

OUR THREATENED HERITAGE

In the last ten years western North Carolina has experienced a 150 percent increase in land development. Our farmlands and woodlands are being developed at the rate of 277 acres per day. Our open spaces and beautiful mountains are being covered with second homes, subdivisions, and shopping malls due to a lack of balanced and responsible zoning regulations.

This alarming trend is not confined to Macon and surrounding counties. America at large is losing two acres of farmland every minute to urban sprawl and development. This is not only decimating our agricultural food base and ability to produce food locally, it is wiping away thousands of years of Native American history. Most of our remaining cultural and historical sites are found on private farmland and woodlands.

Along with this loss of family farms, wildlife habitats and natural stands of rivercane along riverbanks are increasingly being eradicated and fragmented by new vacation cabins and travel trailer parks. This rate of development is irresponsible, unsustainable and detrimental to our quality of life today and especially for our children and grandchildren.

We cannot stop development but we can do it better. By identifying our most important natural and cultural places, we can build with nature in mind. As a private landowner, you can manage your farm and conserve your land to protect wildlife, maintain a healthy and clean environment, and preserve Native American sites.



This painting by Greg Horak of the Town of Toqua on the Little Tennessee River in the 16th Century is based on archaeological excavations. The palisade was made of wood and clay. This town was occupied until the late 1700s.

Photo taken at Fort Loudon State Historical Area, TN.

Preserving Your Land Preserves Your Heritage What you can do:

Managing your land is your business and what you do to protect cultural sites is up to you. The stewardship we promote is strictly voluntary. If you know of specific cultural sites on your land, you can contact us to learn more about how you can preserve your cultural resources. We are non-profit and there is no cost. Our work with you and information regarding the sites on your land will be kept strictly confidential.

Acknowledgements & Thanks:

Bill Evans, Land Trust for the Little Tennessee, Bill Dyar, Sam Greenwood, Nikwasi Foundation, Myrtle Driver, Bob Simpson, Lamar Marshall and Wild South, Dr. Brett Riggs, Paul Webb, Tasha Benyshek, Dr. Michael Trinkley, Josh Pope, Justin Setser, The Macon County Mapping Office, The Town Of Franklin, Rodney Snedeker and the U.S. Forest Service, Cherokee Preservation Foundation, Russell Townsend and the Cherokee Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Dr. Anne Rogers and Dr. Robert Conley of Western Carolina University.
Graphic design by Lamar Marshall

The Native American Cultural Sites Preservation Project



Nikwasi Mound

Courtesy of the Macon County Historical Society

“Preserving the Past for the Future”

VTGΩJ DhBΘω TGΘP h.J
Zp ΘΘSOW?

“Look around the Carolina mountains and nearby. You can see where the Cherokees lived. However, construction of buildings and roads are destroying these sites. They are destroying farmland where food for everyone is grown. The photos show where the Cherokees lived and where they came from. It is everyone’s responsibility to preserve what the Creator gave us.”



Reproduction of a late 1700s Cherokee house made of wood and clay daubing. Note the rivercane behind the house on the river bank. Rivercane, one of the most important natural resources to the Cherokee, was once abundant along most western North Carolina streams.



“Our mission is to assist private landowners in the identification and protection of Native American cultural resources located on their private property and to provide them with options for voluntary preservation through conservation easements and other measures that would protect these important sites for future generations.”

For more information contact:
The Native American Cultural Sites Preservation Project
Call: 828.349.3773 or 828.371.5116
Email: rke1945@yahoo.com



Cultural Resources



Painting of Cherokee Syacust Ukah (presumably Ostenaco) by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1762

What Are Native American Cultural Sites and Resources?

Cultural resources are historical or prehistorical remains of man-made objects or alterations in the landscape. Macon County and western North Carolina was home to the Cherokee Indians for more than a thousand years. Their history is recorded in places represented by mounds, campsites, mortars and nutting stones, old trail remnants, old-growth trees that were used for boundaries, council places or trail markers, fishing weirs and other artifacts.

Most of these sites are on private property where their protection lies in the hands of private landowners. The state and federal government does not restrict or infringe on the rights of private landowners in regard to these sites unless they are cemeteries or human burials.

It has been our experience that most private landowners are proud to be stewards of our nation's farmlands, forests, and natural and historical resources. They want to see their family farms and forestlands left intact with the rich history that is found there. Many families take measures to insure that the land will be preserved as countryside or farmland through conservation easements, which permanently protect land against urban sprawl or other destructive activities.

The first step in historical stewardship is knowing what cultural resources are and working the land with that awareness. The following are some historical features that you, as a landowner, might find on your property.

Examples of Cultural Resources



A mound located on private property in Macon County



Left: Mortar stones and nutting stones were used to grind seeds, chestnuts, acorns, and grains. The grinding holes are also known as cupules.
Below: Rock art in shelter shows serpents and turkey tracks



Fish weirs are located in many public waters. They are shaped like a "V" with an opening in the downstream point where baskets or fish traps were used to collect fish.



Bluff shelters were used as both permanent rock houses and as temporary hunting, gathering and travel camps.



Some trees like the "Great Council Oak of Tellaquo" were used as meeting places and boundary markers.



Cupules or mortars on rocks in the Little Tennessee River



Indian trails criss-crossed the region and some were widened into wagon roads in the early 1800's. This is an original section of the old Leatherman Gap trail that connected Cowee Town on the Little Tennessee River with Stecoah Town (modern Whittier) on the Tuckasegee River.



A cosmogram petroglyph found on a rock in Macon County



"Thong trees" or trail marker trees were bent by Indians to mark wilderness trails. Some species live four or five hundred years.