

Archaeology and ancestral Cherokee lands in western North Carolina



Presentation to the Asheville Friends Meeting
August 15, 2021

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Indigenous
archaeology:

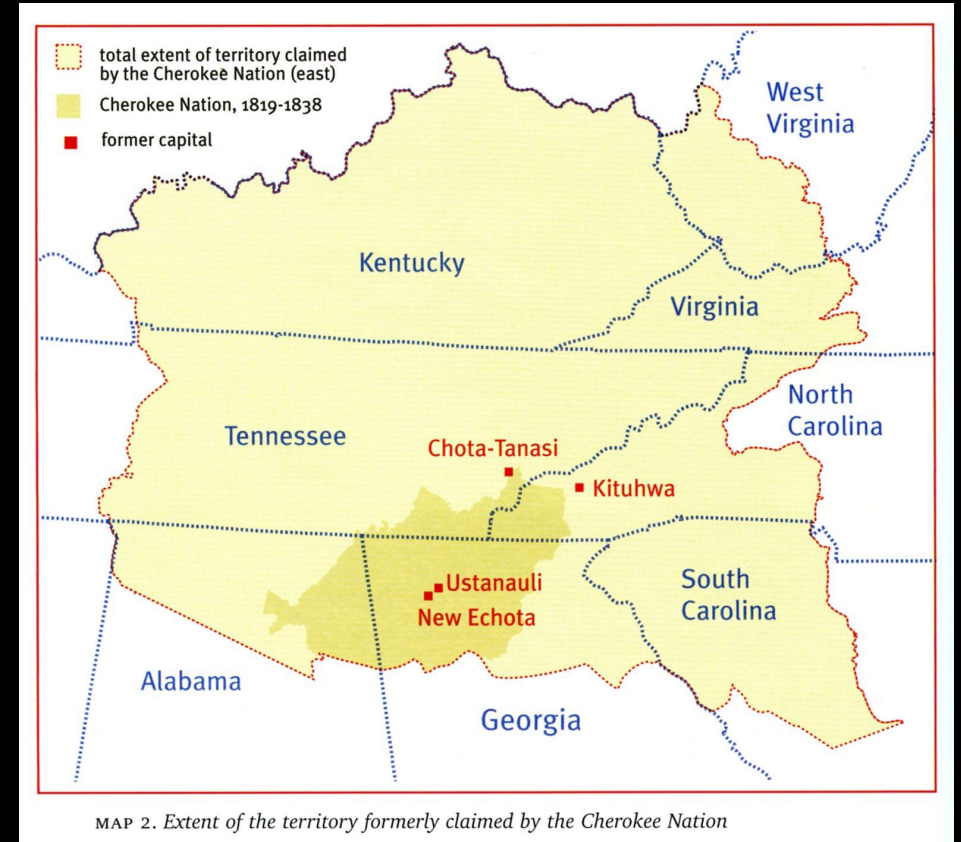
Archaeology
done by, for,
about, and with
indigenous
communities



Ben Steere (right) with Cherokee Beloved Man Jerry Wolfe (left) and Tribal Archaeologist Beau Carroll (center) at the Boundary Tree archaeology site in Cherokee.

Land acknowledgment

- We respectfully acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of the *Anikituwagi* (Cherokee) people.
- Asheville: *Togiyasdi*
- Cullowhee: Judaculla's place
- WCU campus: *Tali Tsisgwayahi*



Map of the ca. 140,000 square miles of territory formerly claimed by the Cherokee Nation, and the extent of the Cherokee Nation, 1819-1838

Map from Cherokee Heritage Trails Guidebook
Duncan and Riggs 2003, page 14

Main ideas

- The Cherokee world is **bigger than you think**
- The archaeological record is at once **incredibly fragile** and **remarkably resilient**
- Cherokee mounds and towns are not only sites of historical importance, but are also **integral, living parts of the cultural landscape** of the Southern Appalachian mountains



Tom Belt (fluent Cherokee speaker and cultural expert)

Kituwah is:

- Our real name, what we call ourselves (Ani-Kituwah)
- Soil/earth that belongs to a third person (the Creator)
- The place where we put down the fire

<https://youtu.be/9GZNMBuAO9Y>



TJ Holland (Cultural resources manager, EBCI)

- "Cosmography"
- The central fires in mounds and townhouses are living things

A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE HEARTBEAT OF WOUNDED KNEE



NATIVE AMERICA
FROM 1890 TO THE PRESENT

DAVID TREUER

Most Indians do not see themselves as merely the first in a long series of arrivals to North America; they see themselves as indigenous. And the belief in tribal indigeneity is crucial to understanding modern Indian realities. The rhetorical stance that Indians are merely one group of travelers with no greater stake than any other clashes with Indians' cultural understanding that we have always been here and that our control over our place in the world – not to mention our control over the narrative and history of that place – has been deeply and unjustly eroded (Treuer 2019:28).

A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE HEARTBEAT OF WOUNDED KNEE



NATIVE AMERICA
FROM 1890 TO THE PRESENT

DAVID TREUER

Such [creation] stories explain how Indian peoples and Indian homelands came to define each other. The Diné recognize that they came from someplace else, just as Americans recognize that they came from someplace else and likewise became who they are through struggle and loss and hardship. Just as we might recognize that Americans were once French or English or Dutch or Italian, their origins don't invalidate their claim to the country or alter the fact that Indians of all kinds were here before any colonial power, and remain here. (Treuer 2019:56).

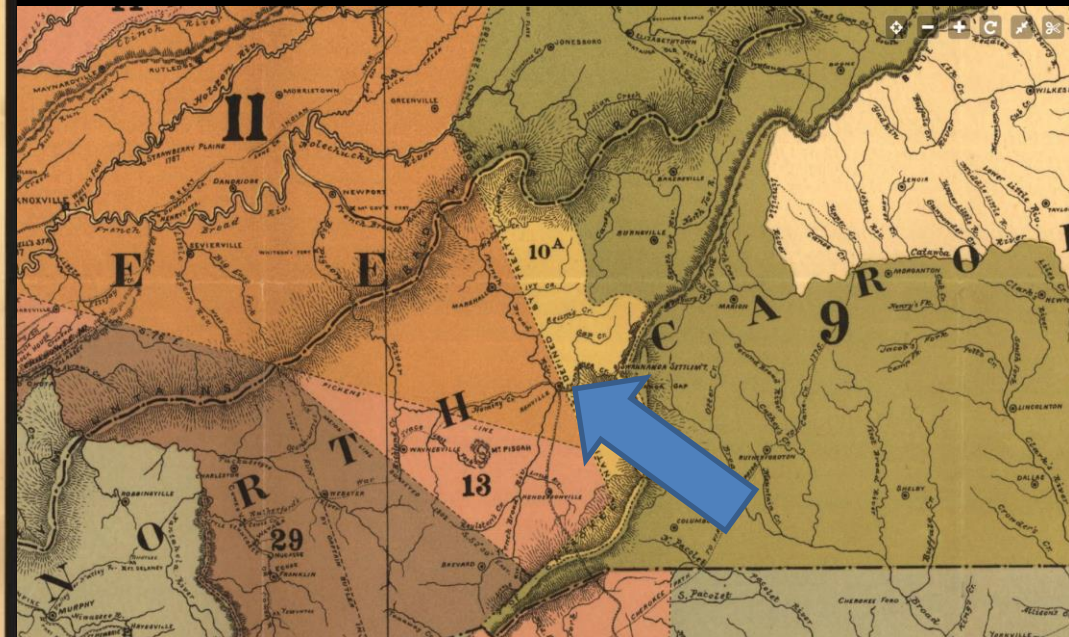
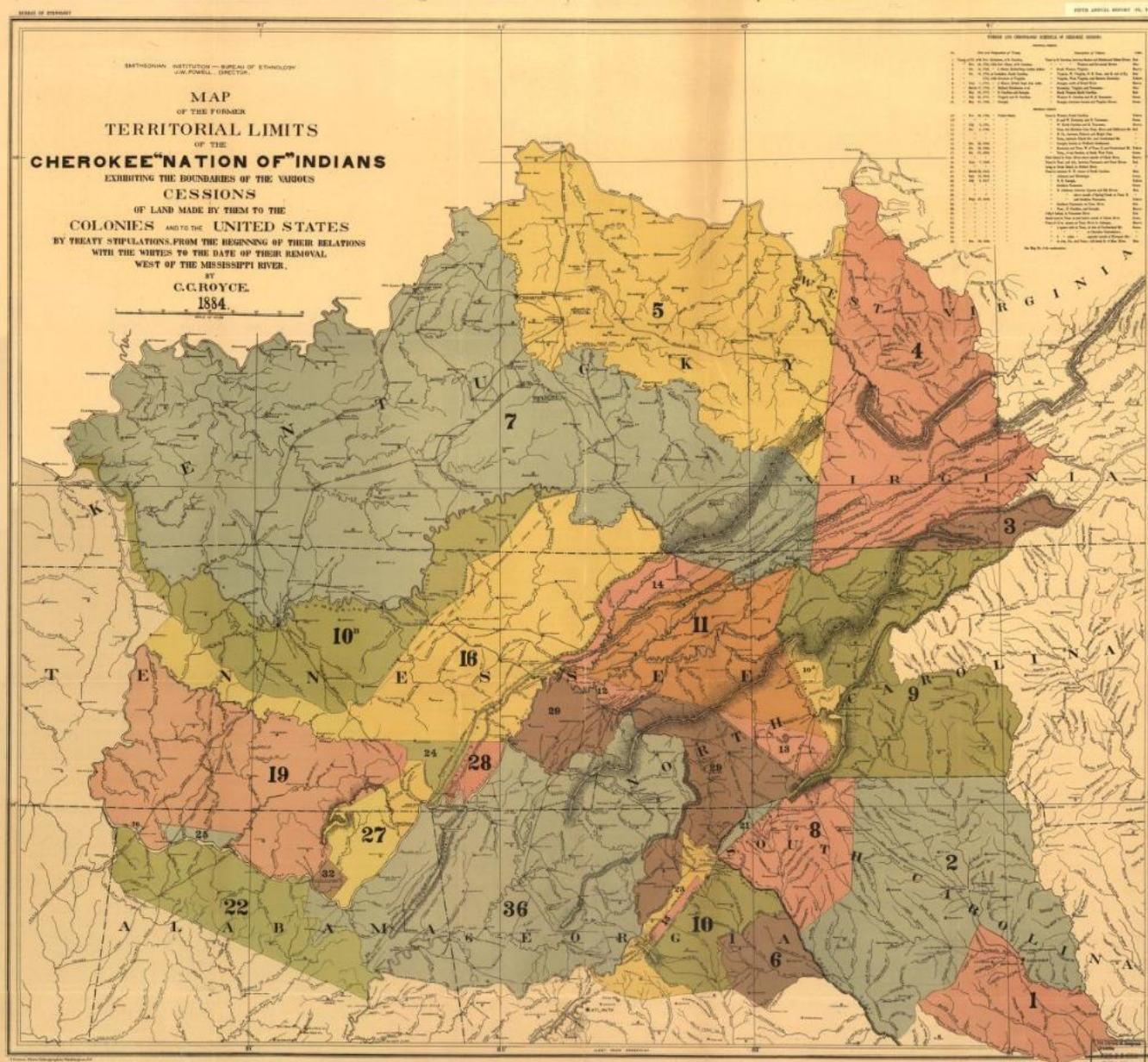
PART 1: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE CHEROKEE HEARTLAND



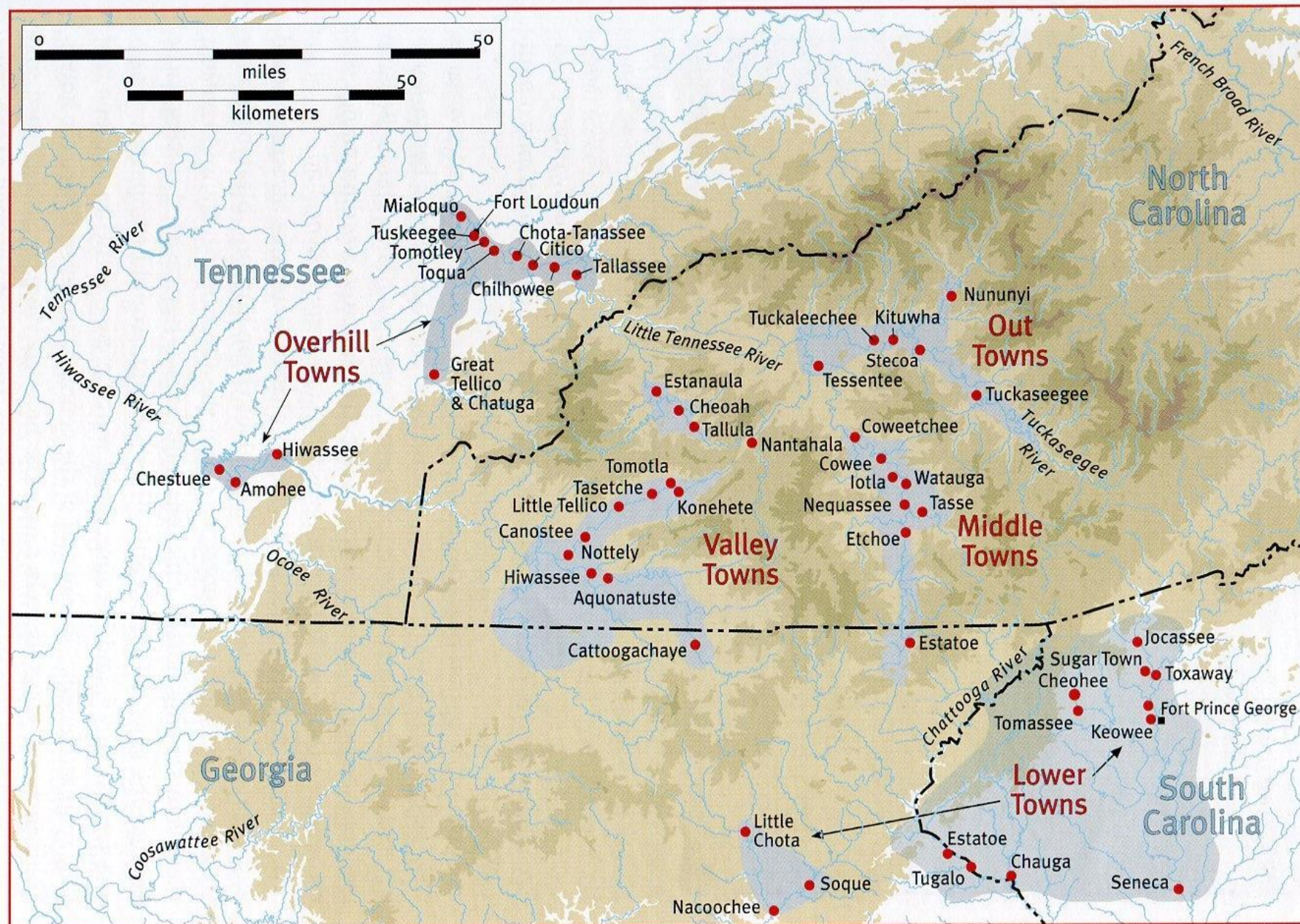
MAP 2. *Extent of the territory formerly claimed by the Cherokee Nation*

Map of the ca. 140,000 square miles of territory formerly claimed by the Cherokee Nation, and the extent of the Cherokee Nation, 1819-1838

Map from Cherokee Heritage Trails Guidebook
Duncan and Riggs 2003, page 14



"Map of the former territorial limits of the Cherokee Nation of Indians." C. C. Royce, 1884.



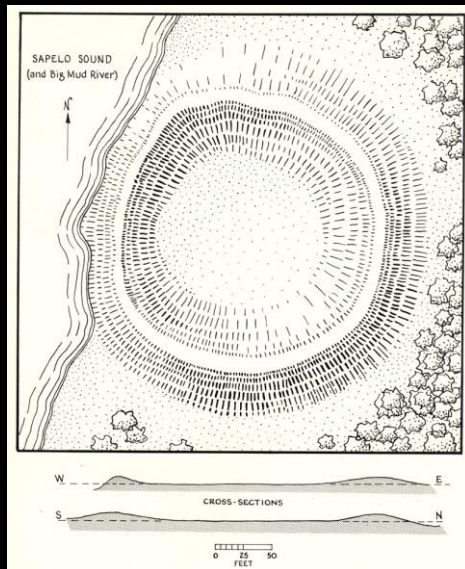
18th century Cherokee towns (Duncan and Riggs 2003:17)



Newark Earthworks, Ohio



Etowah Mounds, Georgia



Sapelo
Island Shell
Ring,
Georgia



Monks Mound, Cahokia, Illinois

BILTMORE MOUND AND HOPEWELLIAN MOUND USE

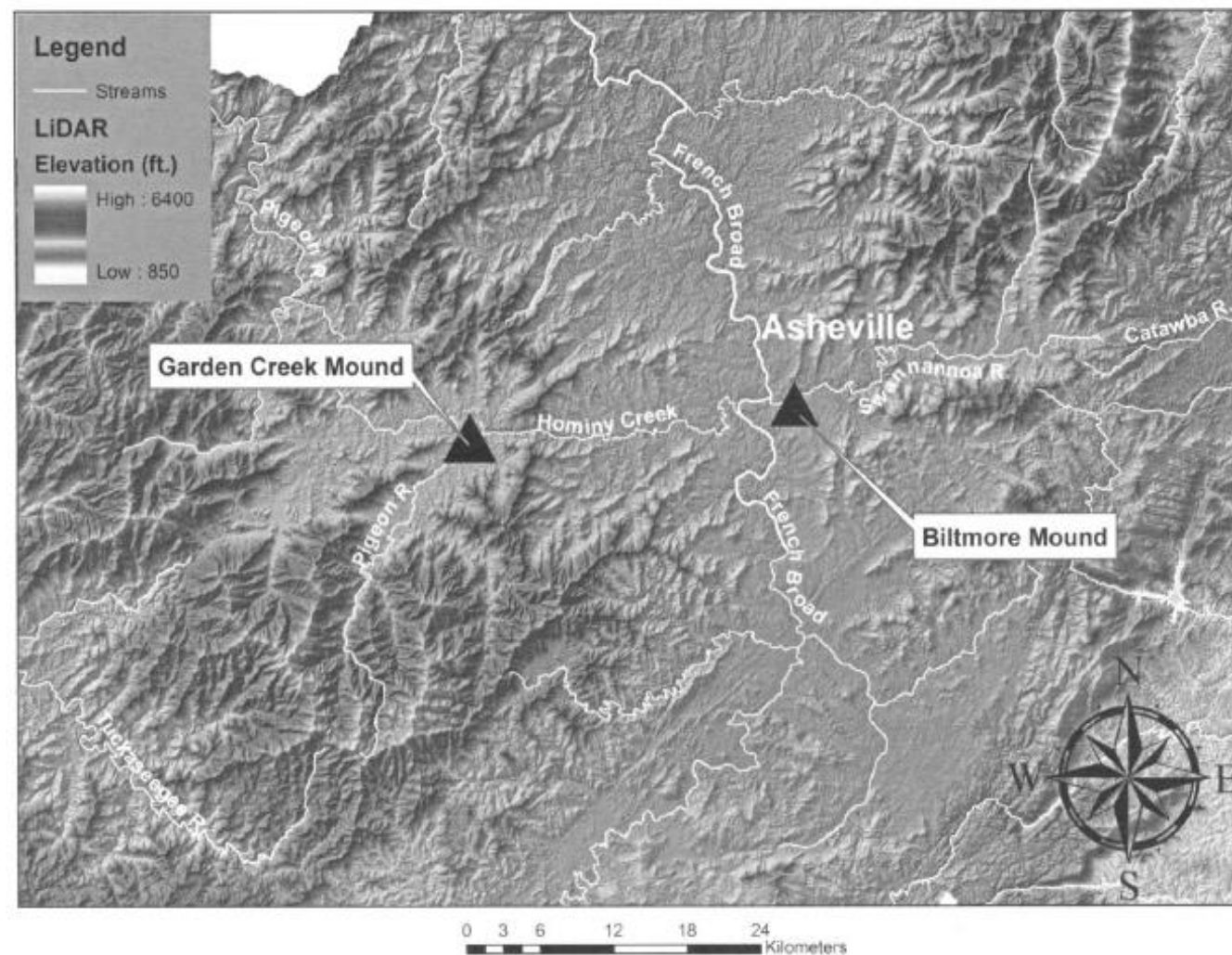
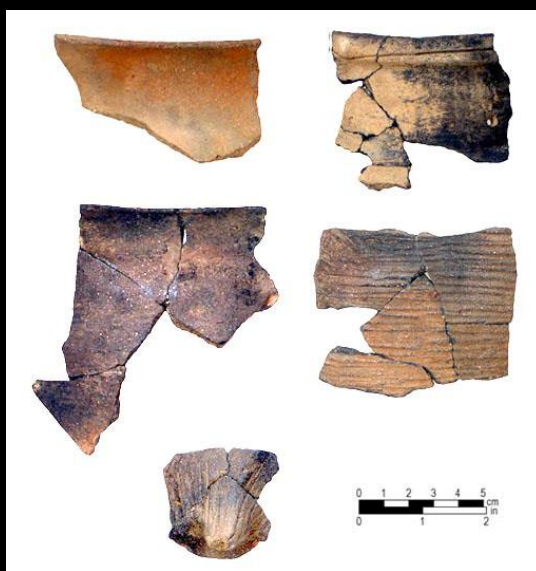
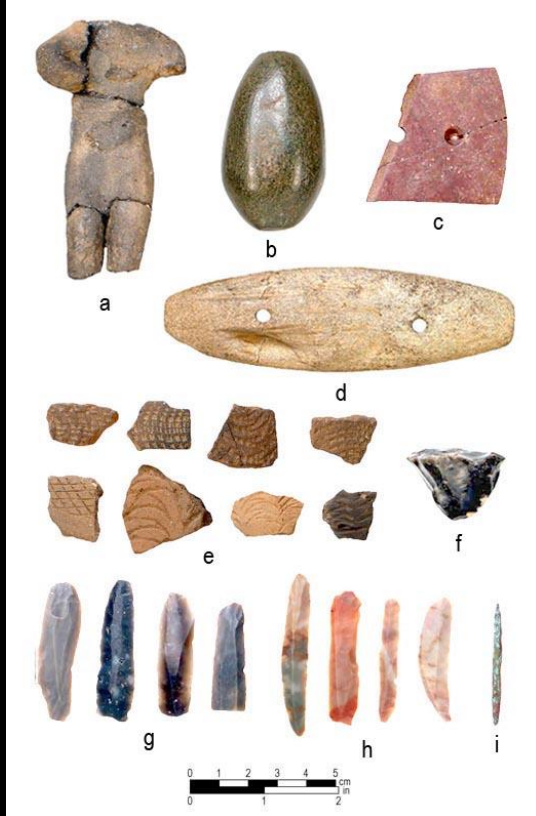


Figure 1. Biltmore Mound setting.

Map of the Biltmore and Garden Creek Mounds from Kimball et al. 2010:45



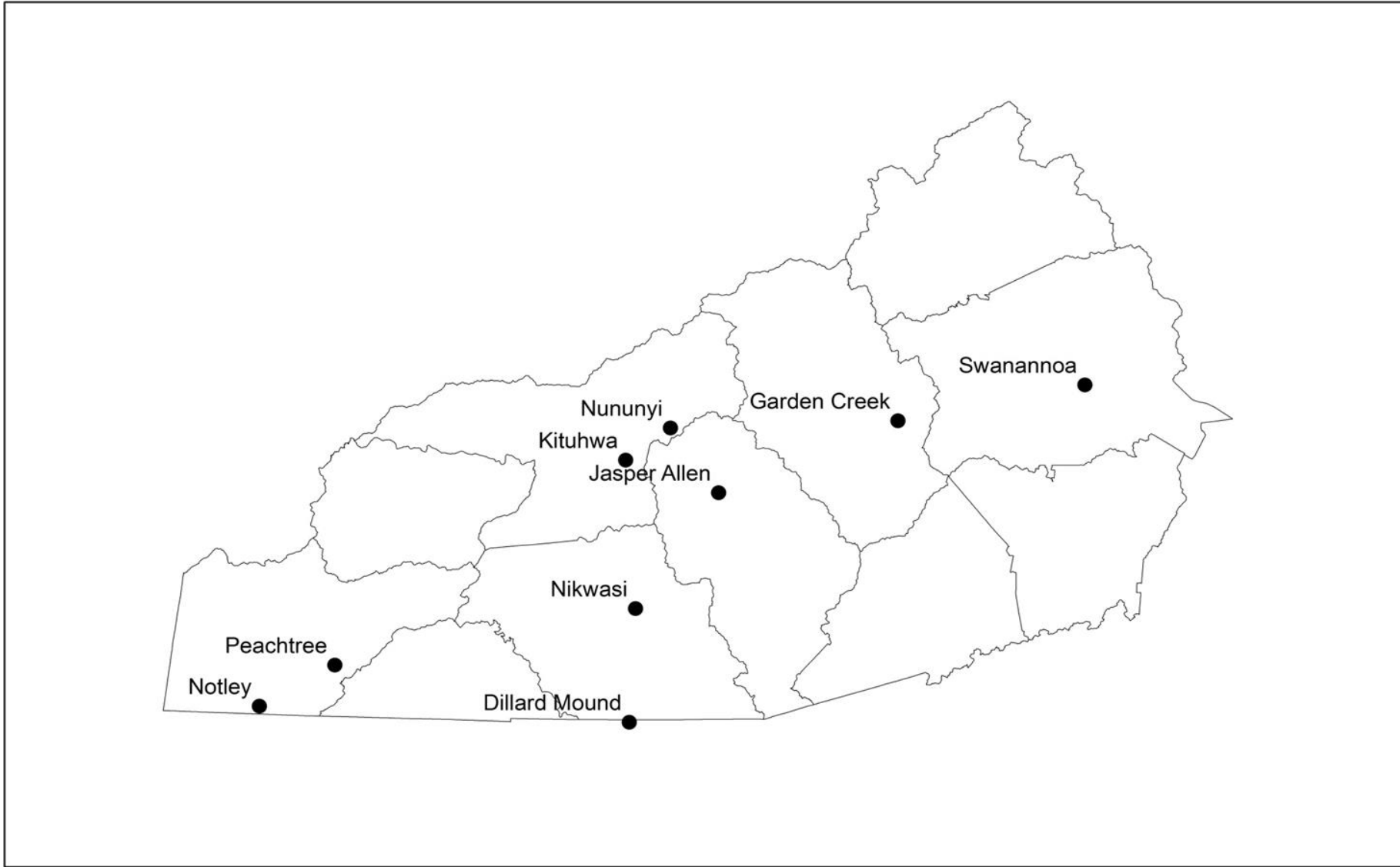
Garden Creek Mound 2
Middle Woodland Period (A.D. 200 – 800)
Images courtesy of UNC RLA



Garden Creek Mound 1, Pisgah phase
 Photograph ca. 1960, courtesy of UNC RLA



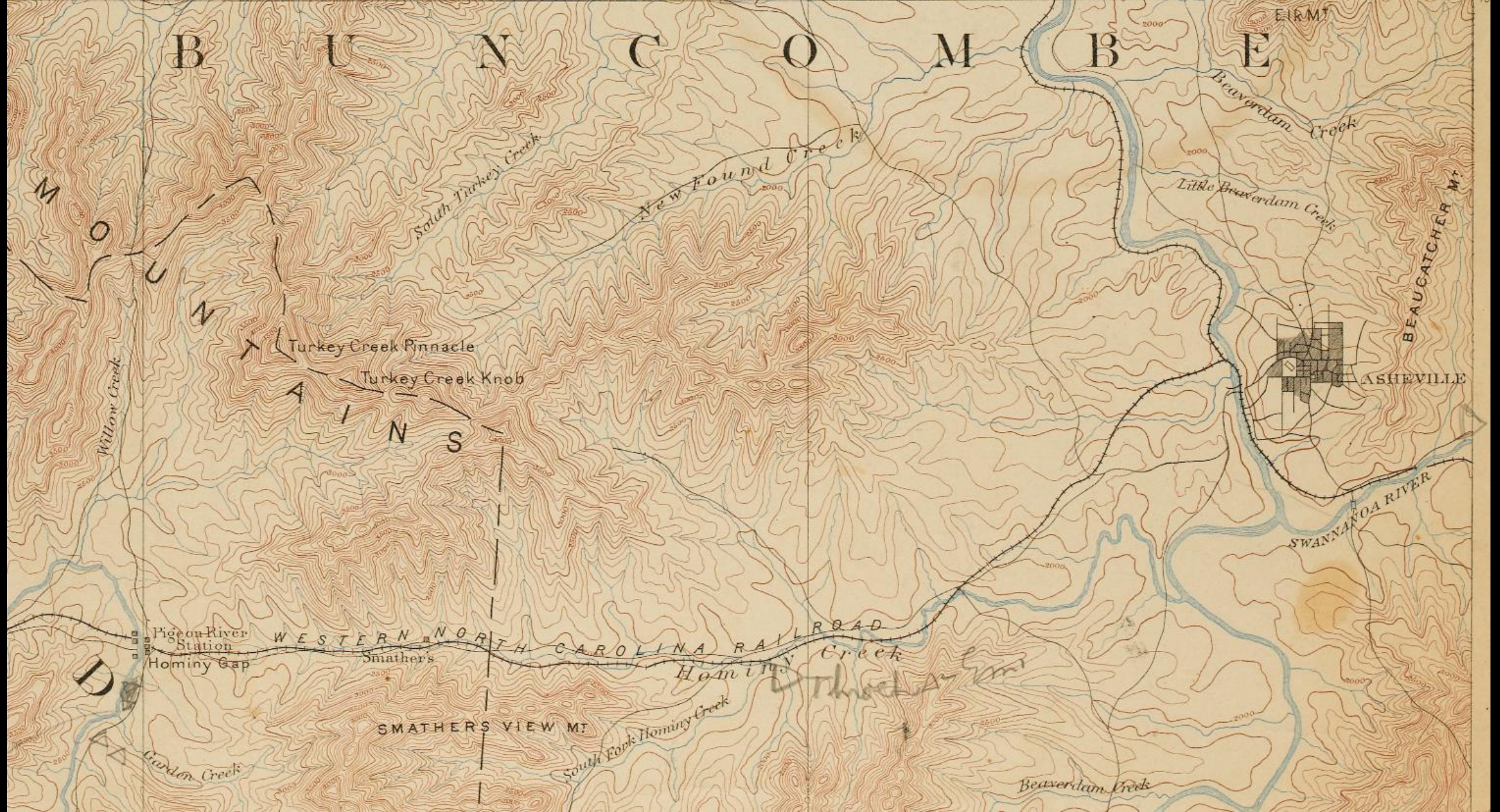
Nikwasi Mound (photographed 1898)
 Mississippian Period
 (A.D. 1000 – 1600)



Legend

● Mississippian period platform mounds

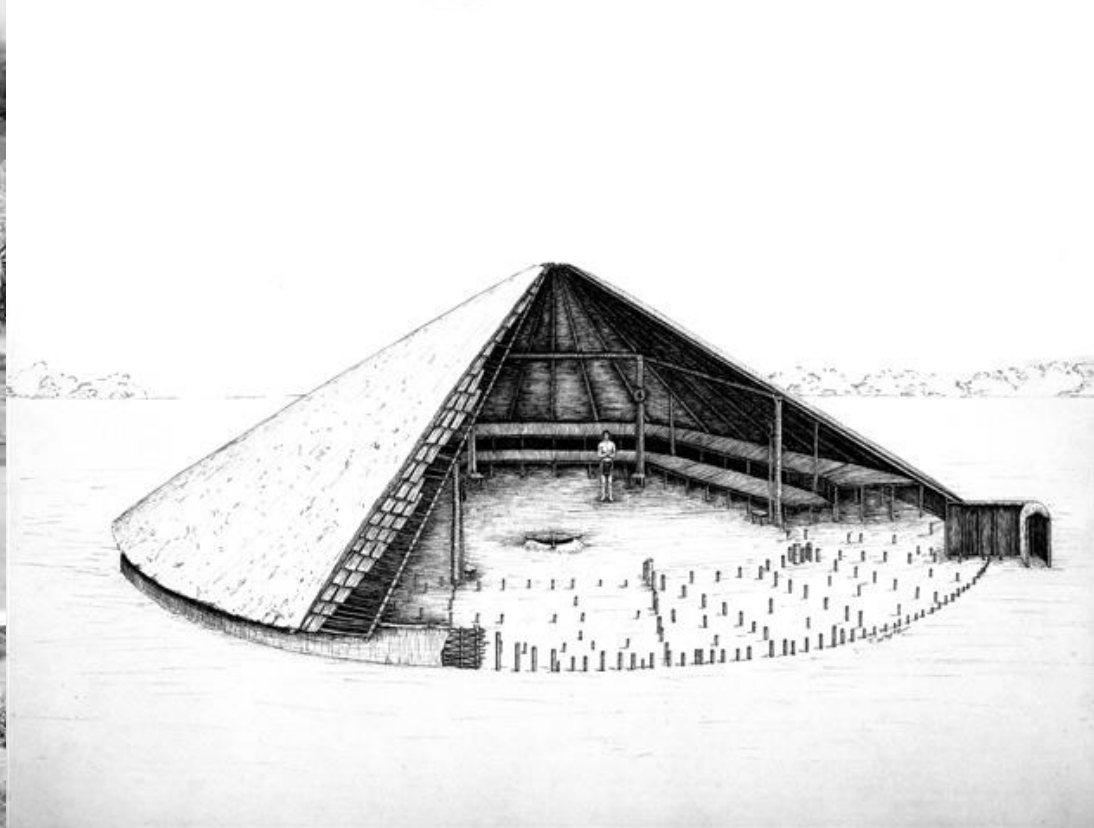




1882 USGS Quad Map annotated by James Mooney, image courtesy Smithsonian Institution

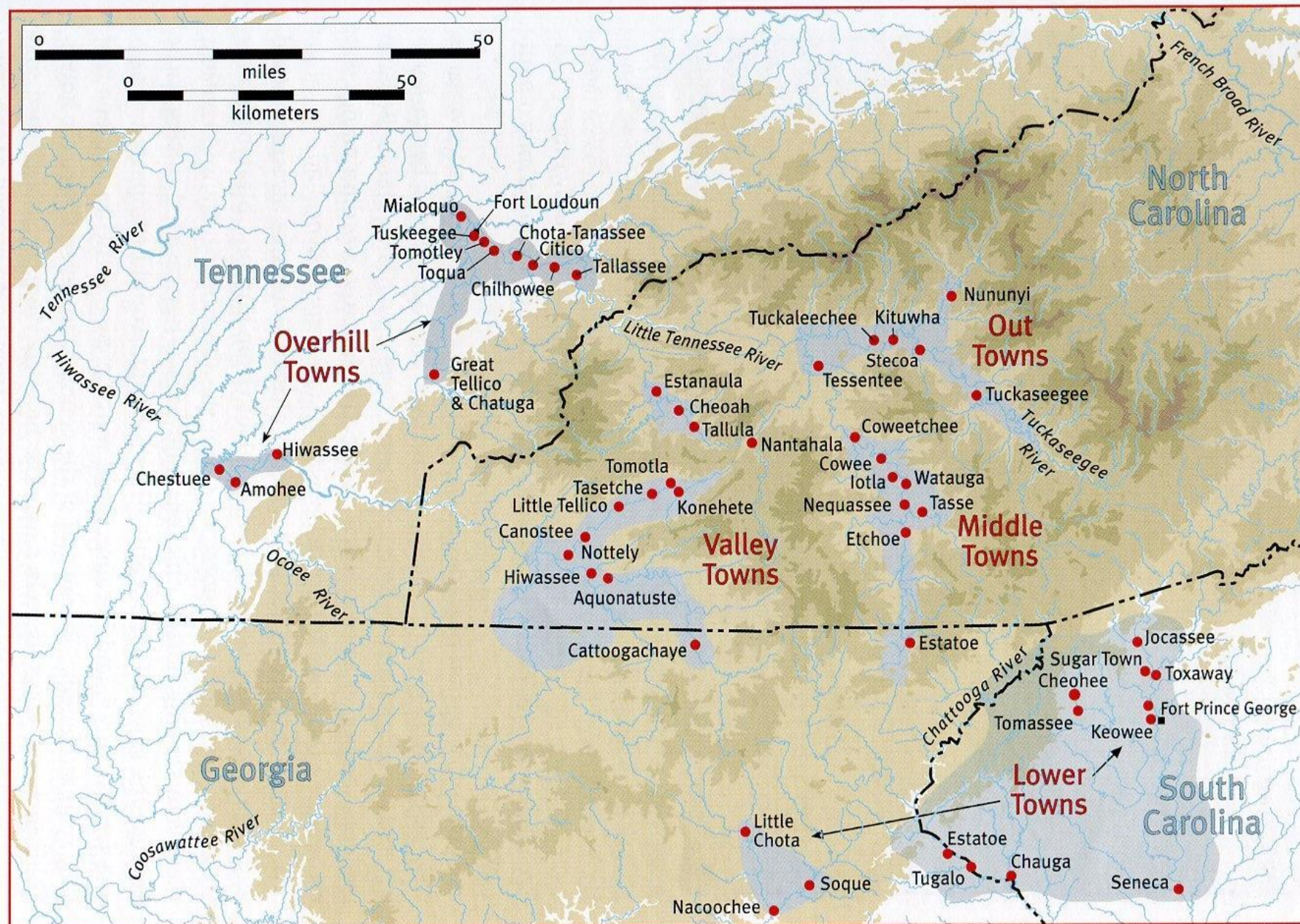


Cherokee townhouse, Coweeta Creek
(A.D. 1500 – 1700) Image courtesy of
UNC RLA



Artist's reconstruction of Chota
townhouse, eastern Tennessee

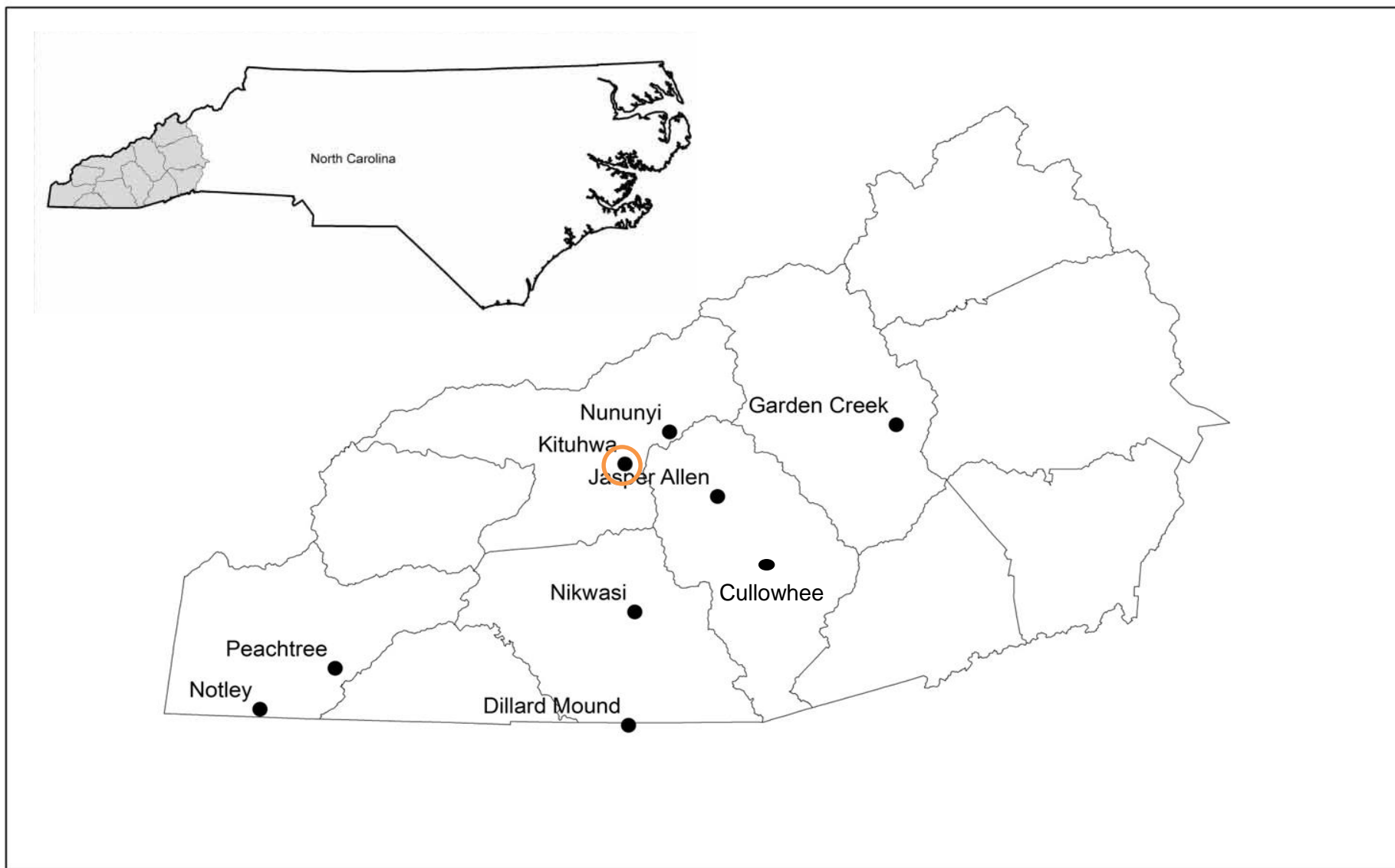
Drawing by Tom Whyte from Schroedl
1986, *Overhill Cherokee Archaeology at
Chota-Tanase*



18th century Cherokee towns (Duncan and Riggs 2003:17)

PART 2: CASE STUDIES IN RESILIENCE

KITUWAH AND NIKWASI



Legend

- Mississippian period platform mounds

30 15 0 30 Kilometers





Kituwah Mound

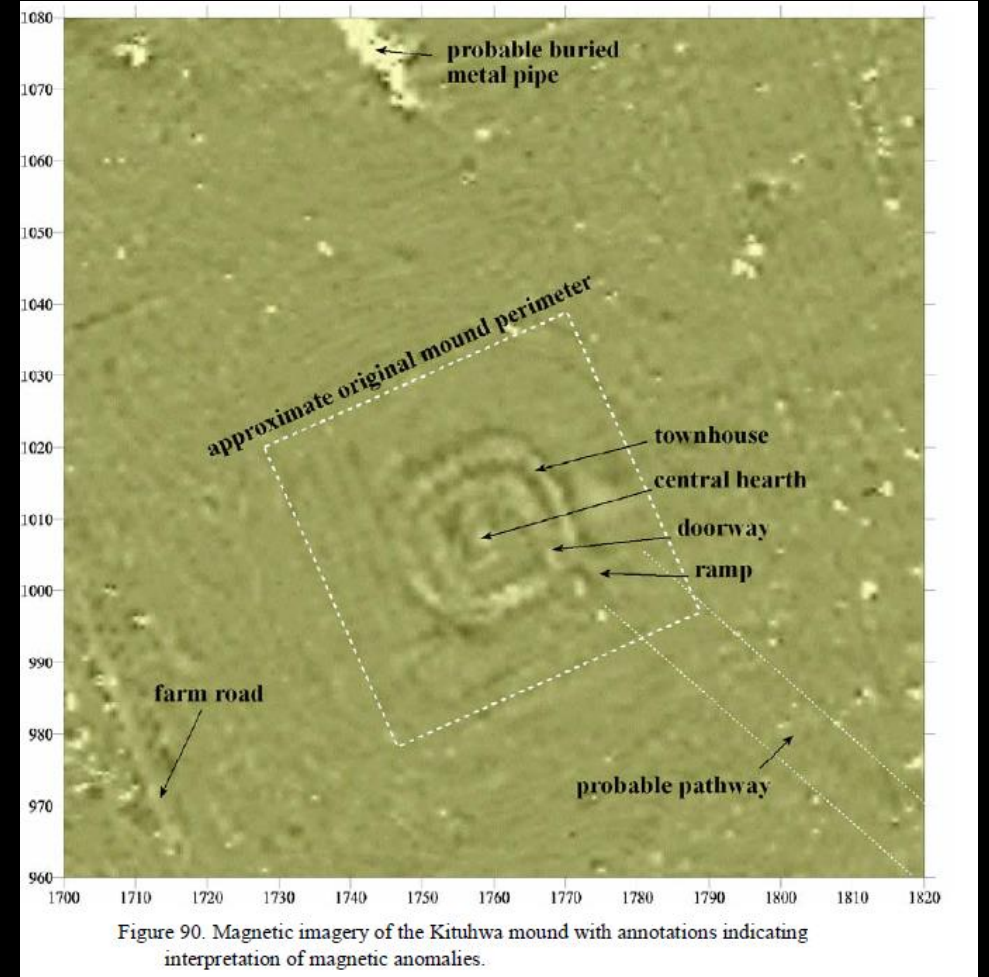
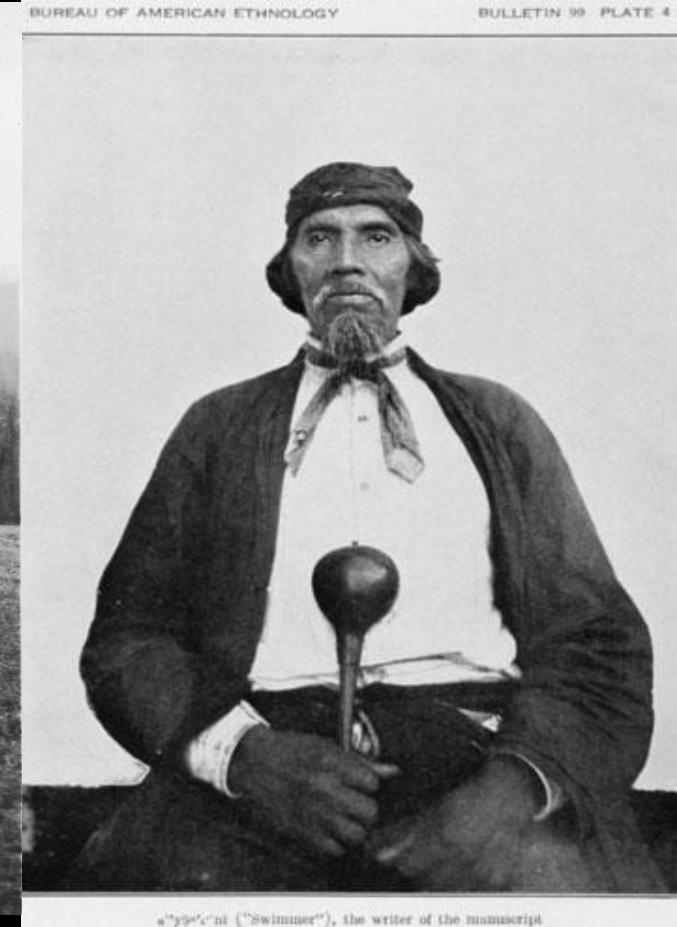


Image from Riggs and Shumate 2003
Archaeological Survey and Testing at
Kituwah



Kituwah Mound in 1937.
Image courtesy NPS.

Some say this everlasting fire was only in the larger mounds at Nikwāsī', Kītu'hwa, and a few other towns, and that when the new fire was thus drawn up for the Green-corn dance it was distributed from them to the other settlements. The fire burns yet at the bottom of these great mounds, and when the Cherokee soldiers were camped near Kītu'hwa during the civil war they saw smoke still rising from the mound.



“Swimmer, the writer of
the manuscript”

Excerpt from “Myths of
the Cherokee” by
James Mooney (1900)



The Kituwah Mound (Google Earth 2019)



DESCRIPTION

The **2019 Mother's Day 5K Run/Walk** returns to the **Kituwah Mound** also known as the Mother Town. Hosted by **Cherokee Choices**, the course has a bit of everything - road, farm road, and trails - offering a complete review of the historic site. The course is perfect for seasoned runners, first timers, and walkers.

Cool shirts, great awards, and a great cause: all proceeds benefit the Maverick's Tsalagi Sunshine Group .

RACE DAY SCHEDULE:

7:30 - 8:30: On-site registration and packet pick up

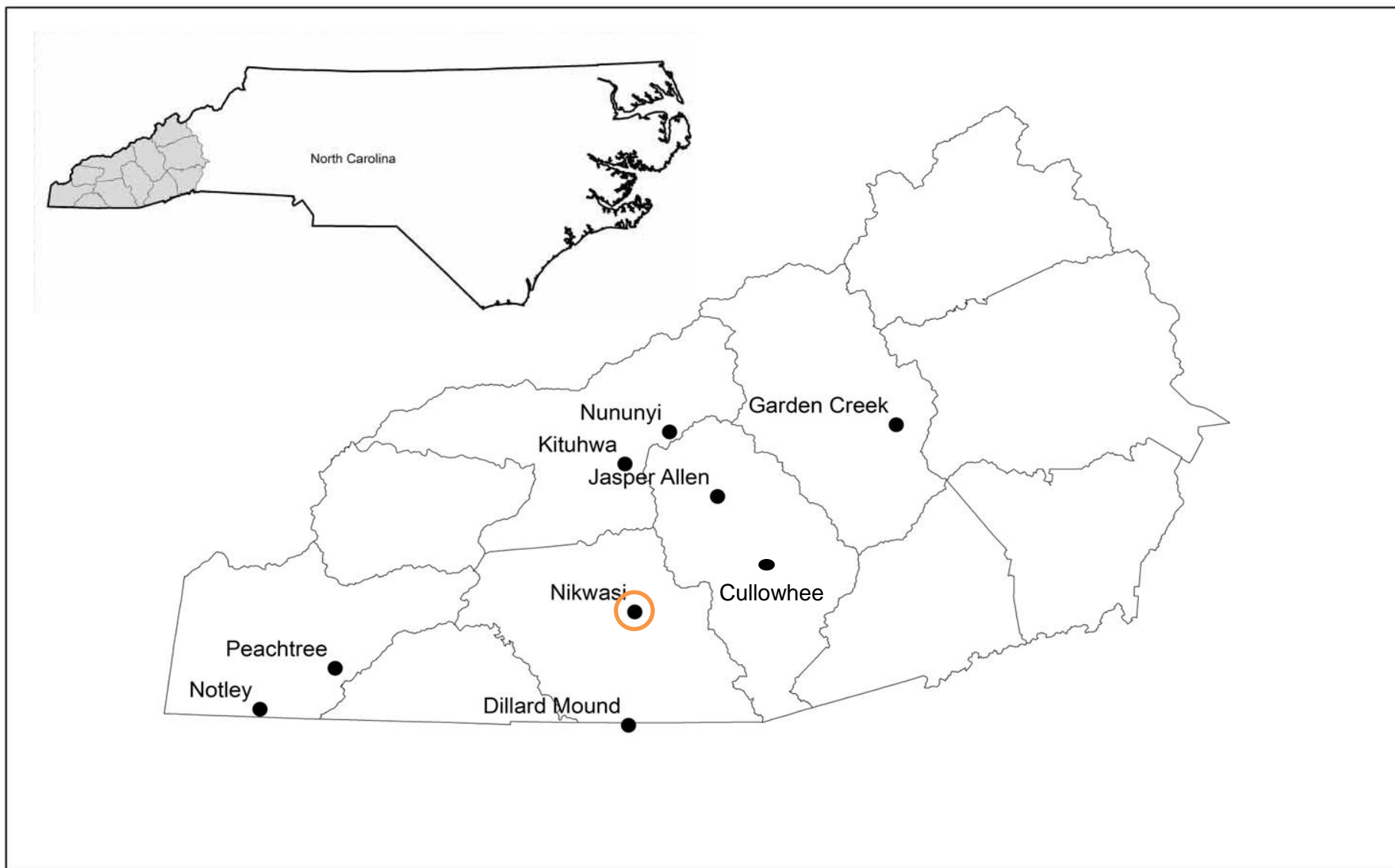
9:00: START 5K Run/Walk

Download a race flyer [here](#).

The Mother's Day 5K Run/Walk is a benefit for the **Maverick's Tsalagi Sunshine Group**. MTS provides care packages to children and families who experience extended hospital stays, as well as providing awareness, encouragement, comfort, and uplift the spirit of those in need. 100% of the money raised by the Mother's Day 5K Run/Walk support these programs as well as funding future fundraisers. Please support the MTS by adding a donation to your registration or click on the DONATE button above.

PLACE

Kituwah Mound
3831 Ela Rd
Bryson City, NC US 28713

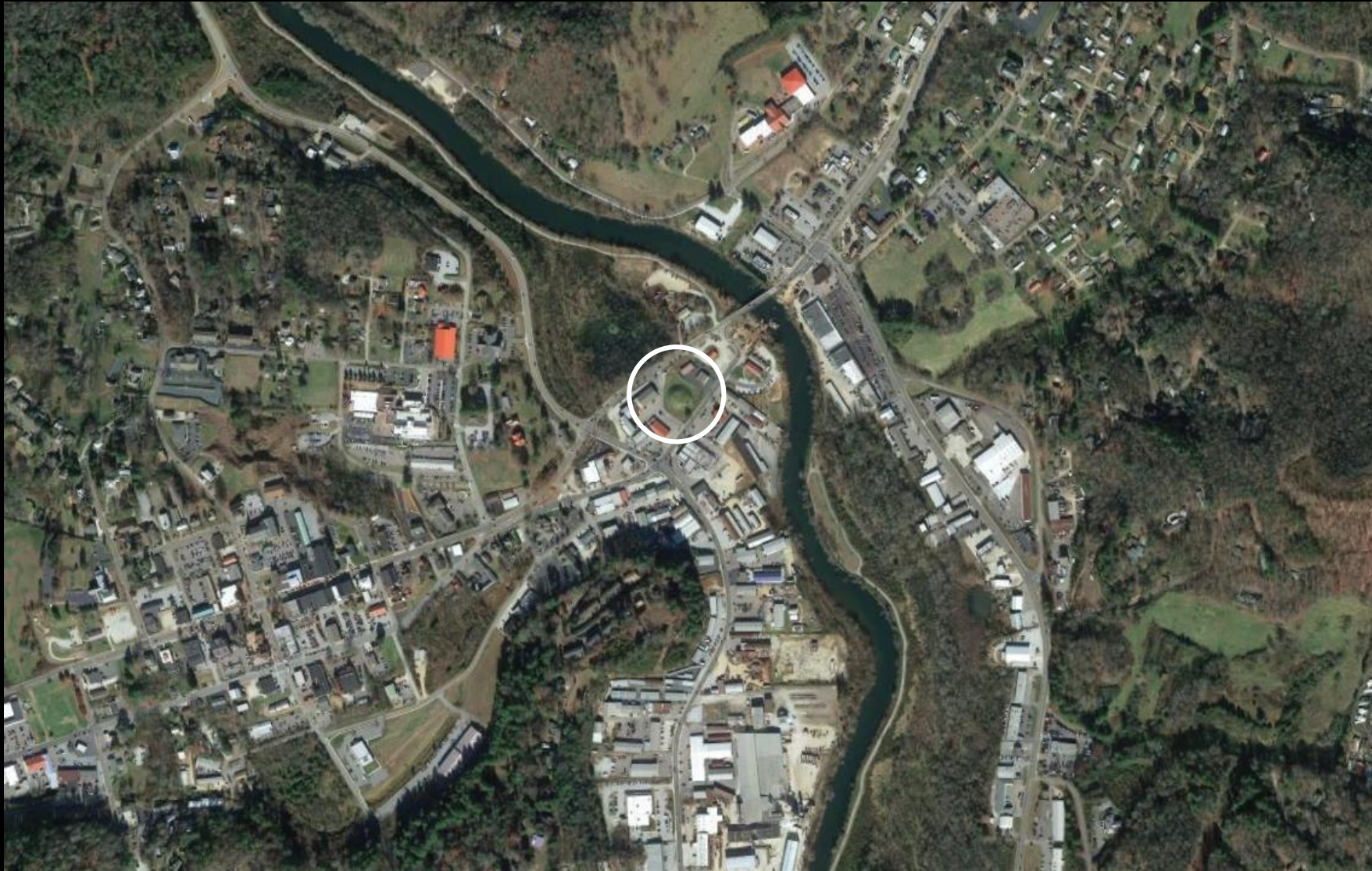


Legend

- Mississippian period platform mounds

30 15 0 30 Kilometers





The Nikwasi Mound (31MA2) circled in white.
Note development surrounding mound (Google Earth 2019)

Caffé Rel French restaurant/Hot Spot gas station.





NIKWASI MOUND AT FRANKLIN, NORTH CAROLINA.
(From photograph of 1890 furnished by Mr H. G. Trentee, owner of the mound.)

Photo of Nikwasi Mound (Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1897-98, p. 336)

Locations of monitored excavations







Smoky Mountain news

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Nikwasi ownership sparks more debate

Written by Jessi Stone 20 March 2019



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National Park Service surveyor Hiram Wilburn took this photo of Nikwasi Mound circa 1937.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Cherokee One Feather

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LETTER: Ostomy Awareness Day is coming up...

HEADLINES

COMMENTARY: How can we best prepare for the future of the Cherokee Nation?

LETTER: Ostomy Awareness Day is coming up...

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Cherokeepics.com (Photo Galleries)

Tribal

Published On: Mon, Apr 1st, 2019

Front Page / News | By Scott

Macon County residents voice opinions on Nikwasi Mound deed transfer



The Nikwasi Mound, shown in a photo by the Cherokee Nation, was put on the National Park Service list.

Cherokee One Feather

Breaking News

Opinions

LETTER: Ostomy Awareness Day is coming up...

HEADLINES

Tribal Court Judgment Summaries for Sept. 23 and 24

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Cherokeepics.com (Photo Galleries)

Tribal

Published On: Sat, Aug 24th, 2019

Community / Front Page | By Scott

Honoring Nikwasi event commemorates deed transfer of sacred mound



As Barbara McRae Ivers, Junita Wilson, right, an EBCI tribal member, speaks at the beginning of the Honoring Nikwasi event at the Nikwasi Mound area on the morning of Saturday, Aug. 24 commemorating the deed transfer of the Nikwasi Mound from the Town of Franklin to the Nikwasi Initiative, McRae and Wilson serve as co-chairs of the Initiative. (SCOTT



EBCI Remember the Remained Riders at Nikwasi, June 2020

Main ideas

- The Cherokee world is **bigger than you think**
- The archaeological record is at once **incredibly fragile** and **remarkably resilient**
- Cherokee mounds and towns are not only sites of historical importance, but are also **integral, living parts of the cultural landscape** of the Southern Appalachian mountains

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Tom Belt, TJ Holland, Jane Eastman, Brett Riggs, Tasha Benyshek, Paul Webb, Andrew Denson, Constance Owl, Russ Townsend, Beau Carroll, and Johi Griffin for insights and conversations that helped with this presentation.



Dedication

- This presentation is dedicated to my colleague and mentor, TJ Holland, Cultural Resources Manager for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Please consider donating to the TJ Holland Memorial Cherokee Studies Scholarship

Cherokee Studies Program's endowed scholarship renamed for T.J. Holland

WCU Stories October 5, 2020

By Geoff Cantrell



T.J. Holland

The Cherokee Studies Program at Western Carolina University will rename its endowed scholarship in memory of T.J. Holland, an alumnus and lifelong leader in the community and Cherokee cultural preservation and revitalization who died recently.

Holland, 44, passed away unexpectedly Sept. 12 at his home in Robbinsville. He was the cultural resources manager for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and served as director of the Junaluska Memorial Museum in Robbinsville.

The T.J. Holland Memorial Cherokee Studies Scholarship will be awarded to a student enrolled in one of WCU's undergraduate or graduate programs in Cherokee studies, with special consideration given to members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Cherokee Nation, United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians or another Native American tribe.

Brett Riggs, WCU's Sequoyah Distinguished Professor of Cherokee Studies, described Holland as the bridge between the Eastern Band and the university, the "person who translated academia for his Cherokee community and constituency, and who brought understanding of the perspectives of his community to the academy." Lisa Leffler, director of WCU's Culturally Based Native Health Program, recalled he was instrumental in "assisting with our annual medicine walks, elders and clinicians' meetings, as well as the annual Rooted in the Mountains symposium," and wrote extensively about the importance of respecting tribal protocols in conducting research in native communities.

In addition to his dedicated work through his many ties to WCU, Holland also served on the EBCI Medical Institutional Review board, the Tribal Historic Properties and Preservation Committee, the Center for Native Health board and the Snowbird Fading Voices Committee.

Holland's expertise brought him a national reputation as trusted, knowledgeable and willing colleague, and he worked with scholars from across the country conducting research using EBCI resources.

Courtney Lewis, associate professor of anthropology at the University of South Carolina, described how Holland aided her scholarship on the role of small businesses in fostering Native American economic sovereignty. "He took time to work with me and get my feet on the ground," Lewis said.

Holland also worked with curators, such as at the Smithsonian Institution, to develop guidelines for the management of culturally sensitive Cherokee archival materials and to ensure that Cherokee communities could benefit from access to these collections. "T.J. Holland was an instrumental thought leader in developing best practices for bridging college and community," said Gwyneth Isaac, curator of North American Ethnology at the Smithsonian. "He helped us museum scholars at the Smithsonian with this






About the Blog

Western Carolina University is located in the beautiful Southern Appalachian mountains of Cullowhee, North Carolina. Our 600-acre mountain campus is surrounded by one of the most biodiverse regions in the state that provides students unparalleled learning and adventure opportunities. If you're looking for a university ready to fight as hard for your success as you are, choose WCU. Learn more about our campus...

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