broader cultural and demographic trends in the Southeast, began practicing intensive maize agriculture and living throughout the year in permanent, nucleated villages (Dickens 1976; Rodning and Moore 2010; Smith 1992). These practices are seen at sites associated with Pisgah phase ceramics, like Warren Wilson and Garden Creek, and Qualla phase ceramics, such as the Nununyi Mound and village site (Greene 1998; Rodning and Moore 2010). In nearby eastern Tennessee, platform mounds replace burial mounds as the principal form of monumental architecture during the Late Woodland to Early Mississippian

transition, and mounds appear to become political and economic centers (Hally and Mainfort 2004:273; Schroedl 1998:66–73; Schroedl et al. 1990:183–192; Sullivan 2007, 2009a; Sullivan and Koerner 2010).

In western North Carolina, Mississippian period villages with platform mounds appear to have been central places on the political, economic, and cultural landscape, but they were not as large or elaborate as mound sites in neighboring regions (Hudson 1997:190–199; Rodning and Moore 2010:80–81; Sullivan 2009b). Large Mississippian period communities like Etowah, Moundville, and Cahokia contained multiple platform mounds, and these sites appear to have been the administrative center of settlement systems with two or more hierarchical levels of political organization (Beck 2003; Hally 2006; King 2003; Knight 2010; Pauketat 2004). In contrast, Mississippian period central places in western North Carolina contained single platform mound sites that appear to have served as political centers for several surrounding communities. Similar Mississippian polities are well documented in nearby northern Georgia (Anderson 1994; Hally 1996, 2006).

By approximately A.D. 1600 and into the late eighteenth century in western North Carolina, townhouses replaced mounds as the primary form of public architecture (Rodning 2009, 2010). Townhouses, large public buildings measuring between 10 and 20 m in diameter, were often rebuilt in place over time. This process gradually formed a low mound and created an elevated base for new townhouse construction. In some cases, Cherokee communities constructed townhouses on top of existing platform mounds built centuries earlier.

The Cherokee townhouse at the Coweeta Creek site (31MA34) is one of the best preserved and archaeologically understood examples of these structures (Rodning 2002, 2009, 2010). This large public building had at least six successive stages and was used from the 1600s to the late 1700s (Rodning 2010:59). In contrast to platform mounds, which literally and metaphorically elevated the chief above other community members, townhouses were public structures which likely functioned as architectural symbols of the Cherokee town, emphasizing the importance of community identity over individual leadership (Rodning 2009, 2010).

During the historic period, a sacred fire was kept burning in Cherokee townhouses, and once a year,

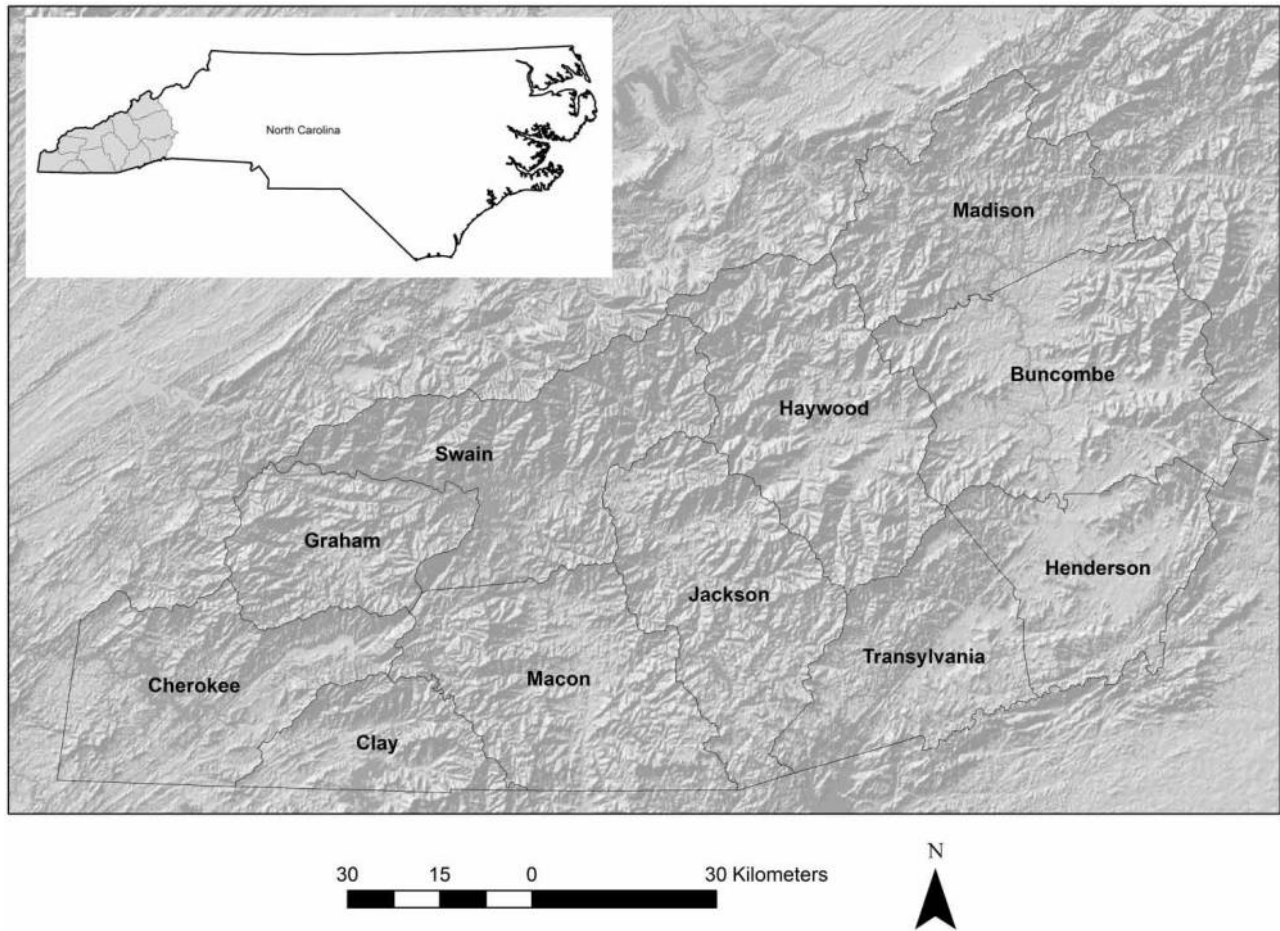


FIGURE 1. Study Area, the Eleven Westernmost Counties of North Carolina.

all the hearths in the village were extinguished and then ceremonially rekindled from this sacred fire (Mooney 1900:396). Based on traditional Cherokee beliefs, sacred fires continue to burn at places

like Kituwah (Duncan and Riggs 2003:146–148; Mooney 1900:396). Cherokee legends also suggest that mounds were the home of the Nunnehi, immortal spirit buildings, and that

TABLE 1. CULTURAL CHRONOLOGY FOR WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA, ADAPTED FROM RODNING (2008).

Period	Phase	Start date	End date	Hiwassee	Little Tennessee	Tuckasegee	Pigeon	French Broad
Historic	Late Qualla	A.D. 1700	A.D. 1838	X	X	X	X	
Protohistoric	Middle Qualla	A.D. 1500	A.D. 1700	X	X	X	X	
Mississippian	Early Qualla	A.D. 1300	A.D. 1500	X	X	X		
	Undefined ceramic series	A.D. 1000	A.D. 1300	X	X	X		
	Late Pisgah	A.D. 1250	A.D. 1450			X	X	X
	Early Pisgah	A.D. 1000	A.D. 1250			X	X	X

mounds and townhouses are symbolically associated with mountains (Mooney 1900:335–337; Rodning 2009, 2010). Thus, in addition to serving as hubs for social and political activities, townhouses created a link between the built environment and sacred aspects of the natural landscape.

Despite the obvious importance of these sites, and despite a rich history of archaeological research in the area, we still know relatively little about many of the mounds and townhouses in western North Carolina. As in other parts of the Southeast, this is primarily the result of antiquarian excavations in the late nineteenth century and site destruction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A brief review of archaeological research in the region illuminates this history, and also points to several important and underutilized documentary sources.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

The earliest archaeological investigations in western North Carolina were carried out in the late 1870s and early 1880s to collect artifacts for the Valentine Museum in Richmond, Virginia. Mann S. Valentine and his sons, E. E. and B. B. Valentine, directed expeditions in Haywood, Jackson, Cherokee, and Swain counties, sometimes with the help of local residents (Ward and Davis 1999:6–7). The Valentines and their associates “opened” the Peachtree Mound (3ICE1), the Garden Creek Mound No. 2 (3IHW2), the Wells Mound (possibly 3IHW5), the Jasper Allen Mound, the Kituwah Mound (3ISW2), the Nununyi Mound (3ISW3), the Birdtown Mound (3ISW6), and the Cullowhee Mound (3IJK2). These activities were highly destructive.

In the 1880s the Smithsonian Institution “moundbuilder expedition” identified approximately 40 mounds in western North Carolina (Thomas 1891, 1894). The results of this work were published in the annual reports of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Thomas 1891, 1894) and also are mentioned in at least one Peabody Museum report (Putnam 1884). These reports were adequate for their time, but provide little more than an approximate location for each recorded mound and a brief description of the stratigraphy and contents of excavated mounds.

Many of the mounds recorded in the Smithsonian reports were submitted by James Mooney.

While Mooney is most famous for his role as an ethnographer, Thomas (1891) credits him with recording over two-thirds of the mounds in western North Carolina. In addition to providing written descriptions of mound locations, Mooney mapped the locations of mounds and other important Cherokee sites on a series of annotated 1886 U.S.G.S. 30' series quad maps. These maps have been stabilized, scanned, and made available online through the Smithsonian Institution's website (<http://siris-archives.si.edu>, keyword NAA MS 3318). In some cases Mooney's annotations include additional information about mound locations, such as the names of property owners. I georeferenced Mooney's maps in ArcGIS to create a data layer that helps clarify some of Thomas's vague location descriptions.

In May of 1913, Robert Dewar Wainwright, a retired captain of the United States Marine Corps and amateur archaeologist, carried out surface collections and excavations at several mound and village sites in western North Carolina, including the Donnaha site (31YD9), the Cullowhee Mound, the Andrews Mound, and the Kituwah Mound (Wainwright 1913, 1914a, 1914b). Wainwright published a written account of his travels, “A Summer's Archaeological Research,” in an obscure journal, *The Archaeological Bulletin*. Wainwright's account has only recently received scholarly attention, and it provides useful details about the Cullowhee, Andrews, and Kituwah mounds (see Steere et al. 2012).

The next excavations in western North Carolina were carried out in Haywood County by the Museum of the American Indian/Heye Foundation (Heye 1919). In 1915, George Heye directed excavations at the Garden Creek sites (3IHW1, 2, 7, and 8) near Canton, North Carolina, and also excavated a probable Woodland period mound on the Singleton property (3IHW4) near Bethel, North Carolina (Heye 1919).

In 1926, Charles O. Turbyfill, a Waynesville, North Carolina native who assisted George Heye with logistics in western North Carolina, completely excavated the Notley Mound (3ICE5) (see Wallace [1960:130–134] for a colorful and candid interview with Turbyfill in the *New Yorker* magazine). According to United States Army surveyors who mapped the Notla River valley just prior to Cherokee removal in 1838, the mound once stood approximately 9 m tall (United States Army 1838). Unfortunately,

Turbyfill devotes only one paragraph to the excavation of the Notley Mound in a short paper on file at the National Museum of the American Indian (Turbyfill 1927).

In 1933 and 1934, the Smithsonian Institution, in conjunction with the Civil Works Administration, carried out extensive excavations at the Peachtree Mound (3ICE1) near Murphy, North Carolina. The Peachtree Mound was completely excavated, and Setzler and Jennings (1941:57), using the culture history terminology of the day, concluded that the site “is a component in which both Woodland and Mississippi traits occur simultaneously.”

In the late 1930s, Hiram S. Wilburn, a surveyor and historian for the National Park Service, mapped and photographed the Cullowhee Mound (31JK2), the Garden Creek site (31HW1), the Kituwah Mound (31SW1 and 2), the Nikwasi Mound (3MA2), the Nununyi Mound (31SW3), and the Watauga Mound (31MA89) (archives on file at the University of North Carolina Research Laboratories of Archaeology and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Visitors Center). Wilburn’s photographs, maps, and notes provide a valuable snapshot of these mound sites decades before they received attention from professional archaeologists.

In the early 1960s the University of North Carolina carried out extensive pedestrian surveys in western North Carolina under the umbrella of the Cherokee Project. The goal of the Cherokee Project was to understand the development of Cherokee culture through a study of the archaeological record in western North Carolina (Dickens 1976; Keel 1976, 2002). By the 1970s, these surveys and other fieldwork resulted in the documentation over 1,500 archaeological sites in western North Carolina (Keel 1976:15; Ward and Davis 1999:139). The results of the Cherokee Project were published in theses, dissertations, books, and articles that became standard reference texts and created the framework for our current understanding of the archaeology of western North Carolina (see Dickens 1976; Egloff 1967; Holden 1966; Keel 1976).

More recent research on mounds in western North Carolina has yielded new insight on individual sites and improved our understanding of the archaeology of the region. Survey and testing at the Nununyi, Birdtown, and Kituwah mounds on the Qualla boundary suggest that the mound sites were occupied during the Early to Middle Qualla phases (Greene 1998, 1999) Rodning’s

analyses of materials and records from the Coweeta Creek site have improved our understanding of Cherokee townhouses and domestic architecture (2004, 2010), and his analyses of pottery from Coweeta Creek have refined the chronology for the Qualla ceramic series (2008). Ongoing research at the Spikebuck Mound and town site by Western Carolina University promises to shed new light on the ceramic chronology in the Hiwassee river drainage (Eastman 2012; Stout 2011). Research programs at the Biltmore Mound (Kimball et al. 2010, 2013) and the Garden Creek site (Wright 2013, 2014) are generating new data for understanding western North Carolina’s place in the broader Hopewell Interaction Sphere during the Middle Woodland period (ca. A.D. 200–800).

METHODS AND INITIAL RESULTS

In addition to the historical problems of site destruction, a major barrier to understanding the prehistoric cultural landscape of western North Carolina is the lack of a concerted effort to compile all existing information about mound and townhouse sites in a single location. This is a general problem in archaeological research, and is hardly unique to western North Carolina (see Anderson and Sassaman 2012:192). While the state site file contains an excellent database of archaeological sites and current site reports for the state, older records and finer scale data are harder to find. Archival data and archaeological records and collections are scattered across universities, state offices, and museums, and possible mounds identified decades ago have not been revisited. Many historical references to Cherokee townhouses have not been cross-checked and confirmed with archaeological evidence.

The first step in this project was to examine all available archival sources for information about mounds and town sites in western North Carolina compile this information into a single database containing accurate location data, archaeological and historical documentation, and preservation status for all the prehistoric and historic Cherokee mound and town sites in western North Carolina. This was completed in the summer of 2011, with the aid of archaeologists and historians from across the state.¹ The database and GIS from this project are on file with the EBCI THPO and the Coweeta LTER.

Archival research suggested that while there were only 16 known archaeological sites

containing mounds or townhouses officially recorded on state site forms, there may have been as many as 68 mound and townhouse sites in the study area (Steere 2011). This finding contrasts with the prevailing notion that there were relatively few mound sites in the region, and that fewer still could be identified archaeologically.

Following this archival research, archaeological fieldwork was carried out in the winter of 2011 and spring of 2012. Initial reconnaissance surveys were completed at 37 of the 68 sites to determine which of the newly identified possible mound sites contained archaeological evidence for mound construction (the remaining sites were inaccessible; most were on private property, and a few were inundated by lakes). Mapping and shovel test surveys were completed at 10 of the 37 locations with the goal of defining unknown or poorly understood site boundaries and generating ceramic samples for dating.

During the reconnaissance survey, our research team visited possible mound sites, often accompanied by local residents, archaeologists, and historians. Site boundaries were defined by the presence of artifacts, either recovered from the surface in areas appropriate for pedestrian survey, or from subsurface contexts in shovel tests. In accordance with the research design developed with the EBCI THPO, no invasive subsurface testing took place directly on known or possible mounds. Older ceramic collections and new, systematic artifact collections were analyzed to assign approximate dates of occupation to sites.²

The archaeological survey completed for this project revealed that 18 of the 68 archaeological sites identified through archival research lacked reliable archaeological or historical evidence for Woodland or Mississippian period mounds or Cherokee townhouses. Of the remaining 50 sites, 25 can be identified conclusively as containing Woodland or Mississippian period mounds or Cherokee townhouses. An additional 25 sites represent possible mound and/or townhouse locations, but further archival and archaeological research will be necessary to verify their status.

The discussion that follows provides a brief description of 15 archaeologically confirmed Mississippian period platform mound and Cherokee townhouse locations in the study area. Table 2 provides summary information for these sites. The project also produced new information about 10 archaeologically confirmed Woodland period mounds, but they are not

discussed here. Interested readers can refer to a technical report (Steere 2013) and a forthcoming book chapter (Steere 2015) for details on the other confirmed and possible mound sites identified by this project.

MISSISSIPPIAN PERIOD MOUNDS AND CHEROKEE TOWNHOUSES IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

The archaeological and historical data gathered for this study suggest that at least seven mounds in the study area are Mississippian period platform mounds. These platform mounds include: the Peachtree (3ICE1) and Notley (3ICE5) mounds in the Hiwassee River drainage, the Nikwasi Mound (3IMA2) on the Little Tennessee River, the Jasper Allen Mound (in the vicinity of 3IJK 562), Kituwah Mound (3ISW2), and the Nununyi Mound (3ISW3) in the Oconaluftee and Tuckasegee drainages, Garden Creek Mound 1 (3IHW1) in the Pigeon River drainage, and the Swannanoa Mound (no site designation) in the French Broad River drainage near Asheville.

Historic records suggest that there are dozens of archaeologically unrecorded Cherokee townhouses in western North Carolina, each one marking the location of the many named Middle, Valley, and Out Towns (Duncan and Riggs 2003). At present, there are 11 archaeologically documented Cherokee townhouses in the study area. These include four townhouses that appear to have been constructed on top of earlier, Mississippian period platform mounds: the Peachtree Mound, the Nikwasi Mound, the Kituwah Mound, and the Nununyi Mound. Based on our current understanding of available archaeological evidence, the remaining seven townhouses appear to have been constructed during the sixteenth century or later, and do not have clear evidence of an underlying platform mound. However, it should be noted that additional archaeological research may reveal evidence for earlier construction stages at some of these sites. This group includes the Andrews Mound (3ICE3) on the Valley River, the Spikebuck Mound (3ICY1) on the Hiwassee River, the Cullowhee Mound (3IJK2) in the Tuckasegee River drainage, the Cowee (3IMA5), Watauga (3IMA89), and Coweeta Creek (3IMA34) mounds along the Little Tennessee River, and the Birdtown Mound (3ISW6) on the Oconaluftee River. Archaeological and historical evidence for each of the mounds and townhouses is summarized below.

TABLE 2. SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR SITES DISCUSSED IN TEXT.

Name	State site number	Artifacts and architectural features	L (m)	W (m)	H (m)	Ceramic phases	References
Andrews Mound	31CE3	Large mound generally considered to have represented a Cherokee townhouse. Qualla ceramics and glass trade beads found near mound	45.2	32.6	3.0	Qualla	Coe (1972), Wainwright (1914a:6)
Birdtown	31SW6	Recovered artifacts include glass beads, Qualla and Pisgah phase ceramics (mostly Qualla), and a razor. This is likely a Cherokee townhouse	30.5	27.4	2.4	Qualla	Greene (1998:50), Thomas (1891:158), Ward (1971:13)
Cowee	31MA5	Historically recorded Cherokee townhouse	42.6	42.6	3.4	Qualla	Bartram (1928)
Coweeta Creek	31MA34	At least six stages of Cherokee townhouse construction. Early, Middle, and Late Qualla ceramics	13.7	13.7	1.2	Qualla	Rodning (2002)
Cullowhee	31JK2	Probable townhouse mound leveled in 1956. Artifacts recovered during destruction include Qualla phase ceramics				Qualla	Keel (1964)
Garden Creek Mound 1	31HW1	Stone mantle at base of mound. Likely represents an earthlodge replaced by platform mound	45.0	40.0	2.0	Pisgah, some Qualla	Dickens (1976:79–87), Keel (1976:78–89)
Jasper Allen	31JK562	Multiple fill zones and layers of “burned clay,” pottery, charcoal, ash, burial with conch shell and human head effigy bottle	14.0	14.0	2.0	Pisgah, some Qualla	Osborne (1881), Thomas (1891:156)
Kituwah	31SW2	Cherokee townhouse identified with geophysical survey; cedar posts, beads, pottery, and Qualla phase ceramics recovered by Valentines	43.0	43.0	1.5	Qualla, Pisgah	Riggs and Shumate (2003:61–71), Thomas (1891:157)

Continued

TABLE 2. CONTINUED.

Name	State site number	Artifacts and architectural features	L (m)	W (m)	H (m)	Ceramic phases	References
Nikwasi	31MA2	Historically recorded Cherokee townhouse built atop Mississippian period platform mound	50.0	30.0	6.7	Qualla, Pisgah	Tormey (2010)
Notley	31CE5	Large stone structure in center of mound, overlain by subsequent construction stage. Pisgah and Qualla phase ceramics recovered from mound fill. Turbyfill records 24 burials, complete ceramic vessels, pipes, copper ear ornaments, and a conch shell containing the remains of an infant	50.0	50.0	4.3	Qualla, Pisgah, Lamar, Etowah	Steere (2013:38-41), Turbyfill (1927)
Nununyi	31SW3	Mostly Qualla and some Pisgah phase ceramics recovered by Valentines. Stone mantle at base of mound. Burned structure and burials in mound	45.7	45.7	3.4	Qualla, Pisgah	Dickens (1976:91), Greene (1998:29-39), Thomas (1891:157)
Peachtree	31CE1	Three mound stages: a primary stage including a stone and wood structure (possibly an earth lodge), overlain with two subsequent construction stages. Pisgah and Qualla phase ceramics in mound fill	55.0	67.0	3.4	Qualla, Pisgah	Setzler and Jennings (1941:16)
Spikebuck	31CY1	Qualla phase ceramics and European trade goods recovered in excavations near mound	45.0	45.0	1.9	Qualla	Eastman (2012), Stout (2011), Thomas (1891:151)
Swanannoa	Unassigned	Piled stone core or mantle covered in charcoal and dark will. Projectile points near base	24.4	24.4	2.7	Unknown	Thomas (1891:151)

Continued

TABLE 2. CONTINUED.

Name	State site number	Artifacts and architectural features	L (m)	W (m)	H (m)	Ceramic phases	References
Watauga	31MA89	Historically recorded Cherokee townhouse. Qualla phase ceramics	40.0	40.0	1.9	Qualla	Bartram (1928), Benyshek (2014), Steere (2013:107-111)

THE PEACHTREE MOUND (31CE3)

According to Setzler and Jennings (1941:14-26), the Peachtree Mound contained a primary mound with a rectangular structure made of stones covered by at least two later construction episodes. The mound measured 3.4 m (11 ft) high and 55-x-67 m (180-x-220 ft) at its base when it was excavated in the early 1930s (Setzler and Jennings 1941:16). Dickens (1976:97-98) suggests that the stone structure at Peachtree was similar to the stone mantle found in the Pisgah phase Garden Creek Mound 1, and may have represented the remains of an earthlodge. Dickens also notes that while only a few Pisgah phase sherds can be identified in the plates of Setzler and Jennings report, most of the ceramic collections associated with the mound excavations can be assigned to the Dallas and Pisgah phases.

The Peachtree Mound served as a platform for the townhouse at Hiwassee, one of the most important eighteenth-century Cherokee Valley Towns (Duncan and Riggs 2003:195; Riggs 1996:56). While the Smithsonian excavation at Peachtree did not produce a clear map of the historic Cherokee townhouse, a profile drawing of the mound showing several distinct floors above the "primary mound" and the quantity of European trade goods discovered in the mound suggests the presence of a Cherokee townhouse (Setzler and Jennings 1941:20, plates 11 and 12).

THE NOTLEY MOUND (31CE5)

According to the Turbyfill's (1927) account, the Notley Mound was 3.4 m (11 ft) high and measured 23-x-27 m (75-x-90 ft) at the base when he and a small crew completely excavated it. Like the Peachtree and Garden Creek mounds, the Notley Mound contained a square structure made of stones, as well as artifact and burial associations consistent with Mississippian period construction and use, including Pisgah phase jars which were eventually curated at the Heye Museum (Keel 1964).

In 2012, our survey team carried out topographic mapping and a limited shovel test survey in the habitation area surrounding the Notley Mound. A low mound remnant measuring 50-x-50 m at the base and approximately 1 m high is still present at 31CE5, despite the long history of excavation and landscape modification at the site. Landowners indicate that Turbyfill and his crew piled the mound fill from their excavation back in the original location of the mound, and that this new "mound" was leveled with a bulldozer in the 1960s. Shovel tests excavated near the mound remnant reveal a complex stratigraphy that appears to include mound fill and midden which have been excavated, redeposited, and plowed. This fill is underlain by more uniform strata which may contain intact cultural features (Steere 2013:38-42). A preliminary analysis of the ceramics recovered from the 2012 shovel tests suggests that 31CE5 contains Late Woodland, Early Mississippian, Middle Mississippian, and Late Mississippian occupations represented by Napier, Etowah, Pisgah, Savannah, Lamar, and Qualla phase ceramics.

THE NIKWASI MOUND (31MA2)

The Nikwasi Mound, located in downtown Franklin, North Carolina, on the west side of the Little Tennessee River, marks the site of the eighteenth-century Cherokee town of Nikwasi (Dickens 1967; McRae 1993). The townhouse on top of the mound was used by Col. James Grant as a field hospital during his 1761 campaign against the Middle Towns (McRae 1993:41).

In the late nineteenth century, Thomas (1891:156) described the Nikwasi Mound as "one of the largest and best preserved in the State and on the site of the Old Nikwasi (Nequassee) settlement." In 1889, Mooney sought permission to excavate the mound but was denied access, and the mound was not excavated by the Smithsonian (McRae 1993:48). Thus, unlike most of the large mounds in western North Carolina, Nikwasi has never been the subject of antiquarian

or professional excavations. There is no indication that representatives of the Valentine Museum dug into the mound. The only professional excavation known to have taken place at Nikwasi is a single 5-x-5 ft test pit excavated by UNC archaeologists in 1961 to investigate damage caused by the placement of a drainage ditch north of the mound (Davis et al. 1998:25).

A ground penetrating radar survey of the mound summit by Western Carolina University geologist Blair Tormey suggests that the lower portion of the mound is buried in 1–2 m of floodplain sediment and fill (Tormey 2010). Tormey's study also revealed evidence for multiple construction stages and a dense cluster of objects near the surface of the mound that may represent a townhouse (Tormey 2010:25–29). These findings support the interpretation of Nikwasi as a mound originally constructed during the Mississippian period, and then used as the base for an historic Cherokee townhouse.

THE JASPER ALLEN MOUND

Osborne completely excavated the Jasper Allen Mound for the Valentine Museum in December, 1881, and until now, its location has not been known. In a letter to B. B. Valentine describing the mound exploration, Osborne writes that the mound is located on "Scots Creek 5 miles north of Webster," on the farm of Jasper Allen. Thomas (1891:156) places the mound "on Scott's Creek, between the railroad and the creek, about 5 miles north of Sylva."

Osborne's narrative includes general information about the characteristics and contents of the mound. He states that he and a crew of five workers excavated a trench 40 ft (12.2 m) long and 5–6 ft (1.5–2 m) deep, 20 ft (6.1 m) from the center of the mound, probably on the southeast side of the mound. They encountered "different layers of earth and clays, and some burnt clay as we found in the McCombs Mound," and also pottery, charcoal, ash, and decayed bone (Osborne 1881). Several days into their excavation, Osborne and his crew encountered a burial containing a conch shell and a painted effigy bottle with images of four human heads.

The human head effigy bottle recovered from the mound (curated at the Research Laboratories of Archaeology at the University of North Carolina) bears a strong resemblance to similar bottles recovered from Dallas phase contexts in eastern Tennessee (e.g., Polhemus 1987:683, figure 8.39). It is nearly identical to similar vessels

found in association with Level H burials in Mound A at Toqua and with burials in the Dallas Mound (Koerner et al. 2011:139–140; Lewis et al. 1995). Koerner et al. extrapolate the use dates for Level H of the Toqua Mound as A. D. 1390–1410 (2011:142), and AMS dates for the Dallas phase in eastern Tennessee fall in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (Sullivan 2007).

A human effigy head bottle from the Bell Field site (9MU101) on the Coosawattee River in northwest Georgia is also nearly identical to the vessel from the Jasper Allen Mound and the Dallas phase effigy vessel illustrated in Polhemus's report (1987:683, figure 8.39). Hally (1996) dates the pottery collection from the mound at Bell Field to the late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century Savannah phase. In sum, the effigy bottle and other ceramic artifacts in the Jasper Allen collection suggest a Pisgah or Qualla phase occupation, perhaps dating to the late fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries (see Davis et al. 1998:3, 21).

Records of land sales on file at the Jackson County register of deeds indicate that between 1854 and 1900, D. J. ("Jasper") Allen bought and sold hundreds of acres of land on Scott's Creek. Most of his holdings appear to have been situated north and east of Sylva and west and south of the confluence of Scott's Creek and Carson's Branch. The descriptions provided by Osborne and Mooney and the available land records indicate that Jasper Allen's farm was located on the north side of Scott's Creek near the confluence with Allen's Branch. Descendants of Jasper Allen interviewed by the principal investigator confirmed this location. Archaeological survey on the north bank of Scott's Creek revealed that most of the terrain in the probable location of the mound has been cut, filled, and graded for commercial development. A very small (ca. 60-x-20 m) site with Qualla phase and other unidentified grit-tempered ceramics (31JK562) was identified in this location during the 2012 survey (Steere 2013:91). Site 31JK562 may represent a portion of a much larger occupation late prehistoric occupation area associated with the Jasper Allen Mound.

THE KITUWAH MOUND

The Kituwah Mound is located on the west side of the Tuckasegee River, approximately 3.2 km west of the confluence with the Oconaluftee River. According to Cherokee oral tradition, the

mound marks the center of the first Cherokee village, and the ancestral home of the Cherokee people (Duncan and Riggs 2003:73–74). Decades of plowing have reduced the mound's height to approximately 1.5 m (Riggs and Shumate 2003:60). Records from the Valentine excavations indicate the mound was 3.7 m tall in the 1880s. Hiram Wilburn mapped and photographed the Kituwah Mound in 1937, and at that time the mound was 2.7 m high, with a diameter of approximately 43 m.

According to Thomas (1891:157), representatives of the Valentine Museum dug into Kituwah in the 1880s. A series of letters written in 1934 between historian Barbara Creel of Bryson City and Virginia Gee of the Valentine Museum indicates that the Valentine excavation uncovered a red cedar post and four graves, interred with their heads pointed toward the post. The Valentines removed these burials, along with beads, pottery, pipes, and other materials (Valentine et al. 1889).

Archaeological survey and testing conducted at Kituwah Mound and the surrounding village make it one of the better understood mounds in western North Carolina (Riggs and Shumate 2003). In 1997, a shovel test survey defined the limits of the site and identified archaeological components, and a 2001 geophysical survey refined our understanding of the site structure and the nature of the mound (Riggs and Shumate 2003). There is evidence for Early Archaic through historic period occupation at the site. The geophysical survey reveals that despite decades of plowing, there is still evidence for a ca. 20 m diameter townhouse with an intact central hearth at the base of the mound, and a fourteenth- to eighteenth-century Qualla phase plaza and village near the mound (Riggs and Shumate 2003:61–71). According to Riggs and Shumate (2003:68), “the townhouse stage or stages indicated by gradiometry likely represents a temple destroyed at the midpoint of the use of the mound, probably in the fifteenth or sixteenth century.”

THE NUNUNYI MOUND

This mound is located on the east bank of the Oconaluftee River, just below its confluence with the Raven Fork River. Bartram (1928:301) referred to the site as Nuanha during his 1776 visit to the region. The site appears on the 1730 Hunter map and the 1760 Kitchin map as Newni (Ward 1971:8). Historical documents suggest the

town was largely abandoned after 1761 (Greene 1998:25).

Edward Valentine dug three trenches into the Nununyi Mound in 1882, and discovered the burned floor of a structure covering 26 graves (Greene 1998:25). In their usual fashion, the Valentines damaged the mound, but seem to have left the village area intact. Dickens (1976:91) examined the field records and artifacts from the Valentine expedition at the Nununyi Mound, and suggested that at least one stage of the mound was built during the Mississippian period. According to Dickens (1976:91), the Valentines encountered a pile of stones at the base of the mound (superficially similar to the one at the Peachtree Mound). Dickens also notes that 34 of the 218 ceramic sherds collected by Edward Valentine from the Nununyi Mound may date to the Pisgah phase (Dickens 1976:91). This figure is noteworthy, although it should be remembered that the Valentines' collections were not systematic, and the high percentage of Pisgah phase sherds may represent collector bias. The presence of Pisgah phase ceramics and the stone core suggest that mound was first constructed during the Mississippian period.

Wilburn mapped and photographed the Nununyi Mound in 1937. He indicates that the mound was 150 ft (45.7 m) in diameter and 11–14 ft (3.4–4.3 m) tall at the time. In 1960, when construction began for the “Cherokee Wonderland” amusement park, the village area east of the mound was badly damaged by grading and the excavation of a canal. In 1964, a drainage ditch was dug just east of the mound. Archaeologists from the University of North Carolina collected artifacts from this ditch and recorded the stratigraphy (Ward 1971:10).

In 1994, Lance Greene carried out archaeological testing on the 6.25 acre Crowe property south and east of the mound. Greene (1998:29–39) collected artifacts from a garden plot just south of the base of the mound, dug shovel tests at 30 m intervals over the entire property, except the mound, and excavated several 1-x-1 m square test units. He concluded that the heaviest occupation of the Crowe property dated to what he defined at the time as the “early Qualla phase (A.D. 1450–1650).”

GARDEN CREEK MOUND I

The Mississippian period mound at the Garden Creek site is perhaps the best-documented example of a Pisgah phase mound in western

North Carolina. The mound measured approximately 45 m east-west and 40 m north-south, with a height of 2 m when it was excavated in the 1960s (Dickens 1976:79). In his reconstruction of the mound construction sequence, Dickens (1976:79–87) argues that the mound began as two earth lodges placed side-by-side and connected by entry trenches, with an adjacent rectangular structure. After the earth lodges began to deteriorate, they were surrounded by a layer of boulders. The boulders were then covered with midden soil from the village, almost to the tops of the earth lodges. It appears that construction of a building began on this surface but collapsed, and more fill was brought in to create a level platform. Two structures, a palisade, and burials were placed on this surface. Qualla ceramics were found around the mound during excavations. Dickens (1976:87) suggests that a Qualla phase townhouse, destroyed by plowing, may have been built above this Pisgah phase surface, but this speculation has never been confirmed.

THE SWANNANOA MOUND

The Swannanoa Mound was recorded and excavated in the late 1880s by archaeologist J.W. Emmert (Thomas 1891:151), but the site has never been relocated. James Mooney places this mound on the north bank of the Swannanoa River, approximately 6.4 km southeast of Asheville on the 1886 U.S.G.S. 30' series Asheville quad map. This area has been heavily modified by grading for residential and commercial development.

Thomas (1894:350) indicates that the mound measured 80 ft (24.4 m) in diameter and 9 ft (2.7 m) high, and was located less than 100 m from the river. Emmert apparently excavated a trench into the mound, revealing a core of piled stone, about 30 ft (9.1 m) in diameter and 4 ft (1.2 m) high. The stone pile was covered in charcoal and charred wood and then covered in dark fill. There is no other discussion of stratigraphy, suggesting the dark fill represents a single building episode. Thomas claims the piled stone was not placed in any particular order. No graves were reported, and a few projectile points were collected from the trench.

Based on Thomas's description of a piled stone core at the base of the mound, Dickens (1976:91–92) suggested that the Swannanoa Mound may have been constructed during the Mississippian period. The Swannanoa Mound has never been relocated; the late nineteenth- and

early twentieth-century records from the Bureau of American Ethnology provide the only historical and archaeological documentation for this mound.

THE ANDREWS MOUND

This large mound was located on the east bank of the Valley River in Andrews, North Carolina. A National Historic Landmark application authored by Joffre Coe, on file at the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, indicates that the mound was mostly intact in 1972. An inn was constructed on top of the mound in the first half of the nineteenth century. This construction damaged the mound but probably prevented it from being completely demolished. Coe (1972) suggested that the mound represented a Cherokee townhouse constructed and used from approximately A.D. 1600–1800. During a visit to the site in 1913, R. D. Wainwright reported finding glass trade beads, lithics, and pottery in a field near the mound (Steere et al. 2012:17). He estimated that the mound measured 148.5 ft (45.2 m) long by 107.25 ft (32.7 m) wide and 10 ft (3.0 m) high, and suggested that the mound was 1.5 m taller before it was leveled for the construction of the inn (Steere et al. 2012:24). The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, but the mound was bulldozed by the landowner in 1975 to build a shopping center.

THE SPIKEBUCK MOUND

Located in Hayesville, near the confluence of Town Creek and the Hiwassee River, this mound is thought to represent the remains of the townhouse for the eighteenth-century Cherokee Valley town of Quanassee, a prominent settlement with a British factorage (Duncan and Riggs 2003:197–198). Thomas (1891:153) recorded the site as, “a large mound on McClure farm, near Hayesville, on southwest bank of Hiwassee River,” but it was not excavated by the Smithsonian. Today the mound measures approximately 45 m in diameter and 1.9 m in height.

The Spikebuck Mound and the associated Cherokee town have been the focus of professional archaeological research since the 1960s. Western Carolina University conducted small-scale excavations at the site from 1973 to 1975, and again under the direction of Anne Rogers, Jane Brown, and Jane Eastman (Eastman 2012; Ward and Davis 1999:21). The village site appears to have been occupied from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, based on the appearance of Middle to

Late Qualla ceramics and European trade goods (Stout 2011).

THE CULLOWHEE OR ROGERS MOUND

This mound was located on the west side of the Tuckasegee River, on the campus of Western Carolina University. Thomas (1891:155), citing Mooney as the reporter, describes 31JK2 as a “mound on the east side of Cullowhee River, just above its junction with the Tuckasegee,” and indicates that the mound was excavated by the Valentines. Mooney accurately places the mound in its known location on his annotated 1886 U.S.G.S. 30’ series Cowee quad map. In an “account of the opening of the Jasper Allen Mound,” addressed to B. B. Valentine and dated December 14, 1881, A. J. Osborne provides a brief description of the exploration of Cullowhee Mound, and indicates that he and his crew found “two or three pots” in the mound.

A few photographs and maps were made of 31JK2 prior to its destruction in 1956. Wilburn mapped and photographed the mound in 1937, and indicated that it was only “1 foot high.” In a one-page report entitled, “Destruction of the Mound at Cullowhee, N.C.,” on file at Western Carolina University, Keel (1964) indicates that the mound was destroyed to build recreational grounds south of the mound. Features containing pottery and bone were exposed as the mound was leveled. The Research Laboratories of Archaeology of the University of North Carolina maintain ceramics from the Valentine excavation and a small surface collection that Keel salvaged from a pit at the bottom of the mound during a site visit after the mound was destroyed. These collections primarily contain Qualla phase ceramics (Davis et al. 1998:23). The low height of the mound and presence of Qualla ceramics suggest it was a Cherokee townhouse.

THE COWEE MOUND

Cowee was a Cherokee town famously documented by William Bartram during his visit to North Carolina in 1775. According to Bartram, an artificial mound at Cowee served as a platform for a townhouse. Bartram (1928:297) writes, “the council or town-house is a large rotunda, capable of accommodating several hundred people; it stands on the top of an ancient artificial mount of earth, of about twenty feet perpendicular, and the rotunda on the top of it being above thirty feet more, gives the whole fabric an elevation of about sixty feet from the common surface of the

ground.” The Cowee Mound is located on top of a prominent hill overlooking the Little Tennessee River, which helps account for Bartram’s description of the townhouse’s height.

Hiram Wilburn visited the Cowee Mound in 1937 and produced a map and two photographs of the site. He indicates that the mound measured 140 ft (42.6 m) in diameter and 11 ft (3.4 m) high at the time. Based on Bartram’s description and Wilburn’s measurements, it seems likely that the mound at Cowee represents a Cherokee townhouse with several construction stages, and perhaps also the remains of a Mississippian period platform mound.

THE WATAUGA MOUND

A low townhouse mound marks the site of the Cherokee town of Watauga, a settlement visited by Bartram during his travels through western North Carolina in 1775 (Bartram 1928:284–285). For decades, 31MA4 was considered to be the location of the Watauga Mound. According to a North Carolina Archaeological Survey Form dated to 1937, 31MA4, located on the west side of the Little Tennessee River south of Porter’s Dam, was reported by a local resident to have been excavated by the Smithsonian “forty or more years ago.” The site form places the Watauga Mound on a low ridge overlooking the river and characterizes the mound as “well flattened,” and “130 feet in diameter.”

Cultural resource management surveys suggest that 31MA89 is a more likely location for the Watauga Mound. This site is also located on a hill on the west side of the Little Tennessee River, but lies north and west of 31MA4. Like the Cowee Mound, which is located on a natural topographic rise, the townhouse at Watauga would have been elevated well above the surrounding floodplain.

In a 2007 survey of a possible site for a new school in the Iotla community, Joy (2007:1) noted that local residents have long known of a mound at 31MA89, and that the location of the site more closely matches descriptions in historic maps. Joy and her crew identified a possible townhouse mound at 31MA89 and performed shovel testing at 20 m intervals over the 12.9 ha project area north and west of 31MA89. According to Joy (2007:3), “of these 209 shovel tests, 98 (46.9 percent) yielded prehistoric ceramics and lithics that are indicative of an historic (A.D. 1450–1650) Cherokee village. Artifacts are predominately Qualla ceramics.” Such an assemblage

would be consistent with a village area associated with the mound.

While surveying a nearby property in 2009, archaeologist Tasha Benyshek also identified the possible mound at 31MA89 (Benyshek 2014). In 2009, Benyshek and a team of volunteers made a topographic map of the mound and carried out a limited program of systematic shovel testing on a 10 m grid around the mound. A total of 22 shovel tests were excavated. Benyshek's map indicates that the mound is currently 1.9 m in height and 40 m in diameter. Her initial survey efforts produced 21 positive shovel tests in a roughly 40 m radius around the north, east, and west sides of the mound.

Benyshek's fieldwork revealed that the area in the immediate vicinity of the mound has been deeply plowed. Ceramics recovered near the mound were primarily very small body sherds, and in one shovel test the plow zone was 44 cm deep (Tasha Benyshek, personal communication 2015). The only clearly diagnostic sherds recovered included one Pisgah style rim sherd and a few complicated stamped body sherds that likely date to the Qualla period.

In 2012, our research team re-established Benyshek's grid. We excavated 44 additional shovel tests on a systematic 10 m grid east and west of the mound. Forty-one of 44 shovel tests excavated in the site area during the survey produced prehistoric artifacts. As in the case of Benyshek's survey, the density of artifacts recovered from shovel tests around the mound was low but consistent. Small Qualla phase body sherds were the most common artifact type recovered, consistent with the pattern observed by Benyshek during her survey (Steere 2013:108–109).

THE COWEETA CREEK MOUND

The Coweeta Creek site is located on the west bank of the Little Tennessee River, south of Hickory Knoll Creek. The mound at the Coweeta Creek site represents at least six successive stages of a large Cherokee townhouse dating from the 1600s to the early 1700s (Rodning 2010:49). The site was extensively excavated by the University of North Carolina from 1965 to 1971 as part of the Cherokee Project (Rodning 2010:66). The low mound was the focal point of a townhouse and plaza complex surrounded by domestic structures (Rodning 2009, 2010). Rodning has analyzed and interpreted the ceramics (2008), architecture and community plan (2009, 2010; Sullivan and Rodning 2001, 2011),

and graves (Rodning and Moore 2010) from the site, making it one of the best understood and publicized sites in western North Carolina.

THE BIRDTOWN MOUND

This mound (31SW6) and its associated village area (31SW7) are located on the north side of the Oconaluftee River near the confluence with Goose Creek, in the Nick Bottom floodplain. The site was excavated by the Valentines, who noted that the mound was 100-x-90 ft (30.5-x-27.4 m) in diameter and 8 ft (2.4 m) high at the time of their dig (Greene 1998:45). Thomas (1891:158) notes that the mound was "nearly obliterated" by the Valentines. The Valentine excavation produced glass beads, a razor, stone and clay artifacts, and five graves (Ward 1971:13). This supports the interpretation of the mound as a Cherokee townhouse.

In 1994, Lance Greene carried out a systematic surface collection and excavated three 1-x-1 m square test units just south of the Birdtown Mound. The surface collections primarily produced Qualla series ceramics (Greene 1998). While Pisgah and Connestee series ceramics have been found at the site, it appears that the Qualla occupation was the most substantial (Greene 1998:55; Ward 1971:13). Despite the history of previous excavations and landscape modification at Birdtown Mound, investigations indicate that much of the mound and village site are still intact (Epenshade 2006; Green 1998).

Four additional locations in western North Carolina contain possible archaeological evidence for townhouses. There are unconfirmed accounts of a looted mound at the site of the Western North Carolina Regional Airport in Andrews, North Carolina (Steere et al. 2012:26). James Mooney reported possible mound sites on Sweetwater Creek, in Robbinsville, North Carolina, and near a train depot in Bryson City, North Carolina, both of which may have represented townhouses (Thomas 1891:154, 158). Finally, a cursory reference in a Valentine Museum artifact catalogue suggests that agents of the museum may have excavated a mound or townhouse in the general vicinity of the eighteenth-century Cherokee town of Stecoe (31JK15) near Whittier, North Carolina (Valentine et al. 1889).

DISCUSSION

Given the preliminary nature of this study and the lack of good chronological information for many

of the mound sites, few archaeological interpretations will be offered here. The primary aim of this study is to organize, synthesize, and report old and new information and lay the groundwork for future research. Archaeological components have only been assigned to the 25 confirmed mounds and townhouses, and in some cases these designations are tentative and based on limited data (e.g., reports from antiquarian excavations). However, a few key points merit discussion, even at this early stage of the project.

As Figure 2 shows, platform mounds that appear to date to the Mississippian period were evenly distributed across the study area in four spatial groupings, with one or two mound sites each in the Pigeon, Tuckasegee, Little Tennessee, and Hiwassee River drainages. One mound group may be represented by the Pisgah phase mound at Garden Creek (and perhaps the poorly understood Swannanoa Mound). A second may be represented by the Nununyi, Kituwah, and Jasper Allen mounds in the Oconluftee and Tuckasegee drainages. The Nikwasi Mound and the Dillard Mound in Dillard, Georgia (see Elliot 2012), located on the Little Tennessee River, are 22 km apart, and may represent a third group. Finally, the Peachtree and Notley mounds, located on tributaries of the Hiwassee River, are located 16 km apart and could represent a fourth group.

This distribution is consistent with very general expectations for Mississippian period settlement patterns and is broadly similar to the pattern of mound placement in nearby northern Georgia (see Anderson 1994; Hally 1996, 2006; Smith 1978, 1992). Given this pattern of distribution, Hally's (1996, 2006) model for territorial size of Mississippian polities may serve as a useful framework for understanding political and social organization in the region. This model, developed in northern Georgia, has been applied fruitfully elsewhere to improve our understanding of the Mississippian world (e.g., Meyers [2006] on nearby towns in eastern Tennessee). Even if Hally's model is not a perfect fit for western North Carolina, it serves as a useful tool for analyzing settlement patterns at a regional scale.

Hally (2006:27) used ceramic dating and mound stratigraphy to reconstruct the geography and timing of mound construction and occupation in northern Georgia during the Mississippian period. Based on the assumption that Mississippian platform mound sites serve as the capitals of polities, Hally found that the minimum distance separating neighboring, competing centers was

35–55 km, that towns making up a chiefdom were generally situated along a river floodplain for a distance up to 20 km from the mound center, and that polities were separated by an unpopulated buffer zone measuring between 10 and 30 km (Hally 2006:26–30). In a follow-up study using least-cost-pathways in place of straight-line distances, Livingood (2012:181) found that most contemporary mound centers within the same polity in northern Georgia were separated by no more than four hours in travel time, and that competing centers were located more than a 5 hour walk away from one another.

At the moment, the lack of accurate dating precludes identifying the platform mound sites within each of the four spatial groupings as contemporary or not contemporary. For example, it is unclear to what extent, if at all, the Mississippian period construction and occupation of the mounds at Kituwah, Nununyi, and Jasper Allen overlap. Nor do we know if there were *contemporary* polities centered on the Notley and Nikwasi mounds. As a result, it is not currently possible to use geographic or travel time distances separating mound sites to identify polities. However, Hally's (2006) model can be used to develop future research.

Do any of the individual Mississippian period platform mound sites in western North Carolina represent primary and secondary centers in a hierarchical, politically centralized polity, or do individual mounds represent individual polities? Given the lack of multiple mound sites, the relatively great distances separating mound sites in each of the four groupings (as much as 15–22 km), and the mountainous terrain, which would increase the travel time between mound centers, the latter scenario seems more plausible. These alternative models can be tested as we gain a better understanding of the timing of occupation at each of these sites through additional analyses of available ceramic collections from mound sites.

While we lack a fine-scale understanding of the occupation of the Mississippian period platform mounds in the region, there is a clear shift in settlement pattern associated with the transition from platform mounds to townhouses. Figure 3 shows the distribution of confirmed and possible Cherokee townhouses. Based on historic records, we know that the current archaeological sample of eighteenth-century Cherokee townhouses is incomplete. However, even this fragmentary dataset suggests that townhouses were much more closely spaced than Mississippian period

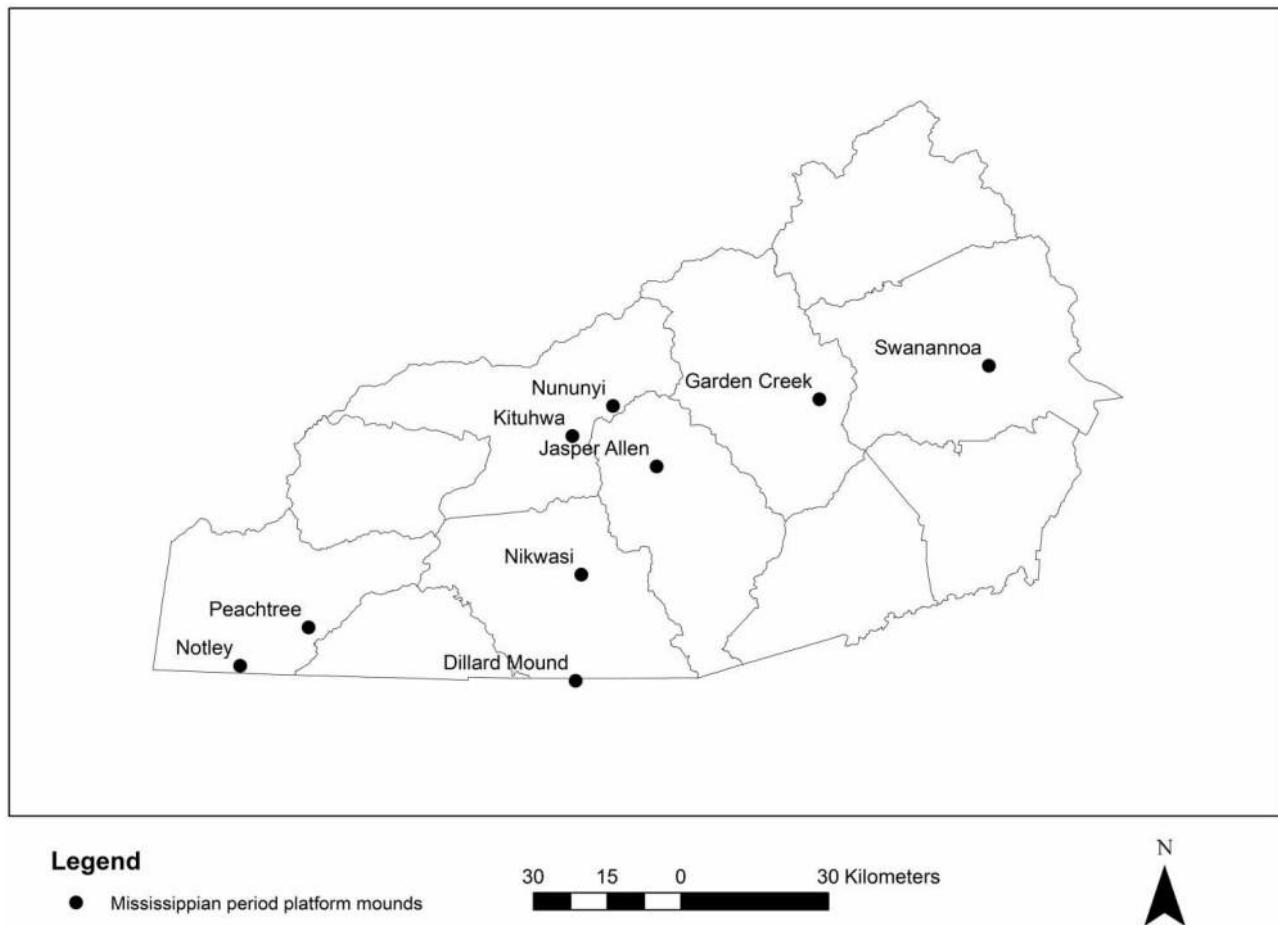


FIGURE 2. Confirmed and Probable Mississippian Period Platform Mounds.

platform mounds, and that there were many more of them. We know from historic records that in many cases townhouses less than 10 km apart served as centers for contemporary Cherokee towns (Boulware 2011; Gragson and Bolstad 2007). This general change in the spacing of central places may represent archaeological evidence for a shift away from more hierarchical, politically centralized, multi-community polities in the sixteenth century and the rise of more autonomous, independent, and egalitarian communities by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Gaining a better understanding of the Late Mississippian period chronology for the region will help us gain a more nuanced understanding of this shift.

Another pattern that merits further exploration emerges when the locations of Mississippian period platform mounds and Cherokee townhouses are compared. Three of the spatial groupings of Mississippian period platform mounds are located in the territories that would become the well-defined town groups of the eighteenth-

century Cherokee. The Peachtree and Notley mounds are located in the territory that would become the Valley Towns, the Nununyi, Kituhwah, and Jasper Allen mounds are located in the Out Towns territory, and the Nikwasi and Dillard mounds roughly mark the northern and southern boundaries of the Middle Towns territory. If these platform mounds represent the presence of earlier, Mississippian period polities, then from a regional, long-term perspective, it would appear that the eighteenth-century Cherokee Valley, Middle, and Out towns are built “on top” of former Mississippian period polities, much in the same way that Cherokee townhouses are thought to have been constructed on the summits of Mississippian period platform mounds at the Peachtree, Nikwasi, Dillard, and Nununyi mounds. The patterns observed here may provide regional-scale archaeological support for the construction of Cherokee identity as a process of “emplacement,” by which “a community attaches itself to a particular place through formal settlement plans, architecture, burials, and other material additions to

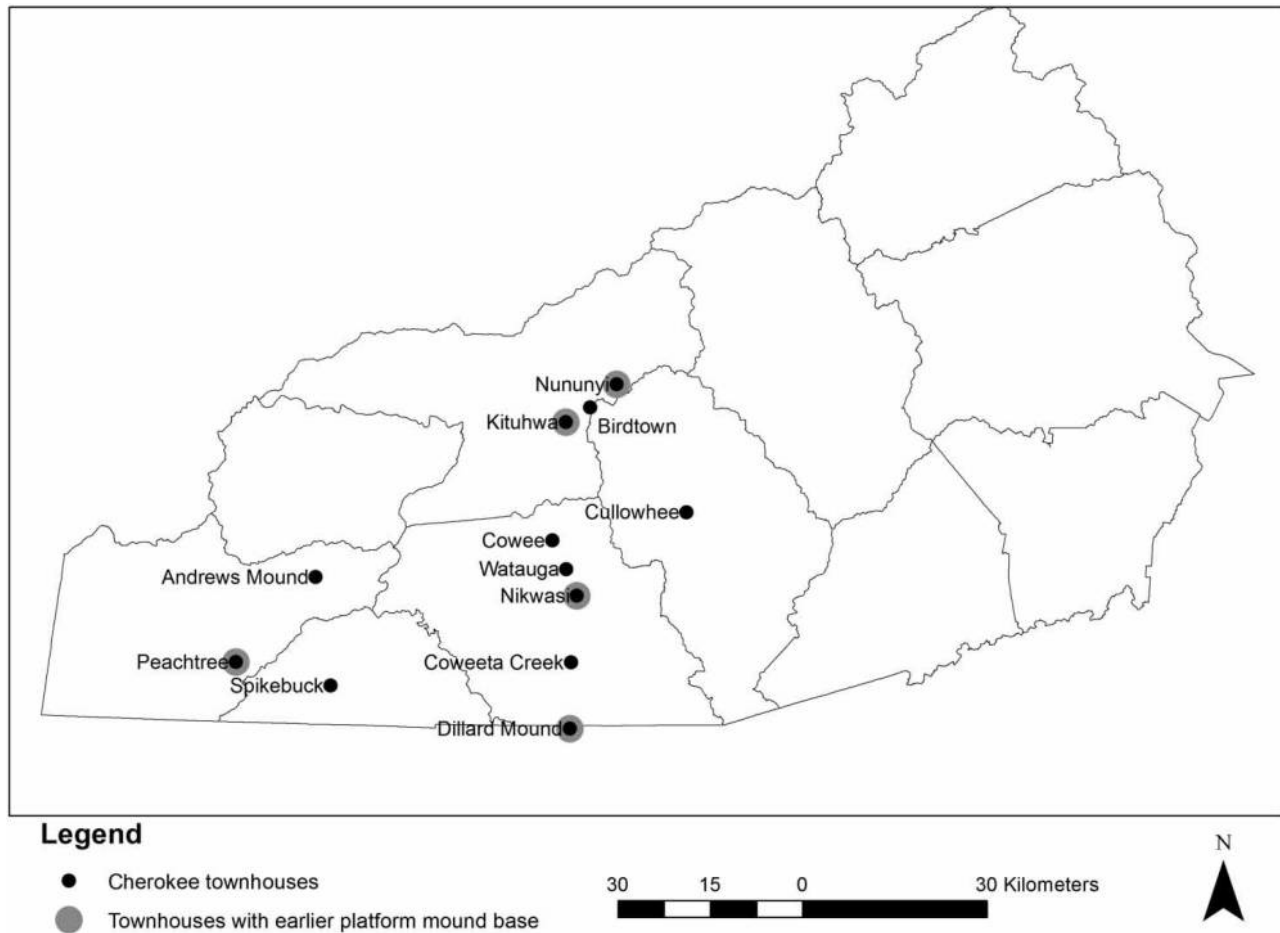


FIGURE 3. Archaeologically Identified Cherokee Townhouses in the Study Area.

the landscape” (Rodning 2009:629). For historic period Cherokee societies, locations marked by Mississippian platform mounds may have been an important part of the cultural landscape, and may have served as anchors for their groups of towns. It is also noteworthy that two historically recorded eighteenth-century Cherokee townhouses, those at Cowee and Watauga, were built on natural elevations high above the floodplain. This may represent an attempt to use natural features to recreate the process of building townhouses on top of platform mounds.

In addition to providing important new archaeological information about the Cherokee heartland, this project can serve as an example for positive collaborative research between archaeologists and indigenous communities in the service of native interests (*sensu* Riggs 2002). A major critique of archaeological research, and one that still applies today, even after the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) is that archaeology is

something done to, not with, or for, indigenous groups (Watkins 2003:3–22). This project is designed to use the tools of archaeology to give something back to the Cherokee community, and to serve as a catalyst for an increasingly collaborative and engaged archaeology in the Cherokee heartland.

The database from this project will serve as a monitoring tool for the Cherokee THPO. Mound and town sites, even those that have been badly disturbed, have a high probability of containing graves. With updated status and location information for these sites, many of which are currently “lost,” the THPO staff will be better equipped to carry out their stewardship responsibility.

Furthermore, the results of this project expand our understanding of the historical geography of the Cherokee landscape. In presentations to Cherokee audiences at public events, the staff of the Cherokee THPO and I have observed that most members of the Cherokee community are intimately familiar with the location and the

meaning of important sites on the Qualla Boundary; sites like Kituwah, Nununyi, and Birdtown mounds. However, members of the Eastern Band are probably not as familiar with the names, locations, and histories of important mound and town sites outside the Qualla Boundary, especially those mounds that were leveled by late nineteenth-century expeditions. This narrower view of Cherokee historical geography is at once the result of the violence and land cessions of centuries past and of the destruction of important places by development.

We have already begun to use the information generated by this project for public outreach efforts in the Cherokee community. In addition to presenting the findings of this project in scholarly publications and professional conferences, the staff of the THPO and I have presented the results of our work at a community club meetings in Cherokee and in other public venues, such as libraries and community centers in neighboring counties. We have shared the initial results of our work with member of the Eastern Band at the newly organized Cherokee Archaeology Symposium in 2012, 2013, and 2014. This public archaeology event, organized by the THPO and held annually on the Qualla Boundary, provides an opportunity for archaeologists working in western North Carolina to share their work with members of the Cherokee community.

At these public events, members of the Cherokee community provide us with informal feedback and suggestions for future research in question and answer sessions after our presentations. Themes that emerge in these discussions with Cherokee community members include a concern with preserving mound and town sites (and specifically, the graves they contain), and a desire to use archaeology as a tool for understanding Cherokee culture and identity. These discussions will inform future investigations of mounds and townhouses in western North Carolina, and are laying the groundwork for more formal community engagement and collaborative research in the years to come.

CONCLUSION

By relocating and studying poorly understood mound and town sites, we can create a broader reconstruction of the Cherokee world before contact and removal. Mounds are a physical connection to Cherokee cultural identity, material reminders of past and present Cherokee lifeways

and traditions. Some mounds and townhouses that were damaged by plowing, development, and antiquarian explorations may still be partially intact, and are still important places on the landscape. For archaeologists and stewards of Cherokee heritage alike, putting these places back on the map is important work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was supported by a National Science Foundation award DEB-0823293 from the Long Term Ecological Research Program to the Coweeta LTER Program at the University of Georgia. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in the material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation or the University of Georgia. This research was also supported by grants and in-kind support from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, the Tribal Historic Preservation Office of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the Duke Energy Foundation, TRC Environmental Corporation, and the University of West Georgia. This project was developed in close cooperation with the Tribal Historic Preservation Office of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and I would like to thank Russell Townsend, Brian Burgess, Tyler Howe, Yolanda Sanooke, Miranda Panther, Beau Carroll, and Johi Griffin for their role in designing and supporting the research, public outreach, and preservation efforts of the Western North Carolina Mounds and Towns Project. Russell Townsend's support and guidance were especially important. I also thank John Chamblee and Ted Gragson at the Coweeta Long Term Ecological Research Program at the University of Georgia and Tasha Benyshek and Paul Webb of TRC for their support of this research. John Kesler of TRC helped direct and complete the fieldwork in western North Carolina and, as always, his skill and good humor made even the wettest, coldest days in the field productive. The following individuals helped with the archival and field research for this project, and provided useful leads and insight: Linda Hall, Susan Myers, John Mintz, Steve Claggett, and Dolores Hall of the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, John McDade and Erik Kreusch of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, T. J. Holland, Cultural Resources Manager for the EBCI, Rodney Snedeker and Scott Ashcraft of the U. S. Forest Service, Lorie Hansen of the Western North Carolina Rock Art Project, Heather Olson, Mandy Terkhorn, Michael Nelson, and Erin Grantham of TRC, Chris Rodning of Tulane, Steve Davis, Vin Steponaitis, and Brett Riggs of the Research Laboratories of Archaeology of the University of North Carolina, Jason Love and Carol Harper of the CWT LTER, David Hally and Mark Williams of the University of Georgia, David Moore of Warren Wilson College, and Jane Eastman, Anne Rogers, and Tom Belt of Western Carolina University. Joelle Freeman, a graduate assistant for the Coweeta LTER, helped me build the GIS layers for this project and was instrumental in the project to georeference the James Mooney maps. David Hally helped analyze the ceramics from the survey of 31CE5. Jon Marcoux generously provided artifact photographs and documents related to the

Notley Mound. Tasha Benyshek, Chris Rodning, Paul Webb, David Hally, Maureen Meyers, and one anonymous reviewer read and commented on earlier versions of this paper; their insightful feedback greatly improved this article. Any errors herein are the responsibility of the author.

NOTES

- 1 Between June 21 and August 31, 2011, the project director traveled to the following locations to carry out archival research and interviews: the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) in Cherokee, the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology (OSA) in Raleigh and the western branch of the OSA in Asheville, the North Carolina State Archives in Raleigh, the Research Laboratories of Archaeology at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill (UNC RLA), Western Carolina University (WCU) in Cullowhee, the archives of the National Park Service at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park visitors center in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, the Franklin Press in Franklin, the North Carolina Rooms of the Buncombe, Henderson, and Haywood County libraries, the office of the register of deeds in Buncombe, Henderson, and Jackson County, and the Main Library and the Map Library at the University of Georgia. The results from the archival research for this project are discussed in detail in reports of preliminary research for the Western North Carolina Mound and Towns Project (Steere 2011, 2013). Background research also was conducted using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) available publically through county land record websites and other sources, such as the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) website and the North Carolina State University GIS clearinghouse. LIDAR data available through the NCDOT website were especially useful for identifying and assessing possible mound locations.
- 2 Surface collections of ceramics and other artifacts from sites 31BN12, 31CE1, 31CE3, 31CE7, 31CE8, 31CY1, 31GH2, 31HW4, 31JK2, 31MA2, 31MA5, 31MA38, 31SW2, 31SW3, and 31SW7 were examined at the Research Laboratories of Archaeology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. At the time of writing, all artifacts collected during fieldwork for the Western North Carolina Mounds and Towns Projects are curated at the Antonio J. Waring, Jr. Laboratory of Archaeology at the University of West Georgia.

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NOTE ON CONTRIBUTOR

Correspondence to: Benjamin A. Steere, Department of Anthropology, G3A McKee, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC 38723, USA. Email: bensteere@gmail.com.