

Tennessee's Indigenous Geography

By

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ABSTRACT

Popular narratives and public history institutions purposefully or incidentally erase Native contributions to Tennessee's geography. However, the settlement and mapping of Tennessee was built on Native precedents. White settlers followed Native settlement patterns and early Tennessee maps often utilized Native sources, guides, or mapmakers in their creation without attribution. This thesis reinserts Native voices into the white settlement and mapping of Tennessee. The first chapter examines Native cartography, Native geographies of power, and Native ground across North America. The second discusses the historiographies of Native history, Native cartography, and the Trans-Appalachian frontier in which this thesis interacts. The third chapter uses the frameworks and techniques outlined in the first two chapters to study Native contributions to the settlement and mapping of Tennessee. The final chapter makes recommendations for public historians to improve interpretation of Native history and colonial-era maps in the context of decolonizing their institutions.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Popular histories cast European colonizers as intrepid pioneers, settling wildernesses, blazing trails, conquering the unknown, and mapping a New World. Modern historical, archaeological, and anthropological scholarship, however, refutes all of those Western heroic tropes. The American continent on which European colonizers settled was not wilderness, but often purposefully cultivated to suit the need of those who had long inhabited it. Most migration paths and wagon roads were not cut from dense forests and undergrowth but followed well-trodden trading or hunting routes in use for hundreds or thousands of years. Nor were white Europeans settling uninhabited territory or pristine wilderness. Most early settlements were wholly dependent on their Native neighbors to survive, both in terms of protection from more hostile nations and in growing and harvesting crops for consumption. The America that Europeans colonized was densely populated with complex societies who influenced, controlled, and knew their environments. It is unlikely that without Native guides or maps, Europeans would have been able to navigate as far inland as quickly as they did. Colonizers lived and operated within the bounds of Native spheres of influence, traded and traveled on Native roads, grew and survived on Native crops, conducted diplomacy within Native political structures, and mapped using Native sources and guides. While Tennessee was settled by European Americans much later than coastal states, this thesis will show the extent to which Native geography influenced Tennessee geography and settlement and how Indigenous cartography aided in the mapping of the state. It also seeks to help historical institutions properly interpret their collections to include Native sources, voices, and contributions to the settlement and mapping of Tennessee.

OVERVIEW OF TENNESSEE'S INDIGENOUS PAST

People have inhabited Tennessee for at least 14,000 years. Hunter gatherers sparsely populated North America until the Mesoamerican agricultural triad of squash, beans, and maize spread north. Farmers carefully cultivated fruitful and hardy cultivars of the “three sisters” to supplement their diets, and traders exchanged seeds for other goods allowing widespread cultivation of them. This American agricultural revolution transformed the people and land of North America, leading to a population explosion. Conservative estimates place the population of America north of Mexico at around 18 million prior to the arrival of European colonizers and, with them, European diseases and European warfare.¹

The tribal names with which most are familiar were relatively recent labels, existing just prior to the primary wave of European settlement that reached the inland Southeast. They were a combination of survivors from previous iterations of Native civilization and culture. Anthropologist Robbie Ethridge calls these “coalescent societies” who merged with geographically similar groups for protection after the collapse of Mississippian culture in the 15th and 16th centuries. Mississippian culture is characterized by a reliance on agriculture (specifically maize), mound building, similar pottery and crafting, and shared spiritual philosophies. The collapse of the Mississippians was a long process not completely attributable to Europeans. Mass deforestation, over

¹ Meltzer, David J. *First Peoples in a New World: Colonizing Ice Age America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 11.

farming of maize, political instability, and disease surrounding major population centers aided in the downfall of Mississippian society even before Hernando de Soto's disastrous expedition through the American Southeast. Ethridge goes on to call the remnants of the Mississippian culture the "Mississippian Shatter Zone." She theorizes there were further fractures of Native societies following de Soto's expedition due to Spaniards' warring and pathogens along with constant cycling of chiefdoms vying for hegemony. Many moved in search of better farmland, better allies, stronger leaders, but most importantly many abandoned the distinct marker of Mississippian cultural identity, mound building. Perhaps due to the lack of a surplus labor source, but most likely disillusionment with the outcomes associated with their spiritual practices, Southeastern tribes stopped building earthen mounds.²

THE CHICKASAW

By the time of the first European accounts of the area, the Chickasaw were the Native group most associated with West Tennessee and northern Mississippi. Ethridge traces their formation as a splinter from the Mississippians near Moundville, Alabama. During his 1540 expedition, de Soto encountered a Native polity called Chicaza near the present Mississippi Alabama border. The Chicaza and de Soto's army's relationship seemed genial at first, as de Soto wintered with them in 1540. Their bonds weakened over the course of the winter, probably due to ration disputes and by 1541, the Chicaza attacked the Spaniards, attempting to run them out of their territory. The Chicaza, like

² Robbie Ethridge. *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

other Southeastern tribes that de Soto encountered, abandoned their homeland and even their important spiritual markers. De Soto left devastation in his wake. War casualties, epidemics, and depleted or burned food stores all caused a second round of social collapse of Southeast Native polities. The Chicaza moved northwest to northern Mississippi, where they found fertile ground on which to start anew. By the time the French reached the inland Southeast in the late 17th century, they found the Chickasaw inhabiting north Mississippi, with semi-permanent settlements into Tennessee.³

THE SHAWNEE

French traders and explorers from Louis Joliet to René-Robert Cavelier de la Salle traversed the Mississippi from French Canada and traded with the native inhabitants of the Ohio Valley. Here they encountered a somewhat transient group, the Shawnee. Just as the Cherokee, Creek, and Chickasaw coalesced out of various former Mississippian paramount chiefdoms, the Shawnee are thought to have coalesced from the Fort Ancient people who lived in the Ohio Valley. They share linguistic similarities with both the Miami and Illinois people of the region. In the mid-17th century, they were displaced from their homeland by both disease and war. The Iroquois, at war with European colonists in New England, pushed further south to replace their own losses from disease and war. These “Mourning Wars” included capturing rival Indigenous people so the Iroquois could reunite with the souls of their loved ones, using the bodies as vessels. The Shawnee and Fort Ancient people had a long history of trade with societies in East

³ Edward Gaylord Bourne, ed. and trans., *Narratives of the Career of Hernando De Soto*. London: David Nutt, 1905, vol. 2: 47-48, 120-145.

Tennessee as trade goods originating in the Ohio Valley have been found among archaeological remains of the paramount chiefdom of Coosa and Dallas Phase. They migrated out of necessity but incorporated movement into their identity. Their migration was not always reactive but proactive. They thrived in contested zones gaining reprieve from slaving or a competitive advantage in trade.⁴ When the English gained enough power in Carolina to contest local Native people, the Shawnee appeared and emerged as a regional power so much so that a river and major port city on the South Carolina/Georgia border carry a version of their name, Savannah.

The Shawnees' mobility continued as they moved into Middle Tennessee around the same time to take advantage of the dearth in trade middlemen between the English and their allies in the Southeast and the French and their allies in the Midwest. They abandoned the upper Illinois Valley because it was no longer contested as the French-Kaskaskian alliance maintained regional hegemony. The Shawnee appear at various times in the Chesapeake and Pennsylvania to act as trade intermediaries, gaining such a reputation for diplomacy that Shawnee became somewhat of a lingua franca. Small contingents lived with both the Creeks and Chickasaw including Tecumseh's parents, whose connection with the Creeks would be important in the Pan-Indian uprising that took place during the War of 1812.⁵ Unlike most Native groups, they resisted merging with similarly situated neighbors and remained separate because of their unique language

⁴ The Shawnee were subject to slaving by both the Westo and Occaneechis in present-day North and South Carolina.

⁵ Stephen Warren. *The Worlds the Shawnees Made: Migration and Violence in Early America*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 19, 35, 42, 62, 94, 132, 170-178.

(Algonquian) and culture.⁶ The Shawnee were the Native group most associated with Middle Tennessee even if their inhabitance was relatively short-lived.

While we do not know much about the Yuchi people that once inhabited Tennessee, but the Shawnee story can provide certain hints for their existence. Both resisted coalescence, at least for a while, occupying liminal spaces between collapsing Mississippian chiefdoms and European settlements. The Yuchi are markedly unique, outliers in both gender roles and language from nearby societies of the Creek and Cherokee. The Yuchi appear in present-day Georgia around the same time the Shawnee do, in the contested borderland of Carolina probably for similar reasons. The two societies maintained a deep alliance and some Europeans even mistakenly believed them to be related.⁷ This thesis will only touch on the Yuchi's lasting geographical influence on Tennessee, as very little is known about them; instead, it will focus mainly on the three other Native societies.

THE CHEROKEE

The Cherokee are the most well-known and impactful Indigenous group that inhabited Tennessee because of their long residence in the state. However, the Cherokee were relatively late in moving into the Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia mountains and valleys. Etowah dominated the region during the Mississippian period,

⁶ Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*. Warren, Stephen and Randolph Noe “The Greatest Travelers in History: Shawnee Survival in the Shatter Zone.” In *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South*. Ed. Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 163-187.

⁷ William Bartram. *The Travels of William Bartram* ed. Francis Harper. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 317.

based from a massive mound complex in northern Georgia. When de Soto's conquistadors tramped through the Tennessee Valley, Mississippian society had long since crumbled, replaced by the paramount chiefdom of Coosa. Coosa shared the bounds of Etowah's sphere of influence from northeastern Alabama, through northern Georgia, and up the Tennessee Valley near the Tennessee-Virginia border. The polity was governed from the city of Coosa on the Coosawattee River in Georgia and its paramount chiefdom consisted of at least 7 smaller chiefdoms that paid tribute in return for protection to Coosa. Roughly 50,000 people populated the paramount chiefdom at its height. Following de Soto's expedition, the war and disease brought by the Spaniards devastated Coosa as it did the other Southeastern chiefdoms and Coosa broke apart, unable to support such a large population.⁸

After Coosa's downfall, around 1600, the shatter zone allowed for the ascendancy of the Cherokee. The Cherokee, unlike the Muskogeean-speaking Coosa and Creek, spoke an Iroquoian-language, evidence of their northern roots, probably pushed south by similar forces as the Shawnee.⁹ They coalesced in Western North Carolina in the Middle and Valley Towns. The site of their most sacred and oldest town, Kituwah, is in this area. They eventually expanded their reach to the Lower towns in South Carolina and Overhill towns in East Tennessee. Once in Tennessee, they took up residence in former Coosa and Yuchi towns. They arrived sometime in the 17th century, well established before James

⁸ Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*. 110-112. Smith, Marvin T. "Late Prehistoric/Early Historic Chiefdoms (ca. A.D. 1300-1850)." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*.

⁹ Mooney, James. *Myths of the Cherokee*. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office. 1902. Each set of towns, Overhill, Middle, Lower, and Valley spoke different dialects, as would be expected of geographically isolated groups.

Needham and Gabriel Arthur's 1673 journey to establish a trade route with the Cherokee, and first appear geographically on Thomas Nairn's 1711 *Map of South Carolina*. Their location, buffered from English colonization by the Appalachian Mountains and far enough north to escape the worst of Spanish colonization, allowed them to thrive and endure until government-sponsored removal by the United States in 1838.

Tennessee served as a battleground state for European imperial powers in the years just prior to large-scale white settlement. The English, allied with the Cherokee (and at times, the Chickasaw), continually pushed claims westward. The French, allied with the Shawnee and other Ohio Valley Indians, resisted. Most of the fighting between the European nations was done by proxy through the American Indians with which they were allied. This held true until the Anglo-Cherokee War, part of the wider French and Indian War, that ended in 1761 and solidified England's foothold in the inland Southeast. The animosity left buffer zones between the rival Native groups in East, Middle, and West Tennessee. Nairn even refers to the Cherokee as a buffer from "french Indians," calling the Cherokee "our only defence on the Back parts."¹⁰ . Smaller groups appear on maps residing in the buffer zones, but all disappear by the mid-18th century, probably merging with more powerful polities, although historian Juliana Barr argues that European maps purposefully omitted Native geography, encouraging colonization by creating huge swaths of open land.¹¹

¹⁰ Alexander Moore, ed., *Nairne's Muskhogean Journals: The 1708 Expedition to the Mississippi River*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988. 73-78.

¹¹ Taogaria, Tali, and Caskinampo all appear in Middle Tennessee on the 1733 Henry Popple map, but all three are gone in John Mitchell's 1755 map. Barr, Juliana. "Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the "Borderlands" of the Early Southwest." *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 2011), 5-46.

The British-Cherokee alliance grew from their trade network. The earliest and most important trade good produced by the Cherokee was deer skins. Deer were always important to the Cherokee, even ingrained into their spiritual mythology. The Cherokee include deer in creation myths and as the source of some diseases. There is evidence of early trade with the Spanish in Gulf area as the Cherokee already possessed European firearms at the time of Needham and Arthur's journey to the Overhill Cherokee Nation. The deer skin trade exploded when English traders reached the Southern interior. In the 1720s, Charleston was exporting 250,000 deer skins a year to England supplied almost exclusively by Native hunters. The Cherokee received European firearms and ammunition in return which only increased their deer skin output. To protect their lucrative trade network the English built a fort deep in Cherokee territory, Fort Loudoun. This caused unease among the Cherokee, especially the local chiefs, who ultimately attacked and destroyed Fort Loudoun during the Anglo-Cherokee War.¹² The Cherokee continued their habitation of East Tennessee despite depredations of Tennesseans in the Revolutionary War, and frontier settlers during the early 19th century. They remained until the United States government dispatched their army to force them from their homeland west across the Mississippi River to a designated Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma in the wake of the 1830 Indian Removal Act. A faction of Cherokee, known as the Treaty Party signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835, which ceded their remaining tribal lands east of the Mississippi River. Many Cherokee, furious at the betrayal, resisted emigration and remained on their land. President Martin van Buren and

¹² Drew A. Swanson. "Leather: The Deerskin Trade in the Southern Mountains." In *Beyond the Mountains: Commodifying Appalachian Environments*, 10-32. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2018).

General Alexander Macomb ordered General Winfield Scott to force the terms of the treaty upon the resisters. General Scott rounded up the remaining Cherokee and placed them in internment camps around Fort Cass, near Calhoun, Tennessee. The army forced some Cherokee aboard boats at Ross's Landing and Gunter's Landing for their departure west. The remaining 13,000 marched overland on what is called "The Trail of Tears." An estimated four thousand Cherokee died from disease, starvation, and exposure on the journey.¹³ The resentment felt by the Cherokee persisted after removal. In 1839, a group of Cherokee murdered three principal treaty negotiators, Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot. Despite the tragedy of the Trail of Tears, not every member of the Cherokee Nation removed across the Mississippi. A reservation, known as the Qualla Boundary, in western North Carolina remains Cherokee territory to this day.

NATIVE CONCEPTIONS OF GEOGRAPHY

Important to understanding Native geography is understanding Native cartography. How did Indigenous North Americans represent their physical world to scale? Pre-contact Native cartographic traditions are not well known as few examples have survived. This is partially because Indigenous American created ephemeral maps and perhaps guarded geographic knowledge for the privileged elite. Therefore we can assume that all extant Native maps have some modicum of European influence, especially since most descriptions of these lost maps come from European sources. It is likely that many examples of Native mapmaking were misunderstood or disregarded as

¹³ Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green. *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*. (New York: Viking, 2007), 42-46.

they did not conform to what a European would envision as a map. Even many post-contact maps exist in description-only form, as the originals were not preserved. We do know that Native Americans in many regions of the country understood the concept of mapping. For example, as early as 1540, Hernando dé Alarcon asked a Yuma man to draw a chart of the Colorado River, the man asked for a map of Alarcon's own country in return. In the Southeast, a map drawn by a member of de Soto's expedition contained hallmarks of Native cartography, suggesting a rich mapping tradition was already present at the time. This map will be explored later in the thesis.¹⁴

Post-contact Indigenous map use is better understood by historians. Native peoples across the continent used maps for a variety of purposes, all of which mirrored their European peers. They created maps to send messages or instructions to others such as a birchbark map an Ojibwa man fastened to a tree to inform others of his groups' heading. They created maps for planning, like the river maps created by Chipewyan and Inuit guides that helped Joseph Tyrell navigate Manitoba and Saskatchewan in the 1890s. Some Indigenous maps recorded past events for the future, such as the buffalo hide map depicting a military victory of the Quapaw over their regional rivals, the Chickasaw.¹⁵ They generated maps for the purpose that most think of them today, to make sense of the broader world, beyond what they experienced day-to-day. This might be best exemplified

¹⁴ G. Malcolm Lewis. *Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American Mapmaking and Map Use.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 2.

¹⁵ G. Malcolm Lewis, "Maps, Mapmaking, and Map Use by Native North Americans" in David Woodward and G. Malcolm Lewis ed. *The History of Cartography, Volume 2, Book 3: Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998), 117.

by the 1837 map of the Mississippi and Missouri River valleys made by an Iowan Indian that spanned some 250,000 square miles, an astonishing feat from memory. The final purpose for which Native maps were created was to instruct spiritually rather than physically as seen in the Pawnee sky chart currently held by the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.¹⁶

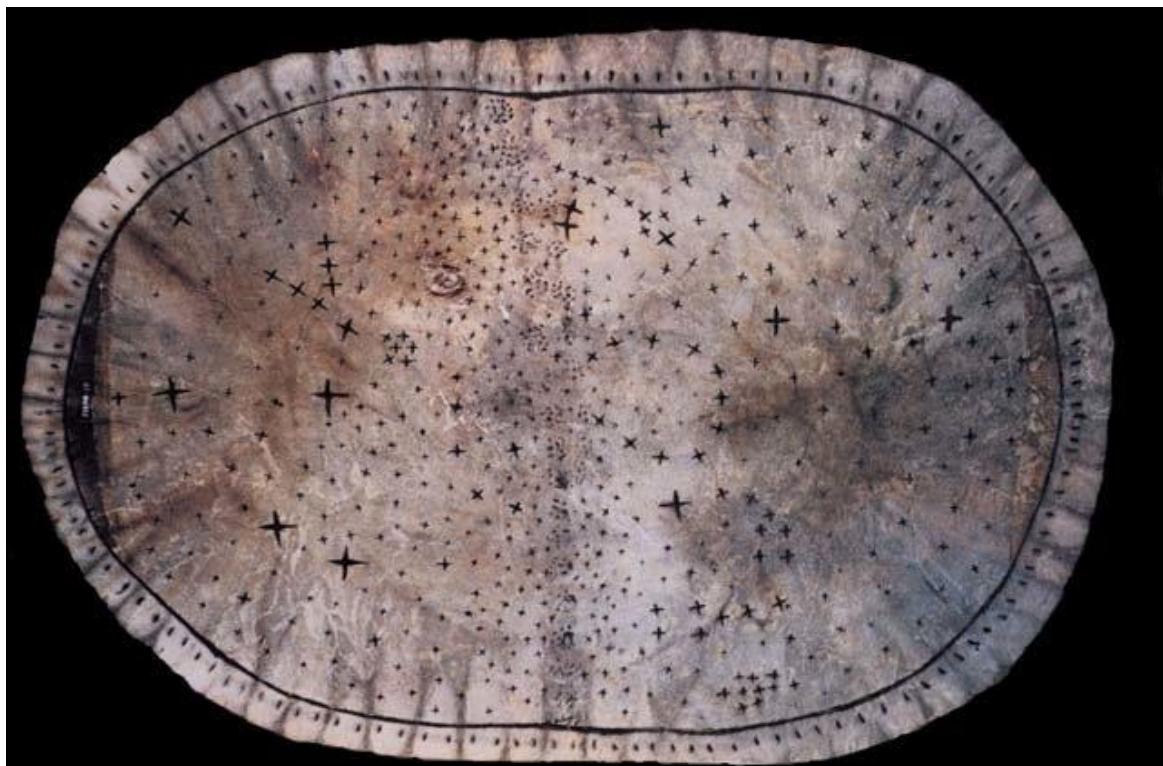


Figure 1. The Skidi Pawnee buckskin chart of the heavens. (Courtesy of Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago) published in: Pasztor, Emilia & Roslund, Curt. "An interpretation of the Nebra Disc." *Antiquity*. Vol. 81. (2007) 267-78.

¹⁶ Lewis, *Cartographic Encounters*, 11-13.

Indigenous maps were perhaps more creative than those created by Europeans, as they had different resources with which to fashion them. Copious examples of Native maps on birchbark exist including one drawn by the Cenis Indians for de la Salle of East Texas in 1687. Another common medium of Indigenous maps was using sticks to etch topography into the dirt or in ashes around the night's campfire.¹⁷ The Lewis and Clark Expedition made great use of Indian maps including many drawn in dirt.¹⁸ In addition to the example of the Powhatan map drawn in the sand Jesuit missionary Joseph-Francois Lafitau witnessed the Iroquois tracing "exact maps" in the sand during his time between 1712 and 1717. In 1540, four Iroquois men charted the rapids of the St. Lawrence River for Jacques Cartier using sticks to represent its meanders and rough points. Perhaps most creative is the dynamic map created by the chief of the Pookmoosh band of Micmac Indians with his hand to describe the strategic situation the Micmac found themselves in, nearly surrounded by European invaders by 1761.¹⁹ The Cherokee were known to use "road belts," metaphorical maps symbolizing free passage through their territory for the recipient.²⁰

¹⁷ William Cumming. *The Southeast in Early Maps*. revised and updated by Louis de Vorsey, Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 67.

¹⁸ Lewis, *History of Cartography*, Vol. 2, 114.

¹⁹ Lewis, *Cartographic Encounters*, 11-15

²⁰ Lewis, *History of Cartography*, vol 2., 80-89

Native maps, regardless of the place or culture of origin, contain some distinct and consistent features. Many examples depict Native communities, whether towns or entire nations, as circles. This feature appears in one the earliest Indigenous map examples, the 1524 map of Tenochtitlan, that portrays the Aztec capital as a large circle. While the surviving source was published by Europeans it is thought to have been copied from a Nahuatl original.²¹ There are numerous written examples of this phenomenon such as in 1649, Awascecencas, chief of the Kickotank, drew a map of Virginia's shoreline for Henry Norwood, which depicted local Indians settlements as circles.²² On an expedition to the Great Plains, Spaniard Juan de Oñate had a captive Native man christened Miguel to draw him a map to Quivira, a place rumored to be flush in gold. Miguel drew a map of the Plains using circles of differing size to depict the various peoples of the Eastern Plains.²³

²¹ Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain*, XIII-XVIII.

²² Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, 77-78.

²³ Kathleen DuVal. *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 57.



Figure 2. “Cortés’ 1524 Map of Tenochtitlan,” in Praeclara Ferdinādi Cortesii de Noua maris Oceani Hispania narratio [...] Nuremberg, Germany: Friedrich Peypus, 1524. (Courtesy of Newberry Library).

Native spirituality and mythology deeply impacted Native views of geography and landscape. One of the Cherokee founding myths involves the Great Buzzard flapping his wings to create the Appalachian Mountains within which the Cherokee resided. Indigenous Mesoamerican cartographers emphasized both spiritual and topographical symbolism in their maps highlighting the importance of the land on which they lived.²⁴ Travel and mobility is prevalent in Creek mythology stressing the importance of paths

²⁴ Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain*, 78-80.

and roads, which themselves are governed by topography.²⁵ An important deviation from this trend is the Shawnee. Shawnee spirituality was not tied to the land in any meaningful way specifically because of their identity as travelers. Geographically this gave them an advantage as their knowledge was widespread and were highly prized as guides and interpreters.²⁶ The infusion of place with spirituality is human, as many religions have holy sites and holy lands that hold special significance to its adherents.

Many 17th and 18th century European maps were drawn for royal patrons. Both French and English cartographers pushed imperial boundaries on the North American continent to project the power of their kings or queens. In 1711, Thomas Nairne drew an inset map pushing English control of North America to the Mississippi River when English habitation and geopolitical power extended barely beyond the Atlantic coastal plain. Conversely Guillaume De l'isle's 1703 *Carte du Mexique* claims all territory west of the Appalachian Mountains for France, when their actual sphere of influence was limited to present-day Canada and small outposts in the Great Lakes and along the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Indigenous cartographers were no different, in present-day Mexico, local rulers would commission cartographic histories of their fiefdom to emphasize their power or to establish themselves within royal lineages, a concept Barbara Mundy calls "rhetorical projection." These maps were displayed in highly public places and served similar purposes to stained glass in medieval European churches, to tell a

²⁵ Angela Pulley Hudson. *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 13-16

²⁶ Stephen Warren. *The Worlds the Shawnees Made: Migration and Violence in Early America*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 21.

pictographic story for the illiterate masses.²⁷ Another example of similarities between Native and European maps, especially earlier examples is that authors generally center themselves on maps, placing themselves as central to the greater world. Both the Chickasaw and Catawba maps center the creators. The first Indigenous Hawaiian geography book, published in 1840, opened to a two hemisphere world map with the Pacific Islands right in the middle.²⁸

That is not to say that Indigenous map makers could not draw in the European style. Many European accounts remark on the ability of Native sources to draw precise and accurate representations of the landscape. In Jamestown, a Powhatan guide drew a map of the James River in the sand for Captain James Archer, complete with navigational tips. When Archer requested a pen and ink version to carry with him, the guide replicated it flawlessly. The Baron de la Hontan remarked that Native map makers “draw the most exact Maps imaginable of the Countries they’re acquainted with, for there’s nothing wanting in them but the longitude and latitude, even setting down true north.” These artists did everything asked of them in drawing a map in the European style, yet Hontan still remarked that they did not include the arbitrary lines Europeans assigned to improve seafaring navigation. John Lawson, on Southeastern Indians, remarked that “they will draw maps, very exactly, of all the rivers, towns, mountains, and roads.”²⁹

²⁷ Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain*, 105-116.

²⁸ David A. Chang. *The World and All the Things Upon It: Native Hawaiian Geographies of Exploration*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 144.

²⁹ Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, 72, 83, 88

The most common source of Indigenous geographical knowledge came by way of guides. Guides, both voluntary and involuntary, served as invaluable sources of information to traders, settlers, and surveyors on the American frontier. Hernando de Soto used captive guides during his expedition through the southeast.³⁰ Sieur de la Salle's entire exploration of the Ohio Valley hinged on Shawnee and other regional guides.³¹ Lewis and Clark's famed expedition through the Louisiana Territory relied on Native guides, translators, and interpreters including the Lemhi Shoshone woman, Sacagawea.

Native cartographers were curious just like their European counterparts, they not only were knowledgeable in their immediate surroundings, but actively explored and sought to understand the world around them. When Ponce de Leon landed in Florida, Europeans assumed it was another Caribbean Island, evidenced by many contemporary maps that depict it as such. The Spaniard's Indigenous captives, however, knew that it was part of a larger landmass, not just an island. In 1602, a Plains Indian drew a map route to Meso-America, encompassing over 100,000 square miles.³² Powhatans in the Virginia Tidewater knew of the Great Lakes and directions to get there, some 500 miles over land, nearly the length of Great Britain. A Yazoo man claimed to have traveled from his home in present-day Mississippi to Eastern Canada then across the continent to California, before returning home.³³ A native Hawaiian man, Ka'iana voluntarily traveled aboard an English vessel to mainland China, visiting the cosmopolitan Macau.

³⁰ Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, 70.

³¹ Warren, *The Worlds the Shawnees Made*, 33.

³² Lewis, *Cartographic Encounters*, 18.

³³ Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, 68, 74, 83-85.

Afterwards, he sailed around the Pacific and once he returned home, the knowledge he gained while abroad increased his standing at home demonstrating that the Native Hawaiian power structure was curious about the wider world. The popular narrative that Europeans were discoverers, while Native people were “discovered” doesn’t hold up under scrutiny. In addition to the Yazoo man’s story of exploration and discovery, when the English first arrived to the Hawaiian Islands, Native Hawaiians went out to sea to meet them, rather than the other way around.³⁴

Native geographical influence on early colonists was not limited to the mapping of America, but included what is called geographies of power. Indigenous power directed how and where Europeans could settle, travel, and with whom they could trade. Early colonization was governed by alliances with Native groups. In the Virginia Tidewater, the tenuous alliance between the English and Powhatan meant that the English could not travel outside the Powhatan sphere of influence for fear of attack from rival Indian nations. Similarly, in the American southwest, Spanish colonizers could only travel and settle within lands of amenable Indigenous polities.³⁵ In South Carolina, the English allied with the Cusabo, who helped defend Charles Town from a Spanish incursion that could have completely ended English colonization of South Carolina.³⁶

³⁴ Chang, *The World and All the Things Upon It*, 72

³⁵ Hatfield, April Lee. “Spanish Colonization Literature, Powhatan Geographies, and English Perceptions of Tsenacommacah/Virginia.” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. LXIX, No. 2 (May 2003) 245-282. Barr, “Geographies of Power.”

³⁶ Alan Taylor. *American Colonies: The Settling of North America*. (New York: Penguin Books 2001), 232.

CONSIDERATION OF PRIMARY SOURCES

The most obvious set of primary sources that contribute to this thesis are period maps, both manuscript and published. They provide a glimpse at how contemporary Europeans and Native people alike viewed the Tennessee and the American Southeast. Journals, diaries, letters, and travel accounts provide details of frontier encounters and snapshots, albeit biased, of Indigenous life, where Native sources are not available. An attempt to include Indigenous sources was made, through both maps and later writings, but to also glean sources that have either erased or clouded Native contributions. Correspondence, especially regarding negotiations with Cherokee leaders will document power dynamics between colonial Native governments, and reveal where and when Indigenous leaders pressed their advantages. The papers of Robert Armstrong will furnish direct evidence of Native contributions to the mapping of Tennessee. There is work to be done on African and African American contributions to colonial mapping but that will not be covered in this thesis. Most of my research comes from sources found at the Tennessee State Library and Archives supplemented by digitized sources available online and those that have been published. This is due to restrictions in both time and money as well as museum and archive closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most of the sources from which I have drawn that speak to Native cartography and map use are from a white perspective. Primary encounters were filtered through a white lens and the secondary literature was again written and interpreted primarily by white historians, even I, with knowledge of Native cartographic practices and map use, carry white biases and do not and will never fully understand Native mapping culture or

techniques. We can infer from available examples is the importance paid to community and relationships. These are the ideas most commonly expressed and therefore were probably most central to their ethos.

Maps and map making can be a beautiful intersection of art and science, but they can also be powerful forces for colonialism and Eurocentricity. The mapping of early America has provided us with invaluable primary sources of how Europeans viewed and even imagined the North American landscape. However, period maps typically paint a one-sided picture of discovery and exploration by Europeans and of Indigenous Americans. Colonizers and historians have, at times, falsely played up this passive role in the creation of the United States. This thesis seeks to reinsert Native stories into the colonial record by understanding Native cartography, geography, map use, contributions of Native people to the mapping of early North America (more specifically, Tennessee), and geographic resistance to colonization.

Evidence of Indigenous cartography are many, but much of that focus occurs outside the bounds of the state of Tennessee. The state is important in Native history as the home to thousands of Indigenous people as well as the main thoroughfare for their forced removal from that home. As a Tennessean, I know how Tennessee history is taught in schools, and, perhaps more importantly, what is not taught. This thesis also seeks to uncover Indigenous influences on the mapping of early Tennessee, how to identify Native cartographic practices, and instruct museums and archives on how to interpret these maps to rightfully attribute possible Native sources.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORIOGRAPHY

To fully understand the impact of Indigenous geography on Tennessee's settlement, one must first understand the study of the Trans-Appalachian frontier, which mirrors that of American history generally. Early studies focused on white elites pioneering "unsettled" territory and fending off "aggressive" Indians in the early twentieth century. By the mid-century, scholars began adding more common people to the discussion. It was not until the 1980s and 1990s that historians focused on Native societies and perspectives as well as acknowledging enslaved Africans and surprisingly few of the work in this paper expound on frontier slavery in the Old Southwest. Overall, historical paradigm shifts explain many of the adjustments in Trans-Appalachian frontier studies but overlook the role that racism played in early scholarship of the frontier. This chapter reviews previous and current approaches to the Euro-American settlement of the Trans-Appalachian West and Native cartography and geography and establishes how the research in this thesis will build upon those works and contributes to the historiography.

TRANS-APPALACHIAN FRONTIER

Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 "frontier thesis" argued that the frontier was fundamental to the development of American democracy, individualism, and "manifest destiny." His thesis was influential in the field of history as well as popular culture. The theory of individualism favors individual freedoms and free enterprise over government control, especially socially and economically. Politically, individualism was closely associated with Thomas Jefferson's Democratic-Republicanism, whose supporters' American ideal consisted of small farmers and small government. Proponents of

American expansionism in the mid-nineteenth century coined the term “manifest destiny,” the belief that God had ordained citizens of the United States to spread westward across the North American continent, to justify their actions in displacing Indigenous people. Turner described “winning the wilderness,” as if nothing lay beyond the frontier line of which he spoke. In using phrases such as this one, he was erasing thousands of Native peoples and hundreds of Native cultures and implying white superiority, a popular misconception of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the rise of Social Darwinist theory.³⁷ Nonetheless, Turner’s academic musings, along with interpretations of the West in popular culture, ensured that the frontier held a hallowed spot in American memory.³⁸ Some scholars have chided Turner for putting so much importance on the frontier without fully defining it. Turner created a nebulous and malleable frontier, moldable to whichever argument he intended to make.

Early twentieth century works, including Verner Crane’s 1929 *The Southern Frontier* and Thomas Abernethy’s 1932 *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee*, focus on white Euro-Americans, othering both Native Americans and African Americans. Crane focused on the frontier of the Old Southwest, which in his instance and timeframe meant South Carolina and Georgia rather than Tennessee. His book was the first to argue that the Old Southwest frontier was primarily a trading frontier, dissimilar to Turner’s

³⁷ Social Darwinism was a social theory that groups of people fit into the Darwin theory of natural selection. Now widely discredited, it was used to pursue colonial, imperialist, and racist goals.

³⁸ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” delivered to the American Historical Association, 1893, in Martin Ridge, ed., *Frederick Jackson Turner: Wisconsin’s Historian of the Frontier* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986).

farming frontiers of the Great Plains and American West.³⁹ Crane argued Tennessee's importance as a frontier, but his definition viewed it as a liminal space between imperial powers, the French and English, rather than one between Euro-Americans and Native peoples. This argument overshadowed actual people on the frontier and their interactions with one another; it is an example of top-down history common in this era of scholarship. Crane's book appears to recount or "chronicle" events rather than comment on or interpret sources or biases within sources.⁴⁰ This of course assumes that a historian carries no bias, an assumption which would be roundly criticized today. The biggest hole in Crane's source base was that it lacked Indigenous and Spanish sources, the latter probably a result of either his lack of access to or knowledge of the language.⁴¹

Thomas Abernethy's *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee* began to understand the role that capitalism tied into colonization of Tennessee. Abernethy, who dedicated his book to Turner, refuted many of Turner's arguments. Abernethy's work, the first to focus this frontier thesis on Tennessee, acknowledged the role that land speculation played in the early white settlement of the state, focusing on the actions of Territorial Governor William Blount. He rejected Turner's argument that American democracy developed on the frontier, at least on the Trans-Appalachian frontier. He also rejected previous arguments that North Carolina Regulators made up the earliest wave of white Tennesseans, something Turner would have agreed with. Poor farmers did not flee

³⁹ Trading frontiers are characterized by white traders living among and traveling through primarily Native-controlled land. Farming frontiers, like the Great Plains in the latter half of the 19th century are characterized by white farmers living on the edge of American or white zones of settlement.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, Joseph D. *The Catholic Historical Review* 16, no. 1 (1930), 92-94.

⁴¹ Verner Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732*, (New York: Norton, 1929).

to Tennessee's frontier to seek freedom and to develop a democratic system; it was a territory established by and for wealthy elites, and in fact "democracy was defeated in the wilderness." He notes that while wealthy land speculators bought up most land titles, even the first white inhabitants of Tennessee were of at least upper-middle class birth, such as John Robertson, John Donelson, John Sevier, and John Tipton. While admitting that white "pioneers" encroached on Native lands, Abernethy, like Crane, wrote from a purely Euro-American point of view. He viewed Indigenous Tennesseans only as belligerents standing in the way of settlement and "preying" upon white settlers. In recounting the Cherokee attack on Freeland's Station in Middle Tennessee, Abernethy refers to the Cherokee as "savages."

Abernethy also took governmental documents too much at face value without questioning motive or bias, especially in regard to North Carolina's treaties and diplomacy with the Cherokee. He, like those before, and even after, utilized no Native sources. When documenting Cherokee land cessions, he knew that the Cherokee sold land that they did not occupy, but he failed to understand their views on land ownership and occupation, or their motivations behind such an act.⁴² His class argument comes as the result of the Great Depression, which would have been in full swing at the time of publication, or perhaps it is the hindsight of the Gilded Age, in which Turner made his original argument.

⁴² Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee: A Study of Frontier Democracy*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932).

Despite the advances of Thomas Perkins Abernethy, the study of the Trans-Appalachian frontier took a step backward with the publication of John Caruso's *The Appalachian Frontier*, who made no attempt to understand Native people or their culture. His work, largely a synthesis of secondary literature, catered more to popular audiences than academics. His interpretations of frontier conflict reverted to nineteenth century viewpoints of Native "slaughter" and "massacre" while white settlers merely "kill" for revenge. Caruso also focused his book on important names of the era: Daniel Boone, William Blount, and John Sevier, again retreading ground Abernethy had paved but without the discerning eye cast by his predecessor. Caruso's wrote eloquently enough but offered very little to advance the study of the Trans-Appalachian frontier.⁴³

Malcolm Rohrbough's 1978 *The Trans-Appalachian Frontier* turned its attention to Kentucky and Tennessee as the first American frontiers from 1775 to 1850. He compared these two states' development of institutions, such as law, religion, education, and agriculture with that of the Ohio Valley. Rohrbough actually defined "frontier" for his readers, stating, "this story generally uses the word 'frontier' in the singular when it describes new land settlements." He shifted the frontier focus from Crane's trading frontier back to agriculture as his later era demanded. Rohrbough spent more time discussing common white settlers than most of his predecessors, a result of the social turn in history of the 1960s and 1970s. Since historians criticized Turner's original thesis for not defining frontier, Rohrbough made it clear that there were multiple frontiers, three of which he explicitly stated: urban, rural, cotton. Rohrbough took a Whiggish approach to

⁴³ John A. Caruso, *The Appalachian Frontier: America's First Surge Westward*, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1959).

his study, emphasizing technology and transportation, especially the steamboat, cotton gin, and finally, the railroad. He acknowledged the role of Native Americans in the frontier but expressly stated their viewpoint lay outside of the purview of his work. This explanation is not sufficient; adding Native perspectives would have perhaps expanded his book, beyond his intention, but it comes across as Rohrbough ducking his responsibility as a historian, especially given the era from which his work emerges.⁴⁴

INCORPORATION OF NATIVE SOURCES

Despite Rohrbough's 1978 dismissal of Indigenous viewpoints, the 1960s and 1970s began a period of recognition of Native perspectives and contributions to the Trans-Appalachian frontier. The rise of social history out of the Civil Rights movement as well as the American Indian Movement in the context of Red Power can be seen in this new frontier development.

Walter Stitt Robinson's 1979 *The Southern Colonial Frontier* noted Native accomplishments and contributions to the colonizer's survival. Robinson also used twentieth century photographs to demonstrate Cherokee hunting techniques, subtly decrying the myth of the "vanishing Indian" that pervaded early frontier scholarship. This myth, that Native peoples completely vanished from the continent, was pushed for various reasons, mostly to ignore their present concerns and identity, and to force white conceptions of them into the public sphere.⁴⁵ He incorporated Native sources including

⁴⁴ Malcolm Rohrbough, *The Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions, 1775-1850*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978)

⁴⁵ Vine Deloria Jr. *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

maps and correspondence lacking from earlier histories. These mark a turning point in the use of Native sources, as most of the following works utilize them in some way. Robinson adopts Abernethy's anti-Turner stance when it comes to white settlement of the Trans-Appalachian frontier. He too noticed that land speculators nearly always preceded the yeoman farmer, the opposite of Turner's hypothesis for the American West. However, Robinson missed the opportunity to strengthen his book by examining the role cities played in developing frontier society.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ W. Stitt Robinson, *The Southern Colonial Frontier, 1607-1763*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979).

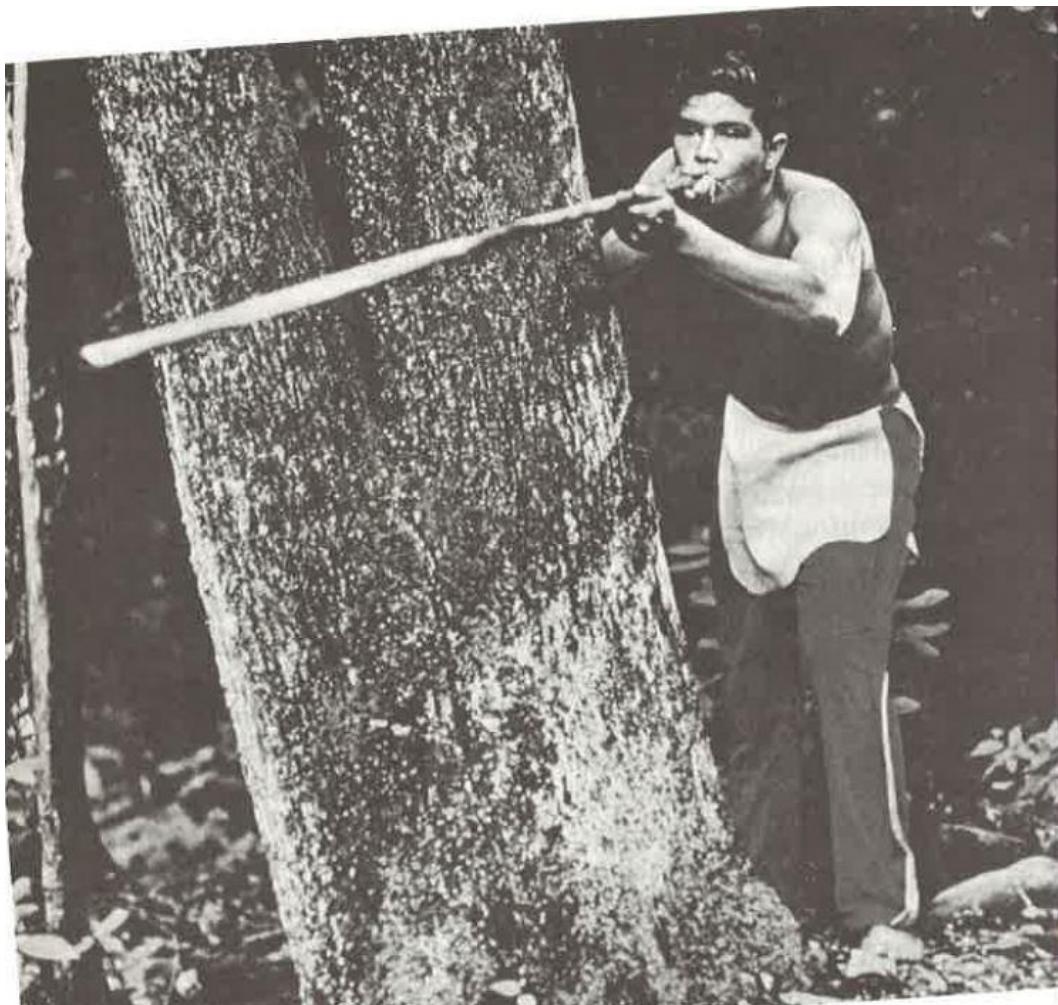


Figure 3. Photograph of Cherokee Indian using blowgun. (Courtesy of Ocunalftee Indian Village, Cherokee, North Carolina). Published in W. Stitt Robinson, *The Southern Colonial Frontier, 1607-1763*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979)

James O'Donnell defined frontier as a place of interaction rather than a place of settlement in his 1982 bibliographic essay *Southeastern Frontiers*. O'Donnell's work was among the first to critically incorporate enslaved Africans into the frontier narrative, discussing people enslaved both by Euro-Americans and by the Cherokee (citing Theda

Perdue's work on Cherokee chattel slavery). O'Donnell also studied Spanish interactions with Native peoples in the Southeast, linking frontier conflicts with the American Revolution.⁴⁷

William Cronon's 1983 *Changes in the Land* marked a fundamental change in the way historians viewed the colonial landscape. While not squarely within frontier historiography, *Changes in the Land* dealt with frontier ideas and themes. Cronon's environmental history of colonial New England reexamined the impact of Native societies on their landscape. He also showed how each culture's worldview, especially economically, affected the way in which they interacted with the land. European capitalists viewed the land as a commodity to be bought, sold, and exploited, while Indigenous gift-giving and subsistence societies consciously preserved the landscape. He also argued against the "children of nature myth" that pervaded Native history, a theory that Native Americans were "one with nature" and left no trace of their humanity on the landscape. This allowed colonizers to categorize Native people as natural history rather than include them with the history of Euro-Americans.⁴⁸

Thomas Clark and John Guice's *Frontiers in Conflict*, published in 1989, placed the Trans-Appalachian frontier in a national context. They defined the Old Southwest as the land lying south of the Tennessee River, east of the Mississippi River, west of the Ocmulgee River and north of the Gulf of Mexico. They posit that historians long omitted

⁴⁷ James Howlett O'Donnell III, *Southeastern Frontiers: Europeans, Africans, and American Indians, 1513-1840*, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1982).

⁴⁸ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

the Old Southwest from frontier studies “because of the existence of slavery.” Instead of the frontier molding American democracy, Clark and Guice argued that the frontier of the Old Southwest molded Andrew Jackson and thus the Age of Jackson as well as the idea of Manifest Destiny. This one was of the few times the Trans-Appalachian frontier was incorporated into a broader national narrative. They also discussed the cultural and religious significance of each of the “Five Civilized Tribes,” the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole. While recognizing some of their achievements, the majority of the book explained how each of these tribes assimilated into white culture, omitting their influence on Southern Euro-Americans.

John Finger, in his 2011 book, *Tennessee Frontiers*, argued that Tennessee had multiple frontiers, a prehistoric frontier, one between Euro Americans and Native Americans, and finally one that white Americans populated, changing it to its currently recognizable state. Finger added another important field to the scholarship of frontier interactions by studying interactions within both white and Native societies, not just between. He rejected Abernethy’s argument that elites took advantage of lower-class whites but instead suggested they cooperated with them. He often discussed when the market economy arrived in Tennessee, arguing at times that it had always existed, as deerskins harvested by Cherokee hunters in the 17th century reach European cities, but also that it did not truly exist until the 1840s when the state’s first railroads were

constructed. The market economy, in this instance, refers to the buying, selling, and production of goods is governed by the forces of supply and demand.⁴⁹

The study of the Trans-Appalachian frontier evolved similarly to the wider field of history; the advent of paradigm shifts in the broader discipline brought similar changes to the study of the southern frontier. The field advanced from a wealthy, white-centered focus to an inclusive and empathetic one, incorporating and endeavoring to understand Native viewpoints.

GEOGRAPHIES OF NATIVE POWER

The study of geographies of power has aided in the understanding of Native power as it relates to their geographical situation and extent. Scholars have studied Indigenous geography's influence upon colonial Virginia and the American Southwest, but a thorough examination of these principles and evidence are lacking for Tennessee. April Hatfield argued that Powhatan power in the Virginia Tidewater meant that the English could not travel outside the Powhatan sphere of influence for fear of attack from rival Indian nations. Similarly, in the American southwest, Julianna Barr revealed that Spanish colonizers could only travel and settle within lands of amenable Indigenous polities. Barr also noted the binary established by Europeans between owning private property and not, justifying the dispossession of said property.⁵⁰ Michael Witgen

⁴⁹ John Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition*, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2001).

⁵⁰ April Lee Hatfield, “Spanish Colonization Literature, Powhatan Geographies, and English Perceptions of Tsenacommacah/Virginia.” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. LXIX, No. 2 (May 2003): 245-282. Julianna Barr, “Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the “Borderlands” of the Early Southwest.” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 2011): 5-46.

examined the Northwest Territory and how “settler colonialism” and mapping envisioned replacing Native peoples with European settlers in the region.⁵¹

NATIVE HISTORY

Two of the most important frameworks for studying Native history of the past few decades are Richard White’s “middle ground” theory and Kathleen DuVal’s “native ground” one. White’s “middle ground” hypothesis that through “creative misunderstandings” Native peoples and Europeans in the Great Lakes region mutually established a set of understood practices with which to engage one another. DuVal’s “native ground” theory rejects that notion. Instead it posits that in some circumstances, Indigenous North Americans pressed their advantage and forced Europeans to engage on their terms rather than on the Europeans’ terms or even on compromised terms. Historical examples of “native ground” geography include deliberate misinformation given by a captive Indian to de Soto that led him into swampland rather than inhabited cities. In 1542, the chief of the Guachoya refused to give de Soto’s men directions to the Gulf of Mexico. He understood the threat the Spanish posed to his people as well as other Native peoples in the region and hoped to save others from the disastrous fate that befell previous Native tribes that interacted with the Spanish. In another instance of native ground, the Quapaw people of the Arkansas River Valley dissuaded the French from traveling any further south on the Mississippi River to avoid unfriendly people, but were most likely also attempting to keep them from establishing trade relations with one of

⁵¹ Michael Witgen. "A Nation of Settlers: The Early American Republic and the Colonization of the Northwest Territory." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2019).

their regional competitors to retain the local trade monopoly for French trade goods.⁵² In the Southeast, the Cherokee enforced buffer zones (unoccupied areas between settlements, typically for protection and hunting) when allowing the English to settle near them under the 1730 Articles of Friendship.⁵³

Both DuVal and White's theories ushered in paradigm shifts in the study of native history, but Native history and frontier history are necessarily intertwined. *Before the Volunteer State* is an edited volume of essays that brings the study of the Trans-Appalachian frontier to the present and combines it with Native history in an intuitive way. The work necessarily speaks to many other historiographies but incorporates both Richard White's *Middle Ground* and Kathleen DuVal's "native ground" theories. White's theory examined interactions between Native peoples and Euro-Americans and how creative misunderstandings necessitated adaptation and compromise between the two groups. Misunderstandings in 1730 diplomacy between Cherokee and British officials that led to both British observation of buffer zones and Cherokee adaptation of European land use and capitalism demonstrate this theory. DuVal's theory established the level of control Native polities exerted on colonial diplomacy. Diplomatic exertion of Native power is evident in the Trans-Appalachian frontier when the Cherokee refused to abide by British suggestions that they select a supreme ruler, contradictory to their

⁵² Richard White. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 3, 34-44.

⁵³ *Before the Volunteer State: New Thoughts on Early Tennessee*, ed. Kristofer Ray. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014). 68.

decentralized form of government. Additionally, English power projection on this frontier depended wholly on their alliance with the Cherokee.

Historians in this collection of essays employed empathy and understanding when dealing with Native societies and cultures, evident in the discussion of Cherokee land cessions. Where Abernethy simply stated, “the Cherokees did not own the land they sold,” Kristofer Ray and Tyler Boulware explained the Cherokee view on land ownership, occupation, and the purpose of an unoccupied hunting ground. The Cherokee derived much more of their diet from hunting than Euro-Americans and thus needed a larger area in which to hunt. The Cherokee also used this hunting ground as a geographic buffer to protect themselves from enemies, whether that be neighboring Creeks to the west or English to the east. The authors additionally demonstrated this point with the interpretation of a Chickasaw map of the southeast that depicted Native polities separated by buffer zones and not drawn to represent the South purely geographically but acknowledging connections between differing groups.⁵⁴

Historian Stephen Warren reframed Shawnee mobility in *The Worlds the Shawnees Made* and noted how and why their alliances with the French made them important actors in the Ohio Valley. He explained how the Shawnee went from being a place-bound culture to an adaptive one, in which migration and reinvention became essential. Throughout colonial history they appeared in places of conflict, migrating to

⁵⁴ *Before the Volunteer State: New Thoughts on Early Tennessee*, ed. Kristofer Ray. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014).

areas to ensure their survival, all the while maintaining their culture in contradiction to James Merrell's "new world" thesis. Warren emphasized that Shawnee mobility was just as proactive as it was reactive, providing agency to Shawnee travelers.

In *Creek County*, anthropologist Robbie Ethridge explored the Creek Nation and how the Creeks interacted with and transformed their landscape for both hunting, trading, agricultural purposes. She also looked at how their specific location helped determine certain aspects of their culture and society. Ethridge relied on the papers of Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins, and successfully read through white biases extant in the records. Angela Pulley Hudson took a different route, studying how Creeks, Europeans, and enslaved Africans interactions and philosophies were governed by mobility and converged on roads through Creek country in *Creek Paths and Federal Roads*. Hudson was able to analyze how travel and mobility molded Creek spirituality and how spirituality governed Creek actions and road networks. She also connected the Native history and geography with the enslaved African and African American experience of the mid-19th century through a framework of the roads constructed through the Creek Nation.

Theda Perdue's *Cherokee Women* analyzed Cherokee culture and interactions with Euro-Americans through a gender lens, coinciding with a wider trend of gender history within the historical field. She discussed early attempts at "civilizing" the Cherokee, including adopting Anglo-American gender roles in terms of production. The

Cherokee division of labor between men and women comprised an important function in their society, one that endangered Cherokee women's influential role in their society.⁵⁵

Perdue's study of the Cherokee has been long and influential. In 2007, she and Michael Green, in *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*, addressed the idea of civilizing the Cherokee as incongruous. Americans wanted the Cherokee to adopt Anglo-American culture, but if they did, these Cherokee were treated as second class citizens, and thus eliminated any incentive for the Cherokee to follow course. They argued that by the mid 1820's the concept of removal completely displaced any sentiment of Indian "civilization." The work rounded out the study of the Trail of Tears, specifically the factions within the Cherokee regarding whether or not to sign the Treaty of New Echota. They also actively refute that removal spelled the end of the Cherokee Nation, countering the "vanishing Indian" myth.⁵⁶

Tyler Boulware's *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation* examined the Cherokee through the lens of town and region in understanding Cherokee society and politics, vital when considering the importance of Cherokee geography. This differed from earlier studies of Cherokee socio-politics that focused more on nation and kinship ties or gender. Various wars precipitated the need to develop a national "community" for protection and political power, but also shifted the region of power from east of the Appalachian Mountains to the Overhill Towns, west of the range. The result of acclimating to the

⁵⁵ Theda Perdue. *Cherokee Women*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

⁵⁶ Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green. *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*. (New York: Viking, 2007).

Euro-American ideal of single farms was the breakdown of the Cherokee village structure that governed them for centuries prior.⁵⁷

NATIVE GEOGRAPHY AND CARTOGRAPHY

The study of Native mapping practices and techniques is a newer field, but one that aids in understanding how Native people placed themselves in the broader world. Indigenous maps reflect the values and purposes of Indigenous communities just as European maps reflect the values and purposes of European communities. Art historian Barbara Mundy classifies the different approaches to mapping between Europeans and Indigenous North Americans as rational versus humanistic. Europeans, drawing on principles of rationalism and the Enlightenment attempted to recreate three-dimensional topography on two-dimensional paper using Euclidean geometry to translate what they could see to the page. Indigenous map makers preferred “social projection” rather than geometric projection, instead emphasizing relationships and communities.⁵⁸

Even today, not all modern maps reflect geometric principles. Professor of English, Barbara Belyea used subway maps for example, the routes do not accurately reflect the exact tunnel system and each stop is not equidistant apart. Drawing a subway map to reflect the actual distances and routes would be confusing and unhelpful. Additionally, theme parks generally do not draw their maps to scale, rather they aggrandize their attractions because that is what was deemed important during its

⁵⁷ Tyler Boulware. *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation: Town, Region, and Nation among Eighteenth-Century Cherokees*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011).

⁵⁸ Barbara E. Mundy. *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), xiii.

conception, and a map drawn perfectly to scale would have mostly walking paths rather than rides. Even the standard Mercator projection, the most common way of representing the globe on a single plane, is just that, a projection, and it distorts the scale of continents, especially at the poles. However, it accurately served its purpose, a guide for sailing straight across the Atlantic Ocean.⁵⁹ These examples demonstrate that even maps that use social projection should be considered accurate, because they achieve the mapmaker's purpose.

Powhatan's Mantle, an edited volume was an influential addition to the study of the American Southeast's Native peoples. Chapter topics include population movements, Mississippian mounds, and perhaps most relevant to this thesis is Gregory Waselkov's chapter on southeastern Indian mapping. His identification and interpretation of colonial era Indigenous maps provided an early and comprehensive resource to those studying the subject, including the important Chickasaw and Catawba maps stored in the British State Papers in England. He is one of the first historians to note the pattern of circles Native cartographers utilized to indicate settlements or polities.⁶⁰

G. Malcolm Lewis's *Cartographic Encounters* and his addition to *The History of Cartography* initiated the scholarly study of Native maps. He looked past their visual beauty to rigorously examine the information they provided and why Indigenous mapmakers might have drawn in a certain style. *Cartographic Encounters* contains almost an exhaustive list of Native maps or mapping contributions, setting up future

⁵⁹ Barbara Belyea, "Inland Journeys, Native Maps," in Lews, ed., *Cartographic Encounters*, 135-155.

⁶⁰ Waselkov, Gregory A. "Indian Maps of the Colonial Southeast," in Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast, edited by Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood, and Tom Hatley, 435-436.

cartographic historians to examine each in more detail. His addition to *The History of Cartography* cemented the elevation of Native mapmaking to equal terms as other cartographic traditions.⁶¹

David A. Chang's *The World and All the Things Upon It* explored Native Hawaiian geography from how they incorporated it into their spirituality, viewed themselves in the Pacific world, and challenging the colonial system of bifurcation in order to "other" people or ideas. Chang directly refuted the trope of Europeans as "discoverers" of Native peoples who were the "discovered," instead citing numerous examples of Indigenous exploration of the Pacific. Perhaps most importantly it looked at geography education and how the teaching of geography in Hawaii differed once white-centered textbooks replaced both traditional Hawaiian geographical teachings and even native Hawaiian geography texts.⁶²

One way historians have studied Indigenous cartography is through the use of Native sources in the creation of European maps. The earliest example of this in North America is Peter Martyr's 1511 map of the Caribbean. His inclusion of a large "Isla de Beimeni" north of Cuba, two years prior to Ponce de Leon's first voyage indicated the Martyr obtained information from other sources, most likely Native Caribbeans, among whom the Florida peninsula was probably known. In the American Southeast the first

⁶¹ G. Malcolm Lewis. *Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American Mapmaking and Map Use*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).; G. Malcolm Lewis, "Maps, Mapmaking, and Map Use by Native North Americans" in David Woodward and G. Malcolm Lewis ed. *The History of Cartography*, Volume 2, Book 3: *Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁶² David A. Chang. *The World and All the Things Upon It: Native Hawaiian Geographies of Exploration*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

example that still exists is a 1544 map drawn by a member of Hernando de Soto's expedition. This map's odd depiction of the Southeast's river systems as intertwining as well as emptying into two separate coasts, could indicate Indigenous sources "rooted in a basic difference in the ways European and Native Americans treated networks in mapping tradition," according to historian Louis de Vorsey, Jr. De Vorsey argued that this difference was that Europeans saw water and land routes as distinctly different, and thus mapped them totally separate, while in Native traditions, a route was a route regardless if it was on land or by river. He postulates that de Soto's men must have mistranslated a Native map that depicted Southeastern routes in this web-like manner and transcribed that for his map.⁶³ Historian Patricia Galloway suggested that early European maps that used multiple house or hut symbols for villages were relying on Native sources, especially one in which the number of residents or combatants is included.⁶⁴ These contributions, however are nearly always unnoted, another example of Native erasure in the historical record.

It is evident from the examples that Native North Americans were neither outwitted nor outright coerced when providing geographical information to their European counterparts. Often they did so on their terms and, when it suited them, omitted strategic information or simply lied to European colonizers. These are all geographic examples of Kathleen DuVal's "native ground" theory.

⁶³ Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, 66-67, 71.

⁶⁴ Lewis, *Cartographic Encounters*, 231-235.

Another facet of Native culture necessary to consider when discussing Indigenous geography is how they viewed space and land. The Creeks, like many Southeastern American Indians, had well-developed concepts of boundaries and borders, use rights, rights of way, and property. The Creeks, Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Shawnees, all at varying times pressed claims on Tennessee lands. Much of Tennessee was contested between two or more of these groups due to their views on “national” land rights. Each maintained a wide swath of land between their primary area of settlements and neighboring lands, generally called hunting grounds. These hunting grounds were multipurpose; they provided food from hunting game, animal skins for trade, and buffer zones from neighboring settlements. While Native groups clearly recognized the extent of these grounds, they often shared as well as competed for them with adjacent tribes. This probably seemed strange to Europeans who preferred discrete borders and often used this to agitate and press for land grabbing wars. Prior to colonization of property, Creeks, like the Quapaw in the Arkansas River Valley, had notions of property rights, however these were generally communal property rights rather than private property rights.⁶⁵ The Cherokee maintained a similar communal property structure, and even allowed personally controlled and maintained gardens that were ultimately publicly owned. Once European ideas of private property began to spread amongst the Cherokee, historian Theda Perdue suggests that its development fell on gendered lines. Individualistic men who historically hunted, pushed for private property rights, while women, who historically farmed preferred communal property rights. Perdue explained that entire

⁶⁵ Robbie Ethridge. *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 208.; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 7.

Cherokee nation owned their land, which they divided into communal towns, agricultural areas, and hunting grounds.⁶⁶ This stands in stark contrast to the greed which overtook the North Carolina land speculators and desire to gobble up huge swaths of territory to enrich themselves, often at the expense of veterans and those who already inhabited the “empty” public land. It also differs from the Euro-American societal role for women, who contributed less to farming. Perhaps parallel, perhaps coincidentally, they were not allowed to own property, and generally held an inferior position in society.

This thesis seeks to add to these various historiographies by building off previous historians’ frameworks in studying Indigenous mapping and geography in Tennessee and how it affected frontier settlement and colonizer-Native interactions. None of the above authors have examined the sources from which I will draw and few focused on Tennessee. Specifically, this thesis will look for Native exertion of power in colonial Tennessee found in DuVal’s *Native Ground*, as well as Native geographies of power found in both Hatfield and Barr’s frameworks. Using both Waselkov and Lewis’s identification of Native map markers I will attempt to note possible Native contributions to early maps of Tennessee.

⁶⁶ Theda Perdue. *Cherokee Women*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 104, 135.; Private property would have benefitted men as most communal property was held by matrilineal kin groups.

CHAPTER THREE: TENNESSEE'S INDIGENOUS GEOGRAPHY

Previous chapters have detailed many examples of Native impact on the exploration, mapping, and settlement of North America. However, many of these same principles have not been fully examined within the bounds of the present-day state of Tennessee. In this chapter I will explore how Tennessee's Native people exerted power diplomatically, geographically, and agriculturally and ultimately affected the settlement and mapping of Tennessee. Using the historiographic themes and concepts introduced in the previous chapter, I will examine maps, travel accounts, and letters for evidence of Native geographical power and Indigenous influences on the white settlement of Tennessee and show how white crops, roads, waterways, and settlements mirrored those of their Native predecessors.

NATIVE GROUND

Kathleen DuVal's "native ground" theory saw an important shift to the study of Native exertion of power, as discussed previously in Chapter Two. Cherokee interactions with the English, and later the Americans, provide plenty of examples of DuVal's "native ground" concept.⁶⁷ Peace negotiations with opposing nations were never easy, but due to the Cherokees' relative power and importance as a buffer from the rival French-allied nations, as well as a trading partner, the English negotiated on Cherokee terms. This proved difficult as the Cherokee maintained a decentralized government, with chiefs ruling a single town with an unclear hierarchy. In July 1725, George Chicken, a treaty

⁶⁷ Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

negotiator for South Carolina, pushed for the Cherokee to select a single “King” with whom the English could negotiate. The Cherokee refused to conform to European diplomatic practices, instead staying with their own, more deliberative method.⁶⁸ When negotiating the peace to end the Anglo-Cherokee War in 1761, the British would only meet with one of four Cherokee head men, Oconostota, Ostenaco, Conocotocko II, and Attakullukulla. According to Henry Timberlake’s *Draught of the Cherokee Country*, Oconostota was the head of the Overhill chief town of Chota, while Ostenaco the leader of Tomotley. Conocotocko is listed as governor of both Tanasi and Chota, and Attakullakulla is denoted as governor of Mialaquo and Tuskogee. The first three, for good reason, would not meet with the British on their soil, as the British had a habit of false imprisonment during peace talks. Attakullakulla, however, desired power and thus offered to bargain on behalf of the Cherokee. He negotiated a peace with the British, but insisted he did not represent all Cherokees. He presented five strings of wampum, a sign that he had authority over only five Cherokee villages. At the conclusion of the treaty, both sides performed the calumet ceremony to seal their peace agreement.⁶⁹ Their acquiescence to Cherokee customs shows that even though the British dominated militarily, they still respected the power the Cherokee maintained. Following the Treaty of Holston in 1791, the Territorial Governor of Tennessee, William Blount, had to travel to Coyatee to deliver the first year’s annuities outlined in the treaty, another example of

⁶⁸ “George Chicken’s Journal” in Newton D. Mereness, ed. *Travels in the American Colonies*. (New York: MacMillan, 1916), 110-111.

⁶⁹ Tortora, Daniel J. *Carolina in Crisis: Cherokees, Colonists, and Slaves in the American Southeast, 1756-1763*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 155-168.

Cherokee negotiating power.⁷⁰ In 1805, the Cherokee ceded land to the state of Tennessee in present-day Roane County under the Treaty of Tellico. They agreed to do so on the condition that this land become the seat of Tennessee's government, closer to Cherokee population centers than Knoxville.⁷¹ Tennesseans agreed to, thereby recognizing a certain level of bargaining power by the Cherokee, only to double cross them, moving the capital to Kingston for a single day before returning it to Knoxville. Obviously, discussions of treaty negotiations were fraught as power imbalances generally made them survival negotiations rather than bargaining on equal terms. This just reinforces the concessions the Cherokee were able to draw from Europeans and Tennesseans alike.

Shortly after the Cherokee developed and adopted a written language, Elias Boudinot, started the first Cherokee newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*. The paper, written in both Cherokee and English, published the news of the day to its Cherokee subscribers and those living in and around sovereign Cherokee territory. The *Phoenix* provided a powerful voice for Cherokee to report the news on their terms and in their own tongue. While many contemporary American newspapers published anti-Indian viewpoints, the editors of the *Phoenix* resisted this American imperialism on the Americans' framework of newsprint, but on the Cherokees' own terms.

⁷⁰ 1792 Letter from William Blount to Daniel Smith. Tennessee Historical Society Miscellaneous Files, Tennessee Historical Society.

⁷¹ "Indians" *The Cherokee Phoenix*, October 28, 1829.

NATIVE GEOGRAPHIES OF POWER

Native geographies of power refers to the recognition of Native boundaries and the ability to exert power within boundaries. Just as the Powhatans and their neighbors policed borders in Virginia and Indigenous people in the American Southwest did the same with the Spanish, Native people in present-day Tennessee maintained geographies of power.⁷² Because of the British-Cherokee alliance, it is safe to assume that in Tennessee, a British trader would not be welcome outside the territorial limits of the allied Cherokee Nation, and likewise, a French trader would have been unsafe treating with the Cherokee outside the bounds of Shawnee-controlled land, because of their trade alliance with the French..

Naturally it was a French cartographer, Guillaume Delisle, that first placed the Shawnee, or Chouanons, in Tennessee in his 1703 *Carte du Mexique et de la Floride*. French traders and explorers from Louis Joliet to René-Robert Cavelier de la Salle traversed the Mississippi from French Canada and traded with the native inhabitants of the Ohio Valley. Here they encountered a somewhat transient group, the Shawnee. The Shawnee were the Native group most associated with Middle Tennessee even if their inhabitance was relatively short-lived.

⁷² April Lee Hatfield, “Spanish Colonization Literature, Powhatan Geographies, and English Perceptions of Tsenacommacah/Virginia.” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. LXIX, No. 2 (May 2003): 245-282. Juliana Barr, “Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the “Borderlands” of the Early Southwest.” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 2011): 5-46.

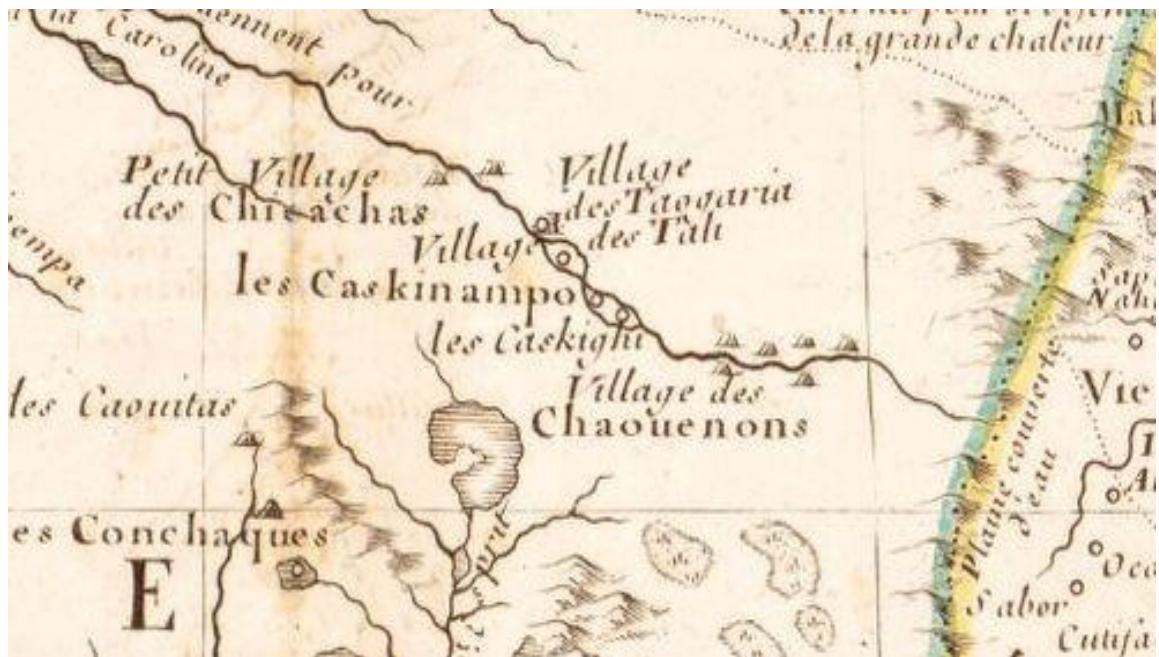


Figure 4. Enlargement of Guillaume Delisle's *Carte du Mexique et de la Floride* indicating the "Chaouenons" in present-day Tennessee. Library of Congress.

By 1718, Delisle's depiction of Tennessee's major rivers in his *Carte de la Louisiane* finally looks recognizable. The Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers are clearly separate and both feed into the Ohio. Delisle names the Cumberland the "Riviere des anciens Chouanons," (the river of the ancient Shawnee) which clearly places the Shawnee as inhabiting the land along the river, most likely in Kentucky and Middle Tennessee. It is unclear whether the designation comes from Jean Couture's 1701 traverse of the Tennessee River or, more likely, from French traders in the Ohio Valley. What is clear is that the Shawnee were powerful and influential enough in the early 18th century to have a substantial waterway named for them. The name remained until Dr. Thomas Walker named it the Cumberland River to curry favor from the Duke of

Cumberland, something April Hatfield would argue signified the rise of British power in the region, just as the renaming of the James and York rivers did so in Virginia.



Figure 5. Enlargement of Guillaume Delisle's *Carte de la Louisiane* naming the Cumberland the “Riviere des anciens Chouanons,” (the river of the ancient Shawnee) in present-day Tennessee. Library of Congress.

The Tennessee River is the largest and most important of the state’s internal waterways. Early maps either conflate the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers or omit one altogether. Some of the earliest names given to the river were variations on Casquinambaux, perhaps meaning many warriors in the Koasati language, an early group of Native peoples de Soto encountered.⁷³ Robbie Ethridge would probably disagree with this notion, as she argues the political structures in place at the time of de Soto’s expedition were long gone by the turn of the 18th Century.⁷⁴ The United States Geological Survey lists 42 variants on the name of the Tennessee River. Englishman

⁷³ Lewis, Thomas M. N. and Madeline Kneberg. *Hiwassee Island: An Archaeological Account of Four Tennessee Indian Peoples*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970).

⁷⁴ Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw*.

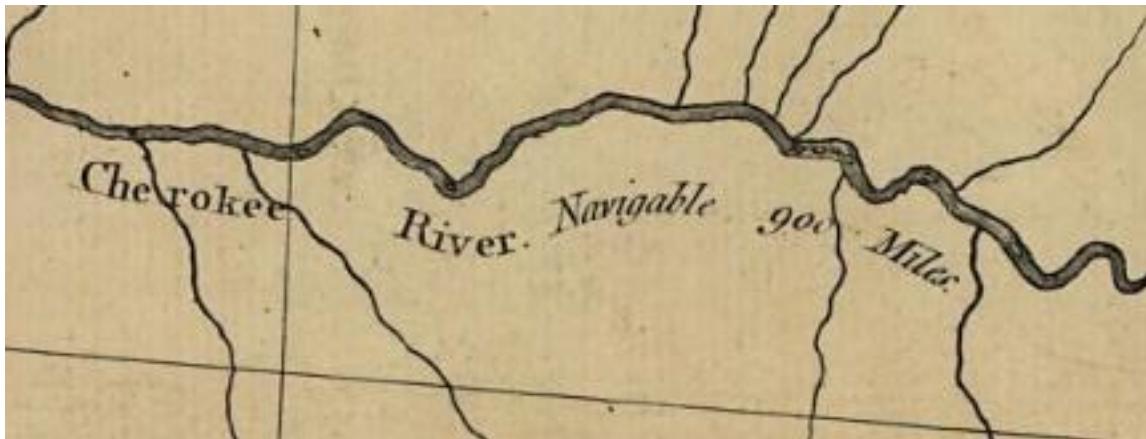
Thomas Nairn's 1711 *Map of South Carolina* uses two of the most common 18th Century names, Cussate and Hockalegie. Nairn is the first to use the latter designation, one that remained in place until at least 1763 under various spellings, the most common being Hogohegee. The name is thought to either be a Yuchi word or to describe the Yuchi people. Nairn's map was produced to push France's southeastern claims further north and west than before and extending England's claim to the Mississippi River. Nairn also is the first to include the Cherokee in East Tennessee by a recognizable name, Cherecie, because of their trade connections with the English in Virginia and the Carolinas. Nairn also seems to be the first to suggest the construction of an English factory, and, while his suggestion appears to be at Muscle Shoals, it is usually at the confluence of the Tennessee and Clinch Rivers when reproduced on maps for the next century. Nairn's information comes from his extensive travels as a trader and government agent.



Figure 6. Thomas Nairn's 1711 Map of South Carolina names the Tennessee River both the Cussate and Hockalegie, depicts the Cherokee in East Tennessee, and places the Chickasaw in West Tennessee. Library of Congress.

By the mid-18th century, the Tennessee River was primarily called the Cherokee River, a name that persisted nearly until Tennessee's statehood. The fact that the British

named the river after the tribe confirms the power that the Cherokees exerted over the region even as more white settlers encroached on their land and the Cherokee population dwindled.



*Figure 7. Excerpt from Thomas Hutchins' 1778 *A new map of the western parts of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina* depicting one of the latest denotations of the Cherokee River. Library of Congress.*

The first mapped instance of the Tennessee River given its permanent name was on John Stuart's 1761 hand-drawn *Sketch of the Cherokee Country*, completed during the Anglo-Cherokee War. The river was named for the Cherokee town Tanasi, a regional capital. The name was given to not only the river, but a Middle Tennessee county when still a part of North Carolina, and eventually the state itself. This is perhaps the most visible legacy of Native influence on Tennessee's geography, since the Anglicized version of a Cherokee place name now appears on every Tennessee state map and map of the United States.



Figure 8. Excerpt from John Stuart's 1761 *Sketch of the Cherokee Country*, first naming the Tennessee River. Norman B. Leventhal Map and Education Center.

Just as in the Virginia Tidewater, European colonizers attempted to remake Tennessee's geography in their image. White colonizers tried to similarly appropriate Native river names in Tennessee. The only Indigenous names that remain for Tennessee's waterways were still owned by Indigenous groups in 1818 or had long since been usurped by white settlers. In Upper East Tennessee the Watauga and Nolichucky rivers retain their Indian names only because white settlers appropriated the names for white settlements. In Lower East Tennessee, many rivers and creeks kept their names because by the time Tennessee's government acquired legal right to them in 1819 and 1835 their Native names were already popularized including the Hiwassee, Tellico, and Ocoee rivers, and a number of their smaller tributaries.



Figure 9. Excerpt of Anthony Finley's 1825 *Tennessee* showing the Hiwassee and Tellico Rivers in Lower East Tennessee. Tennessee State Library and Archives.

Under military pressure, the Chickasaw relinquished their claim to West Tennessee in 1818. Their naming conventions for many of West Tennessee's rivers and creeks remain to this day because of the relatively late cession of land. The Hatchie, Loosahatchie, and Obion rivers still retain their Chickasaw names, as does Nonconnah Creek in Shelby County. The Wolf River, also in Shelby County, was directly translated from the original Chickasaw, Nashoba.

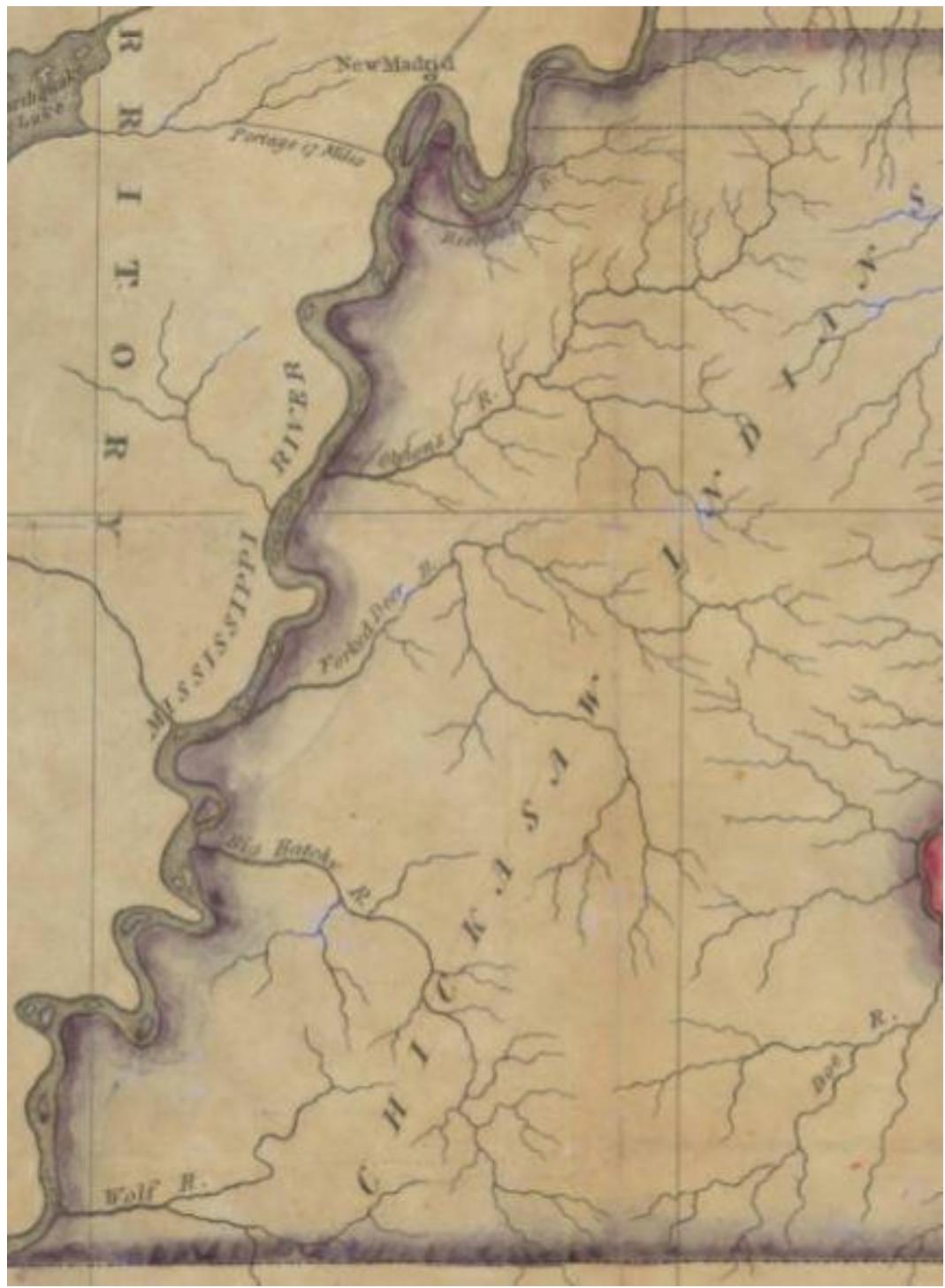


Figure 10. Excerpt from John Melish's 1818 *Map of Tennessee* showing the Wolf, Hatchie, and Obion rivers. Tennessee State Library and Archives.

ROADWAYS

When waterways failed to provide a quick or direct enough route, individuals were forced to travel over land. Presently interstate highways host the majority of overland automobile traffic. These tend to follow older roads, as they were generally the easiest and most direct routes between two points. The great roads Tennesseans traversed in the 18th and 19th centuries include the Virginia Road in East Tennessee; Boone's Trace through the Cumberland Gap; the Emory Road connecting Knoxville and Nashville; the Natchez Trace between Nashville and Natchez, Mississippi (touching the Cumberland, Tennessee, and Mississippi Rivers); the federal road connecting Nashville and Chattanooga; and Charlotte Pike (earlier called Glover's Trace) extending westward from Nashville toward the Tennessee River.

All five of these roads and their later iterations on which we still drive today were already in place at the time of white settlement. Most may have begun as buffalo and large game trails until Native groups carved them out of wilderness hundreds or thousands of years before European colonization and used them for travel, trading, and raiding. The Virginia Road runs from Knoxville into Virginia in East Tennessee, establishing the route that would become Interstates 40 and 81. This road follows the "Great Indian Warpath," connecting the Cherokee (or older Native polity) with the dominant Indian nations in Virginia and continues all the way into New York. The trail through the Cumberland Gap popularly attributed to Daniel Boone, was in use in 1750 when Virginian Dr. Thomas Walker named the gap and surveyed the border between

Kentucky and Tennessee. Walker only found the gap thanks to Indian scouts. The Emory Road between Knoxville and Nashville, an important immigration trail that closely mirrors modern Interstate 40 follows the Cumberland Trace, a path connecting the Overhill Cherokee with Middle Tennessee. It was used either as a hunting trail leading the Cherokee to Middle Tennessee's many salt licks around which animals congregate; a war path to the Shawnee; or a trading path again for the rich furs extracted from Middle Tennessee. The Natchez Trace, earlier called Mountain Leader's Trace, connected the Chickasaw in north Mississippi with Middle Tennessee for similar reasons to the Cherokee's use of the Cumberland Trace. In 1807, Governor John Sevier commissioned a Federal Road to connect Nashville with the Georgia Road in northern Georgia passing through the area that would become Chattanooga. This important thoroughfare overlaps in parts with modern Interstate 24. Early maps call this road Taylor's Trace, but William E. Myer terms it the Cisca and St. Augustine Trail. It connected the Cherokee Valley Towns with Middle Tennessee and, by extension, the Ohio Valley. Glover's Trace, an early path west from Nashville overlapped the "Lower Harpeth and West Tennessee Trail." Native groups most likely used this path once again for trading, hunting, or warring between Middle Tennessee and West Tennessee with a more direct route to the Mississippi River.⁷⁵ All of these thoroughfares appropriated indigenous pathways proving

⁷⁵ William E. Myer. "Indian Trails of the Southeast" from *42nd Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution*. (Washington D.C.: United States Congress. 1928). Toplovich, Ann. "Native American Trails," *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture.*; Longfellow, Rickie "Back in Time: The Cumberland Gap." United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Highway History. <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/back0204.cfm>.

their reliance on existing Native geography and its lasting importance to modern Tennesseans.

SETTLEMENT

Tennessee's modern cities similarly follow paths of Native habitation. Knoxville's white habitation began in 1786, by James White, who illegally squatted on a land grant issued by North Carolina. The Knoxville area is home numerous Woodland period mounds demonstrating Indigenous habitation for at least a millenium, not to mention the contemporary use of the area as hunting grounds by the Overhill Cherokee.

Chattanooga, Tennessee's fourth largest city, rests on land long inhabited by Tennessee's Native residents. Archeological evidence dates the earliest human habitation of the area to at least the early Archaic period, around 10,000 years ago.⁷⁶ The site of Chattanooga more recently was chosen because of the success of Ross's Landing, a ferry crossing spanning the Tennessee River, owned and operated by John Ross. The city of Chattanooga arose because of the river crossing and landing, directly attributable to the Indigenous entrepreneur and Cherokee leader. The landing's location, vital to Chattanooga's placement, also served as the launching point for Cherokee Removal in 1838.⁷⁷ The Native impact on the city remains in its name, Chattanooga, the Muskogean word for Lookout Mountain, a number of mounds that dot the landscape, and a

⁷⁶ "Moccasin Bend Cultural Landscape Report." (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, April 2014); Lawrence, Alexander and R. Bruce Council, "An Archaeological survey of the proposed outdoor drama Amphitheater Site, Moccasin Bend, Chattanooga, Tennessee" (1994).

⁷⁷ Gilbert Govan, "Ross's Landing," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1972).

permanent art exhibit titled “The Passage” that commemorates Chattanooga’s Native people and the Trail of Tears, designed and sculpted by Cherokee artists.

The town of Manchester, Tennessee was established because of the presence of mills built on the Duck River. Early white entrepreneurs built these mills into the side of a stone and earth mound, that they called Old Stone Fort. Early Tennesseans believed this enclosure to be a defensive work created by de Soto, because its sophistication was beyond their comprehension of Native builders’ abilities. Old Stone Fort is actually a Woodland-period ceremonial site (although artifacts date through the early Mississippian period), positioned between forks of the Duck River. It contains an opening that faces exactly toward the rising sun on the summer solstice.⁷⁸ Without the literal groundwork laid by Tennessee’s Native people, the town of Manchester might not exist.

Many of the earliest sites settled by European traders and Virginian longhunters were previously settled and cleared of forest by Native people. Bledsoe’s Station and the town of Castalian Springs are built atop Woodland mounds, evidence of a reasonably-sized settlement. The mound was excavated by antiquarian, Ralph E. W. Earl in 1821, who discovered skeletal remains and funerary objects.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Willard S. Bacon. "Factors in Siting a Middle Woodland Enclosure in Middle Tennessee." *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 18, no. 2 (1993): 245-81.

⁷⁹Letter from Ralph E. W. Earl to John Haywood, October 13, 1821. Andrew Jackson Collection. Tennessee State Library and Archives.



Figure 11. Sketch of mound excavated by Ralph Earl at Bledsoe's Lick. Andrew Jackson Collection.
Tennessee State Library and Archives

Nearby, the city of Nashville exists in its current location because of the French Lick, a salt lick just off the Cumberland River. This salt lick attracted wild game which attracted Woodland period Native hunters and later the Shawnee. Evidence of Woodland inhabitance lies in a mound, excavated by Earl in 1820. The mound was significant to the white settlement of Tennessee as one of the first French fur traders, Jean de Charleville, built a trading depot on the mound secure in the knowledge that the Shawnee, a French ally, inhabited and controlled the area.⁸⁰ This mound was so prominent that on the earliest local map to show the city of Nashville, the mound is included. Its importance was such that it was not named, only referred to as “the Mount.” The surveyor also denoted the French Lick nearby.

⁸⁰ J. G. M. Ramsey. *The Annals of Tennessee History to the End of the Eighteenth Century*. (Charleston, SC: John Russell, 1853), 45.; John Haywood. *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee*. (Nashville, TN: George Wilson), 145.

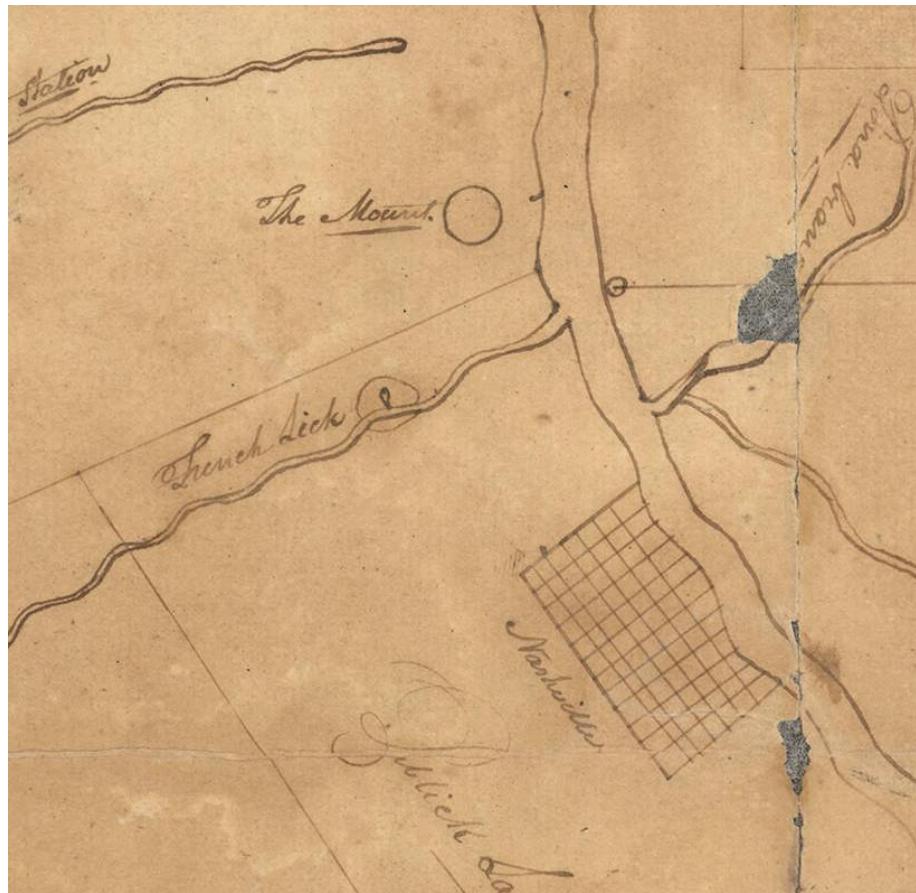


Figure 12. Excerpt from David McGavock's 1786 "Sketch of plantations along Cumberland River."

Tennessee Historical Society.

NATIVE FOODWAYS

The first white longhunters settled in Tennessee in search of economic prosperity. Their survival and success was dependent upon Native trade and Native crops. The plant *hydrophyllum virginianum*, or Virginia waterleaf, is colloquially known as Shawnee salad, as some of the plant is edible. John Donelson noted that this plant was consumed on their journey to colonize Middle Tennessee in 1780. Its name might be a reference to

the people who taught English colonials its edibility, or at least a reference to the lasting influence of the Shawnee people.⁸¹ Even the first large-scale white settlement at Watauga traded furs, but also grew corn, potatoes, and tobacco, all native to the Americas, carefully cultivated over thousands of years to produce the desired varietal. The Cherokee were adept corn growers and harbored early European traders for months or years on end.⁸² James Adair, one such European trader, documented the corn varietals the Cherokee had cultivated: a small “Indian corn”, a “hommony-corn,” and a larger “bread-corn.”⁸³ In addition to corn, Cherokees grew pumpkin, potatoes, beans, and tobacco, demonstrating that the diets of early white settlers at Watauga were dependent upon Native agriculture.⁸⁴ Corn and tobacco remain vital agricultural exports to this day amounting to roughly \$636 million and \$78 million in 2019.⁸⁵

French fur traders sailed up and down the Mississippi and through the Ohio Valley into Middle Tennessee to the salt licks that attracted fur-bearing game. The Cherokee easily adopted European domesticated animals, specifically the hog.⁸⁶ These salt licks were well-known to the Indigenous peoples of Tennessee as archaeological evidence of ancient roads led to and from the sulphuric springs.

⁸¹ John Donelson Journal, March 29, Tennessee Historical Society Miscellaneous Collections, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

⁸² Arnow, Harriette Simpson. *Seedtime on the Cumberland*. (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 189-218.; Barksdale, Kevin T. "Land of the Franks: The Backcountry Economy of Upper East Tennessee." In *The Lost State of Franklin: America's First Secession*, 18-35. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009).

⁸³ James Adair. *Adair's History of the American Indians*. Ed. by Samuel Cole Williams (Johnson City, TN: Watauga Press, 1930), 437.

⁸⁴ “Report of the Journey of the Brethren Abraham Steiner and Frederick C. De Schweinitz to the Cherokees and the Cumberland Settlements (1799)” in *Early Travels in Tennessee Country*, ed. Samuel Cole Williams. (Johnson City, TN: The Watauga Press, 1928).

⁸⁵ According to the United States Department of Agriculture, www.nass.usda.gov

⁸⁶ Adair. *Adair's History of the American Indians*, 436.

CARTOGRAPHY

In the American Southeast, and within the present bounds of Tennessee in particular, varying types of Native cartography have been noted. An example that is representative of the cartography of Native Tennesseans but lies outside the present state borders is Alexandre de Batz's copy of a Chickasaw-drawn map of a cluster of their towns in Mississippi. The map depicts the settlements as circles of varying size, connected by lines that demonstrate relationships between towns. This map combines Native social projection with geographical accuracy, as it has been used successfully to find archaeological sites of the named villages.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Lewis, *Cartographic Encounters*, 207-215

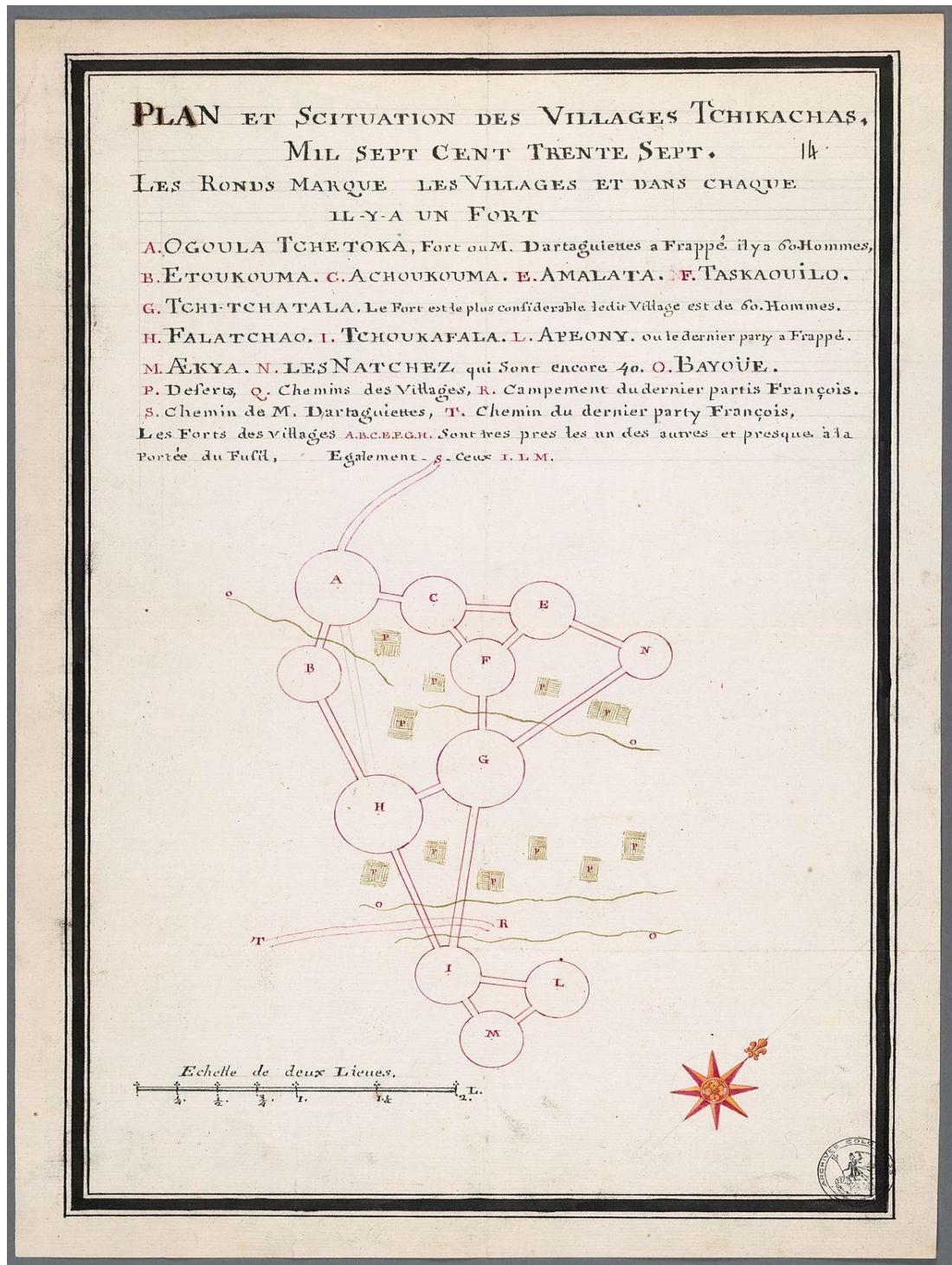


Figure 13. Plan et Scituacion des Villages Tchikachas (Plan and Situation of the Chickasaw Villages),
 Alexandre de Batz, 1737. Courtesy of the Archives de Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence.

Indigenous maps that include the area of present-day Tennessee exist as well. Perhaps the most famous is the map drawn by a Chickasaw headman which combines the circle feature with another distinct Native American cartographic feature, the lack of delineation between land and water routes. The map is also quite remarkable for the sheer scale of what it represents, covering the American southeast from Texas to Florida and going as far north as New York. Historian Gregory Waselkov suggested that this probably reflects the “collective knowledge” of the Chickasaw.⁸⁸ This point just reinforces the extent of their trade networks as well as the high regard with which North America’s Native peoples held geography, that the accumulation of the nation’s geographical knowledge could only be held by the political elite. These maps also demonstrate Mundy’s idea of social projection. They did not seek to topographically recreate North America to scale, instead showing social and political relationships, not unlike medieval European maps. Groups with which the Chickasaw have stable political and trade relationships with are connected to their social circle with a line. Those who perhaps used to maintain amiable relationships but do no longer have lines running between them that do not fully connect with the Chickasaw circle of power. If one wanted an example of what a Native map of Tennessee might look like, this is the proof. It is probably the most important Indigenous source for studying Tennessee’s Native geography and cartography.

⁸⁸ Gregory Waselkov. “Indian Maps of the Colonial Southeast” in Gregory Waselkov, Peter H. Wood, and Tom Hatley ed. *Powhatan’s Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*. (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2006) 444.

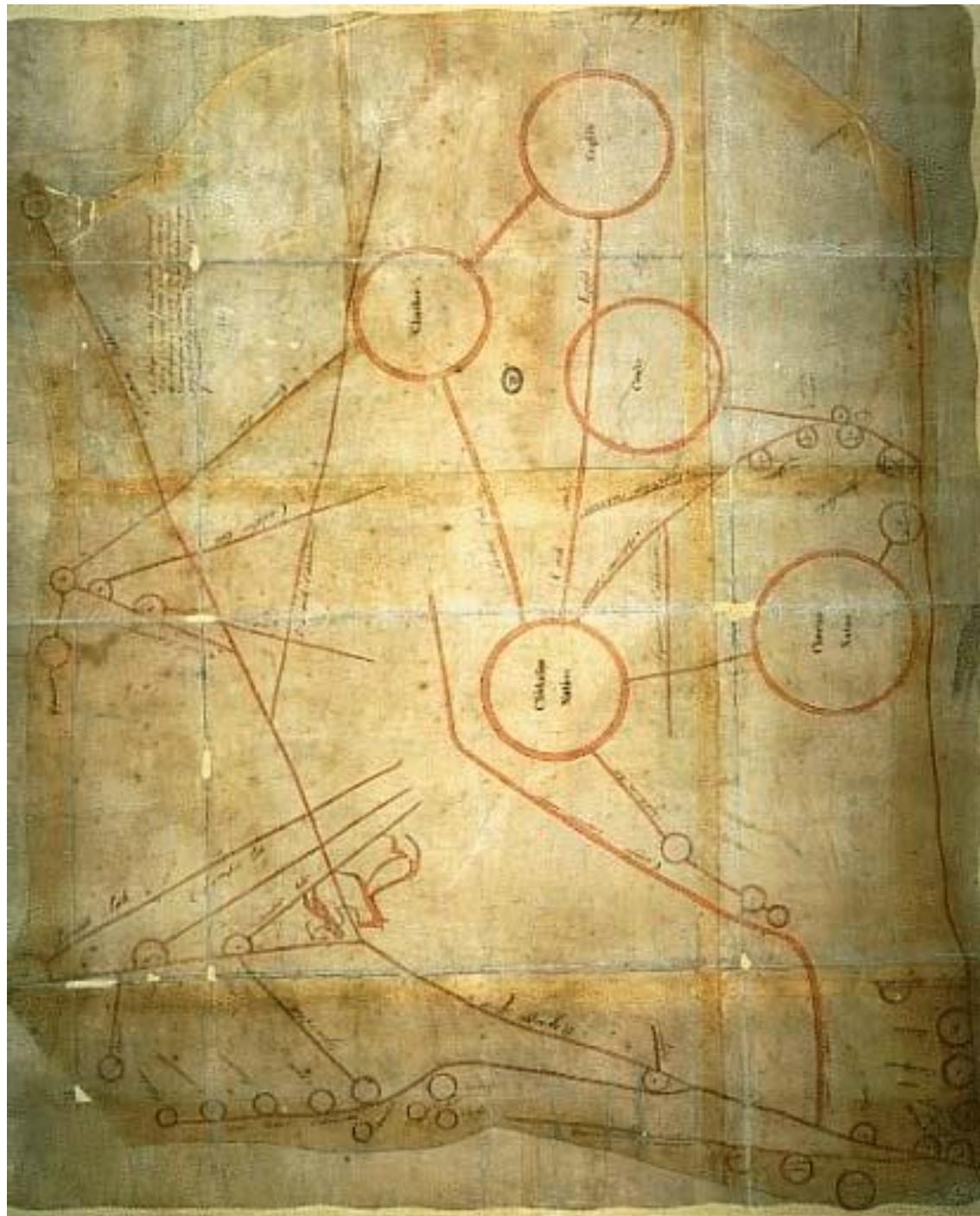


Figure 14. "A Map describing the situation of several Nations of Indians between South Carolina and the Massisipi ..." Courtesy of the Public Record Office, London [CO 700/6(2)]

The two maps look remarkably similar, which, considering both were originally drafted by Chickasaw cartographers, may not be so remarkable after all. However, this same construct is visible on a map completed in 1721 from an original given to Francis Nicholson, the colonial governor of South Carolina by a Catawba delegation. Notice how Native communities are once again symbolized with circles while lines representing relationships connect them. These two nations are separated by hundreds of miles and the Appalachian Mountains, not to mention the large number of examples from all across North America where this geographical representation is duplicated. The Catawba obviously view Europeans differently from themselves or even other Indigenous peoples and that is reflected in their depiction as rectangles rather than circles. The difference in the appearance of European settlements could also be a reflection of built space. The Catawba had knowledge of Charleston's street grid evidenced by the grid-like depiction of the town. Virginia's rectangular structure could be a representation of village, town, or building shape contrasted against that of the Native polities of the region.



Figure 15. "Map of the several nations of Indians to the Northwest of South Carolina." Francis Nicholson (Contributor), c. 1721. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

Indigenous mapping of Tennessee occurred not only in the traditional sense of creating a physical map but also as a means of self-identification. In the Cherokee Constitution, written by committee in 1827, the Cherokee leaders delineated the borders of the Cherokee Nation. This “metes and bounds” description of the Nation’s geographical extent displayed a complex version of resistance to colonization.⁸⁹ The Constitution describes the Cherokee Nation’s boundaries as:

Beginning on the north bank of Tennessee River at the upper part of the Chickasaw Old Fields thence along the main Channel of said River including all the islands therein to the mouth of Highwassee River thence up the main channel of said river including Islands to the first Hill which closes in on said river about two miles above highwassee Old Town thence along the ridge which divides the waters of the highwassee Little Tellico, to the Tennessee river at Tallasee thence along the main channel including Islands to the junction of Cowee & Nanteyalee thence along the ridge in the fork of said river to the top of the blue ridge, thence along the blue ridge to the Unicoy Turnpike road thence a straight line to the nearest main source of the Chestatee; thence along its main channel, including Islands to the Chatahoochie and thence down the same to the Creek boundary at Buzzard roost; thence along the boundary line which separates this and the Creek Nation, to a point on the Coosa river opposite the mouth of Wills Creek thence down along the South Bank of the same to a point, opposite Fort Strother thence up the river to the mouth of Wills Creek, thence up along the east Bank of said Creek to the west branch, thereof and up the same to its source & thence along the ridge which separates the Tombigby & Tennessee waters, to a point on top of said ridge thence a due north Course to Camp Coffee, on Tennessee which is opposite the Chickasaw Island, thence to a place of beginning

The Cherokee utilized one of the most potent forms of colonization, the commodification and parcelling of land, to declare their independence and separation

⁸⁹ The term “metes and bounds” refers to a surveying technique employed by Europeans and later Americans. Characterized by using physical landmarks to describe a plot of land, this system was utilized by North Carolina and later Tennessee surveyors to parcel land.

from the United States.⁹⁰ The fact that they did so in their Constitution, a foundational document, impresses the importance and brazenness of this resistance to American rule. One notes the number of Native places names within this description nearly all of which remain today.

Native peoples' most common and widespread contribution to mapping early America is in the role of guiding surveyors and "explorers." When Georgians surveyed the boundary between themselves and the Creeks in the early 19th century, they began to stray from what the Creeks believed to be the true line. The arrogant surveyors, certain that their scientific instruments must have been correct, argued. It turns out that an underground iron ore deposit played with the surveyor's compass altering the true direction of the survey line, proving the Creeks correct.⁹¹ The towns of Wanchese and Manteo, North Carolina are both named for Native leaders and guides. When John Donelson and over one hundred fellow Watauga settlers traveled down the Tennessee River to colonize Middle Tennessee at the Cumberland Settlements, Chickamauga Cherokees guided them through portions of treacherous water in southeast Tennessee.⁹²

Many of the principles previously discussed in regard to native contributions to the mapping of Tennessee are visible in the surveying of the Hiwassee District. The Cherokee Treaty of 1819, just one in a series of treaties between the Cherokee to the

⁹⁰ For more on commodification of the landscape enabling settler colonialism see Adam Dahl. *Empire of the People: Settler Colonialism and the Foundations of Modern Democratic Thought*. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2018).

⁹¹ Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, 94.

⁹² John Donelson Journal, Tennessee Historical Society Miscellaneous Collections, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

United States, redrew Tennessee's frontier borders. This penultimate treaty ceded roughly 1.5 million acres within Tennessee to the federal government.⁹³ In East Tennessee a large portion of this cession was called the Hiwassee District. This territory, bound by the Little Tennessee and Hiwassee rivers to the north and south, consisted of an estimated one million acres.⁹⁴ In addition to the land cession, the treaty provided the Cherokee a choice of either emigration to the Arkansas Territory or accepting a path to citizenship by receiving a 640 acre reservation within the Hiwassee District.

Robert Armstrong was chosen as the surveyor for the treaty and was tasked with mapping Tennessee's newest territory. On May 22, 1819, Robert Armstrong, Robert Houston, a treaty commissioner and Armstrong's relative, and their convoy departed Knoxville for Hiwassee Old Town, also called Great Hiwassee. The journey through the East Tennessee foothills took three days by road. Led only by Cherokee guides and river pilots, the group spent the next year and a half traveling across the newly annexed expanse of land readying it for sale to white Tennesseans.⁹⁵

Armstrong relied on guides to traverse and survey the area, in this instance two Cherokee men named Old Crow and Tumestooby. The hand-drawn map Armstrong produced as the official survey of the Hiwassee District contains information gathered from Native sources in addition to Armstrong's first-hand experience. In the upper left

⁹³ Report to the Tennessee General Assembly on Indian land cessions. RG 60. Miscellaneous Reports, Oversize Box. Tennessee State Library and Archives

⁹⁴ *Map of the Cherokee Country*. Grace Armstrong Coile Collection. Tennessee State Library and Archives

⁹⁵ Grace Armstrong Coile Collection of Robert Armstrong Papers, 1790-1930, Tennessee Historical Society.

portion of the map he enumerated the number of Cherokee living in a certain area as “supposed to contain two thousand souls great and small.”⁹⁶ This sounds more like second-hand information from someone who might have greater knowledge, probably one of his guides or one of the Cherokee commissioners with whom Armstrong and Houston met at Hiwassee Old Town.

⁹⁶ “Survey Map of Cherokee Country (ca. 1819), covering parts of eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina,” Tennessee Historical Society

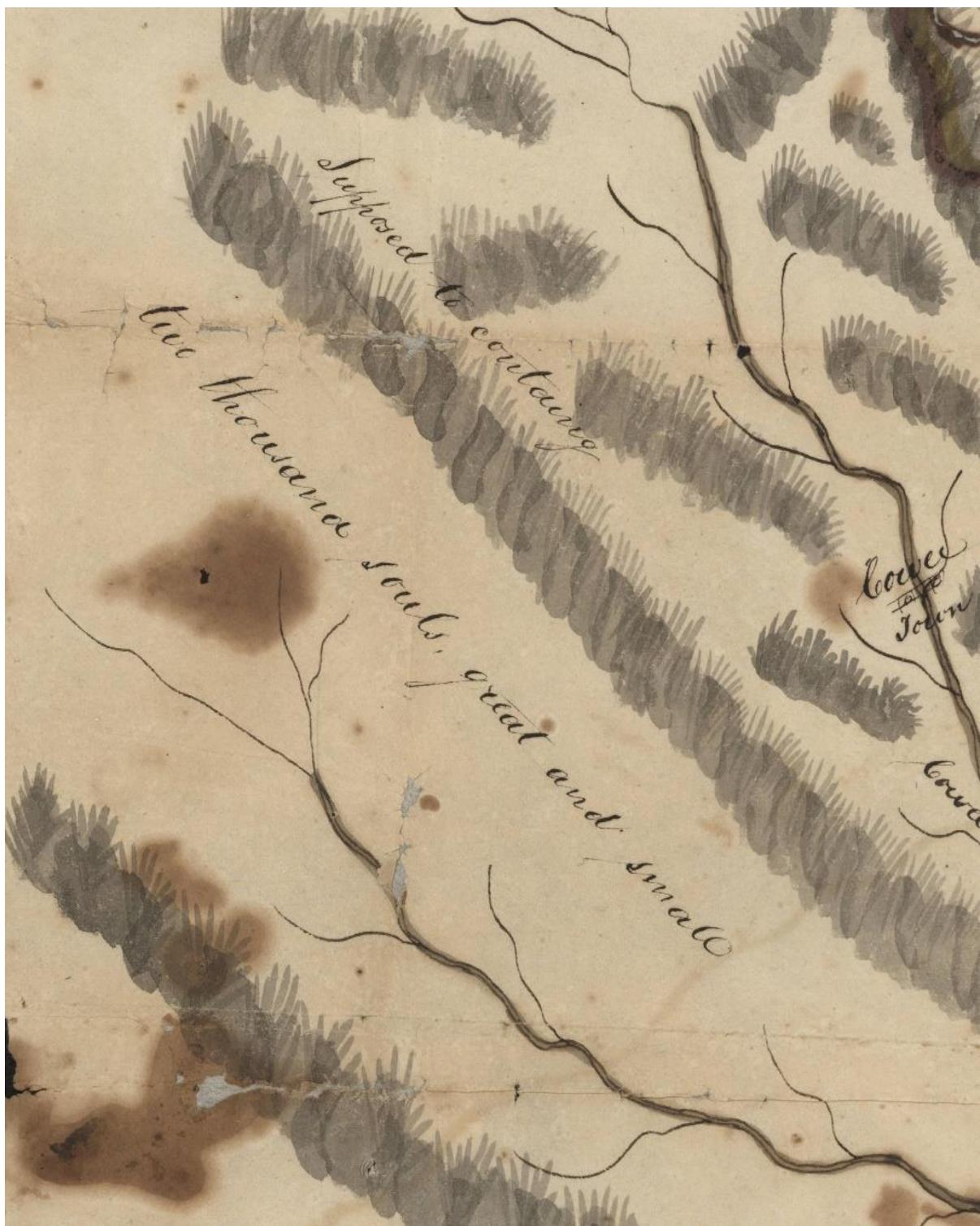


Figure 16. Excerpt from Robert Armstrong's "Survey Map of Cherokee Country (ca. 1819), covering parts of eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina," Tennessee State Library and Archives.

CONCLUSION

It is reductive to think of Tennessee's geography and settlement from a purely European perspective. It erases the thousands of years of Indigenous influence on the state's landscape and history. Much of the state's geography has Native roots as it was easier for early white settlers to appropriate than create. So much of what makes up the state's geography was usurped and its origins obscured including Native crops, roads, waterways, and settlements. Tennesseans do not usually think of the geography of the state as Native, but this thesis shows that white settlement clearly followed Native precedents. This is generally due to the history education provided in Tennessee from school textbooks, museums, and archives. Their presentation of white settlement is often separate from, rather than a continuation of, discussions of Indigenous history.

CHAPTER FOUR: HOW TO INTERPRET NATIVE GEOGRAPHY

American museums and other cultural institutions have a long history of problematically interpreting Native Americans and their history. Many perpetuate colonization by presenting physical and documentary evidence used, collected, and preserved by colonizers. Public history professionals can and should “decolonize” their institutions to present a more holistic and inclusive interpretation of the past. Historian Amy Lonetree defined decolonization as the practice of providing public awareness of the “hard truths of colonialism and thereby creating spaces for healing and understanding.”⁹⁷ Attempts at decolonizing museums include moving the exhibition of Native history from natural to human history, collaboration and cooperation with Native people to interpret their own history, present Native viewpoints of colonization instead of a purely European perspective, and acknowledging Native influences on American culture. Decolonization also means discussing Native history beyond pre-contact and colonization, and failing to do so perpetuates the myth of the “vanishing Indian” discussed in Chapter Two to the public. This chapter includes a number of wrongs practiced by Tennessee public history institutions and concrete ways to decolonize and rectify those wrongs using the research into Native influences presented in this thesis.

One of the longest running stereotypes perpetuated in museums, popular films, archives, and textbooks, is of the ecological Indian, that Indigenous North Americans lived in harmony with the natural world, passengers or reactive agents letting the

⁹⁷ Amy Lonetree. *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

landscape dictate their actions. This harmful trope previously allowed anthropologists and historians to shunt Native Americans to natural history museums, rather than including them with the rest of humankind in typical historical institutions. It is also verifiably false. Yes, geography and soil quality informed Native settlement patterns, as they have for all of humanity, but Indigenous Southerners transformed their surroundings to suit their needs. White settlers essentially continued Native settlement patterns, especially after Cherokee Removal in East Tennessee. Cherokee villages became white towns, Native fields became white farms, and trading paths became wagon roads.⁹⁸ While Indigenous North Americans settled near rivers and creeks because of the superior soil, they landscaped the valleys to benefit themselves. Floodplains nearest the waterways became farmland, while they terraced the hillsides above with housing. Southeastern Indians burned forests to kill insects and encourage the growth of berries, fruit, and herbs. They both consumed this flora and hunted the game that foraged from it. Women, in addition to producing most of the farm labor, maintained oak and hickory stands. Native men altered rivers with weirs to harvest more fish and set forest fires to roust game. They often over farmed soil which forced them to let it lie fallow for a period of time to recover, sometimes appearing on early maps as “old fields.”⁹⁹ Their impact on the environment was demonstrably significant enough to justify an end to the myth that Native Americans were a part of their natural world.

⁹⁸ "Cherokee Settlement." In *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 2: Geography*, edited by Pillsbury, Richard, by Wilson Charles Reagan, (University of North Carolina Press, 2006.), 161-63.

⁹⁹ Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 54-56; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 65.

Another tool historically used by cultural institutions to minimize and erase Native history is the intentional segregation of prehistory and history. This was especially prevalent in archaeology, until Kent Lightfoot and others advocated for a continuous view in an effort to recognize post-colonial culture change with precolonial roots, but more importantly to limit the primacy of written documents over archaeological remains, which inherently centers Euro-Americans.¹⁰⁰ The binary choice between prehistory and history mirrors the binary offered by early museums of “civilized” history versus “primitive” “natural history” that often separated white and Native histories. Antiquarians and curators originally created museums to display an “evolutionary narrative” of Western progress adjacent to the apparent lack of progress made by Native peoples. This also allowed them to present Indigenous human remains and funerary objects alongside animal fossils without doing so with the remains of Europeans and without considering how that affected Native descendants. Museums have consistently presented Native history and culture but disallowed Indigenous persons to interpret their own culture.¹⁰¹ Institutions such as archives and museums are based on European cultural practices and therefore inherently “privileg[e] the material over the spiritual and the scientific over the religious.” They normalize Western Culture and thought and marginalize other cultures.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Kent G. Lightfoot. "Culture Contact Studies: Redefining the Relationship between Prehistoric and Historical Archaeology." *American Antiquity* 60, no. 2 (1995): 199-217.

¹⁰¹ Susan Sleeper-Smith. *Contesting Knowledge : Museums and Indigenous Perspectives*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 2.

¹⁰² Claire Smith and Hans Martin Wobst. *Indigenous Archaeologies : Decolonising Theory and Practice. One World Archaeology*. (London: Routledge, 2005), 4.

Native contributions to early America have been systematically erased and belittled. This erasure is visible even in supposed scientific undertakings such as cartography. Indigenous contributions to colonial maps and geography was invaluable. They were not passengers on their own land, but explored and transformed it to suit their needs. They assigned physical features with spiritual importance to reflect the value they placed on their land and their home. Indian guides led Europeans down rivers, through forests, and over mountains to connect themselves to valuable trade goods that might increase their personal or tribal prestige. If crossed or to proactively prevent a rival from gaining a competitive advantage, some misdirected, misguided, and deceived their European counterparts. Native maps reflected Native values of community, communication, and social relationships but also pressed for tribal and personal power. Understanding Indigenous geography is vital to decolonizing early American maps.

Europeans lauded themselves on their accuracy and exactness while belittling Native cartographers for not conforming to their set of rules governing accuracy. Many 18th century European map makers titled their works “new and accurate” or “new and correct,” promising patrons their maps were the best available. This, of course, assumes that the European method is “correct.” But is not the most correct map the one that fulfills its purpose, not necessarily the one that represents the surface of the earth in two dimensions the most closely? Even today, not all modern maps reflect geometric principles

Institutions necessarily highlight material in their collections when preparing public exhibits. Most institutions, especially the ones in Tennessee such as the Tennessee

State Museum, Tennessee Historical Society, and Tennessee State Library and Archives, were historically run by white elites who collected the stories of other white elites. This practice effectively erased the past of non-whites and non-elites, even today, as their stories were not preserved.¹⁰³ This should not be used as an excuse to center their interpretation around white European-American viewpoints, especially in regard to treaties between colonial governments and Native polities, the United States and Native peoples, or white-Indigenous relations in general. Indigenous points of view matter. White-centered interpretation further distances museum goers and schoolchildren from the Native experience and further cements colonization.

MUSEUMS

Museums are trusted places where communities can visit and experience history firsthand. They can also be important sites for interpreting a complete and complex history for both young and old visitors. Many present museums remain hampered by past collection practices in which wealthy white collectors sought out items from wealthy white friends and acquaintances. Collectors chose to preserve these items because it fit in with their idea of what histories mattered, those of history's "great men," typically political or military leaders, which for most of America's history were exclusively white and overwhelmingly wealthy. For many years, the Tennessee State Museum's exhibits presented a woefully outdated, fairly narrow view of the state's history, but in 2018 the

¹⁰³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995)

state funded a new building in which they could reimagine the interpretation of their collections.

The Tennessee State Museum's new building necessitated new exhibits which represent a marked improvement over their previous interpretation of Native history. Their exhibits are arranged chronologically. Even with improved exhibits, the museum continues to practice many of the problematic interpretations discussed above. Much of Native history, primarily pre-contact history is exhibited with other natural history elements including fossil remains. This reinforces both the "vanishing Indian" myth and the "ecological Indian" myth by implying Native culture is "fossilized" and that they should be included in the history with other plants and animals. Part of this is due to their chronological setup and that Native people occupy a huge timeframe of Tennessee's history prior to European arrival. This section is much more artfully interpreted than its previous iteration. Native cultures and societies are discussed, they are not lumped into one section, and the museum rid the exhibit of the distasteful, if not derogatory, dioramas of Indigenous Tennesseans. However, the area could be improved by explicitly demarcating the switch between natural and human history. Post-contact Native history is also much improved. Inclusion of Native culture, art, and technology are displayed alongside their white counterparts, although discussion of Native peoples ends entirely with the year 1838, the year of removal. This is vital in interpreting Native history in Tennessee; settlement history should not only discuss white settler colonists but the Native people who taught them what and how to plant, whose roads they traversed, and whose towns they coopted. The museum should have more in their collections from

modern Native peoples, as plenty still reside in the state. Their interactive exhibit on Indian Treaties is perhaps the most problematic portion of their interpretation of Native history. It presents the treaties as a continuous and agreeable cession of land, and is interpreted almost entirely from the American point of view. This could be improved by including a side-by-side interpretation with the Native perspective on each treaty as is practiced in the National Museum of the American Indian.

The first and most important step in decolonizing museums, archives, and school textbooks in Tennessee as it specifically relates to the mapping of Tennessee and Native cartography is the inclusion of Native voices. Speak to Cherokee, Chickasaw, Shawnee, and Yuchi people today. Let them interpret Native and colonial maps and include that interpretation for the public's benefit. This is putting into practice the public history principle of "shared authority." Museum administration can even do better than cooperation and conversations with Native people, they could hire them to work in the museum to interpret collections and educate the public. Museums displaying colonial era maps must include context of Native erasure or instances of Native contributions or they are furthering the colonial aims of the publisher. Amy Lonetree outlined three examples of centering Native voices in museum exhibits in *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. These include collaboration and cooperation with and at tribal museums, specifically at the Mille Lacs Indian Museum,

the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, and the National Museum of the American Indian.¹⁰⁴

ARCHIVES

Archives, like museums, were built upon white supremacy. Wealthy white patrons, donors, and collectors contributed to create and build the collections, preserving their idea of history. While this cannot be undone, there are steps archives can take to mitigate the erasure of minority history. Archives should, like museums, begin dialogues with Native communities. Native people still reside in the state and should be consulted when interpreting their history. Larger archives with more employees and resources could conduct community-driven digitization projects highlighting Native histories, complete with Native interpretations. Archivists and librarians writing metadata for digital collections or interpretive panels for physical exhibits should consult this thesis and its appendices for suggestions of how to recognize and properly attribute Native cartography when interpreting colonial-era maps. Not only must archivists acknowledge Native contributions to mapping Tennessee, but context must be given to maps that sought to erase Native people from the landscape and maps that pushed colonization on Tennessee's Native population. Metadata can be a great way to properly contextualize a document or map, but to accurately recognize Native contributions to colonial maps, one must move beyond data compilations that many libraries use. For instance, a map that displays obvious signs of Native cartography such as circular settlements, social

¹⁰⁴ Amy Lonetree. *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

projection, or enumerated peoples (for example, the 1721 Catawba map, *Figure 15* in Chapter 3), institutions should consider including Indigenous people as contributors in the metadata. The Library of Congress includes Indian Mapping as a subject heading in their linked data service, this subject heading must be applied when instances of Native cartography or contribution are present. Cartographers who drafted maps for the express purpose of colonization and Native erasure need to be contextualized, and the erasure explained. Archives should also consult travelers' guides and journals for instances of Native guides especially when discussing exploration and early settlement to prevent the erasure of Native contributions to both. Like museums, archivists interpreting Tennessee settlement must include Native contributions to agriculture, transportation, and settlement patterns. Archives should also hire Indigenous people not just in interpretation and metadata-writing positions but management where their perspectives could change institutions from within. Archives often receive less exposure to broader audiences than museums or historic homes, but their materials provide primary source documentation to researchers and for educational programs used in schools.

TEXTBOOKS

Children often first encounter history through their school textbooks. The teaching of an inclusive history within textbooks is a vital step to decolonizing history at large. If children interact with Native voices and viewpoints from a young age, the burden of decolonization that currently rests with museums, archives, and public history professionals might be lessened in the future. Tennessee history is taught in the state's public schools in the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 8th grades.

Recent changes to Tennessee's social studies standards have improved the study of Native people. By the second grade, kids are expected to know the significance of Sequoyah, the Cherokee linguist who devised the Cherokee syllabary and language. Geography education, a standard that begins in the first grade, continues through until the 5th grade, but focuses on Tennessee in the 3rd grade. Tennessee geography is framed in the present, around major cities, rivers, and mountain ranges. There are standards for the differences between regional Native people, contributions of early explorers, and how Indian cultures changed as a result of contact. The state could benefit from introducing the Cherokee in East Tennessee, as children would already be familiar with Sequoyah. While Native history education has improved, the focus still seems to be on how Europeans affected Native peoples with any regard to how Europeans and European settlement was affected by Indigenous North Americans.

In the 5th grade, students spend half of their social studies year focusing on Tennessee history. In 2019, the state commissioned and published a new textbook for 5th grade social studies, half of which is devoted to Tennessee history. The textbook is a vast improvement over elementary education of the past. It delineates the differences between Paleo, Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian cultures. The text even dedicates separate sections for each tribe that resided in Tennessee the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek, Shawnee, and Yuchi. The textbook does a number of things correctly: it specifically mentions that some Cherokee remain in Tennessee and North Carolina; it discusses Native views on land ownership; it asks students to consider Native viewpoints. The only historical maps presented in the text are of white European and American origin, thus it

could be beneficial to include the 1723 Chickasaw map (*Figure 14* in Chapter 3) and discuss how and why it differs from the geography students studied in earlier grades to further consider Native viewpoints. Coupling this with a brief explanation of the importance of community in Native societies would give students a perspective into a non-white experience. The term explorer is reserved exclusively for Europeans and Euro-Americans, so examples of Indigenous explorers would help provide equity to this narrative. Overall, this new textbook is an excellent example of what 5th graders should be learning in regard to Native history.¹⁰⁵

CONCLUSION

Public history institutions need to exert more effort and thought into their interpretation of Native history and particularly Native geography and cartography. If an institution displays a colonial-era map, they should have an expert, or someone trained in Native cartography review both the map and the interpretive text to ensure the institution is not perpetuating Native stereotypes and erasing Native history. The cartographic examples presented in this thesis offer some opportunities to improve upon current interpretive practices specifically related to the Indigenous contributions to the mapping of Tennessee and demonstrate that Tennessee's geography is highly influenced by Native precedents. Museums should open dialogues with members of Native communities and listen to how Native people wish their stories to be told. Archives must provide context alongside colonial-era maps in both digital collections and physical interpretation to reverse colonial erasure of Native contributions to Tennessee's mapping as well as help

¹⁰⁵ *Tennessee Through Time*. (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith Education, 2019).

visitors understand how these items were used to perpetuate the aims of colonization in an effort to mitigate that colonization in the present. Textbooks and educators must continue to push students to consider Indigenous viewpoints, teach Native history at an early age, and strive to improve in the teaching of geography, especially Tennessee and North American geography, by expanding its scope to include some Indigenous cartographic traditions and examples presented in this thesis.

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