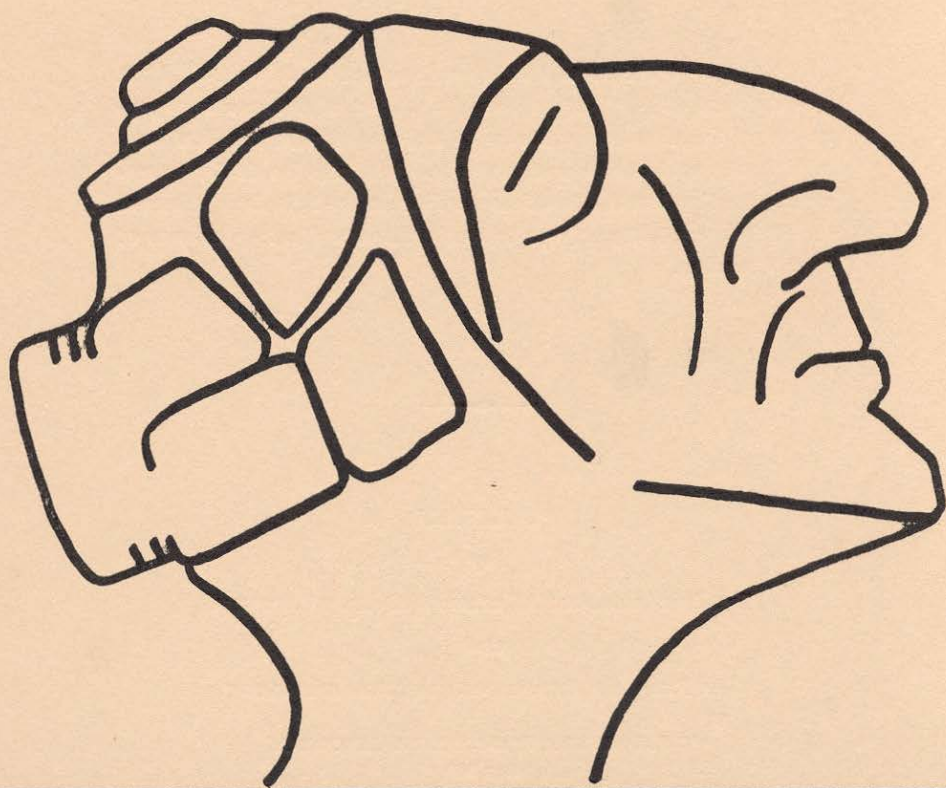


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CONTENTS

THE ROUTE OF RUTHERFORD'S EXPEDITION AGAINST THE NORTH CAROLINA CHEROKEES	Roy S. Dickens, Jr.	3
NOTES ON CHEROKEE ARCHITECTURE	Clemens de Baillou	25
A NOTE ON CHEROKEE HOUSE CONSTRUCTION OF 1776	Roy S. Dickens, Jr.	35

THE ROUTE OF RUTHERFORD'S EXPEDITION AGAINST THE NORTH CAROLINA CHEROKEES

by

ROY S. DICKENS, JR.

INTRODUCTION

In September of 1776 approximately twenty-five hundred North Carolina militia, commanded by General Griffith Rutherford, marched against the Middle and Valley Towns of the Cherokee Indians. Sketches of this expedition can be found in a number of nineteenth and twentieth-century histories, but for the most part these descriptions lack detail and are often based on misinformation.

By giving special attention to a few original documents, by utilizing archaeological findings, and simply by taking a common sense look at the terrain, the author attempts in this paper to provide a more accurate delineation of the route of Rutherford's march. Particular attention is given to the locations of Indian towns mentioned in the chronicles. The accurate positioning of these towns is of prime importance in archaeological investigations to which this study is an adjunct.

The author is indebted to Dr. Joffre L. Coe, Director of the Research Laboratories of Anthropology, The University of North Carolina, for use of the North Carolina Archaeological Survey Files; and to Dr. Louis DeVorse, Jr., Professor of Geography, University of Georgia, for his critical reading of an original draft of the paper. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Bennie C. Keel of the Research Laboratories of Anthropology for directing the author to some of the important source material on the Cherokee expeditions and for reading the original draft. A portion of the research was made possible through Grant No. GS-717 of the National Science Foundation.

BACKGROUND

At the opening of the American Revolution, the Cherokees existed in a state of semidependence on the white trader. While the Indians grew to rely on European-made guns and manufactured goods, they found at the same time that their native lands were being whittled away by an ever-increasing wave of

settlers and land speculators. The British, whose agents opposed violations of the Indian boundary¹ and whose traders provided necessary commodities, had little trouble in gaining Cherokee support. In turn, the frontier settlers, who hoped to retain their illegal claims within the Indian territory, gave their full support to the Revolution.

As friction between England and the colonies increased, Indian Superintendent John Stuart and his deputy Alexander Cameron attempted to keep the Cherokees loyal to the Crown but off the "war path." These desires were incompatible, and in early June, 1776, a combined Tory-and-Indian force raided white settlements in South Carolina. Soon after this, settlements on the Holston River in northeastern Tennessee were attacked. It must be noted, however, that these uprisings were neither as numerous nor as severe as the frontier settlers claimed.²

By early July, the colonial governments of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia all had expressed a desire to bring an end to the "Indian threat."³ Colonel Samuel Jack of Georgia was already in the field leading two hundred volunteers against the Cherokee Lower Settlements on the Tugaloo River. Jack managed to burn several important towns and to destroy their provisions and corn fields. He met with little resistance from the Indians, since they had fled to the hinterland on hearing of his approach.⁴

On July 31, 1776, Colonel Andrew Williamson and eleven hundred South Carolinians advanced rapidly against Lower Settlements on the Tugaloo, Seneca, and Keowee rivers in northeastern Georgia and northwestern South Carolina. During the next two weeks this army burned houses and crops at the towns of Oconee, Tugaloo, Estatoe, Seneca, Tomassee, and Keowee.⁵ On two occasions they fought pitched battles with combined Tory-and-Indian parties led by Cherokee war chief Dragging

1. A generalized boundary line was established between Colonial and Indian lands by the Proclamation of 1763. This boundary followed roughly the escarpment of the Blue Ridge through North Carolina. In 1767, the Royal Governor of North Carolina, William Tryon, established a new boundary, slightly to the east of the Proclamation Line. For a full discussion of the establishment of these boundaries and of the related Colonial-Indian policies see Louis DeVorse, Jr., *The Indian Boundary in the Southern Colonies, 1763-1775* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1966).

2. Philip M. Hamer, "The Wataugans and the Cherokee Indians in 1776," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, III (Jan., 1931), 122-23.

3. On July 7, President Rutledge of South Carolina had suggested that armies be dispatched from these four states in a concerted movement against the Cherokee Nation.

4. J. G. M. Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee* (Charleston, S. C., 1853), p. 163; Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, Part II (New York, 1905), p. 96.

5. Letter from Andrew Williamson to Griffith Rutherford, August 14, 1776, in William L. Saunders (ed.), *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, X, 745-48; John Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution* (Charleston, S. C., 1821), II, 345-53; Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee*, p. 163.

Canoe and British agent Alexander Cameron. In early September, Williamson turned his forces northward to effect a pre-arranged rendezvous with a North Carolina army at Nuquassee in the Middle Towns.

A third expedition was directed against the Cherokee Overhill Towns in eastern Tennessee. The army was composed of Virginia militia under the command of Colonel William Christian. It was October before this army advanced, and as they approached the French Broad River along the "Great Indian War Path" they were confronted by a large body of Cherokees, again led by Cameron and Dragging Canoe. The Virginia forces, eighteen hundred strong, were too formidable, and the Indians retreated to the mountains leaving their villages deserted. Christian burned those towns known to have been openly hostile—Tellico, Chilhowee, Citico, and Tuskegee. He then began peace negotiations.⁶

A fourth campaign against the Cherokees, and the one with which this paper is concerned, was launched by the colony of North Carolina in early September, 1776. It was directed against the Middle and Valley Towns, which were located principally on the headwaters of the Little Tennessee and Hiwassee rivers of western North Carolina. Its leader was Griffith Rutherford, newly appointed brigadier general of the Western North Carolina Military District.

RUTHERFORD'S EXPEDITION

From mid-July to late August, General Rutherford called for volunteers and amassed supplies at Davidson's Fort (present-day Old Fort) at the eastern foot of the Blue Ridge. By September, his force amounted to 1,971 privates, 80 light-horsemen, 350 pack horse drivers, 35 pack horse masters, and an undefined number of officers,⁷ a total of approximately twenty-five hundred troops. They carried enough provisions for 40 days in the field.⁸

Leaving Davidson's Fort on September 1, the army crossed the Blue Ridge at Swannanoa Gap (Plate I) and proceeded to the headwaters of the Swannanoa River. The following day, they marched down the Swannanoa approximately eleven miles.⁹ On

6. Letter from William Christian to Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia, in Saunders (ed.), *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, X, 844-45.

7. Letter from Griffith Rutherford to the Council of Safety, September 1, 1776, in Saunders (ed.), *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, X, 788-89.

8. *Ibid.*

9. From the "Wartime Diary of William Lenoir," Lenoir Family Papers No. 426, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

September 3, they crossed the French Broad River just below present-day Asheville and followed Hominy Creek westward. The total day's march covered nine miles.¹⁰ The next day they reached the vicinity of Canton where the Pigeon River was forded.¹¹ On the fifth, the route lay southwestward bringing the army to Richland Creek near the present community of Waynesville.

On Friday, September 6, Lieutenant William Lenoir recorded in his diary that the troops "marcht in a very Rough way & William Alexander of Mecklenburg saw 5 Indians and run from them after Reinforcements [and] pursued them and found 1 gun."¹² These were the first Indians sighted.

The troops continued up Richland Creek and by the evening of the sixth they had reached Scott Creek, a tributary of the Tuckasegee River. In this vicinity there was an interesting occurrence that showed how anxious the soldiers were to draw Indian blood. One historian writes:

This latter stream [Scott Creek] obtains its name from John Scott, a trader among the Cherokees a negro of whom was shot by Rev. James Hall, the Chaplain [of the expedition], as he ran, mistaking him for an Indian.¹³

On Saturday, the seventh, Rutherford selected approximately one thousand men and placed them under the command of Colonel Francis Lock. These were sent on a forced march across the Tuckasegee River and down Savannah Creek in hopes of surprising the villages along the Little Tennessee River. In his haste to attack these settlements, Rutherford completely ignored the towns on the Tuckasegee.¹⁴

The advance party crossed the Tuckasegee and on reaching the Cowee Mountains (probably at Rocky Face Knob) found a small party of Indians waiting in ambush. Lenoir described the encounter as follows:

[We] marcht to a little Town on Tuckeyseagey River [and] 8 miles from thence towards watauger [Watauga] saw some indians walking up a mountain & we was attacked by about 20 indians on the top of the mountain at 3 o'clock within about 7

10. *Ibid.*

11. The army either forded the Pigeon River at Canton, followed the general course of the stream westward, crossed the Pigeon Ridge and marched south to Waynesville; or they followed the Pigeon upstream to its forks, crossed the mountains at Pigeon Gap and then proceeded west to Waynesville. The author favors the former route, which is supported by David L. Swain in, "Historical Sketch of the Indian War of 1776," *North Carolina University Magazine*, I, No. 4 (1852), 133.

12. Lenoir diary.

13. Swain, "Historical Sketch of the Indian War of 1776," p. 133.

14. William Moore's October raid down the Tuckasegee to Stecoe and over to the Oconaluftee is sometimes incorrectly included as part of the Rutherford expedition. See Appendix.

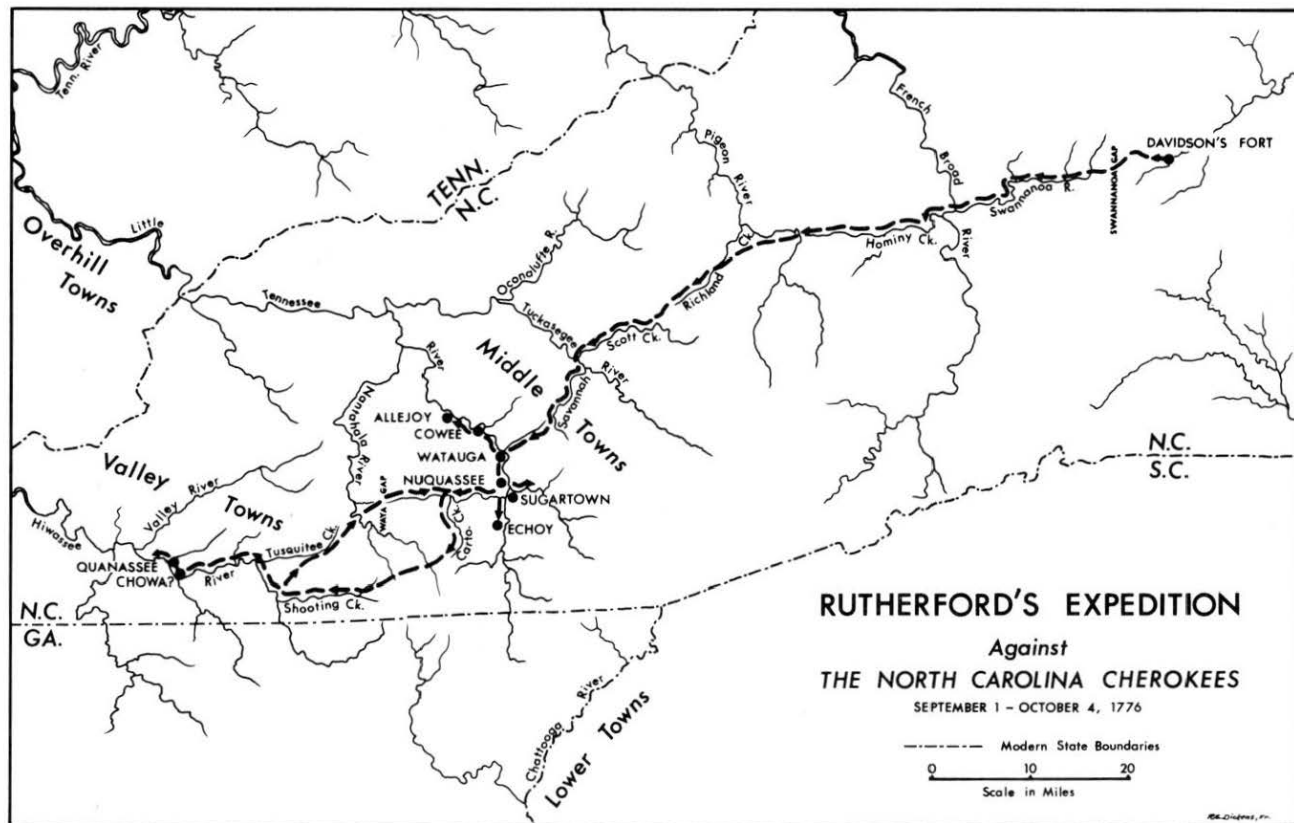


FIGURE 1

miles of s.d [said] Town. William Alexander was wounded in the foot and no visible Dammage done to the Indians only a few kettles taken & c. then marcht within 2 miles of the s.d Town and lay on a small Emenance—20 [miles marched that day].¹⁵

On Sunday, September 8, the forward group reached Watauga¹⁶ but found that village deserted. The following day General Rutherford arrived with the remainder of the troops. This was the day on which Rutherford was to have met and combined forces with Andrew Williamson. The South Carolinians, however, had not yet appeared.

On the tenth, six hundred men were dispatched to look for Williamson and the remainder were sent to

reconitree the Towns and plantations [communal corn fields] and Destroy the Corn Houses &c. — the afs.d [aforesaid] men went up Tenny River to Nukercy [Nuquassee] Town¹⁷ & Echocy [Echoy]¹⁸ and found much corn &c. being about 7 miles [from Watauga].¹⁹

On this same day the Sugartown or Cullasaja River was also reconnoitered. Events surrounding the destruction of two Indian towns are found in a letter written in 1850.

A detachment of 300 men was sent to destroy a town called Sugartown immediately above the junction of the Tennessee & Sugartown rivers.²⁰ The ground on which the town was situated was flanked on 2 sides by the rivers which threw [?] it in the form of a triangle, & the remaining angle on the third side was enclosed by a strong work of brush and timber. When the soldiers had finally entered the town a fire was opened upon them by the Indians from the riverbanks, and the brush works, & finding themselves surrounded by an invisible foe they took shelter in the cabins and remained there for about 3 hours, at which time they were relieved by a strong detachment from the main army from about 4 miles below, where the firing of the small army had been distantly heard. The detachment lost 18 men killed and 22 wounded. The Indians did not sustain any loss that was discovered. A prisoner, whom they had taken, upon the promise of his life, proposed to lead the army to what was called the hidden town, where their women, children, & a large number of cattle were collected. This was 7 miles distant from Nequassee in a narrow valley on the Sugartown river and surrounded at all points by mountains and was very difficult to

15. Lenoir diary.

16. A mound and village site believed to be Watauga is located at a point opposite the confluence of Watauga Creek and the Little Tennessee River. This site is numbered Mao4 in the Archaeological Survey Files of the Research Laboratories of Anthropology, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

17. The site of Nuquassee lies within the modern city limits of Franklin, North Carolina. The aboriginal temple mound still stands and is numbered Mao2 in the North Carolina Archaeological Survey Files.

18. Echoy probably was located on the east and west banks of the Little Tennessee River where it makes a sharp horseshoe bend about 4 miles south of Franklin. Archaeological sites at this point are labeled Mav20 and Mav21.

19. Lenoir diary.

20. Archaeological remains of the Historic Period have been found on several sites in the area of the juncture of these two rivers. The sites are designated Mav7, Mav11, and Mav25.

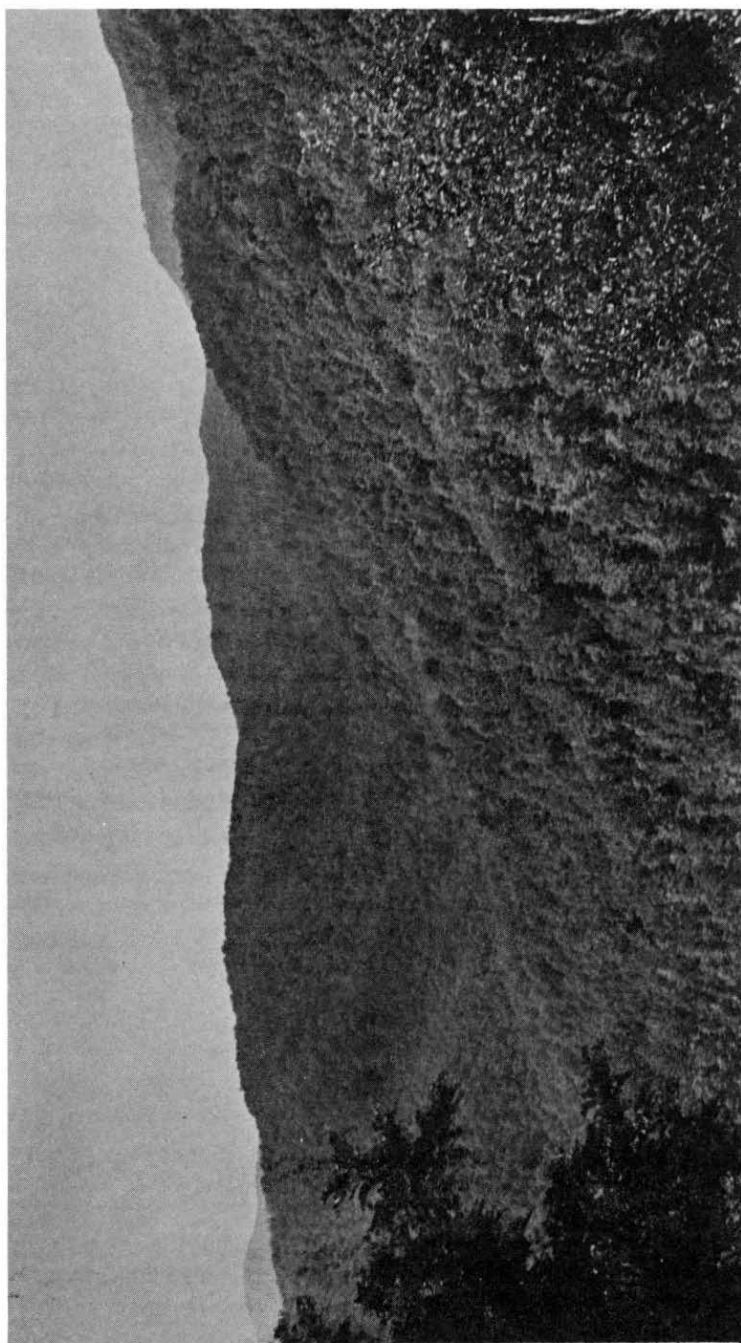


PLATE I

Swannanoa Gap looking west. Rutherford crossed the Blue Ridge Escarpment at this point on September 1, 1776, to begin his march on the Cherokee Middle and Valley Towns.

approach from the fact that the mountains jugged in abruptly upon the river, in many places scarcely leaving room for a foot path. However, on reaching the town there was not an indian to be found save a few very old & decreped men and women, the other indians being discovered some hundreds of feet above them on the crests of the mountains apparently looking down & taking a calm survey of them from their secure situations. They achieved nothing but the destruction of this town & some few beef cattle by that days adventures.²¹

On the following day, Wednesday, September 11, the whole army moved downstream a few miles and set up camp at the town of Cowee²² (Plate II), also found to be deserted. It may be of interest to include here a description of Cowee as provided by the naturalist William Bartram, who passed through the town only a few months prior to Rutherford's visit.

I arrived at Cowee about noon. This settlement is esteemed the capital town: it is situated on the bases of the hills on both sides of the river, near to its bank, and here terminates the great vale of Cowee. . . . [where there are] Indian plantations of Corn, which was well cultivated, kept clean of weeds, and well advanced, being near eighteen inches in height. . . . The town of Cowee consists of about one hundred dwellings. . . . The council or town-house is a large rotunda, capable of accommodating several hundred people: it stands at the top of an ancient artificial mount of earth. . . .²³

On Thursday, the twelfth, still having no word from the South Carolina troops, Rutherford

despatched a party of men to Allejoy²⁴ about 7 miles down Tennesy [Little Tennessee River] who saw some Indians [and] killed & sculpt 1 Indian Squaw [and] was Fired at by a few Indians who killed Nichl. Peck of Rowan County 2nd Batalion.²⁵

The army then moved upstream to the town of Nuquassee where they set up camp on the fourteenth. On Sunday morning, the fifteenth, a church service was held in which Reverend Hall (who earlier had shot Mr. Scott's negro slave) delivered a sermon from atop the Indian temple mound²⁶ (Plate III). This same

21. From a letter written by Silas McDowell of Franklin to L. F. Giles (?) of Chapel Hill, on July 9, 1850. The letter is filed with Miscellaneous Papers, Series I, Vol. III, 1831-1861, pp. 87-8, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh. An almost identical description of this raid is presented in Swain, "Historical Sketch of the Indian War of 1776," p. 134. Swain claims to have gotten his information from an "interprising gentleman of Macon county." The stories are so similar that the author believes them to have come from the same source.

22. The site of Cowee can be positively located at a sharp bend in the Little Tennessee about six miles northwest of Franklin. There are archaeological remains on both sides of the river; the mound described by Bartram is still discernable on the west side. The site is numbered Ma05 in the Archaeological Survey Files.

23. Mark Van Doren (ed.), *Travels of William Bartram* (New York, 1940), pp. 286-97.

24. The site of Allejoy is represented by a large village midden on the west bank of the Little Tennessee River just upstream from Burningtown Creek. The archaeological survey number is Ma51.

25. Lenoir diary.

26. Swain, "Historical Sketch of the Indian War of 1776," p. 136; and Polk diary, quoted in C. L. Hunter, *Sketches of Western North Carolina* (Raleigh, N. C., 1877), p. 198.



PLATE II

A view across the site of Cowee looking northwest. The council house described by Bartram stood atop the mound which can still be seen on the hill in the back center of the photograph. Rutherford was here from September 11 to 13, 1776.

day a "Council of war" was held, and it was decided that Rutherford, with 1,200 troops, would march the following morning for the Valley Towns.²⁷ The remainder of the army would stay at Nuquassee to await Williamson's arrival.

Rutherford's route across the mountain ridges to the Hiwassee River is difficult to trace. This has led to ambiguous descriptions on the part of some writers and to a total avoidance of the matter by others.²⁸ A few points, however, seem fairly clear.

After leaving Nuquassee on the morning of the sixteenth, the army advanced westward toward the Nantahala Mountains. They soon became lost in attempting to find the proper trail across the ridge. The Indians, in the meantime, had prepared an "ambuscade on the common crossing place."²⁹ Rutherford, in losing his way, crossed the Nantahalas at an "unaccustomed place" and escaped the trap.³⁰ By noon the seventeenth the army had reached a town called Nowee,³¹ located on an unnamed "creek." The following day they crossed "two very steep mountains and Camp on the head of a Creek of the Hywassee. . . ."³²

Williamson's army arrived at Nuquassee on the eighteenth. They immediately set out to join Rutherford, and subsequently, in crossing the Nantahalas at the "usual place," fell into the ambush prepared for the North Carolinians.³³ The fierce battle that resulted nearly ended in the defeat of Williamson's army. Finally, however, the Indians were put into retreat and the South Carolina forces pushed on toward the Valley Towns.

On the nineteenth, Rutherford set up camp at the village of Quanassee³⁴ on the Hiwassee River. During the next six days, according to Lenoir, the soldiers killed several Indians, took others as prisoners, confiscated horses and cattle, and burned corn.³⁵ It appears from this evidence that a great deal of raiding and destruction was carried out along the Hiwassee and its tribu-

27. Lenoir diary.

28. See Appendix.

29. Letter from the North Carolina Council of Safety to Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia, in Saunders (ed.), *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, X, 860.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Polk and Lenoir diaries. Lenoir spells it Nowe.

32. Lenoir diary.

33. Council of Safety letter to Virginia, in Saunders (ed.), *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, X, 860.

34. The site of Quanassee is located at the junction of Peachtree Creek and the Hiwassee River, approximately four miles upstream from present-day Murphy, North Carolina. Extensive archaeological excavations were carried out here by the Smithsonian Institution in 1933-34. This work is reported in Frank M. Setzler and Jesse D. Jennings, "Peachtree Mound and Village Site, Cherokee County, North Carolina," *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin*, 131 (Washington, D. C., 1941).

35. Lenoir diary.



PLATE III

The temple mound at Nuquassee, surviving remnant of a large Cherokee village that served as the base for Rutherford's raids on the Middle Towns. The mound is located in present-day Franklin, North Carolina.

taries (Plate V). Nevertheless, only one town other than Quanassee is mentioned by name in the documents, this being Chowa.³⁶

Williamson reached the Hiwassee on the twenty-sixth and accomplished the long awaited meeting of the two armies. As the officers of the "South Army" were brought into camp, they were "saluted with 13 Swivel Guns" by the North Carolinians.³⁷ Since Rutherford had already completed the destruction of the Valley Towns, the armies parted company on the twenty-seventh and began their homeward marches.

As previously noted, there has been little effort by past writers to determine with any precision the route of Rutherford's army in its movements west of the Little Tennessee River. To arrive at the following interpretation, the author utilized documentary evidence (principally the Lenoir and Polk diaries), archaeological survey data, and topographic maps. In some instances, on-the-spot examinations were made in the field.

There is general agreement that the ambush in the Nantahalas took place at Waya Gap (Plate IV), eleven miles west of Franklin.³⁸ This location seems to represent physiographically the most likely crossing place for anyone traveling west from Nuquassee. If we may assume that Waya Gap was the "common crossing place" and the site of Williamson's ill-fated encounter, then Rutherford must have crossed the ridge elsewhere. Ashe gives his interpretation of the route as follows:

His [Rutherford's] army ascended Cartoogaja Creek, west from the present town of Franklin, to the Nantahala Mountains; and from the Nantahala [River] (about Jarrett Station) the route lay across the mountains into the present county of Cherokee to Valley River, and down the Valley River to the Hiwassee, at the site of the present town of Murphey.³⁹

Ashe, like several other writers,⁴⁰ assumes that Rutherford crossed the Nantahalas north of Waya Gap and that the stream reached on the seventeenth was the Valley River. These writers then propose that the army marched down the Valley River to the Hiwassee.

36. *Ibid.* Any one of several extensive village middens located in the area of the juncture of Brasstown Creek and the Hiwassee River could represent the site of Chowa. The floor of a burned house was found here in 1964 and was excavated by the Research Laboratories of Anthropology. This site is numbered Chv15 (Plate V).

37. Lenoir diary.

38. Swain, "Historical Sketch of the Indian War of 1776," pp. 134-35; S. A. Ashe, "Rutherford's Expedition Against the Indians, 1776," *The North Carolina Booklet*, Vol. 4, No. 8, 1904, p. 16; J. D. R. Hamilton, "Revolutionary Diary of William Lenoir," *The Journal of Southern History*, VI, No. 2 (May, 1940), 252-53.

39. Ashe, "Rutherford's Expedition Against the Indians, 1776," p. 18.

40. Swain, Hamilton, et al.

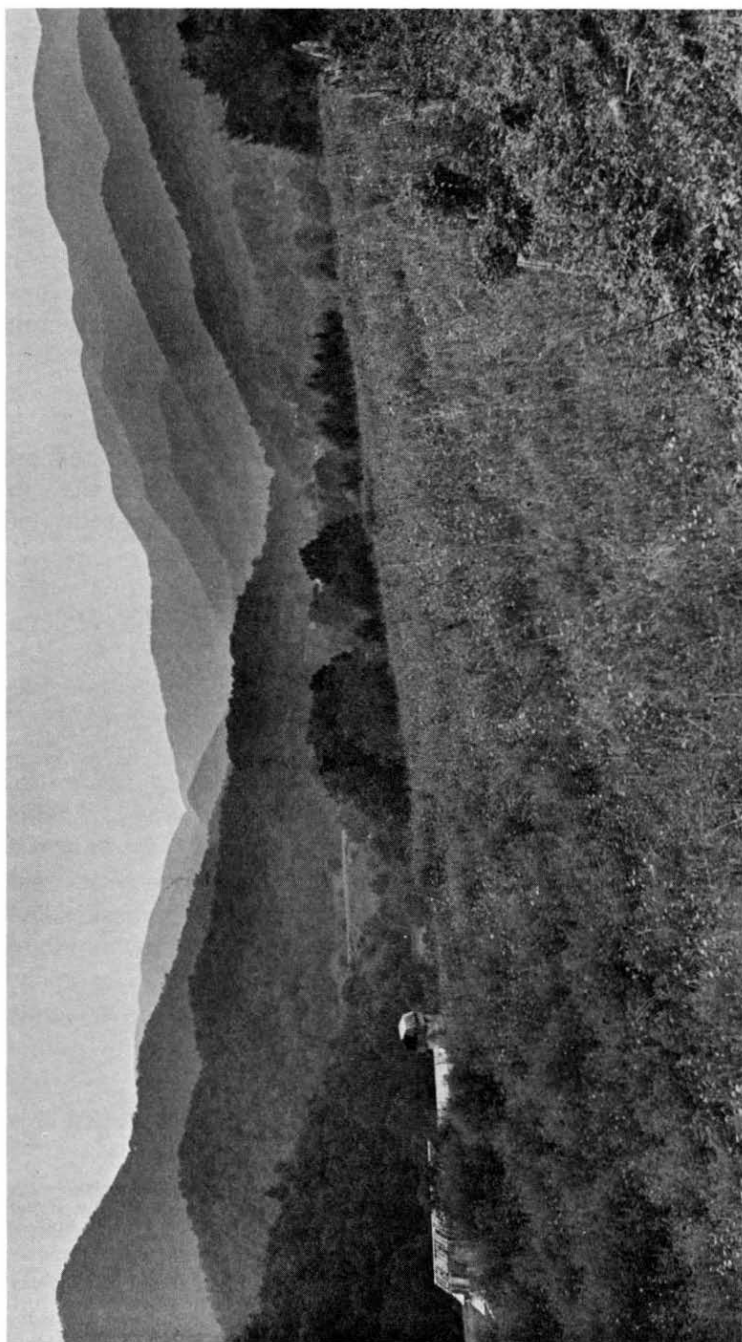


PLATE IV

Waya Gap as viewed from the east. It was here that a Cherokee ambush awaited Rutherford on September 16, 1776. Andrew Williamson's army later fell into the trap.

The distance from Nuquassee to the upper Valley River is over 25 miles by straight line. It is another 15 miles to the Hiwassee, a total of at least 40 miles. This would represent a far greater distance by foot, particularly in such rugged country. For a party of over a thousand, uncertain of its directions, the distance would have required a week or more. Since Rutherford made the entire trip to the Hiwassee in less than three days and by a marching distance of approximately twenty-seven miles,⁴¹ we may assume that he did not go by way of the Valley River and that a more direct path from Nuquassee was taken. A reconstruction of the probable route may proceed in the following manner.

On the sixteenth, Rutherford left Nuquassee and traveled west along Cartoogehaye Creek. He then followed the main branch of that stream southwestward, instead of turning off on the Waya tributary, which would have carried him due west to Waya Gap. That evening he camped on the upper reaches of Cartoogehaye Creek at the foot of the Nantahalas.

On the following day, the army crossed the mountains, probably at Wallace Gap, and struck the headwaters of the Nantahala River. It was in this vicinity that the town of Nowee was discovered.⁴² They then "marched one mile from Nowee and encamped on the side of a steep mountain, without any fire."⁴³

The next day they turned to the southwest and crossed "2 very steep mountains."⁴⁴ After a total day's march of 12 miles, the army arrived at "the head of a Creek of hywassey."⁴⁵ This probably was Shooting Creek. On the nineteenth, they followed the above stream to its confluence with the Hiwassee River and then followed the latter stream to the town of Quanassee. As noted earlier, the next six days were spent raiding towns along the Hiwassee for unrecorded distances.

Taking leave of Williamson on September 27, Rutherford commenced his return trip to Nuquassee. He decided to follow the incoming route of the South Carolina army back to the Little Tennessee. The Waya Gap incident would have encouraged this

41. Lenoir and Polk diaries.

42. Lenoir gives the distance from Nuquassee to Nowee as fourteen miles; Polk estimates eleven miles. No sites of historic date have been found on the upper Nantahala by the archaeological survey teams. However, the work in this area is not complete and such a site may yet be located.

43. Polk diary.

44. Lenoir diary. The first of these probably was the ridge dividing present-day Macon and Clay counties and the second was Chunky Gal Mountain.

45. *Ibid.*

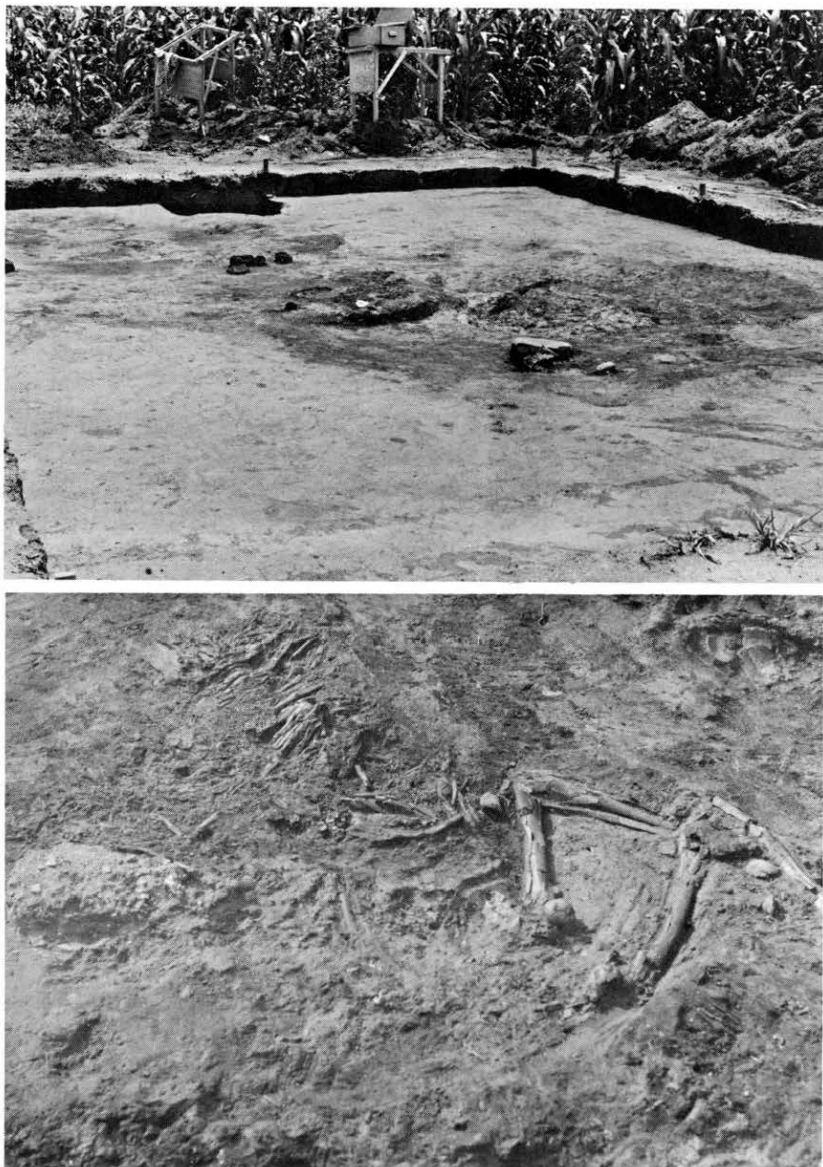


PLATE V

Top: The remains of a burned Cherokee house, located near the junction of the Hiwassee River and Brasstown Creek, were excavated by the Research Laboratories of Anthropology of The University of North Carolina in 1964. This photograph shows the house floor after excavation. The structure may have been burned by Rutherford in 1776. Bottom: This poorly preserved adult skeleton was found on the floor of the burned house shown above.

decision, since his soldiers were looking for a fight, not trying to avoid one.⁴⁶

Lenoir recorded the return trip as follows:

On Friday 27 stated [started] towards the middle Towns marched x [across] to River [probably Tusquee Creek] and up sd. River 6 miles being the most beautiful Vally I'de seen and took up Camp and 1 man of Mecklenburg Dyed—13 [miles marched that day]

On Saturday 28 march'd a very Rough way x [crossed] middle River [Nantahala]—11 [miles]

On Sunday 29th we marched by whare the South army fought the Battle saw Dead Indians lying and where the [S.C. army] buried their dedd in a Branch & made a Cosey & by a small town and Naukersy [Nuquassee] and Join'd our Bregade where 2 men had Dyed in our absence—15 [miles]⁴⁷

The place "whare the South army fought the Battle" surely must have been Waya Gap.

The journey from Nuquassee home was accomplished in only six days, the various companies literally marching day and night in efforts to outstrip one another.⁴⁸ The route from Nuquassee to Davidson's Fort was essentially the same as that for the incoming march.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The route of Rutherford's march up to the Little Tennessee River is fairly well known. Except for the occasional erroneous inclusion of Moore's raid along the Tuckaseegee, past writers have outlined that portion of the "trace" with little difficulty.

Mapping the route over the mountain ranges to the Hiwassee is more difficult. In this paper, a route by way of the Valley River is questioned. It is suggested, instead, that the army missed the trail to Waya Gap, where an ambush had been prepared by the Indians, and crossed the Nantahala Ridge several miles to the south. Here they visited a town called Nowee, probably on the headwaters of the Nantahala River. Then they crossed the mountains to the southwest and found themselves on a tributary of the Hiwassee River, probably Shooting Creek. This stream was followed until it brought them to the Hiwassee proper. The trip back to the Little Tennessee seems to have retraced the steps of Williamson's incoming march, i.e. from the Hiwassee River across the hills to Tusquee Creek, up that stream to the

46. The Council of Safety letter to Virginia mentions that the North Carolina troops were greatly "disappointed" in having missed the Waya Gap ambush; Saunders, *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, X, 860.

47. Lenoir diary.

48. *Ibid.*

Nantahala River, through Waya Gap to Cartoogeehay Creek, and hence to Nuquassee Town.

Although comparatively few Indians were killed by Rutherford's army, the expedition was a complete success. The object had been to destroy the Indians' houses and crops. This was expressed by the North Carolina Council of Safety in an advisory letter to Virginia:

Should Your Army meet with any Signal Success against the Overhills, or should they only destroy their Towns & Corn, we flatter ourselves that the Southern States will suffer no further Damage this Season, from the Savages, as it will employ their whole time to provide Sustenance, & Shelter for their Squaws, & children.⁴⁹

The effectiveness of the expeditions against the Cherokees is evidenced by the declining role of the Indian in military strategy from this time on. In addition, the participating colonists were attracted to the possibilities of settlement in the areas they had traversed, and as a result there was a more rapid reduction of Indian lands. This eventually ended with the complete removal of the Cherokees to areas west of the Mississippi.

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1:62,500 series

Marion

Wayah Bald

1:24,000 series

Addie

Alarka

Andrews

Asheville

Black Mountain

Bryson City

Canton

Clyde

Corbin Knob

Cruso

Cullowhee

Enka

Franklin

Greens Creek

Hayesville

Hazelwood

Hewitt

Marble

Murphy

Noland Creek

Oteen

Peachtree

Prentiss

Rainbow Springs

Scaly

Shooting Creek

Topton

Wayah Bald

Waynesville

Wesser

Whittier

APPENDIX

In compiling information on the Rutherford expedition, the author relied heavily on several primary documents and consulted a number of secondary accounts of varying credibility. The following are annotations on a few of the more important sources.

Primary Documents

A diary kept by William Lenoir, a lieutenant in Benjamin Cleveland's Surry Company, Armstrong's Regiment, Rutherford's army, is a valuable primary source.⁵⁰ In it, Lenoir recorded day by day entries throughout the campaign. These brief notes provide information on rivers crossed, Indian towns visited, and total miles marched each day.

Another diary, that kept by William Polk, a company commander, is quoted in part in C. L. Hunter's *Sketches of Western North Carolina*, published in 1877.⁵¹ Polk's notations are similar in content to those of Lenoir; in fact the two documents agree quite closely on most points (spelling of town names, miles recorded per day, etc.).

A letter from the North Carolina Council of Safety to Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia, dated October 25, 1776, is also important.⁵² It communicates "intelligence" brought to the council by "Mr. Sharp, a gentleman of our board, who accompanied

50. The original of this diary is in the Southern Historical Collection, The University of North Carolina, Lenoir Family Papers No. 426; it is reprinted in J. D. de Roulhac Hamilton (ed.), "Revolutionary Diary of William Lenoir," *The Journal of Southern History*, VI, No. 2, 1940, 247-59.

51. The location of the original document is unknown.

52. William L. Saunders (ed.), *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, X, 860-61; also reprinted in slightly different form in *American Archives*, Series V, Vol. II (Washington, 1851), pp. 1235-36.

Gen. Rutherford, on the Expedition against the Cherokees of the Middle & Valley Settlements." This intelligence is in the form of a short narrative of the expedition from its inception to the destruction of the Valley Towns.

A letter written by Silas McDowell of Franklin, North Carolina, to L. F. Giles (?) of Chapel Hill, dated July 9, 1850, contains a narrative of the expedition as gathered by McDowell from actual participants.⁵³ He states: "I am entirely indebted to a few soldiers who accompanied and made part of that army for all I know in relation to the subject and from narrations I had of them many years ago." McDowell seems to be quite factual in his descriptions of the operations up to and including those along the Little Tennessee. He is brief and unclear, however, on events that took place west of that point.

It should be noted that there is also a report, dated November 7, 1776, from William Moore to General Rutherford, in which Moore provides particulars on a separate expedition commanded by himself and carried out a full month after Rutherford's return.⁵⁴ Since this later expedition followed closely the route of the earlier campaign (as far as the Tuckasegee River), it has been erroneously included by some writers as part of the Rutherford expedition.⁵⁵

Secondary References Containing Some Original Source Material

In 1821, John Drayton wrote of the Rutherford expedition in his *Memoirs of the American Revolution*.⁵⁶ Drayton was chiefly concerned with Williamson's raid, although he mentioned Rutherford in connection with the campaign west of the Little Tennessee, in which both armies took part. Some of Drayton's information seems to have come from actual participants, but there are few specific references cited. This source, nevertheless, has served as the basis for many later writings.⁵⁷

In an article written for the *North Carolina University Magazine* in 1852 and entitled "Historical Sketch of the Indian War of 1776," David L. Swain described the Rutherford expe-

53. The original letter is filed in the Miscellaneous Collections, Series 1, Vol. 3, 1831-1861, pp. 87-88, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh.

54. Saunders (ed.), *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 10, pp. 895-98; also reprinted in *The North Carolina Magazine*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1888, pp. 90-93.

55. James Mooney, Charles C. Royce, and others have made this mistake.

56. John Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution* (Charleston, S. C., 1821).

57. Ramsey, Roosevelt, et al.

dition. A portion of Swain's material probably came from participants and their relatives.⁵⁸

In *Annals of Tennessee*, published in 1853, J. G. M. Ramsey devoted a page to the Rutherford expedition.⁵⁹ There is one allusion to a personal letter from William Lenoir. Otherwise, Ramsey seems to have obtained most of his information from the Drayton account.

John H. Wheeler's *Historical Sketches of North Carolina*, which appeared in 1851, contains a brief section on Rutherford's expedition.⁶⁰ Wheeler gave no references for his information.

Secondary Sources

The best secondary account of the Rutherford expedition is that written by Samuel Ashe for *The North Carolina Booklet* in 1904.⁶¹ Ashe referred to the Polk diary (from Hunter) in tracing the route of Rutherford's march and discussed the Moore expedition as a separate event.

Theodore Roosevelt's *Winning of the West*, published in 1905, contains descriptions of the various raids into the Cherokee country in 1776.⁶² His information on the Rutherford expedition appears to have been taken primarily from Ramsey, Drayton, and the North Carolina Council of Safety letter.

James Mooney, noted ethnohistorian, referred to Swain, Ramsey, and Roosevelt in his discussions of the "Rutherford Trace."⁶³ Unfortunately, Mooney incorrectly included Moore's campaign as part of the Rutherford expedition.

John P. Brown, in *Old Frontiers*, made brief reference to Rutherford's expedition, using Roosevelt and Mooney as sources for his information.⁶⁴ Brown's main interest, however, was Christian's campaign in eastern Tennessee.

Maps

The map in this paper (Figure 1) is the first, to the author's knowledge, to show the route of Rutherford's army in the area

58. David L. Swain, "Historical Sketch of the Indian War of 1776," *North Carolina University Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1852, pp. 132-36.

59. J. G. M. Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee* (Charleston, S. C., 1853), p. 164; Ramsey deals chiefly with the Virginia Campaign of Christian.

60. John H. Wheeler, *Historical Sketches of North Carolina From 1584 to 1851* (Philadelphia, 1851) pp. 383-84.

61. Samuel A. Ashe, "Rutherford's Expedition Against the Indians, 1776," *The North Carolina Booklet*, IV, No. 8 (1904), 3-28.

62. Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, Part II (New York, 1905), pp. 96-109.

63. James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokees*, ("Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology," Pt. 1 [Washington, D. C., 1900]), pp. 49, 205.

64. John P. Brown, *Old Frontiers* (Kingsport, Tenn., 1938), p. 156.

west of the Little Tennessee River. William E. Myer, on his map of "Indian Trails in the Southeast," carried "Rutherford's War Trace" to the Little Tennessee River where he incorrectly joined it to the "great Tuckateechee and Southeastern Trail."⁶⁵ An earlier map, that of Charles C. Royce, also takes Rutherford only as far as the Middle Towns.⁶⁶

Certain early maps of the Cherokee area were helpful in determining the location of Indian towns and in gaining a perspective of the terrain from the eyes of contemporaries. Important were the Mitchell Map of 1775, the Bonne Map of 1757, the De Brahm Map of 1766, the Stuart-Purcell Map of 1775, and the Brown-Purcell Map of 1781.⁶⁷

Research Laboratories of Anthropology
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Chapel Hill

65. Map accompanying William E. Myer, *Indian Trails of the Southeast* ("Forty-second Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology" [Washington, D. C., 1928]), pp. 727-857.

66. Map accompanying Charles C. Royce, *The Cherokee Nation of Indians* ("Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology" [Washington, D. C., 1887]).

67. Photostats of the Stuart-Purcell, Brown-Purcell, and Bonne maps are on file at the Research Laboratories of Anthropology, The University of North Carolina; the Mitchell and De Brahm maps are reproduced in William P. Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps* (Princeton, N. J., 1958), Plates 59 and 61.

NOTES ON CHEROKEE ARCHITECTURE¹

CLEMENS DE BAILLOU

The predominating house type of the late Cherokee period was a simple log structure, deriving its arrangement from the Cherokee "summer house."² The majority of these were built of round logs simply notched. Hewn logs were rare and used only by prosperous people. Especially rare were those with dovetail notching.³ The space between the logs was filled with clay frequently mixed with animal hair or cotton. The clay was softened with water (urine or liquid manure seem not to have been used as elsewhere).

For roofing material, bark or thatch were used, but in better houses, shingles or clap boards. Most of the chimneys were of wood, boards, or wooden crate structure, covered with clay. Sometimes long reeds were mixed with the clay. Stone chimneys built of slabs, and especially brick chimneys, were only found on better houses. The porch on one long side of the house usually faced southwest or west.

In *Sapelo*, the account of a trip to the Cherokee country in 1817 by Rev. F. R. Goulding,⁴ we find the following statement:

Some of the dwellings that we saw that day, and many that we saw afterward, belonging to the poorer class, consisted simply of a roof resting on the ground, and made of long pieces of bark, stripped from growing trees, flattened and leaned against a ridgepole. Most of the better houses were made of straight poles or small logs about twelve feet long, notched into each other at the corners, so as to lie very close, making a wall about as high as a man's shoulders, and surmounted by a roof of bark, or of split boards. These better houses were usually associated with a small patch of cleared ground, an acre, or less, planted with corn and beans.

There follows a description of the Saw-nee establishment. "On a ten-acre field, stood one house in each corner for each of Saw-nee's four wives. The Chief's house was in the center of the field."

However, we see that old forms of construction persisted far into the 19th century as is shown in the following statement concerning Inomatuhata, whose house was on Pea Ridge, north of Winder, Georgia. "He lived in a picturesque house made of the

1. From a report submitted to the Georgia Historical Commission, 1958.

2. John R. Swanton, "The Indians of the Southeastern United States," *Bureau of American Ethnology*, Bulletin, 137 (Washington, D. C., 1946), pp. 403-4.

3. Wilbur Zelinsky, "The Log House in Georgia," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 43 (1953), 173-93.

4. Francis Robert Goulding, *Sapelo* (Philadelphia, 1870).

branches of hickory trees with light, brick-colored mortar, the mixture of which, the writer believes, is now unknown. The roof was of moss, evidently taken from the swamps a few miles to south, and growing, soon became impervious to water."⁵

Fences came very late into use by the Indians. Except for early dry wall stone structures at ceremonial places, only the wooden palisades were used as fortifications around villages. The nearest thing to a fence structure was the animal trap, in which wicker work was employed. The earliest fences used were accordingly of wicker work or the split rail type introduced by the white man. Fences requiring lumber and nails were not in use.

Houses like the Ross House, built in the latter part of the 18th century by a white trader, or the Vann House, built in 1804 by Vogt, who probably came from Charleston, were decided exceptions and cannot be considered as typical. This also applies to the McNair House, Carter's Quarter, and the three two-story frame houses at New Echota (the Mission, Boudinot and Hick's houses).

THE TOWN OF NEW ECHOTA

Very little descriptive material on houses at New Echota has been found. The known descriptions by Col. Gold as well as by the Indian, White Horse, we will not repeat in detail here. However, we should keep in mind that Col. Gold in his letter was for obvious reasons inclined to draw a very favorable picture. We still hope to get more detailed information from his papers, especially in reference to the Boudinot House. The White Horse description was in retrospect, and betrays the limitations of its author. However, both descriptions are of importance. Col. Gold compares New Echota with a typical New England town. Practically at the same time, another visitor said that as he walked through the streets of New Echota in the evening, he was reminded of Baltimore.

What we actually know now is:

1. the decision of the Indian Council to lay out a town
2. that in 1819 only a Council House existed and that up to 1825 only one family was living there permanently
3. that New Echota in about 1830 contained approximately 14 establishments (not all of them permanently occupied), consisting of one or more buildings

5. Gustavus James Nash Wilson, *The Early History of Jackson County, Georgia*, edited by W. E. White (Atlanta, 1914), p. 27.

4. that some of the buildings were frame structures, but that the rest were of round or hewn logs
5. only two private buildings and the Mission House are mentioned as two-story buildings in a "workmanlike manner"
6. the public buildings so far as we know, were designed with great attention to economy
7. that all these public buildings were already in very bad condition in 1836.

It was not the attitude of the Cherokee to let things go to pieces, because the majority of them believed even in 1837 that the removal would be prevented. A letter of John Mackey, dated December 11, 1837, states that "it is the most singular infatuation the (Cherokee) have built houses, cleared land and made more improvements lately." Such remarks are repeated. In a letter of Wilson Lumpkin we read:

New Echota 1836 . . . If the business is transacted here, it will become indispensable to have some repairs made to the dilapidated Cherokee (public) buildings, one at least, to offer shelter and lodging to the Commissioners and secretary while they are engaged in transacting the business.

And on January 27, 1837, also from New Echota:

Sir: In reply to your note of this date, we have to inform you that we found what is termed the public buildings in this place in such a state of decay and delapidation as to render them wholly unfit for public office and have, therefore, been under the necessity of procuring such rooms as we could obtain from private citizens to transact the public business in.

We may add another brief description. On June 15, 1835, Mary Fields, a fourteen year old Indian girl, wrote from Running Water "The court house at New Echota was very cool, but the white men took it away. There was another small house, in the town, and Miss Sawyer kept her school at that house . . . Mr. Ridges' [house] has a smooth plank floor, a large fireplace, and five glass windows, two large ones and three are shut with a slide." From this child's words, we see clearly how precious were smooth floors and good windows.

THE COUNCIL HOUSES OF NEW ECHOTA

The excavations at New Echota in 1954 uncovered, at the site Unit 17, a circular pattern of post moulds, in which we recognized the traces of the Council House. A description of that excavation is given in our 1954 report to the Commission, and

here we shall recapitulate only the essential points. This circular but irregular pattern of post holes has a diameter of 126 feet. The holes vary much in size and shape. Some square holes are 12" or even 14" by 8" or 9" across, some of the round ones are only 4" to 5" in diameter. No nails were found, which suggests that the whole building, roof included, was pegged, or perhaps in certain places tied together. Other cultural material found here amounted to a very few fragments of china, obviously from the neighboring Boudinot House site. Further structural details could not be deduced. Four post holes that we dug out proved to be very shallow, about 4" to 5" deep, even when allowing for erosion and a 4" plough zone, this shallowness is surprising for such a large structure. We did not dig out any more post holes, because we wished to preserve this evidence until such time as we might obtain more information. From the outline of the rotunda, which the pattern of post holes indicated, we estimated that the building had a seating capacity of some 1,500 to 2,000 persons. No fireplace or ceremonial hearth could be found. Burned spots in the ground seemed to indicate the burning of the building.

Information about the Council House which we already had was rather scanty. It comprised Col. Gold's letter mentioning the building, and a retrospective description given by White Horse, the Indian. Neither of these gave any structural details. We found a description of the Council House at the town of Estenally, written by Rev. Steiner in the Moravian diaries of Spring Place in 1801. We give herewith the translation from the German:

The Town house is on the south side and not far from the bank of the Estenally River. It is a rotunda built of posts standing at a slant, pointed at the top, and covered from top to bottom with bark. The entrance is narrow and runs for a distance at a slant along the side of the building until it loses itself in the inside. The inside is a single room without any partitions. In the center stands a high post at the top of which the slanting posts come together. Around the wall of the building are bunks to lie on, made of cane [bamboo], and in front of these are short benches to sit on. The building can accommodate about 1000 persons. It was very pleasantly cool in there during the great heat of the day. In front of the house stands a long, open shed roofed with clapboards, adequately provided with benches and other seats, and there was also installed a raised plank to write on. In this shed the Talk was held. At a short distance stands a tall pole, and here stood an Indian, appointed to this position with a drum on which he drummed as a signal for the beginning of the meeting.

This hitherto unpublished description of a Council House near to and just twenty years earlier than New Echota, seems valu-

able. However, we feel that it could not be directly applied at New Echota.

Having had an opportunity to discuss the problem with T. M. N. Lewis and Madeline Kneberg at the University of Tennessee, and after having read their files on Council House research, we came to the conclusion that the one at New Echota was an acculturated form of an earlier type. Its size (126 feet in diameter) already suggested this.

Our trip to Oklahoma in August 1955 brought to light two new facts. At the Ferguson Collection in Tulsa, we found a decree issued October 17, 1829, at New Echota, by which Elias Boudinot was put in charge of all public buildings, and which further provided that he hire a "mechanic" to repair the Council House floor, windows, fireplace, and some cracks in the door-frame. At Sallisaw, we got from Mr. Wheeler (great grandson of the Phoenix Press printer, Wheeler) a description of a "wood etching" of the Council House, which once hung in his family home. He described the picture from memory as that of a circular structure with a conical roof. The walls were of vertical boards and had windows rather high up under the eaves alternating with slightly lower ones. The roof was open in the center, but something that he could not quite remember was connected with it. He had the feeling that something stuck out of the roof or some kind of little roof was raised above it to cover the center hole. The door in the picture was open and at a distance in front of it stood something that he thought might be a pump. Here, we asked him if it could not have been the post where the drummer-announcer of the meetings stood. He thought that most probable. On both sides of the door, but at a distance from it, he recalled hitching bars and some horses. Our question as to whether he remembered any trees, was answered in the affirmative. To the right and left of the building trees appeared. All this fits in very well with the results of the east part of the excavation of Unit 17. The traditional entrance to a Council House is on the east side. Burned tree stumps (black walnut) were found there too, and some scattered post moulds, which could easily be traces of a former hitching bar and the drummer's post.

The use of windows is certainly a result of acculturation. The fact that they were placed so high in the wall may indicate that bunks were built on the inside along the lower wall. This was the older style, and it appears plausible for the reason that many of the chiefs and council members had no other accommo-

dations. The small amount of window glass in the excavation could be explained by its removal for use elsewhere after the discontinuation of the Council House.

The question of when the Council House rotunda was built remains unanswered. As we see, it is now proved that the first Council House of New Town in 1819 consisted of three open buildings. In 1826, we find five buildings mentioned. The following description is taken from the diary of the Rev. Abraham Steiner, 1819, p. 29:

A new seat of the Cherokee Government had been laid out about twenty English miles . . . eight and one half hours distance . . . from Springplace, name Newton, and a new Council House built, in which the first Assembly for Council was to be held . . . On a Sunday the Preparatory Festivities were to be inaugurated, for which many Indian and white people gathered at the Council House . . . I then took my place in one of the open buildings where I could be seen and heard by the Assembly, and the Baptist Minister stood beside me.

Rev. Butrick's description, written in 1822, reads as follows: ". . . we accompanied our two fathers, the Pathkiller, i.e., the King, and the Boot, to the Council House about one mile distant. The Council House consists of three roofs supported by crotches, each roof perhaps 30 feet long, built in this order: with a fire in the middle of the yard, and one immediately before each house" (Figure 1).

"Letters and Conversation on the Cherokee Mission" by Sarah Tuttle, published in 1830, refers to events at about 1818 and is most likely not about New Echota. "The place where the council was held, was not a room, but merely an enormous roof supported by strong pillars, open on all sides; a railing surrounded the pillars with only one entrance; benches were placed around the whole building; the common people stood without the railing during the session."

In 1826, the following description (from the Moravian Diaries) appeared in a report of Brother Schulze's visit to the Cherokee Country: "Besides, the town consists of a well-constructed two story house in which the National Committee meets during the Council, and of five small houses built in a square, in which the Chiefs of the Nation and the Judges meet at that time." The layout was probably as illustrated in Figure 2.

The following two descriptions refer to one old circular structure, and the latest of that period, at Red Clay. Rev. Butrick writes from Brainerd about his trip to Lookout Mountain.

A little east of south from the above high place, is another [low, earth mound] about half as high. The summit is round 63 ft. in diameter. The edge of the summit on all sides is raised two or three ft. on which evidently the roof of the Council House rested—evidence that the people who built it made their council houses in the same fashion that some of the Cherokees now do, that is, not by laying logs as at Coosawattee, for the circular roof to rest on, but by raising the ground.

The rows of seats in circular council houses seem to have been built one above the other as an amphitheatre.

Featherstonhaugh in 1835 made a "Canoe Voyage up the Minnay Soror" and we read:

Here [at Spring Place] we learned that Red Clay, the place appointed for the Indians' meeting was only 25 miles distant—We walked out to see the Council House. Crossing the Cooay-hallay, we soon found ourselves in an irregular sort of street, consisting of huts, booths, and stores hastily constructed from the trees of the forest for the accommodation of Cherokee families—This street was at the foot of some hilly ground upon which the council room was built, which was a simple parallelogram formed of logs, with open sides, and benches for the councillors . . . near his house stood the Cherokee Council House

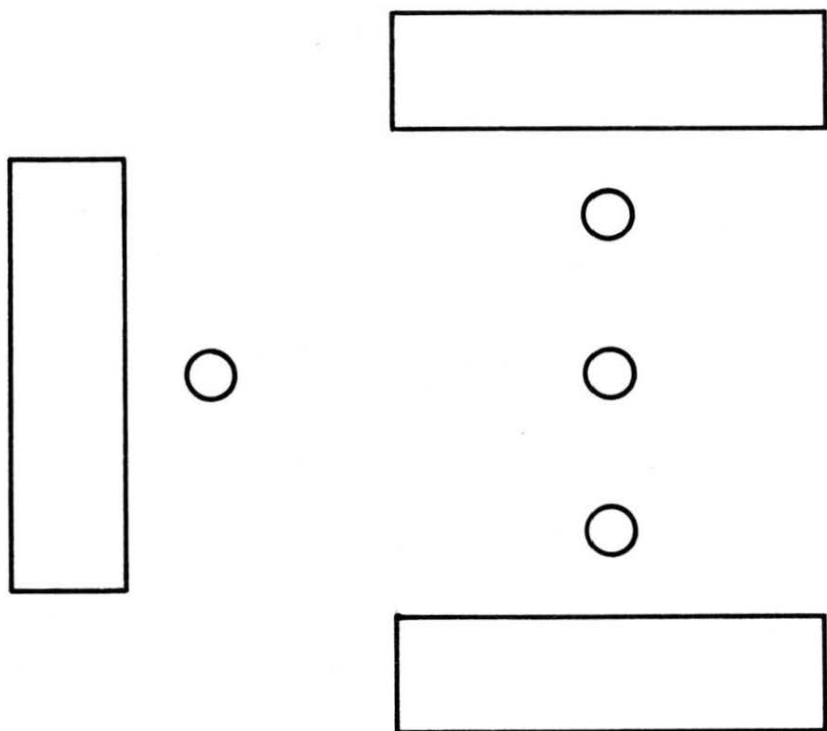


FIGURE 1

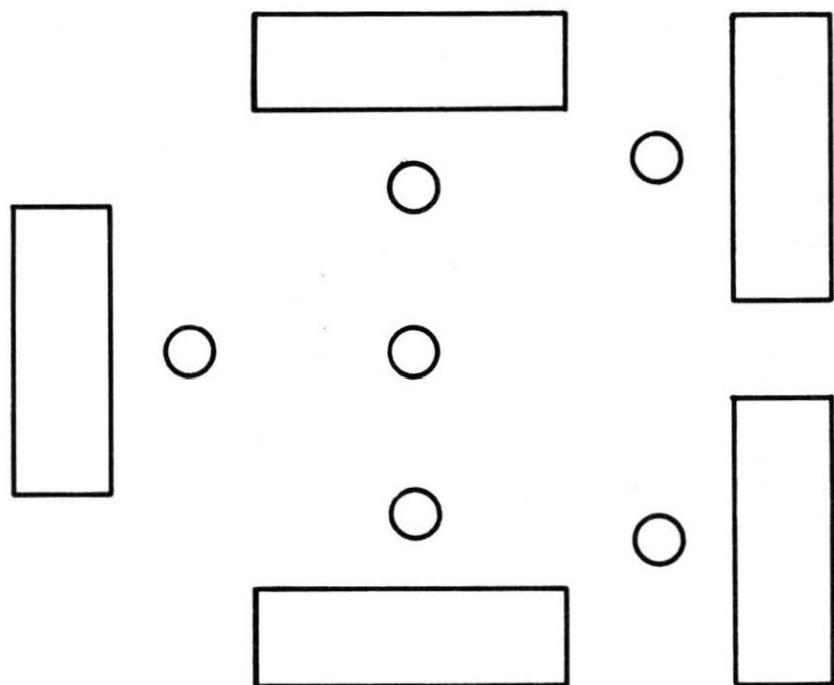


FIGURE 2

of the district, a regular, open octagon, built of logs, with a small portal. Over this a temporary roof is thrown on particular occasions.

Inasmuch as John R. Swanton speaks of the similarity of Creek and Cherokee council houses, and refers to Bartram's observation of the same fact, we would like to add here two descriptions of Creek council houses. In "Travels through North America during 1825 and 1826," Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar Hisenach, says:

At Macon [Georgia] . . . not far from the Chattahoochee several buildings appropriate for popular assembly of the Indians . . . they are large and round having conical roofs covered with tree bark; they have walls of lime. The Indians assemble in these buildings only in bad weather, or at night, and there a fire, kindled in the middle of the house, gives light. In good weather they collected in a square place covered with sheds under which the Indians sit down on planks protected from the sun's heat.

In "Travels in the U. S. 1827 and 1828," Captain Basil Hall notes:

A square court about 20 yards across formed by four covered sheds . . . raised shelf or floor 1½ ft. from ground, covered

with a mat of split canes . . . fire in middle . . . immense hut of a flat sugar loaf shape rising in the center to at least 30 ft. and measuring 60 to 80 ft. across. No wall . . . roof thatched and reaching to the ground. Circular seat skirting the inside, 10 ft. broad, touched the floor all around. Fire in the middle.

It is not surprising to find two types of council houses side by side, because the circular one was like the circular winter houses and the square one like the rectangular summer houses used by the Cherokees. They probably served different purposes. The big rotunda was very likely used for their big national meeting, while the small buildings were used by the tribes or clubs, such as those of warriors, for their conferences.

Finally, we would like to refer the reader to Dr. Henry T. Malone's report on the Payne papers, which contain special references to council houses. "The structural details of the New Echota Council Houses were doubtless partly in the old Indian style. We also believe that some old symbolism was retained . . . as the fires in front of the open buildings. Probably the seven traditional posts were used in the rotunda. In view of this we suggest that a special study of the structural details, the old as well as the possibly new ones, be undertaken."

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A Note on Cherokee House Construction of 1776

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The following description of Cherokee house construction was included in a letter from Lewis Williams to Archibald Murphey, written in 1825. It was related to Lewis by his father, Joseph (?) Williams, who had participated in William Christian's expedition against the Overhill Cherokees of eastern Tennessee in October of 1776. The document is preserved in the Miscellaneous Papers, Series I, Volume II (1789-1930), North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

The towns destroyed were irregularly built on various sites along the Tennessee River—The Houses were generally of an oblong figure, constructed by placing four posts in the ground, and extending rails representing the four sides of the square, from one post to the other—The space on the sides between the rails was filled with reeds in the form of wattled or wicker work, and over these again on the inside was spread a coat of plaster—The roofs of the Houses were covered with bark peeled from the Trees at the proper season of the year—Thus constructed the houses would be warm and comfortable in the winter.

According to this account, horizontal "rail" walls were used in combination with vertical corner posts, wattle-and-daub plaster, and bark roofing. Such a structure was influenced by the white man's log cabin, but also retained aboriginal building techniques.

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