Creating a Place: Mulberry Site (38KE12) Interpretation and Exhibition

Abigail Geedy
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By

Abigail Geedy

Bachelor of Arts
University of South Carolina, 2016

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts in
Anthropology
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Carolina
2019
Accepted by
Adam King, Director of Thesis
Gail Wagner, Director of Thesis
Lana Burgess, Reader
Marc Moskowitz, Reader
Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I am eternally grateful to my parents who have believed in me and have helped and encouraged me throughout my whole life to accomplish my goals. I would like to thank my committee of Adam King, Gail Wagner, Marc Moskowitz, and Lana Burgess, and former committee member Courtney Lewis, for coming along with me on the journey of this thesis and helping me to create a product of which I am proud. Alongside my committee, my exhibit script greatly benefited from the help and suggestions of my cultural advisors, LaDonna Brown, RaeLynn Butler, and Wenonah Haire, as well as through conversation and feedback from Chris Judge. I will forever be grateful to the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology and its employees for giving me a place to work and a support system of incredibly knowledgeable people to whom I could always turn. And of course, many thanks to the friends and pets who helped to keep me sane through the highs and lows of the writing process. This thesis would not be what it is today without all of you.
ABSTRACT

This thesis interprets the place and archaeological collections of the Mulberry site (38KE12) through a community-focused lens and applies that interpretation into text for a museum exhibition. Mulberry is a multi-mound Mississippian town in central South Carolina that was likely inhabited by ancestral Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Muscogee (Creek), and/or Catawba Indian Nation peoples. Utilizing entanglement, place-making studies, and Indigenous worldview studies as grounding theory, oral histories and ethnographies are applied to the physical landscape and artifactual remains of the site in an effort to understand the ways that people interacted with objects and the landscape to create meaning-laden spaces. This interpretation coupled with the feedback of American Indian cultural advisors is used to create the text panels and a suggested outline of an exhibit on the site to be displayed in the future.
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CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING A PLACE

American Indian narratives have long been told by anthropologists, historians, and museum professionals in ways that reflected English-speaking Western cultural ideals. Historically, Indigenous communities globally were treated as primitive populations on the verge of extinction by many American scholars who attempted to conserve what they saw as a single dying culture by excavating and collecting artifacts to be preserved in Western institutions (e.g., Bench 2014:57-60; McGregor 2004:399-400; Ridington 1993:86-87; Tuhiwai Smith 1999:61). Colonialist narratives of a dying American Indian peoples’ narratives have continued in the United States until today. Relationships between museums and American Indian communities only began to change with the implementation of laws such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which allows American Indian communities to petition for their ancestors and artifacts, directly asserting their continued existences. Compliance for NAGPRA forced American academia to begin embracing the idea of American Indian involvement and required museums to reach out and collaborate. While this change continues around us today, it is important to address the ways we can continue to move forward in presenting American Indian cultures and worldviews in museums in a respectful and educational way.
Keeping these points in mind, this thesis utilizes the place of Mulberry (38KE12), a multi-mound Mississippian period town in Kershaw County, central South Carolina, to create a multivocal exhibition script and outline how local American Indian cultures—specifically the Catawba Indian, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and Muscogee (Creek) Nations—create place through natural features, man-made artifacts, and oral histories. The places we live and the things we use are imbued with meaning and interpreted through social and cultural means. People interact with objects and the landscape in ways that reify and recreate worldviews. Using Hodder’s (2016) human-thing entanglement, place-making studies, and Indigenous worldview studies as grounding points, this exhibit attempts to convey the ways that the inhabitants of the Mulberry site created place by turning the landscape into meaning-laden space through their interaction with the material and social worlds and oral traditions.

Acknowledging worldview distinctions are incredibly important when museums interpret artifacts. When artifacts from differing cultures are displayed in museums the interpretations accompanying them are read by people who may have no concept of the differences in worldviews between their culture and the one on display. How museums navigate these differences has improved over time and refinement of interpretive approaches continues in the present day (Bench 2014:12).

The concept of place-making recognizes that people actively manipulate the material world to give physical spaces meaning connected to their social worlds. Hodder’s (2016) human-thing entanglement suggests that humans create their social world by interacting with and depending on things (such as material culture or the
environment around them), just as those things are dependent on other things and human beings.

Perspectives such as these contribute to exhibition creation because they focus on the interaction between the social aspects of a culture and the materials that are often displayed in museums. Ideas drawn from Indigenous worldview studies help to outline the basic principles that guided interactions between the social and material worlds at the Mulberry site. These principles include concepts such as the importance of natural cycles and the sacredness of human relationships with the natural world and man-made objects.

Basing the site interpretation on these principles and perspectives of how people interact with the material world allows for the use of existing artifact collections, aspects of Mulberry’s built environment, and its natural surroundings to explore how the people of Mulberry created place from the space surrounding them. Because we cannot associate the inhabitants of Mulberry with just one descendant community, the exhibition takes a multivocal approach and incorporates the worldviews of three Nations that were in the area at the time of Mulberry’s inhabitation: the Catawba Indians, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and the Muscogee (Creek) Nations (linguistic connections summarized in Waddell 2005:339-342).

In this chapter I first discuss the Mulberry site, including its setting and its layout, descriptions of the site, the history of archaeological investigations, and the archaeological collections available. In the second part of this chapter I discuss the grounding theoretical frameworks of the thesis: place-making, human-thing
entanglement, and Indigenous worldview studies. I conclude the chapter by reviewing the evolving ways in which museums work with American Indian communities and objects associated with American Indian heritage.

The Mulberry Site (38KE12) and Collections

The Mulberry site is a multi-mound Mississippian town located on the Wateree River in Kershaw County, central South Carolina (Figure 1.1), and occupied between 1250-1700 CE (DePratter and Judge 1990). The Mississippian period, which in South Carolina occurred between 1000 and 1520 CE, is characterized by maize-centered agriculture, chiefdoms, and mound construction (Anderson 1989:113-117). This particular site has been argued to be the town of Cofitachequi that was visited and written about by the explorers Hernando de Soto and Juan Pardo (Hudson et al. 2008:481; Vandera 1569). Mulberry has been of archaeological interest for over 100 years and has amassed multiple artifact collections during that time, starting with excavations by the Smithsonian in 1891 (Blanding 1848:105-108; Thomas 1894:326-327). It became part of the Wateree Archaeological Research Project in 1979 (DePratter 1985a:32) and a number of field schools have been conducted at Mulberry by the Department of Anthropology at the University of South Carolina since that time (e.g., Cable et al. 1999; DePratter 1985a; Wagner 2002).
In this section I describe the Mulberry site’s setting and layout, the site’s history of archaeological investigations, and what archaeological collections are available for use in the final Mulberry exhibit.

Figure 1.1. Mulberry Site and Surrounding Mound Towns (Ferguson 1974:60).

Site Description

The Mulberry site, a multi-mound Mississippian town located in central South Carolina near the present-day town of Camden, is situated on a terrace remnant overlooking the Wateree River at the junction of a navigable creek (Figure 1.1). Mulberry is located in a floodplain in South Carolina’s Inner Coastal Plain region. The Inner Coastal Plain region of South Carolina is a hilly region across the center of the state characterized by meandering rivers (Kovacik and Winberry 1989:20). The Inner Coastal Plain region shows considerable weathering over time through the presence of steep bluffs along major rivers (Barry 1980:133). The temperature averages around 60
degrees Fahrenheit year round: January averages the coldest month of the year at 40.9 degrees, with July averaging the warmest at 78.6 degrees (National Climate Data Center 2002:7). Normal precipitation levels for the area average 46.65 inches a year (National Climate Data Center 2002:11). Most of this precipitation takes the form of rain: snowfall, sleet, and hail are rare occurrences in the state (Kovacik and Winberry 1989:31).

The Inner Coastal Plain region is often characterized by mesic woodlands and alluvial (river-deposited) soils (Barry 1980:133). Proximity to rivers facilitated travel and trade and the silt deposits from the river create areas of fertile soil. Mesic woodlands’ natural vegetation is dominantly characterized by white oak (Quercus alba), sometimes in combination with loblolly pine (Pinus taeda) (Barry 1980:138). Associated flora include sweetgum (Liquidambar styraciflua), beech (Fagus grandifolia), southern red oak (Quercus falcata), post oak (Quercus stellata), mockernut hickory (Carya tomentosa), southern sugar maple (Acer flordianum), flowering dogwood (Cornus florida), sourgum (Oxydendrum arboretum), redbud or Judas tree (Cercis canadensis), and other smaller species (Barry 1980:140). Mulberry’s soils consist of the alluvial soil types Congaree and Chewacla: both are well suited for cropland but subject to flooding (Mitchell 1989:20-21). The land is currently cultivated as a pine plantation but historically has served as agricultural fields since the early eighteenth century.

This site is home to one of the longest Mississippian occupations found in South Carolina, spanning the period 1250-1700 CE (DePratter and Judge 1990). The first documented reference to the Mulberry site was noted in the 1848 Smithsonian
Contributions to Knowledge. The manuscript map, recorded by Dr. William Blanding of Camden, South Carolina, of what was then called Taylor’s Mounds, showed two large platform mounds, one of which was surrounded by eight small mounds located on a terrace just south of the creek mouth (Blanding 1848:105-108). The published etching added two additional small mounds to the circle.

Wagner (2002) and DePratter and Judge (1990) have summarized the basic occupational history of the site. Of the three mounds that have been located by archaeologists, Mound A (Figure 1.2) is the earliest built, estimated to have been 46-47 m long, 35 m wide, and 2.7-3.0 m high. The midden below Mound A dates to 1250-1300 CE, putting the likely beginning construction date of a small mound around 1300 CE (DePratter and Judge 1990). Subsequent construction on Mound A added dirt both vertically and horizontally toward the south in multiple clay layers finally capped by massive sand and clay (Wagner 2002:4).

Mound B measured at least 70 m long, 35 m wide, and 2 m high. Construction on Mound B began around 1450 CE on a leveled surface of black midden followed by use of sod blocks (Wagner et al. 2019). In 1891 at the time of the Smithsonian Institution excavation, a barn was located on top of Mound B, which is probably why that abbreviated report fails to mention this mound.

Mound C, whose construction began between 1450-1550 CE, was estimated to have been 10 m in diameter and 60 cm high (DePratter and Judge 1990). Mound C was bulldozed into the creek by the landowners in 1953 (DePratter and Judge 1990) and so is no longer visible. Its location was thought to have been found by Wagner (2002), but
Figure 1.2. West (Riverbank) Profile of Mound A (Ferguson 1974:90-91).
recent testing (Wagner et al. 2019) negates that finding. A wall trench palisade has been uncovered between Mounds B and C (Wagner 2002), and the area between Mounds A and B is presumed to be a mound precinct plaza. Village areas appear to be located to the northeast and south of the mound precinct (Wagner 2002).

The Mulberry site has great potential to be the historic town of Cofitachequi, one of the many communities visited by the Spanish expeditions of Hernando de Soto in 1540 and later again by Juan Pardo (DePratter 1989:133; Hudson et al. 2008; Smith and Hally 1992; Vandera 1569). The exact location of Cofitachequi is difficult to determine based on de Soto and Pardo’s records, but systematic work by DePratter and colleagues places the town on the Wateree River, with the Mulberry site considered to be the most likely candidate for Cofitachequi’s location (DePratter 1989:141-144; Hudson et al. 2008:481). The final documented European visitation of Cofitachequi occurred in 1670 just after the settlement of Charles Towne and “within little more than a decade...Cofitachequi was gone” (DePratter 1989:138). Although some disagreement exists on what may have happened to the people of the chiefdom of Cofitachequi (Hudson et al. 2008; Waddell 2005:350-356), it is likely that the community dispersed due to population loss and stress from disease as well as Westo slave raiding. Survivors likely assimilated into eighteenth century American Indian societies, including the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Chickasaw, Muscogee (Creek), and Catawba Indian Nations (Hudson et al. 2008:482).

De Soto’s exploration noted that his party was greeted lavishly by the “Lady of Cofitachequi” when De Soto and his party first approached the main town and were
received by the community (DePratter 1989:134-135; Hudson et al. 2008:468-469). The Spanish account of a grand greeting and hospitality in Cofitachequi is similar to other greetings noted in early European contact with American Indian communities: it is likely that the hospitality encountered by the Spaniards would have been comparable to how a visiting American Indian chief would have been treated (Smith and Hally 1992).

Cofitachequi was visited later by Pardo’s exploration and a few other Spanish expeditions (DePratter 1989:133; Hudson et al. 2008:467; Waddell 2005:339).

History of Investigations

Because of the site’s early notoriety, portions of Mulberry were excavated by Henry Reynolds of the Mound Division of the Bureau of American Ethnology in the late nineteenth century (Thomas 1894:326-327). Reynolds trenched two of the visible mounds. He noted that Mound 1 (Mound A) showed no signs of use for burial and was instead likely a domicile mound (Thomas 1894:326-327). Although Reynolds made no mention of the other large mound (Mound B), he excavated a trench through the small Mound C. Reynolds died before reporting his work (Kelly 1974:73).

After this investigation no professional excavations were undertaken at the site until the landowner called the University of Georgia for a salvage archaeological investigation when flooding exposed burials along the riverbank south of Mound A. Dr. Arthur Kelly of the University of Georgia, with the support of the Charleston Museum, excavated in 1952 (Figure 1.3). This investigation uncovered a series of burials in what may have been a village area south of the mounds, as well as burials in an early stratum
Figure 1.3. Excavations Conducted at the Mulberry Site from 1952-1998 (Cable et al. 1999).
of Mound A that Reynolds had not excavated. A profile using a five-foot grid was cut along the riverbank of Mound A (Kelly 1974).

Leland Ferguson investigated further with a few test pits and a column profile of the riverbank at Mound A in 1973 (Ferguson 1973). In 1979 Mulberry became a part of the Wateree Archaeological Research Project (DePratter 1985a:32). Investigations of Mulberry have been conducted since in University of South Carolina field schools, including ones directed by Stanton Green (1980, 1981), Chester DePratter (1985a, 1985b), and Gail Wagner (1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2001) (Figure 1.3). Recent work at Mulberry located a possible palisade wall between Mound C and Mound B and a structure near the former Mound C (Wagner 2001, 2002; Wagner et al. 2019).

Cable et al. (1999:95-100) summarize ten WARP field schools as follows. WARP I occurred in 1979, led by Leland Ferguson and Stanton Green (Green 1980; Ferguson 1979). Using surface artifact distribution data, excavations were focused in “the nose area where what appears to be an historic structure is located... and the low density area [between Mounds A and B]” (Green 1980:June 19, quoted in Cable et al. 1999:95). WARP II, conducted in 1980, was led by Stanton Green (Green 1980). Work consisted of surface collection, scattered units, and an extended trench. Surface collection of the exposed portion of Mound A and along the river bank was also conducted. WARP III was conducted by Leland Ferguson and Stanton Green in 1981 (Green 1982; Ferguson 1981; Field School 1981a, 1981b). Coring, units, and a slot trench were dug, and coring revealed what may have been the ditch depicted in Blanding’s site description. WARP IV, conducted in 1982, was led by Stanton Green and Denis Lewarch (Green 1982; Harmon
Surface collection, coring, unit excavation, and backhoe trenching of the “ditch” feature occurred during this field school. WARP V occurred in 1985 led by Chester DePratter and Joan Gero (DePratter 1985a, 1985b; Gero 1985). Trench excavation occurred during this field school, as did excavation of Structure 1 that had a large concentration of mica and sherds and was located approximately 230 m east of Mound A (Cable et al. 1999). A collection of ceramic sherds were found in the creek by students during this field school, which led to an underwater survey of the creek, followed by more intensive underwater collection from the creek and the Wateree River near the site in 1988 (DePratter and Amer 1988).

WARP VI was conducted in 1990 under the leadership of Gail Wagner assisted by Kathleen Bolen (Wagner 1990). Trenches were excavated to relocate Structure 1 that had been discovered in 1985. WARP VII through X, directed by Gail Wagner in 1992, 1994, 1996, and 1998, focused on completely uncovering the structure that had been partially uncovered in 1985 (Wagner 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998). Test pits were also dug in various locations, and excavation of several 2x2 m units to the east of Structure 1 located (but did not excavate) a burial. Magnetometer readings were collected in a 30x30 m area east of Mound B. In 1998, under the auspices of a National Geographic grant coupled with a grant from SC Archives and History, shovel test pits were excavated in the mound precinct and a 2x2 m unit was excavated east of Mound B (Cable et al. 1999). Gail Wagner’s field school at Mulberry in 2000 and 2002 located a wall-trench palisade between Mound B and Mound C, a structure near Mound C, and the possible
former location of Mound C (which had been bulldozed into the creek by the

In 2018, Gail Wagner and Adam King began a five-year project of investigations
focusing on the mound precinct. Under the field direction of Chris Judge assisted by
Tamara Wilson, they excavated trenches in Mound A and Mound B, and ascertained
that instead of re-locating Reynold’s trench through Mound C, the 2000 and 2002 field
schools had located an area of borrow pits (Wagner et al. 2019). Specialists collected
LiDar, metal detection, ground penetrating radar, and gradiometer data, and a
geoarchaeologist began characterizing the dirt on and off site (Wagner et al. 2019).

Archaeological Collections

Because Mulberry has been of archaeological interest since the 1800s, some of the
earliest collections are scattered. The bulk of the collection is primarily 143 curation flats
transferred to the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA)
from WARP in 1988 that include artifacts as well as all field notes and photographs from
the WARP 1973-1985 excavations. Kelly’s 1952 artifact collection is also housed in the
SCIAA curation facility. Gail Wagner houses artifacts in the Department of Anthropology
from recent WARP excavations. In order to achieve a general understanding of the
Mulberry artifacts available, for this thesis I worked directly with the WARP collections
from 1981 and 1982 in an effort to both research the site and help put the collections
back into working order for future use.
Theoretical Frames

In this section I address the theoretical background of place-making, human-thing entanglement, and Indigenous worldview studies. This background will ground my interpretation of the archaeological collections from Mulberry and aid in the overall site interpretation for the proposed exhibition.

**Place Making**

Place-making constitutes the ways that spaces become more than simply space. Places acquire physical, social, and spiritual dimensions that influence their value and meaning to people (Anschuetz et al. 2001:159). Place includes both natural or managed locations such as river shoals or agricultural fields, as well as built locations such as mounds or burials. Place is important to archaeologists because relationships across space and over time can “bridge the division between archaeological practice and the concerns of archaeology’s many publics, including the people of indigenous communities who increasingly are vocal participants” (Anschuetz et al. 2001:159). Place-making studies situate landscapes within cultural contexts, using ethnographic data and direct communication with the people to whom places have importance.

Human beings interact with the world around them in very personal and culturally specific ways (Fitzjohn 2007:36-37). Early studies concerning the ways that people interact with the surrounding areas were pioneered by geographers, but one of the most well-known names in anthropology that addressed place-making was Keith Basso,
whose work with the Western Apache revealed that places were named in culturally relevant ways (Basso 1996a, 1996b). The Western Apaches connect social and spiritual lessons with the land and the ways that they placed themselves within that world. Early names reflected how the landscape appeared at the time of naming (Basso 1996a:11-12). Through time, many place names reflected a story with a moral lesson. Western Apaches referred to learning from the land and understanding the stories behind places as the ultimate path to wisdom (Basso 1996b:61-72). Place and cultural understanding become synonymous through stories tied to places that detailed moral expectations.

The Rankulche Indians in La Pampa, Argentina, similarly use place names as a reflection of the physical landscape, mythic events, and everyday activities (Curtoni et al. 2003:66). Landscape becomes an embodiment of memory of the ancestral past that sustains a people’s identity (Curtoni et al. 2003:63).

Emplacement of burials reflect how identity is sustained. Movements toward residential and community burials imply a solidarity that can help reinforce a lineage (McAnany 2011). Residential burials, or burials below the floors of homes, emphasize a value of hidden things that influence the way that place is emphasized and understood (McAnany 2011:138).

The manipulated landscape may be not only a source of enduring knowledge, but also a reflection of deliberate alterations to social memories (Pool and Loughlin 2017). Some places in the Olmec Heartland show evidence of continuous and consistent use that suggest the passage of an oral tradition or teaching of specific rituals from one generation to the next (Pool and Loughlin 2017), but landscape may also show signs of
altered traditions referred to as “selective forgetting” (Pool and Loughlin 2017:248).

Intentional destruction of mounds at Moundville has been suggested to show this concept of selective forgetting: “[destruction] may represent an attempt by the emerging Moundville elite to selectively remove from the landscape any reminder of a particular political group’s presence while emphasizing continuity with another” (Wilson 2010:8). Thus, manipulation of the landscape is capable of helping to create new visions of what the dominant element of a culture values, as well as destroy what a dominant element in the culture no longer values.

In order to understand the ways that people interact with places, one must look to both oral histories and material culture. Lesley Head’s study of landscapes as understood by the Australian Aboriginal peoples show they were closely connected to the land around them. Among Australian Aboriginal people, land was considered to be the cohabited domains of both people and non-human entities: the land must be interpreted dualistically in order to fully understand the ways in which the Australian Aboriginal peoples inhabited the land (Head 1993). Material analysis reveals that the Australian Aboriginal peoples lived within multiple boundaries of use: concentrations of human-worked materials constituted one boundary, with a boundary of land use (including hunting and source material deposits) beyond (Head 1993:488).

Understanding the ways that people interact with objects and places can help to create a fuller picture of the connections to those places. Edward Swenson stated that “ultimately, a focus on the materialities of place making, as opposed to generic interpretations of ontology, permits a more effective means of reconstructing historical
process within the specific Andean context” (2015:680). A focus on technological representations of culture as supplemental does not reduce culture simply to material, but to the ways that permanency, durability, and reproduction of technology influence and are influenced by culture (Swenson 2015:707).

**Human-Thing Entanglement**

Human being’s reliance on things (or non-human materials) and other human beings to survive is only half of the equation of the relationship between humans and things according to Ian Hodder: things are also reliant on human beings and other things. This four-fold co-relationship/co-dependency is the core of human-thing entanglement (Hodder 2016). Human-thing entanglement posits that human beings and things become entangled in each other through human dependence on other humans, human dependence on things, things’ dependence on humans, and things’ dependence on other things (Hodder 2016:13-14). These dependencies create a give-and-take between people and the materials they create and use. Things, for the purpose of this thesis, can refer to any non-human material, including the land and spiritual entities.

Although specified to material remains, human-thing entanglement is heavily influenced by Bourdieu’s theory of *habitus*. *Habitus* is described as “structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (Bourdieu 1977:72). In other words, a cultural feedback loop exists in which something holds power because people believe that it does. While *habitus* was not created with the thought of humanity’s interaction with material objects in mind, the concept of a cultural feedback
loop applies to human-thing entanglement. The overarching cultural and social environments (such as worldview) that we are exposed to shape the ways we understand the world. Our understanding influences what we are willing to follow and what we consider to have value, which feeds back into either maintaining or challenging the overarching cultural and social customs. Human-thing entanglement acknowledges cultural value in how humans and things become entangled with one another (Hodder 2016), and thus entanglement has the potential to reveal a people’s cultural values through their material remains.

Historical archaeology has embraced the intersectionality/entanglement of identity and politics in recent years. Instead of simply cataloging the artifacts of a specific people, historical archaeologists investigate power structures and address value systems through descendant involvement (Meskell 2002:288-289). Descendant involvement is one of the best ways to gather a value system for interpretation of artifacts: literature reviews supply only broad and overarching themes of value. While a broad overview is an important starting place for interpretation of non-Western viewpoints, interpretations can be enhanced through speaking to descendant communities and learning what that community continues to value. Historical archaeology’s move toward examining power structures and involving descendant communities demonstrates entanglement’s usefulness to archaeology (Meskell 2002:287-289). Understanding the culture from which artifacts are gathered allows us to see the dependencies among humans and things within their own social context.
Even without access to descendant communities, investigating human-thing entanglement can serve to tie artifacts and people to the land. In summarizing studies on pottery formation with respect to a Neolithic site, one researcher notes that:

Here the formation of one site and the events that took place there, say the way pottery was used and deposited, altered other places in the landscape, where the clay had come from, for example, or where the pot had been fired. These now became locales linked to Rowden through histories of material connections [Harris 2009:118].

Entanglement is multilayered: entanglement of humans with a pot extends beyond the pot’s necessity to carry or cook with, to include how the pot is created and the source of its raw materials. How a pot is created relies on humans learning and knowing how to form and fire pottery and having access to someone with that particular skill. Those with the skill are dependent on the land for the materials to create and fire the pottery.

Entanglement with place incorporates how that place has been emotionally experienced by people (Harris 2009:112). Think of a place, such as a memorial or a childhood home, and the feelings and emotions connected to that place. The emotions we feel about places are directly entangled with the people and things present through time in those places. The Western Apache’s use of place names as reference to moral expectations (Basso 1996a:33) is an example of one way that place can additionally be firmly entangled with worldview and culture.
Indigenous Worldviews

A growing body of literature that attempts to define the worldviews of people whose cultures are not part of a modern, Western (often United-States-focused) intellectual tradition. Many such studies are conducted by members of the cultural groups they discuss and are often categorized under the umbrella term “Indigenous” worldview studies. Among the people conducting these studies are members of Native American Nations. Because this thesis attempts to use culturally-appropriate concepts to understand place-making at the Mulberry site, I feel it is important to engage this literature. Often these studies are conducted by scholars who are not anthropologists and do not necessarily conduct their research in ways that conform to anthropological conventions. Despite their stated focus on understanding and valuing other cultures, anthropologists are “popularly perceived by the indigenous world as the epitome of all that…is bad with academics” (Tuhiwai Smith 1999:67). Because research done by anthropologists has been interpreted as devaluing Indigenous cultures, the idea of research itself has taken on negative connotations (Tuhiwai Smith 1999:65-68). Because of this perception, I think it is all the more important that I engage Indigenous worldview studies.

Indigenous worldview studies reflect one of the ways that American Indian scholars represent their cultures in academic settings in the United States. Many of the works cited here reflect synthetic works that utilized the terms ‘traditional’ or ‘Indigenous’ as blanket terms for people across the globe or within specified borders (e.g., Anderson 1996; Berkes 1999; Berkes et al. 1998; Dods 2004; Groenfeldt 2003;
Johnson and Murton 2007; Mazzocchi 2006; McGregor 2004; Pierotti and Wildcat 2000; Schelbert 2003; Turner et al. 2000). Some do specify individual Native Nations but ultimately group the cultures they are writing about into one. Many of these works make direct comparisons to ‘Western’ thought without a clear definition of what that entails. Many appear to connect ‘Western’ thought to science or post-Enlightenment standards (e.g., Dods 2004; Johnson and Murton 2007; Mazzocchi 2006; McGregor 2004:391-392; Pierotti 2011; Pierotti and Wildcat 2000; Schelbert 2003). The term Indigenous will be used in this section in reflection of the language of the literature on this subject. ‘Indigenous’ (for the purposes of this thesis) reflects a discussion that encompasses Native communities globally and research done without specificity to individual Native Nations. Whenever possible, specific Nations are referred to by their names. I also wish to acknowledge that worldviews are dynamic. Individuals are constantly choosing to embrace, adapt, disregard, or add to their particular worldviews in ways that these generalities cannot properly convey.

Although these generalities are problematic, research into Indigenous worldview studies can help to provide basic themes that can be refined and reflected on in more specific research. In his examinations of Indigenous worldview literature, Thornock (2019) isolates six themes that have relevance to archaeological collections and sites: non-human entities are respected as people; relationships between entities should be treated as sacred; humans should seek to maintain balance in the world; events reoccur in cycles; similar practices are more important than differing beliefs; and knowledge is passed through storytelling (Thornock 2019:21-22). These themes can be seen across
much of the literature on Indigenous worldview practices and contribute to the ways in which Indigenous cultures were and continue to be actively produced.

The first and second themes put forth—that non-human entities are considered to be people and that relationships between humans and non-human entities are respected as sacred—are closely related and are best explained using examples. Non-human entities can include anything from the land, animals, plants, climate, skies, spirits, and more (Anderson 1996:57; Martin and Mirraboopa 2003:207; Pierotti and Wildcat 2000:1336-1337). For the American Indian peoples of the Northwest Coast of North America, such as the Haida, this belief is actualized in the ways that cedar bark is harvested. The cedar trees are prayed over and apologized to before beginning the harvesting process. Only the minimum amount of bark needed is removed in long strips positioned and timed to prevent overharvesting or killing the trees (Anderson 1996:54-55).

Another example of sacred relationships between human and non-human entities can be seen in the story of the Omaha Tribe’s Sacred Pole, which was carved from a tree that glowed as though it was on fire at night but appeared like any other tree in the daytime. The Sacred Pole was fed and treated like a fellow member of the Omaha Tribe. It was considered to have a life and spirit of its own that directly contributed to the Omaha Tribe’s wellbeing (Ridington 1993:84-85). The idea that non-human entities contribute directly to human life is not exclusive to the Omaha Tribe: non-human entities are often considered capable of retaliation if they are not treated properly (e.g., Anderson 1996:58-61; Ridington 1993:89-91; Turner et al. 2000:1279-1280).
The Sacred Pole was taken by anthropologists in what the anthropologists saw as an attempt to preserve the Omaha Tribe’s culture during a time that American Indians were considered to be a soon-to-be-extinct race. Its removal to the Peabody Museum created a disturbance in the Omaha Tribe’s care. The Sacred Pole was held at the Peabody for about half a century before pleas from the Omaha Tribe for its return were successful and the Sacred Pole was returned to the Omaha Tribe. Ceremonies were held on its return to honor the Sacred Pole’s return and to help restore the relationship between the Omaha Tribe and the Sacred Pole (Ridington 1993:85-86). The story of the Sacred Pole can also be seen as an illustration of Thornock’s (2019) third theme that humans should seek to maintain balance in the world. The Omaha Tribe’s maintenance and reverence toward the Sacred Pole had a positive influence on the tribe, but when the Sacred Pole was out of their care the Omaha Tribe lost their ability to maintain balance.

The concept of balance can be understood through what the Raramuri in Mexico refer to as *iwigara* or “the interconnectedness and integration of all life in the Sierra Madres, physical and spiritual” (Salmon 2000:1328) which guides agricultural, medicinal, and foraging practices. The Raramuri see humans as caretakers for the world around them and so have maintained reciprocal relationships with the land and animals through sustainable harvesting methods that result in as minimal waste as possible (Salmon 2000:1329-1331). The concept of balance encompasses the joint reliance of the natural world and Indigenous peoples on one another and the ability to maintain a positive impact on both. It should be acknowledged that ideas of humans maintaining
balance in the world does not imply that all Indigenous peoples are inherently perfect conservationists (Berkes 1999:151-153).

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) studies often address the fourth theme that Thornock (2019) draws from Indigenous worldview literature: an understanding of the cycle of reoccurring events. Observations at the micro-level of the environment allow for Indigenous communities to become aware of the patterns of environmental change (Pierotti 2011:67). It is these observations that create sustainable harvesting methods and allow humans to maintain sustainable relationships with non-human entities. As stated before, on the Northwest Pacific coast American Indian communities harvested bark in thin strips and conserved the trees through moral responsibility and respect for the cedars they harvested (Anderson 1996:54-55).

Beyond agricultural methods, an observance of cycles can be seen in the construction of mounds. During the Mississippian period of North American, American Indians from the Prairie Plains to the Atlantic coast and the Ohio Valley to the coast built platform mounds, which were often made of multiple layers added over time. According to Vernon Knight, platform mounds are “underlain by a deeply rooted and expressive symbolic significance, related to the ubiquity of multi-stage episodes of destruction and construction” (1986:678). These episodes are hypothesized by archaeologists to symbolize periods of purification of the earth that occur in cycles, and those cycles have a direct and observable impact hundreds of years later (Knight 1986:678-679). Other research suggests that “several Muskogee groups conceived of mounds as navels through which their ancestors first came forth onto the surface of the earth and through
which their people would someday return” (Wilson 2010:6). Relating mounds to creation events show that mound building may, at least in part, signify a cycle of rebirth in Mississippian societies (Wilson 2010:6) and illustrates the ways in which the land is inherently tied to Indigenous understanding and worldviews.

The final two themes—similar practices are more important than differing beliefs and the passage of knowledge through storytelling—deal with Indigenous understanding and the spread of cultural wisdom. Like the retelling of mounds as navels for human life (Wilson 2010:6), Indigenous pedagogy comes through retelling of stories (e.g., Kovach 2010; Margolin 2005; Pierotti 2011:67-69). Margaret Kovach refers to this type of pedagogy as the conversation method in which “as both parties become engaged in a collaborative process, the relationship builds and deepens as stories are shared” (2010:43).

Malcolm Margolin recounts a story from Jaime de Angulo, a linguist studying the Achumawe and Atsugewi languages, that illustrates both of these themes:

When one old man began telling him the story of how Silver Fox created the world, Jamie interrupted. What do you mean Silver Fox created the world? I just heard from your neighbors that it was Coyote who created the world. The old man didn’t pause. Well, he shrugged, over there they say it was Coyote, here we say it was Silver Fox, and he went on with the story [Margolin 2005:74].

This quote shows both spiritual tolerance and a pedagogical tool. Western viewpoints often have an obsession with uniform single answers to questions, but Indigenous
communities tend to show much more tolerance of difference in how significant events of Indigenous history were accomplished (Margolin 2005:74-75; Pierotti 2011:69-72).

Likewise, Indigenous communities rarely teach through telling someone the correct answer, but rather through stories, songs, or hands-on experiences that allow the person to be led to understanding in a way that is likely to stay with them over time (Margolin 2005:72-74).

Basso (1996a, 1996b) illustrates the ways that Indigenous pedagogy of leading to understanding can be tied directly to place-making. Western Apache place names often reflect either what an area looked like at the time of its naming, or commemorate an event that took place there (Basso 1996a:32-33). Commemorative names often refer to a moral story that is so often retold by the Western Apache that reference to a place name becomes synonymous with the moral lesson behind the name (Basso 1996a:33).

Place-making studies combined with themes found in Indigenous worldview studies and human-thing entanglement suggest that a people’s value system can be at least partially discerned by the ways people interact with the land and non-human entities, including material culture and spiritual entities. In this thesis, I attempt to associate artifacts with places and people through physical, social, and spiritual means. Physical place associations focus on local areas of significance for artifacts and landscapes. Social place associations illustrate the ways people interact with other people and things to place themselves within their communities. Spiritual place associations navigate people and things within oral traditions and cultural mythology. This strategy will be used to interpret the contexts of artifacts and landscape around
and outside of cultural features at the Mulberry site to create an exhibition in the historical context of the Muscogee (Creek), Catawba Indian, and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations, while acknowledging that they are still thriving peoples.

American Indian Representation in Museums

Early museum acquisitions of American Indian cultures were viewed as salvage attempts to collect what most scholars considered to be a dying race’s heritage (Bench 2014:58-59; Jacknis 2006:512-514). European settlers often believed gifts from American Indian peoples were a sign of submission, and many of those gifts now appear in museum collections (Bench 2014:3). Other artifacts that museums acquired were bought or stolen from American Indian peoples, including human remains and grave goods (Bench 2014:57-60; Jacknis 2006:515). What was not collected said as much about what was valued by collectors (or collecting institutions) as what was collected: many of the items acquired by museums were flashy museum-quality pieces that could draw a crowd rather than common artifacts that reflect people’s daily life and cultures (Bench 2014:59-60; Jacknis 2006:515-516). Everyday, common items were overlooked by collectors in favor of pieces that reflected a pre-contact era, as these pieces were considered to be ‘pure’ cultural artifacts, unaltered by colonial contact (Bench 2014:59).

George Gustav Heye was one of the few early museum collectors who focused on archaeological collections rather than just talk pieces, making his collection valuable for research (Jacknis 2006:515-516). Heye used collections for research and in creating the
Museum of the American Indian in New York City in 1916. In 1989, his collection was donated to the Smithsonian to become part of the National Museum of the American Indian (Jacknis 2006:526). Whether they romanticized or demonized American Indian peoples, early museum collections and exhibitions readily accomplished the task of further othering already marginal groups through the ways that American Indian peoples (who were not the dying culture they were exhibited as) were portrayed and studied (Bench 2014:64; Jacknis 2006:513-514).

The NMAI gave American Indian communities the ability to tell their stories center stage on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in hope of rectifying some of the United States’ past indiscretions against American Indians, but the museum opened to varying reviews (Lonetree 2006). The museum opened to an initial backlash from journalists who believed that “scholarly” information was negated in order to value Native perspectives (Lonetree 2006:57-58). Paul Richard of the Washington Post complained of a lack of portraying conflicts between and among American Indian communities, while journalists like Libby Copeland (Washington Post) and Michael Hill (Baltimore Sun) included only the opinions of non-Native scholars in their write-ups (Reinhardt 2005:458-464). Other scholars quickly defended the museum’s approach, but talk eventually subdued into a general ambivalence toward the museum (Lonetree 2006:58). Individual critiques took many forms, and a comparison of all of them finds contradictory complaints, but what was most often criticized was the lack of exhibiting hard-hitting issues discussing the atrocities committed against American Indian communities (Bloom 2005:330; Lonetree 2006:58-60).
On the National Mall, the museum had the chance to address atrocities committed against American Indian communities in a way that would be front and center, but rather the museum took an abstract approach (Lonetree 2006:60). Despite this ambivalent press, the NMAI can easily be commended on their community collaboration and outreach to American Indian peoples in creating the exhibitions. American Indians are not only in high-level positions in the museum, but continually consulted in the creation of exhibitions (Cobb 2005:365-381; Griffin 2007:179; Lonetree 2006:60-61). The structure of the building itself was determined through consultation with American Indian communities in which the museum members traveled to Native communities and “participants voiced their ideas for the building, landscape, and overall tone of the museum” (Cobb 2005:369). Eight rotating, community-curated exhibits spotlight individual Nations based on the individual community’s philosophy on community, locality, vitality, viewpoint, and voice (Cobb 2005:375). Although these themes were outlined by the museum, each exhibit is created entirely through collaboration with the community rather than by NMAI curators alone. The exhibit’s two-year rotation cycle allows for many different communities to be represented over time (Cobb 2005:374-377).

The 1990 passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) pushed to fundamentally change the ways that museums interact with recognized Nations and their material culture:

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (Public Law 101-601; 25 U.S.C. 3001-3013) describes the rights of Native American
lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations with respect to the treatment, repatriation, and disposition of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony, referred to collectively in the statute as cultural items, with which they can show a relationship of lineal descent or cultural affiliation [National Park Service 2018].

The proposal of NAGPRA received vocal opposition from many museum personnel and scientists who feared a loss of what they saw as valuable research material. Museum professional argued that they already had established working relations with American Indian communities and the passage of NAGPRA would hinder these relationships, but American Indians vehemently disagreed:

Over and over again, stunningly brazen, even racist, narratives about our dead followed deceitful or stunningly ignorant proclamations of cooperation with and respect for Native peoples. In each instance scientists assumed, or pretended to believe, that their cultural ways are universally human, while reducing Native ways to ‘speculation,’ the merely ‘personal,’ or some other lesser status. Native leaders’ rebuttals were clear and blunt [Dumont 2011:14].

Despite the passage of NAGPRA on November 16, 1990 some scientists and museum personnel cited vague language and the limitations of Federal regulations to not repatriate sacred artifacts on technicalities, often citing a lack of proof of affiliation (Dumont 2011:24; Kelsey and Carpenter 2011). Valuing scientific methods over Native
American worldviews creates hostile environments that illustrate why American Indian communities are often reluctant to work with museums. However, as museum employees began to truly value Indigenous worldviews in their museums, collaborative efforts have become the new normal. American history and anthropology museums have progressed from early practices of collecting and gatekeeping American Indian sacred materials and human remains. Increasing numbers of collaborative efforts have been established to reinterpret the ways in which museum staff can best approach and involve American Indian communities in exhibition planning and collections management.

As approaches shift, and even with the new stress on collaborative issues, it remains important for museums to address stereotypes that their audiences and staff may include when planning exhibitions (Bench 2014:17-18; McEnaney and Shannon 2014). As Cara Krmpotich stated in an interview with Museum Anthropology:

...there is rarely a ‘right’ or ‘single’ answer but that critical thinking and really trying to understand someone else’s perspective is key to museum work and research. I’m also really keen that students understand the structures that often guide our practices and values, and so, if we want to create change, we need to figure out if those underlying structures need changing too... If we’re going to understand cross-cultural interactions in museums, we need to attend to all the cultural values in our spaces [McEnaney and Shannon 2014:93].
This quote reflects the ways that museums need to adapt and change by looking in on themselves and understanding and acknowledging individual biases. Museums that work with artifacts from a culture that is not adequately represented on their staff can challenge their own perceived authority and work to correct internal museum biases by reaching out and involving the people whose culture is the subject of exhibitions.

Plurality is understood and accepted in many Indigenous traditions in a way that Western standards often have a difficult time understanding (Duarte and Belarde-Lewis 2015:682-686). Museums need to acknowledge that cataloging of American Indian artifacts may not fit neatly in the document standards museum professionals have been using (Duarte and Belarde-Lewis 2015:686). Community collaboration and allowing American Indians to classify artifacts can help museums to better understand and display the artifacts they have acquired (Duarte and Belarde-Lewis 2015; Griffin 2007:179; Lonetree 2006:60-61; McGeough 2012). This type of collaborative understanding has been presented as the new standard in the museum industry (McGeough 2012:19).

Summary

In this chapter, I began by stating the goals of this thesis to utilize oral histories and material culture to understand the ways in which the community of an American Indian mound site created a meaning-laden place and to translate that interpretation into a museum exhibit. The Mulberry site was described and its archaeological and
speculated history were recounted. Following this, I discussed the theoretical frameworks—place-making, human-thing entanglement, and Indigenous worldview studies—that serve as the basis for my interpretation. Finally the opening chapter acknowledges the ways in which American Indian communities have been treated by anthropologists and museum personnel and the current attempts to restore American Indian narratives back into the hands of American Indian peoples.

In Chapter Two I address the most abundant artifacts and their relationship with the recorded oral traditions of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Muscogee (Creek), and Catawba Indian Nations to better understand the objects and features present at the Mulberry site. In Chapter Three I detail how the association between artifacts and oral histories explained in Chapter Two can be used to create a museum exhibit. This chapter will include themes and sections of the exhibit, large panel text, suggestions for artifacts and interactives for each section, and the collaborative feedback process. In Chapter Four I reflect on the goals of this thesis and how I hope this process can be applied to other archaeological collections and exhibits in the future.

In the following chapter I discuss the artifacts most commonly recovered at the Mulberry site. I interpret these common artifact types in relation to the recorded oral history of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Muscogee (Creek), and Catawba Indian Nations in order to connect material culture to people and how they may have contributed to creating place within their community.
CHAPTER TWO: INTERPRETING A PLACE

The goal of this thesis is to interpret the ways that the Mulberry site was a place imbued with meaning by its inhabitants and translate that to a museum exhibit script. In order to do this, I incorporate historical ethnographic information and oral histories gathered on the Catawba Indian, Muscogee (Creek), and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations’ peoples and synthetic ethnographic analyses. To begin this process I read early ethnographic sources that documented stories directly from the people. Specifically, James Mooney’s (1902) work with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Frank Speck’s (1934) work with the Catawba Indian Nation, and John Swanton’s (1928a, 1928b) work with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation provided a working understanding of the stories of the three Native Nations and allowed me to develop themes for the exhibition. Each of these works were collected from communities before they were established as the named and recognized Nations I have listed: for ease throughout this document all three Nations will be referred to as their current recognized names.

As stated before, these particular Nations were chosen because all three lived in the areas around the Mulberry site and the inhabitants of Mulberry were likely ancestrally related to these three Nations. Each of these Nations is made up of people displaced and deeply affected by Colonial invasions. Many American Indian communities
suffered from European diseases and warfare, contributing to significant population loss. The survivors coalesced formerly separate ethnic groups into many of the currently federally recognized American Indian Nations (Swanton 1928b:33-74). The oral traditions gathered here represent the historical memory of multiple peoples that now acknowledge themselves as the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and the Catawba Indian Nation. It is important to acknowledge that these narratives are amalgamations of many different cultures that have also been influenced by Christianity over time as American Indian communities were forced to convert (Merrell 1983; Swanton 1928b:320-321).

After reading the older ethnographic work, newer published ethnographies and synthetic analyses were read to continue developing an understanding and refine the initial thematic outline of the exhibit (e.g., Fariello 2013; Hudson 1976; Lankford 2007, 2011a, 2011b). Once the initial thematic outline was finished, I reached out to four American Indian representatives to ask for their possible collaboration and opinions on the themes thus far. Three of the contacts were representatives of the Muscogee (Creek), Catawba Indian, and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations, and the last was a representative of the Chickasaw Nation who often works with museums. Three of the four potential cultural advisors responded and agreed to be continued contacts for the exhibition. In their initial feedback on an exhibit utilizing oral traditions to examine Mulberry as a place filled with meaning, they were excited and encouraging, as well as filled with words of caution on certain topics and artifacts to be avoided. They were
later consulted again with a draft exhibit script. More information on the collaborative process will be detailed in Chapter Three.

In this chapter I utilize documented oral traditions and the objects and landscape features found at Mulberry to show the ways that these aspects are entangled and contribute to creating meaning-laden places. Entanglement observes that people are reliant on other people, people are reliant on things, things are reliant on people, and things are reliant on other things (Hodder 2016:13-14). Reliance in entanglement refers to the creation and continuation of life cycles. Communities are constituted of many different people who live and work together and learn from one another. Traditions and practices are passed down from generation to generation through oral histories documenting the mundane and spiritual aspects of daily life. Members of the community learn from others about the tools, tactics, and ceremonies they need to survive, as well as the social norms and spiritual influences of the community. The people then rely on ceremonies or tools in order to maintain the community. Tools, like lithic points and pottery, rely on people, to be made and used, as well as on other material, from which they are created. Ceremonies are also reliant on tools used in them and the people who perform them, as well as any non-human entity that ceremonies may call upon. Things and human beings work together in such a way that one aspect can never be fully isolated; hence, the use of the term entangled.

By working with documented oral traditions as close to the sources as I could manage, I have attempted to stitch together the similarities and highlight the differences between these three Nations, and use those aspects to interpret the
importance of materials and features found at the Mulberry site. All of the material and features can be understood in terms of physical, social, and spiritual placement. Physical placement addresses what resources are available and the utilitarian aspects of a community associated with objects or features, as well as places of social and spiritual significance. Social placement looks at the ways in which people place themselves among others in the community, the ways that families are structured, the ways the community interacts with people beyond themselves, and the ways objects and features help to establish these roles. Spiritual placement addresses the ways that people see themselves within the cosmos and the objects or features that either recreate or remind people of their place in the cosmos. Each of these aspects are interconnected and come together to create meaning-laden spaces.

The following interpretations were accomplished by examining a number of different material aspects of life at Mulberry. This chapter discusses the natural and built landscapes of Mulberry, organic material, lithic tools, and pottery as they relate to the ethnographic and oral histories of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Muscogee (Creek), and Catawba Indian Nations. Oral histories are combined to interpret the impact beliefs may have had on the people of Mulberry. This interpretation is then adapted into the exhibit script detailed in Chapter Three.
Natural and Built Environments

The environment may seem to hold an abstract part in place-making, but the setting of a community encompasses everything about the place. Where people are determines the physical aspects of place-making, such as where sources of clay, stone, wood, and medicines may be found, and the kinds of plants and animals found on the landscape. In this way the natural environment helps to create a foundation for a place from which other aspects of community to be discussed in this chapter build. The environment additionally holds its own spiritual aspects through an understanding of the divisions of the cosmos and the ways in which communities reinforce their beliefs through the use of built environmental elements.

An important aspect of built environments is that they are community-created. For example, ceremonial mounds do not just come to be on the landscape: they are deliberately built by the community. The fact that built environments are built creates another social sphere that comes from their creation. Socially, the creation of mounds establishes memories of that creation. People working together to build something remember who helped them to build the structure, abnormal events that occurred during the time of construction, and general events that occurred around the mound construction. These memories can become stories reminisced about to younger generations and create a local social connection to the mound’s creation. The natural environment, for the sake of this document, reflects elements that would likely exist without human contact: natural resources and the general makeup of the landscape.
*Built environments*, on the other hand, are elements of the landscape culturally created, such as mounds, plazas, and structures. All of these elements are understood and will be discussed in terms of cultural heritage and oral histories.

This section is broken into the natural and built environments of Mulberry. First, the natural environment subsection discusses the placement of Mulberry along the river and close to other mound towns, as well as the importance of the earth’s place in the cosmos. The built environment subsection discusses the mounds, plazas, palisades, structures, and cemeteries that make up a town and how they contribute to physical, social, and spiritual placement.

**The Natural Environment**

Aspects of the landscape are more than just physical markers in a community, they are constantly interacted with in social and spiritual ways. From stories about events that happened in specific places to the community creation of built environments, the landscape holds the community’s history and reiterates it to those who remember and pass down those stories. A community’s beliefs on the significance of places were no doubt considered at the time of the initial settlement and such aspects of the setting continue to be significant in ceremonies and general interaction with the environment. Continual interaction with the environment reiterates a society’s cultural meanings in everyday life.

The town of Mulberry sat on a floodplain terrace at the intersection of the Wateree River and a perennial, navigable creek in Kershaw County, central South
Carolina (Figure 1.3). Through time, we presume that ten mounds (two large platform and eight small) were constructed on the terrace that had already been occupied for some generations. A cemetery and possible village neighborhood were utilized to the south of Mound A. Another residential neighborhood stretched north-eastward from the mound precinct along a slightly elevated ridge. By the end of its occupation the mound precinct appears to have been enclosed by a wooden palisade. Undoubtedly a canoe landing fronted the town on the Wateree River. Trails in the floodplain and a major trail along the second terrace a mile away on the east side of the floodplain connected Mulberry to other locations and people. In a later re-occupation of the site, an apparent mica workshop was built several hundred meters east of the mound precinct.

Some of the reasons for choosing a place to settle certainly included physical aspects of place such as available resources; location on transportation routes; and proximity to ancestral towns, allies, and enemies. Mulberry’s location on the river affords good floodplain soil for agriculture, access to fish and shellfish, attraction for terrestrial food resources and plant foods, and a method of transportation. The nearby availability of raw material such as clay, stone, and plants created access to the resources needed to make tools, eat food, and create medicine. Most of these resources surrounding the town were communal property accessible by all members of the community.

The choice of where to settle a town would have been influenced by connections to other communities on the landscape, such as ancestral communities, allies, and even
enemies. It is not uncommon for Mississippian communities to shift to nearby locations over time, sometimes even moving back to re-occupy old centers (Williams and Shapiro 1990:127). Presumably the reasons for short moves, such as across the river, depended at least in part on existing connections to the landscape, such as knowledge of the desired resources and a history of connection to the place. Mulberry was situated within easy walking distance of the contemporaneous and earlier Mississippian towns of Adamson (38KE11) and Belmont Neck (38KE6). Both of these sites are located within 8 km of the Mulberry site (Hudson and Tesser 1994:216), with the Adamson site located approximately 6.4 km upstream (Hudson and Tesser 1994:212) and the Belmont Neck site located approximately 4.8 km downstream. Adamson was the most important mound center during the preceding Middle Mississippian period, and Belmont Neck is the earliest mound town in the area. These communities are older than Mulberry and were inhabited sequentially with periods of overlap between each (Cable 2000:6-7).

The proximity and overlap of the three mound towns suggests that as a town overpopulated, younger people may have moved and created associated town centers, or daughter communities. “[D]aughter communities were commonly populated by individuals who...were disenfranchised from agricultural land in the main towns due to increased population pressure” (Cable 2000:1). Inhabited by the younger generations, daughter towns typically thrived and grew while the older town center often fell into disrepair (Cable 2000:4), effectively transferring the town center to the daughter community over time. The localized movement of mound town centers suggests that the location of Mulberry would have been chosen, in part, because of a long-standing
connection to the area and older town centers. In order to begin understanding anything about the community who lived at the Mulberry site, it helps to start with why this particular place may have been chosen by a community.

The natural world is an influential aspect of the ways that people imbue places with meaning. Physically, a community needs to settle in places that have the resources they need to survive. All of the artifacts and lifeways I discuss rely on the natural world’s resources to sustain them. Resource availability places people physically, out of necessity, but also extends to placing people socially through divisions of labor: who interacts with particular aspects of the natural world, and when. Historically, women typically worked with clay resources (needed for pottery), cultivated crops throughout the growing season, and cooked meals. Men’s role involved providing meat by hunting, building structures, and protecting the community (Hudson 1976:264-268). The availability of resources helps to place people through necessary interaction with the natural world to survive. Understanding how to schedule and use resources is passed down from generation to generation.

The surrounding environment of a town was communally owned and used, creating a space where agriculture and hunting exemplified significant social spaces on the landscape. Although individual fields around a community were managed by family groups, ownership remained communal (Hudson 1976:295). The division of labor in the fields creates a physical representation of the family in the work a community accomplishes in the fields and creates a space where stories can be passed from generation to generation while families work together. Hunting also creates a social
space through a bonding experience among men. Men move to live with their wives when they are married, but participating in the rituals and practice of hunting creates a place for comradery to foster. Because work was organized along kinship, gender, and age groups, working in these groups helped bind families to each other and the community as a whole, and stressed the complementary nature of the different groups. Through interactions with the natural landscape, social aspects of the community were built and reinforced.

People have to interact with the land for resources, but those resources also have to be respected and maintained by a community properly taught to do so. People are taught their roles and how to properly maintain balance in the natural world by more experienced members of the community. The physical setting of place is given meaning through stories that teach about the cosmos and people’s place within it (Basso 1996b).

The Earth-Diver creation stories are an important starting point in understanding the makeup of the natural world. This creation story will be discussed in more depth later in the discussion on pottery, but to briefly summarize here, the world began as the Upper and Beneath Worlds. The Upper World consists of the sky, while the Beneath World is characterized by water (Lankford 2011a:54-105). Ancestral animals created the Middle World as a place to live and rest between the two. Clay recovered from the Beneath World was used to create the landmass that constitutes the Middle World where human beings live. Each of the four corners of the landmass were secured and the original landmass was inhabited by the ancestral animals (Lankford 2011a:106-107).
The creation of pottery and other clay resources can be seen as a re-creation of the Middle World. By taking clay from the Earth and using it to create vessels for food, drink, storage, and ceremonies, people are reminded of their place on the Middle World and how the Middle World came to be created. This reminisce can occur during both the initial creation of clay objects and in their later use.

The creation of clay objects is not the only way in which one can be reminded of the creation of the Middle World. In the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians Nation’s retellings of the Earth Diver story, when the ancestral buzzard is sent to check whether the land is dry he flies too close to the wet earth, creating the mountains where the Cherokee people later settled (Mooney 1902:239). This account creates a tangible connection between a people and the creation of the world in which they currently live. The ancestral buzzard’s creation of the place where the Cherokee came to settle ties them directly both to the sacredness of the land they live on, but also ties the community directly to their sacred history.

The threefold division of the cosmos creates different areas of the natural world that need to be treated differently. Animals associated with the sky and water tend to be attached to the respective realms. In the Muscogee (Creek) Nation tradition, animals that move between realms, such as snakes and flying squirrels, tend to be revered and are not typically consumed (Hudson 1976:165; Swanton 1928a:518-519). Hunting and food preparation are tied closely to understanding the divisions of the cosmos and humans acknowledging their place in it. Both hunting and food preparation will be discussed in more detail in the next section on organic and lithic material.
Beyond the threefold division of the cosmos, the Earth-Diver creation stories highlight a connection to the cardinal directions through the hanging of the Middle World at four corners. Although different Nations and clans associate the cardinal directions differently, each direction is usually associated with a color and a facet of life. In Swanton’s account of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, he notes that:

The circuit is always sinistral, or contraclockwise, and according to the best information I could get it usually begins with the north and ends with the east because the east is associated with life or the renewal of it. According to one informant, however, it ended with the south, and there may have been variations in the formulae because the colors attached to these points are admitted to vary. One of my best informants stated that they were either: North (honeta), green; west (akālatkā), red; south (wahāla), black; and east (hāsosa), white; or else north, red; west, green; south, black; east, white [Swanton 1928a:623].

Cardinal direction color associations vary by community, but the association between east and west as representatives of life and death, respectively, seems to be common (Hudson 1976:344; Lankford 2007:24; Swanton 1928a:624). When people fell ill, their souls were sometimes thought to wander and needed to be called back for “[i]f a person’s soul went all the way east, and thence to the west, the person would die” (Hudson 1976:344). The cardinal directions are invoked in ritual and medicinal ceremonies as embodiments of the ways of life that each tradition ascribed to the directions (Hudson 1976:132; Swanton 1928a:623-624). In this way, the directions
become tangible parts of the landscape imbued with meaning. The way houses, burials, or other built landscapes are arranged often acknowledge directional meaning. Directional meanings are also often invoked in rituals.

Combining the understanding of cardinal directions and a threefold understanding of the universe, it becomes likely that the placement of Mulberry in relation to the Wateree River was no accident. The Wateree River currently lies west of the mound area, but due to meander expected in Inner Coastal Plains and Mulberry’s position at a bend in the river it is certain that the Wateree used to be situated more to the west in the past, apparent through the fact that the river is currently eroding away Mound A. The west is the cardinal direction often associated with the travel of souls after death. The Beneath World, and so water, is associated with death. The mound and village area’s placement to the east of the river may have symbolized a kind of acknowledgement of the path of souls after death across the river.

Mulberry is also located just below the Fall Line, a natural travel route for people and animals that provides access to material from both Coastal Plain and Piedmont areas. The river and the surrounding land provided needed resources in agricultural land, plant and animal habitats, as well as sources of stone and clay. That ancestral towns lie nearby within easy walking or canoeing distance suggest that this area has provided resources for many generations. These aspects of the landscape came together to create a community that would be able to provide for itself for many generations while maintaining necessary social and spiritual connections to their history.
Physical, social, and spiritual connections to the land extend from natural environments into built environments. Wesson (1998:96) notes that built environments can be “seen as a cosmic model, replicating the order and divisions structuring the universe, society, space, and time.” In this way the creation of a community becomes a direct reflection of the world and history of the people who live there. Community creation can be seen through the construction and use of mounds, plazas, palisades, structures, and cemeteries at Mulberry.

Mound and plaza complexes are a staple of Mississippian sites (Kidder 2004:514; Knight 2006:421). Mound precinct plazas are large public areas with little to no evidence of domestic occupation or archaeological features (Kidder 2004:515-516). Plazas, which were used for a variety of social functions and ritual ceremonies, were often flanked by one or more mounds (Kidder 2004:516). Plazas served as gathering places and places of public theater. Platform mounds are elevated earthen platforms that may hold the residences of elite people or ritual structures. Some platform mounds include burials of special people and objects. Residency on mounds created a physical placement of elite and priests on a higher area that undoubtedly reflected a higher social status in the community. Palisades around the mound precinct or ceremonial areas reinforced the idea that sacred spaces are somewhat separate from everyday spaces. A palisade is a wall that separates one area from another, and while the mound and plaza area may have been a common area for the community to gather, a mound precinct palisade can serve as a reminder of entering a ceremonial space outside of the residential areas of
the town. The residential areas would have been filled with structures used for housing, gathering, and storage. Cemeteries or other places of burial would have been located within or near the residential areas, as well.

Mound and plaza complexes are one of the most iconic indicators of a Mississippian town. The Muskogee-language term for mounds, ekvn-like, roughly translates to “earth placed,” “earth sitting,” or “earth dwelling” (Knight 2006:422). Because mounds are created from elements of the natural world, they connect with the earthen Middle World: “The ‘earth’ invoked here is the cosmological world concept, the earth island, an idea highly charged with symbolic associations in native southeastern belief systems” (Knight 2006:422). Mounds with flat, squared tops may directly represent the Middle World as it is conceived in oral traditions (Knight 2006:429).

Mounds can be understood as a product and reminder of one’s place on the Middle World, a direct recreation of the cosmos.

Mounds can also be utilized as social and political as markers of identity (Wilson 2010:8). Mounds can represent different clans or families, and the addition and removal of mounds can result from changing political climates. The creation and removal of mounds with direct ties to different family groups can reflect the changing social and political standing of those families in the community through time.

Geoarchaeological analyses of mounds show deliberate choices in planning, materials, and construction (See Sherwood and Kidder 2011 for in-depth analysis). The location where a mound is placed commonly shows signs of preparation, including deliberately selected and transported construction materials (Sherwood and Kidder
2011:73-74). Some mounds show that they were constructed quickly, without time for the mound structure to erode internally, while others show clear signs they were constructed in stages, indicating different types of planned construction (Sherwood and Kidder 2011:82). Mounds are carefully and painstakingly created structures that can reflect a connection to the Middle World.

Plazas typically occur around or among mounds in Mississippian contexts (Kidder 2004:516; Lewis et al. 1998:8). Plazas are often areas of little to no archaeological signature due to a lack of present structures (Kidder 2004:516; Lewis et al. 1998:11). While archaeologically bare, these areas are still of great cultural significance. They are inherently social places where people gather and many ritual ceremonies take place (Lewis et al. 1998:11). Whether or not they are flanked by mounds or a palisade, plazas hold social and spiritual significance as meeting places or places of public theater. The plaza is a community center that serves to connect people to the landscape through ceremonial and social gatherings. Social aspects of the plaza include its general function as a gathering place where members of the community come and interact with one another.

A notable ceremony that takes place in the plaza is the Green Corn Busk. Historically, the busk consisted of eight days of ritual preparation before the new green corn could be eaten (Hudson 1976:363-375; Swanton 1928a:546-614). The busk is also a marker of the new year (Swanton 1928a:551). Busk is a time of renewal and repair of any of the buildings in the community that needs reconstructing. The plaza serves as the center stage of this ceremony. It becomes a place of social and spiritual gathering to
prepare and celebrate the new year. The mounds become a focal point during some of
the dances of the ceremony (Knight 2006:425). The mound and plaza complex serves as
a centering point of ceremonies such as the busk and reflects one of the ways a plaza is
used in ritual contexts.

Mound and plaza complexes are often surrounded by palisades. A palisade is a
structure made of wooden posts and gates that encloses or protects an area and is
mostly commonly associated with warfare (Keeley et al. 2007:55-57; Krus 2011:227-
228). Not all palisades are created for militaristic use, but all operate in ways that are
inherently militaristic (Keeley et al. 2007:55-57). The palisade could serve to simply keep
unwanted animals out of certain areas or work as a method of defense (Hudson
1976:213; Lewis et al. 1998:18-19). A physical barrier can also serve as a spiritual
reminder of ceremonially charged spaces as separate from everyday tasks. While
ceremonies and ceremonial areas such as plazas and mounds may be a consistent part
of the community, they are places to be respected and protected: a palisade wall can
help to reinforce that idea.

Palisades are a component and reminder of potential conflict in a community.
While Western notions of warfare imply large-scale drawn-out combat, historically
American Indian ideas of warfare were typically motivated by balance-based revenge
(Hudson 1976:239): a life for a life in order to restore balance. Nonetheless, warfare was
an integral part of male identity. “Young men gained war names—a form of social
honor—by their exploits in warfare. Until they acquired these names they had to
perform menial tasks, tending fires, lighting pipes, and serving other men” (Hudson
Warfare was a form of socialization for men and the palisade walls could have been a means of protection during conflicts with outside groups. Men could work together to defend sacred community areas housed inside the palisade wall and, in doing so, create both safety for their community and social standing for themselves. The palisade walls serve as a reminder of men’s role as the community protectors and as a signifier of the ways in which men can rise in rank among their peers.

Building a palisade is a community-wide project that takes a great deal of time and effort (Krus 2011:237). It becomes a social project that brings the community together in order to accomplish their goals. A community coming together creates spaces imbued with social memory. When someone looks at the palisade they or their ancestors helped to build, stories of the process may come to mind—interesting events that happened during or around the palisade, the people who were involved, events that led to its construction, and/or recent usage of the palisade wall. The social aspect of any community-created project adds a layer of meaning beyond the project’s purpose in the community. Community-built palisades establish a meaning-laden, community-created space that inspire memories when looked at and thought of, and additionally function as a wall or barrier of protection.

Field schools in 2000 and 2002 excavated what is likely a wall trench mound precinct palisade parallel to the creek between Mounds B and C (Wagner 2002). It will take more excavation efforts to understand the exact purpose of the Mulberry palisade, but the placement of the Mulberry palisade suggests it encompasses the mound and
plaza area of the community (Wagner 2002), creating a division between village areas and ceremonial spaces.

While the mounds and mound precinct plaza area were often a focal point of a community, a community is made up of many people and places (Hudson 1976:213). Village spaces are also exceedingly important in understanding a community and the ways that built places are imbued with meaning. Village areas contained public and private buildings for storage, community-use structures, and family households (Hudson 1976:213-216). Buildings were typically constructed by groups of men in the community (Hudson 1976:267; Swanton 1928b:385). Residential homes were often modeled after the cosmos (Wesson 1998:94) in a way that served as creating the cosmos around your family. Structuring family homes after the cosmos creates a consistent reminder of history and the connection to your place and purpose in the cosmos.

The construction of structures may have been the domain of men, but the households themselves were heavily dependent on women.

Each block of houses in the town described by Bartram probably consisted of a household comprising a matrilineage or a segment of a matrilineage. The Creek household (huti) was a matrilineal extended family, consisting of a matron, her daughters, and her unmarried sons. The husbands of the matron and her daughters lived there, but the households with which their allegiance lay were those of their sisters and other matrilineal relatives. The household might also include some aged or dependent members of the matron’s lineage. A large household could include an orphan or one or
more individuals captured in war who had been adopted into the lineage.

Other households in the neighborhood were probably headed by the woman’s sisters and her mother and grandmother, if alive [Hudson 1976:213].

In this way, community layouts and buildings are more than just homes—they are family units. Clusters of families create social bonds and place women and unmarried men within their family unit based on their mother. Men who marry into the family are placed, physically and socially, in association with the family of their wife, but they, too, define themselves by their mother’s family. A matrilocal system creates community units that are also family units in the layout of the community.

When building a house, people situate themselves within both the cosmos and their family. The material used to create a structure connects the people building it to the land from which the material came. Building your house near your matrilineal family members signifies your place within that lineage. No matter where a structure is built or its purpose, its creation as a reflection of the cosmos places people within their place in the Middle Earth. All of these aspects come together to connect and remind people of the physical, social, and spiritual influences on their life and the places in which they associate themselves.

A typical Mississippian structure has been documented on the Mulberry site (Cable et al. 1999:106-107). This structure was uncovered at Mulberry in 1985, and relocated and excavated fully between 1990 and 1998 (Figure 2.1). Structure 1 is square with a door on the southwestern corner, facing the mound precinct. It was built with a gable
Figure 2.1. Map of Structure 1 at Mulberry Site (Cable et al. 1999).
roof supported by four central support posts. It had an entry vestibule marked by a shallow floor depression and screen with a nearby exterior burial and two possible interior burial pits. The walls of the structure were lined with bench beds. This building, which has been radiocarbon dated to around 1680 CE, is typical of Mississippian structures (Cable et al. 1999:106-107).

An area near the river excavated at Mulberry in 1952 revealed a number of burials. While this was referred to as a village area (Kelly 1974:83-93), it may be another important aspect of built environments: a cemetery. While death is a topic not typically addressed to non-members in many American Indian communities, it is important to note the ways that burial can maintain family ties. One of the ways that families maintain a lineage is through residential burial, either within or near residential structures. During the Mississippian period people were often buried in the floor of dwellings. Residential burials “embrace the social significance of keeping the dead close to the living” through burials under homes or shared community spaces (McAnany 2011:136-137). Burial in homes or shared spaces creates a social memory that ties those who have died to that space and those living people who use that space (McAnany 2011:137). By burying a family member beneath the floor of a house, a social and spiritual memory of that person becomes an integral part of that space. Matrilineal ties can be reaffirmed in death through burial in a cemetery plot near or with other members of the mother’s family, even if they had not been living in that area as an adult (McAnany 2011:138). In this way, too, familial ties are reinforced through proximity to one’s family continuing after death.
Community layouts create physical, social, and spiritual placement through many different ways. Archaeologists finding clusters of housing can associate the buildings with oral traditions and ethnography to learn how smaller clusters of people organized themselves. In the Muscogee (Creek) Nation example above, matrilocal family clusters were common elements of the built community. This understanding takes an archaeological discovery from finding buildings, to finding a familial community within the town. Historically, buildings were constructed by men for their women-centered families. The structures and other built areas reflect the cosmological understanding of the community. Residential burials also signal familial or community connections to public and private places. The use of each of these areas place people socially and spiritually within their community and their family through signifying their place in the community and cosmos. The physical placement of built environments creates social connections among and across families in the community, whether through familial residential areas or mounds associated with different families of importance within the community. Spiritually built landscapes are often reflections or recreations of the cosmos, a constant reminder of one’s place in the Middle World and the ways in which humans interact with or separate themselves from the Upper and Beneath Worlds.

Overall, natural and built environments both create the place in place-making and are an element of that place. A community no doubt chooses an area to settle by the availability of local resources necessary for the community to survive, but this livable area covers a wide territory. Where within that livable area the community is built can reflect cultural values and beliefs. Mulberry’s placement with waterways on two sides
suggests a connection to water as a source of life, as well as travel and trade. The fact that the built environment closest to the junction of the two waterways is the ceremonial area deepens this idea. When you step back from these general observations and add in the cultural heritage of documented and still-living communities you find the ways in which the world was understood and how the placement of the community and its location and built environments reflects a community’s beliefs about the cosmos. Community layout creates a place imbued with the cultural heritage of a people reflected from the time of its inception to today—a layout that would have been understood by the people who lived and worked within the community. The community layout would have continuously reminded the inhabitants of their place in world and the cosmos at large.

Organic Material and Lithic Artifacts

While not the most abundant type of material recovered, organic matter such as animal bone, seeds, burnt wood, and shell are found commonly among archaeological collections from Mulberry. These organic materials provide insight into many different practices of the people who inhabited Mulberry during the Mississippian period, including agriculture, food preparation, hunting, and medicine. Gail Wagner has and is currently studying the paleoethnobotanical aspects of the site and several small faunal analyses have been completed (Gail Wagner, personal communication 2019). Because it
is almost impossible to discuss lithic tools without their association to hunting and agriculture, I include stone artifacts in this section of discussion. Stone tools are not common at Mulberry. Many of the lithic artifacts recovered are made of non-local raw materials and their purpose is currently unknown by archaeologists (Chris Judge, personal communication 2018). This section discusses organic material and lithic artifacts in relation to agriculture, medicine, hunting, and food production and consumption.

One of the defining traits of the Mississippian period was the rise of maize (corn) agriculture. Mississippian agriculture was often practiced in river floodplain settings like the one Mulberry occupies. This setting provided access to periodically replenished soils and moisture needed to grow food effectively (Mitchell 1989:20-21). Agriculture, along with hunting, allowed for a community to sustain themselves through food production. Cultivated food production made considering the agricultural value of an area a necessary part of choosing where to create and maintain communities.

Historically, agriculture is heavily associated with women. Women grow and produce food while men hunt and fish for food (Hudson 1976:264-268), although the entire community is often involved in the maintenance of fields. Historically, the land surrounding a community was controlled communally with sections divided and maintained by matrilineal groups (Hudson 1976:295). In this way, the plot of land a person farms becomes a reflection of both their community and family heritage, a physical place that enacts social place in the community. Men conducted the initial labor involved in tilling and preparing the land before women planted and maintained the
crops (Hudson 1976:295; Swanton 1928b:385). Children and old women who were unable to otherwise participate in the maintenance of the crops helped by shooing away pests (Hudson 1976:298). The proximity of all ages working together in the fields allowed for the passage of history and reinforced familial bonds by working together and passing down knowledge through stories from one generation to the next.

Historically, the complementary roles taken by men and women of every age create a social structure that maintains balance within the community. Balance is achieved through the division of labor of people of different ages and genders undertaking specific jobs that are vital to the community at large. Through division of labor all the community’s necessities are cooperatively run and maintained to the benefit of the community. The complementary roles utilized to prepare and maintain fields of crops also reinforced the necessity for a community to work together in order to sustain themselves.

This collaborative space creates a reflection of social connections in that all of the community works together through their family units to create food from the land surrounding the community. Plots of land became reflections of one’s family and, while primarily the work of women, men and children have roles in the process that are just as important to the production of food for the community and creating physical spaces of social significance. The crops that are planted also connect back to individual people and the symbols of life in oral tradition. Historically, maize, most notably, becomes more than a crop: maize is a connection to the sustained life of a community.
All three Nations associate maize with life in their recorded oral traditions. Among the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians and Muscogee (Creek) Nations’ oral traditions, agriculture is associated directly with women in that maize and beans were originally created from women’s bodies. In the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians tradition two boys watch their mother, Selu, create maize and beans from her body and decide they must kill her because she is a witch. Selu asks that once she has died the boys clear a large patch of ground and drag her body within it seven times so they may have plentiful maize in the future. Instead, the boys clear only seven small spots of ground, which causes maize to only be able to grow in certain places over the entire world (Mooney 1902:244-245). Similarly, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation people recount the origins of maize and beans with a child seeing their grandmother create maize and beans from her body. After the grandmother learns the child knows, she asks him to leave for a while but to lock her in the cabin and set it on fire first. When the child returns to the land many years later he finds it growing with many types of maize and beans (Lankford 2011a:155). The Catawba Indian Nation oral traditions connect maize to life in a different way. After a flood that consumed the land, people were living in trees above the water to survive. When a dove returned to the trees with maize in its mouth, people knew that there had to be dry land they could now return to (Speck 1934:23).

Through use and oral traditions, maize, and the agricultural process connected to it, became a sign of life that connects to the human experience. The fact that Catawba Indian, Muscogee (Creek), and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations’ oral traditions
that encompass agriculture all specifically highlight maize show the importance of the crop to the community, and so maize was likely important to the people of Mulberry. In the Muscogee (Creek) and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations’ traditions, maize is produced directly from women’s bodies before it becomes something that is planted and grown. In this way, maize is a part of the Nations themselves. Whenever people plant, harvest, or consume maize, they are reminded of the ways in which maize is a signifier of life and directly connected to women. This connection to life creates both a social and spiritual aspect to maize growth and consumption, along with a connection to the places in the community where maize is grown, stored, prepared, and cooked.

Agricultural production imbues places with meaning through its ability to help sustain a community. The community works together to produce and maintain the fields in which crops are planted, creating significant social spaces. Oral traditions tying maize directly to ancestral Catawba Indian, Muscogee (Creek), and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations’ peoples as signs of life create connections to the crops on a deeper level than simply a source of food.

Floral materials found at Mulberry are likely not exclusively associated with food-producing agriculture. Some recovered botanical material may represent plants used in healing and ritual contexts. Dedicated members of the community were trained in herbal healing, although surely some practices were widely understood by the community. Among the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Muscogee (Creek) Nations, disease has been recorded with animals as the cause, while plants create medicine (Irwin 1992; Mooney 1902:250-252; Swanton 1928a:637-638). Diseases in
Muscogee (Creek) Nation’s traditions are classified by the animals that cause them and the plants that can cure them (Swanton 1928a:639-649). Plants inhabit the communal land that belongs to everyone, so collecting, growing, and using plants would have reinforced the connection between the community and the physical landscape.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nation’s oral tradition, Origin of Disease and Medicine, explains direct actions taken by councils of animals and plants on humans. Bears were unsuccessful in their attempt to reduce the spread of man, but deer were able to threaten men with rheumatism if they did not show respect to the spirit of the deer. Fish and reptiles made themselves a part of nightmares, and many of the other animals created diseases to combat the rise in the human population. Plants stood with men, though, and offered different plants as remedies for each of the diseases created by the animals (Mooney 1902:250-252).

This story teaches that humanity’s connection with the other organisms around their community will never leave them without necessities if the plants and animals are treated correctly. Parameters of respect between humans and other animals or plants also explain how illnesses come about and how they can be cured. Having a tangible connection to illness allows for less fear and the creation of preventative actions and treatments for the illnesses. A community’s awareness of diseases caused by animals reminds the humans of their connection to the world around them and the ways in which mutual respect furthers the health of the community at large.

People are limited by the plants they can use in medicine by the available flora in the area. Finding the plants they needed was often a spiritual journey during which one
trusts in their ability to communicate with plants and follow that communication to the
needed plant’s location (Crow 2001). The promise made from plants to humans makes
possible for this spiritual connection to exist in the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
Nation’s tradition and creates spiritual pathways from someone seeking medicine to
physical places that contain the plants needed.

Medicine was also a social experience through healers who administered plants,
made into medicines, and healing rituals. Muscogee (Creek) Nation healers had to
complete a series of extended periods of fasting and training (Swanton 1928b:367).
Medicine was often associated with ritual songs and dances that had be administered in
order for the medicine to work (Speck 1934:49-50; Swanton 1928a:636-663). Beyond
individual healing practices, ceremonies used medicine as parts of rites of
intensification, such as the use of Black Drink in the Green Corn Ceremony (Hudson
1976:373). Communal, ceremonial healing reinforced the ties that bound the entire
community together. In most cases, community history, sacred narrative, and important
knowledge were all recounted at these kinds of ceremonies, placing community
members in physical space, social relations, and time. Ceremonial healing served as a
reminder to the community and an intensification of relevant aspects of history most
relevant to the community at the time.

Medicine’s role of purification in rituals allowed for a new start that could help
eliminate anxieties of past issues in moving forward. Community purification ensures
the continued survival of the community, physically and spiritually, through the healing
nature of local plant life. Utilizing plants as medicine also reminds people of the spiritual
promise made from plants to human beings. Treating diseases through plants is a reminder of the autonomy of the natural world beyond humanity. Human beings inhabit the same places as animals and plants, and need to show the flora and fauna respect in order to receive respect in return. The Origin of Medicine story reminds a community that they exist among other living beings in this place they all call home, and those other beings have the capacity to both harm and help humans under the correct circumstances.

Complementary to the traditions concerning plant life is hunting. In the Southeast, no animals were domesticated for food, so hunting remained an important part of the Mississippian subsistence system. Hunting places people physically similar to agriculture in that one must live in areas in which animals are available and people have access to materials with which to hunt. Hunting tools are often made of stone and wood, and people must know the proper ways to create bows and arrows, spear points, deadfall traps, fishing nets, and more in order to hunt. In general, deer were the most common animal hunted, although a wide variety of large and small mammals, birds, fish, and reptiles were all used as food sources. While much of agricultural work was primarily the domain of women, hunting, especially of large mammals, was the domain of men (Hudson 1976:267).

Many of the tools used in hunting were made from wood and stone. Chunks of raw stone were worked down to points with sharp edges that could be attached to wooden spears or arrows and used to pierce flesh (Hudson 1976:39-44). The process of working raw material into sharp-edged tools is referred to as flintknapping. One can
assume that the tradition of flintknapping was passed down socially from elder men to the community’s sons.

Hunts themselves were spiritual and social activities. Although it could be accomplished by a single man, hunting was often a group activity. Because communities had a matrilocal system in which men resided with their wife’s family, some of the men in a town were originally from different communities. Communal hunting helped to bind unrelated men to each other, to the community, and to the place of their new community.

In the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nation’s oral tradition, the origin of hunting comes from the same story as the origin of agriculture. In this story, two boys watch their father go out to gather meat and then their mother gather maize (Mooney 1902:242-245). When they watch their father they find that he has all of the animals concealed behind a stone that he moves in order to kill what he needs, and then recloses. The boys let all of these animals out and create the need to hunt without the promise that they will always be able to find food (Mooney 1902:242-244).

This oral tradition explains the fickle nature of hunting. Groups of men prepared themselves through rituals and customs before leaving together on a hunt (Swanton 1928b:444-446). After a hunt, traditionally, men sacrificed a portion of the fat of a killed deer as an appeasement to the deer’s spirit (Swanton 1928a:516). Among the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nation, this sacrifice is completed in order to keep a hunter from contracting a disease given to them by the deer in retaliation for humanity acting with unchecked dominance towards the other animals (Mooney 1902:251; See medicine
discussion above). Sacrificing portions of killed game and participating in rituals of balance and respect remind human beings of their dependence on the availability of animals and places them in spiritual realms of mutual respect. After all, animals had an autonomy to create diseases if they were not properly respected. Respect created a relation between people and animals that is unlikely to lead to overhunting a species to extinction.

Deer are associated directly with the Middle World, and hence are considered fair game for hunting and consumption. Taboos about food reveal many of the spiritual connections associated with different animals and human beings. Animals directly associated with the Upper or Beneath Worlds were avoided killing at all, let alone eaten. Animals associated with the Upper World included birds of prey and birds of the night, such as “eagles, ravens, crows, buzzards, swallows, bats, and every species of owl” (Swanton 1928a:518). Snakes were commonly associated with the Beneath World (Hudson 1976:165). Some animals were avoided due to fear that the traits associated with them would transfer to those who consumed them. Muscogee (Creek) Nation peoples avoided eating animals they considered sluggish, clumsy, or unclean, as well as predators that ate those avoided animals (Swanton 1928a:518-519). Food-restricting taboos place people spiritually in the sense that one acknowledges that people (who live in the Middle World) should not consume animals associated with other realms. These taboos also reveal a level of transference between humans and animals through consuming food. The ramifications of consuming non-traditional food can be further
seen through oral traditions of people moving between human and animal states through the consumption of food.

The origin of bears in the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nation’s oral tradition comes from a human boy who discovers he can live off the food in the woods (Mooney 1902:325-236). He convinces his parents and town to fast and join him in the woods and they do. When the next town hears of this plan they try to dissuade the family but “the messengers found them already on the way, and were surprised to notice that their bodies were beginning to be covered with hair like that of animals, because for seven days they had not taken human food and their nature was changing” (Mooney 1902:236). The family’s abandonment of human food is given as the main reason for their change in appearance into what would become bears. Similarly a number of Muscogee (Creek) and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations’ oral traditions tell variations on a story in which a man eats a snake egg and becomes a snake or other reptile-like creature himself that night (Lankford 2011a:83-86). Food-restricting taboos place people spiritually within their role as human beings in the Middle World. A lack of food or consumption of something not of this realm or unclean can have significant consequences, including transforming one into an entirely different species. Thus the use and consumption of plants and animals become physical, social, and spiritual markers of the place of humanity in the balance of the cosmos.

Oral traditions surrounding organic material illustrates that humanity is a direct part of the natural world and the ways in which humans interact with plants and animals around the community have the potential to significantly affect them. Plants
and animals are able to hurt or help humanity through parameters of mutual respect for one another. Members of the community can alter themselves or others through the consumption of different foods associated with animals that are associated with other realms of the cosmos. In this way, food becomes a marker of humanity. Maize and beans are the foods most clearly associated with the survival of humanity through stories of maize’s creation from the bodies of women or as a sign of the ending of a great flood. Hunting and agriculture have social aspects that create closer communities, and maintain the communities’ survival through the delineation of tasks.

Pottery

The most abundant artifacts found at Mulberry are ceramic vessel fragments (sherds). These sherds vary in size and decoration, but represent the importance of pottery as an element of daily life. For example, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation peoples made pottery for storage, to carry water, to cook food, to make gaming stones, smoking pipes, and for ceremonial use. They traded and continued to make clay pottery up into the 1900s (post removal times) (RaeLynn Butler 2018, personal communication). Pottery making is traditionally associated with women, (Hudson 1976:264) although this is not always the case: according to Catawba Indian Nation tradition, men helped collect wood to fire the pottery and accompanied women to dig clay, while children progress from scraping to burnishing to creating full pieces of pottery as a rite of passage. Men were also associated with clay production in the Catawba Indian Nation by creating pipes
(Winnonah Haire 2018, personal communication). The Catawba Indian Nation has an unbroken tradition of creating pottery that both men and women have maintained to this day (Blumer 2004:2). Pottery is an aspect of daily life that holds physical, social, spiritual, and economic value. The ways that pottery is ascribed value can be seen through the physical production and the designs imprinted on the vessels.

Ceramic production starts physically with the availability of clay deposits. Pottery clay sources are aspects of the local landscape that are respected and maintained over time, as illustrated in the translation of a life story told by a Catawba Indian Nation member:

For a long time back clay has been dug, now the hole is big. When the clay is dug put it in a bag to take home. Put it in the ground in the clay hole until you leave at noon-time. When you depart put some earth back in the hole to fill it up. Then leave, go home [Speck 1934:72].

By offering some of what was gathered back to the clay source, the gatherer is sure to only take what they need. This act of respect maintains a genuine spiritual connection with the earth and helps ensure continued availability of clay. Clay sources are part of their physical spaces and heavily relied on for ceramic production, but they are also spiritual places that the community feels and expresses a connection to.

The gathering and formation of clay into pottery extends further into spiritual placing because of clay’s connection to the creation of the Middle World. The Middle World is the realm of the universe where human beings live. The other two realms are the Upper World and the Beneath World. The Upper World is associated with the sun
and sky, whereas the Beneath World is associated with water (Lankford 2011a:54-105). A creation story type classified as Earth-Diver myths (Lankford 2011a:106-110) occurs in a number of American Indian communities, including documentation among Muscogee (Creek) and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations’ peoples. In these myths, animals gather where the Upper World and the Beneath World meet and look for a way to create land. They send various creatures into the water to recover something that could be formed into a resting place on the water, with only one creature successfully returning with clay that is then molded into land on the surface of the water (Lankford 2011a:106-107; Mooney 1902:239-240). In most of the recorded Muscogee (Creek) Nation’s creation stories the crawfish gathers the clay (Lankford 2011a:106-107), while in the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nation stories the water-beetle gathers the clay (Mooney 1902:239).

Gathering clay and forming it into pottery can be seen as a reenactment of the creation stories. Pottery production along with the necessity of the process to be taught to the next generation of makers allows for a pedagogical opportunity to teach connections to local places, connections to the cosmos, and utilitarian production. Women, who are themselves closely associated with creation due to their capability of childbirth, historically made pottery (Hudson 1976:264). Creating pottery then becomes a reminder of the maker’s spiritual place in the cosmos. This association takes something that could otherwise be considered purely utilitarian, or made simply for convenience of use, and directly ties it to oral traditions and people’s placement in the cosmos.
After the clay is collected and tempered, the clay is rolled into ropes and coiled onto a base to build up the walls of a vessel. The vessel’s walls are then smoothed with a polished stone, or burnishing stone, and are ready to be decorated. Possible decorative tools include sharp sticks for incising and wooden paddles used to stamp on designs (Fariello 2013:21-22). The burnishing stones used to smooth sides of vessels are often considered prized possessions, handed down among women from one generation to the next (Fariello 2013:21). The passage of burnishing stones illustrates a social component of ceramic production as a family affair. The tools and techniques of ceramic production must be taught from one person or generation to the next, keeping tempering recipes within families. Tools and recipes become part of a family’s identity and the vessel directly relays that family identity to others. Trading pots for other goods becomes an exchange of physical and social nature, due to every family’s unique pottery recipes signifying their connection to their land and family.

The theme of creation continues into the decorative motifs present in and on clay vessels. Design motifs on Mississippian-period pottery, as well as shell gorgets, often depict centering motifs, sacred geometry, or the cosmos (Dye 2011:110; King 2011:280; Lankford 2007:10, 2011b:271-272). “Thirteenth- and fourteenth-century motifs include interlocking scrolls, ogees, sunbursts, cross-in-circles, nested triangles and circles, and alternating terraces that are often painted, incised, or engraved” (Dye 2011:110). These motifs, along with looped squares (Lankford 2007:21-24) and swirl-crosses (Lankford 2011b) create continued opportunities to teach children about the cosmological system and their place in it. The looped square in particular has been understood as the Middle
World: the four looped corners depict the four directions and their particular powers and embodiments (Lankford 2007:24). A similar four-swirled corner motif is seen in the filfot cross, which depicts the center and its connection to the four directions and is one of the most common motifs among Mulberry vessels (Judge 1987).

While much of the production of vessels is historically attributed to women, paddles used to impress stamped designs may be attributed to men as men are traditionally associated with woodworking (Swanton 1946:555-564). The combined division of labor of men and women in the creation of pottery establishes a process that incorporates the community at large in both the production and use of ceramics. Men and women perform different but complementary roles, all of which are needed to create a working community, just as men and women come together to create a finished pot. Vessels, especially food storage or cooking vessels, facilitate further social interactions through everyday use. Their physical necessity in food production and storage creates social spaces. Pottery facilitates cooking, storing, eating, and drinking every day and during ritual ceremonies or celebrations. Pottery becomes a physical tool in interactions that place people socially among the community.

The centering motif in particular comes full circle in understanding pottery production as a reenactment of the creation of the Middle World. Decorations like this associate users with their place in the cosmos after the vessel’s initial production, during its subsequent use. Thus, pottery can be seen as a grounding point for people in both the specific area they live and their place in the cosmos. Creating pottery from clay is reminiscent of the creation of the Middle World, giving life as a woman does through
childbirth, and relies heavily on oral teaching traditions, availability of resources to create, and centering decorative motifs. Ceramic vessels connect people to place physically through necessity of use and the availability of clay, tempers, and tools. Pottery-making places people socially through the ways that the craft is taught and recipes are passed down among generations. Family temper recipes are imbued with identity and their use connects people to the families who created them. The roles of men and women in the creation and application of designs on the vessels socially connect the community at large in the creation of vessels and place people in distinct but complementary roles. And, pottery places people spiritually through pottery’s symbolic connection to the creation of the Middle World and use of decorative motifs that illustrate a connection to the cosmos and one’s place in it.

One is connected to place through availability of materials and tools, as well as the spaces available to do the work associated. Without these available resources, one can assume pottery would be scarcer than it is on the Mulberry site because it could not have been regularly reproduced. The creation of pots requires physical spaces for materials and creation, social interaction through teaching pottery making and opportunities for other pedagogical moments, and spiritually reenacts elements of the creation of the world. Ceramic vessels can be used in a variety of ways, utilitarian and ritual, that remind and reinforce the physical, social, and spiritual elements imbued in the vessels.
Summary

This chapter utilized recorded oral traditions and ethnographic sources from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Muscogee (Creek), and Catawba Indian Nation peoples to interpret the ways that the location of Mulberry enacted a physical, social, and spiritual place imbued with meaning among the community living there. Natural and built environments, organic and lithic material, and pottery were all interpreted through this lens. Natural environments reflect the physical and spiritual place of Mulberry on the Middle World and adjacent to river, as well as the social placement of nearby mound towns of overlapping inhabitance. Built environments make up the town center and connect people through the use of elements such as mounds, plazas, palisades, and structures, but also connects people socially through the work need to create these elements of the town. Organic and lithic materials represent the ways agriculture, medicine, hunting and food consumption contribute to daily life, and pottery reflects the ways in which families pass down experiences and reflect the cosmos in decorative designs.

In Chapter Three I couple this interpretation with American Indian collaborative feedback in order to create the text and general outline of a museum exhibit on the Mulberry site.
CHAPTER THREE: EXPRESSING A PLACE

In Chapter Two, I discussed the features and material components of the Mulberry site and the ways in which those materials connect to the oral traditions of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Muscogee (Creek), and Catawba Indian Nations. That interpretation provided the basis from which the following exhibit script is built. In this chapter I describe the collaborative process utilized to create the exhibit panel text. I then outline the five sections of the proposed Mulberry exhibit to eventually be displayed at the Native American Studies Center in Lancaster, South Carolina. Because work on the Mulberry site is ongoing and I had access to only a fraction of the artifacts from the site in my thesis work, this chapter will not be a full outline of the exhibit. Instead I include the collaboratively created panel text and suggest artifacts and interactives for each section to be finalized based on the full catalogue of the site.

Collaboration

After I formulated a general idea of the artifacts and direction in which this exhibit script could head, I sent an email to four different possible cultural advisors. Three of the possible cultural advisors contacted were representatives of the Muscogee (Creek),
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and Muscogee (Creek) Nations, and the final possible cultural advisor was a representative from the Chickasaw Nation who has worked closely with museum exhibits before. Each possible cultural advisor was sent an outline of my exhibit concept that stated I would be using oral traditions to connect archaeological material with the ways that communities create meaning-laden spaces. Three of the possible cultural advisors responded with feedback and enthusiastically agreed to continue to be consulted on this project: RaeLynn Butler, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Manager, Historic and Cultural Preservation Department; LaDonna Brown, Chickasaw Nation, Director-Research and Cultural Interpretation and Heritage Preservation, Department of Culture and Humanities; and Wenonah Haire, DMD, Catawba Indian Nation, Executive Director, Catawba Cultural Center.

Initial feedback included excitement about the concept, a warning against using artifacts associated with burial, and a note that not all oral traditions are acceptable to share outside of one’s Nation. Keeping this feedback in mind, I moved forward to interpret the artifacts and features that were most abundantly noted in order to propose an exhibit script. A few months after the initial contact a draft of the exhibit script was sent to each of the willing cultural advisors. Their feedback is reflected in some of the Nation-specific information as well as through general edits for clarity (LaDonna Brown, personal communication 2018; RaeLynn Butler, personal communication 2018; Wenonah Haire, personal communication 2018).
I divide the exhibit script into five sections generally summarized as the introduction, agriculture and hunting, connecting material, connecting features/structures, and the conclusion. These section titles are for organizational purposes and will not appear as titles within the final exhibit. Each of these sections has three panels of text except for connecting material, which has four. Each of these panels are a large poster-like display of information. Individual panels will be labeled in this document as “Panel #.#,” wherein the number before the decimal is the section and the number after is the order in which those panels are displayed in that section. For example, Panel 1.1 is the first panel in section 1. This numbering system is for organizational purposes within this outline and the panel number will not be a part of the final panels placed on display. Along with the panel information, I explain the general concept I had for each section and the possible objects or interactives that could be used in each section.

**Introduction**

The goal of the introduction of this exhibit is to introduce the Mulberry site and the purpose of the exhibit as a whole. It opens with a title panel.
Panel 1.1

A Place Filled with Meaning:

Understanding the Mulberry Site through Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nation, and Catawba Indian Nation Oral Traditions

After this panel the first full-text panel introduces the site in more detail and introduces the connections to oral traditions:

Panel 1.2

The Mulberry Site

“Mulberry” is the name given to a multi-mound Mississippian-period (1000-1520 CE) town site in Kershaw County, central South Carolina, along the Wateree River. This town was the home of an American Indian community from about 1250-1700 CE, making it one of longest lived-in American Indian towns along the Wateree River.

While archaeologists have not been able to pinpoint exactly what the people who lived on the site called themselves, they are likely to be ancestral to the Muscogee (Creek), Catawba Indian, and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations, all of whom have living descendant communities that remain in or were removed from the Southeast. By connecting the oral traditions of these Nations to the landscape and objects found at Mulberry,
we can learn about the people who lived there and how they created a community filled with meaning.

Oral traditions are histories of the beliefs and values of a community passed through teachings to younger generations. Oral traditions belong to and help to form a community’s values. By linking oral traditions to the artifacts and features discovered at an American Indian site we can learn more about the community who lived there and how they created a meaning-filled place.

Before concluding the introductory section, I thought it would be important to introduce the concept of a structured cosmos and its relation to the world at large:

Panel 1.3

Recreating the Cosmos

According to some Mississippian American Indian oral traditions of the Eastern United States, the world contains at least three different layers, which were inhabited by different ancestral animals. Humans live on the Middle World. According to Muscogee (Creek) and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians oral traditions, the Middle World was land created between the realm of the sky (Upper World) and the realm of water (Beneath World). A creature was sent into the water to find something to create land and returned with clay. In many Muscogee (Creek) Nation traditions this animal was a crawfish, and in Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nation traditions it was a water-beetle. The clay was used to form land hung from the sky at its four corners. In the Eastern Band of Cherokee
Indians tradition, before the land was dry an ancestral buzzard flew too close and the force of its wings created the Appalachian mountain ranges where the Cherokee later came to live.

The Mulberry site is on the corner of an intersection between the Wateree River to the west and a small creek to the north. Directions hold unique colors and associations across different American Indian communities. The Catawba Indian, Muscogee (Creek), and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations all have different associations, but west can be associated with souls’ movement towards the afterlife. A soul’s movement to the west after death at Mulberry would require them to cross the river in the process. Crossing the river is significant because the Beneath World, made of water, is also associated with death.

The town’s placement along the river can serve as a reminder for the community of the different realms of the cosmos and their placement in it.

Because one of the important parts of a successful exhibit is that visitors can move from panel to panel in any order and still have an understanding of the content, these ideas will be repeated throughout the exhibit, but this panel presents the significance of the cosmos on its own. Within this introductory section, maps and photographs of the site feel like the most appropriate exhibited objects. This section attempts to familiarize the visitor with the site and setting, so images that reflect the town will help to immerse people with Mulberry.
Depending on the availability of time and resources, a reconstructed diorama of the town would be a great visual aid to add to the introductory section. This diorama could also be a center point in the room, allowing visitors to see the labeled features of the landscape and town. Reconstructions of the found Structure I and known location of the palisade could also be helpful in creating a full visual of the town. At a minimum, this recreation of the town could be a large photograph with lighted push-buttons beside labels such as ‘Mound A,’ ‘Wateree River,’ ‘Residential Area’ that allow a visitor to highlight the built and natural features of the landscape and to see where these aspects are in relation to one another in the town.

**Agriculture and Hunting**

This second section introduces the complementary roles of men and women and the ways in which they come together to create a functioning community. Women are highlighted in a discussion about the community’s role in agriculture:

**Panel 2.1**

More than a Way of Life

Mulberry was inhabited during what is known as the Mississippian Period (1000-1520 CE). This period is known for the rise of maize (corn) agriculture. Maize and other crops are food, but they are also symbols of life and social experiences. In Muscogee (Creek) and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations’ oral traditions, maize and beans were originally produced directly from the body of a woman, who then transferred the
ability to create maize and beans to the earth for others to grow. In the Catawba Indian Nation’s oral tradition maize is brought by a dove to ancestral people living in the trees surviving a great flood. The maize is taken as a sign that the floods are subsiding and that life is returning to the land below. In all three of these traditions agriculture is not just a way of life, but also a sign of life.

Agriculture is a community activity that brings families together. The land around a town belongs to everyone in the town, but sections are divided by family to be planted. Agriculture is primarily the work of women, who learned to work the same land as their mothers and the other women on their mother’s side of the family. Men help to clear and prepare the land before planting. Children and women too old for physical labor help by shooing away unwanted animals from the fields. Through this joint effort, agricultural fields become places of deep family connections, where stories and traditions are passed down among the generations together at work.

This panel addresses that while agriculture is typically associated with women, working the fields involves the entire community.

The center panel of this section directly addresses the complementary roles of men and women in the community.
Panel 2.2

Complementary Roles

Many southeastern American Indian communities trace their family through their mothers: they are matrilineal societies. Men move from their families to live with their wives, although married men are still considered part of their mother’s family, and not their wife’s. Sons learn from the men on their mother’s side of the family. Sons and daughters are taught different crafts growing up, but the roles of both men and women are equally important in maintaining a functioning community.

Agricultural work is predominately cultivated by women in the community. Women also typically prepare food and create pottery. All of these traditions are taught within families from mothers, grandmothers, or other women on one’s mother’s side to the young women of the family.

Men hunt for meat and defend the community in war. Because historically men move to live with their wife, hunting and war create social environments in which men of different families can bond with one another. Men are also responsible for building structures in the community.

Complimentary gender-based roles work together to create a balanced community.

Finally, this section closes on a panel highlighting men’s roles as hunters.
Panel 2.3

Respect and Honor in the Hunt

The men of a community are most often responsible for hunting and fishing to bring the community meat, animal bones for tools, and skins that can be formed into leather. Hunting can be a solo activity, but more often hunting parties work together to provide for the community. Because men move to live with their wife, the men of a community often come from other places. The social aspects of hunting and war create connections, bringing together the men of a community for a common goal.

Because humans live on the Middle World of the cosmos (according to Muscogee (Creek) and Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians Nations’ oral traditions), between the realms dominated by water and the sky, animals associated with other realms are typically not hunted for meat. Animals noted to be avoided by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation peoples include snakes, birds of prey, and bats. Deer, who were one of the most commonly hunted animals, could retaliate if they were not properly respected in death. According to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nation’s oral tradition, deer could inflict disease onto men who did not ask the deer for pardon correctly after the deer’s death.

One of the tools used in hunting are rocks shaped into points for spears, atlatl darts, or arrows. Archaeologists generally call these projectile points. When specific types of rocks are struck at a precise angle, predictable
fragments called flakes can be removed from the remaining stone into a
planned shape. Rocks were also formed into a number of other tools such
as knives, scrapers, and drills by this method. This method of tool making
(called flintknapping) was likely passed down in the same ways women
were taught pottery and agriculture, through direct teaching and
instruction from older generations to younger ones.

This section introduces a few generalities about what daily life may have been like in
this community.

This section is one of the best places to display lithic artifacts. Arrow points,
hammerstones, axe heads, and any other stone tools used in agriculture or hunting can
be placed on display in this section. A notable bone fishing hook found during the 2018
field season would also fit perfectly in this section.

Connecting Material

This section addresses some of the most abundant artifact classes found at the
Mulberry site and details their significance. The first two panels address how
archaeologically found organic material can be traced to food and medicine and the
significance of food and medicine in the community:

Panel 3.1

You Are What You Eat

Historically, food preparation is a community task typically completed by
women. Stews and soups are popularly kept simmering all day long
because they can be eaten whenever someone is hungry or stops by to visit. Hominy is a staple food item in which the coats of maize kernels are removed by soaking the kernels in lye, rubbing to remove the coats, and then cooking for hours. Maize is a common item in many different types of dishes.

Like in hunting, animals associated with the sky-dominated and water-dominated cosmological realms are typically avoided as food. Among the Muscogee (Creek) Nation’s peoples, animals considered to have traits undesirable to humans, like laziness or uncleanliness, were also avoided for fear of a transfer of those traits. What someone ate was considered to have the ability to alter a human being entirely.

In Muscogee (Creek) and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nation’s oral traditions, as well as other American Indian communities in the southeastern United States, stories exist of a man who ate snake eggs and was turned into a snake or other reptile-like creature overnight.

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nation traditions speak of the origin of bears as a direct result of food consumption. A boy discovered that he could survive on only the food found in the woods, and convinced his family and some members of the community to fast and then join him in the woods. They began to change and become what we now know as bears due to their change in diet.
Panel 3.2

Plants as a Healing Force

Plants are not only eaten as food, but also supply medicines to cure peoples’ ailments or help re-purify a community. According to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nation’s oral traditions, the animals men hunted came together to find ways in which to retaliate against overhunting. They created the diseases of the world that could be passed to men who do not show proper respect to the animals they kill. Plants chose to side with men and created the first medicine in the form of plant-based remedies to every disease the animals created. It is said that a healer can always find the plants they need no matter the season.

Healing can be performed on an individual level through specialized healers and general remedies known by the community at large. Present-day Muscogee (Creek) Nation healers, who must know the myskoke language, are selected by traditional leadership to train their entire lives. Catawba Indian Nation healers have been recorded to increase the potency of medicine through ritual songs and dances. Community healing and purification rituals are performed with the help of ceremonial medicine. Black Drink, brewed from yaupon holly leaves, is one such medicine that is drunk during the Green Corn Ceremony in order to re-purify the community in the new cycle of the year.
Flip up interactives with pictures and names of different plants or animals on the top and information about their uses could help to better engage casual visitors with the previous two panels. For example, the interactive could ask visitors to guess whether a plant is used in food production, medicines, or both, and then describe a dish in which it is used and/or how it was used as a medicine under the flip up. Additionally, some samples of common botanical material found at Mulberry and a few well-preserved pieces of animal bone can round out the objects in this section.

The last two panels in this section address pottery production.

Panel 3.3

Pottery as an Act of Creation

According to Muscogee (Creek) and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations’ oral traditions, human beings live on the Middle World of the cosmos. The Middle World was formed by ancestral animals between the realm of the sky and the realm of water when a creature was sent into the water to find material to form land. A successful creature brought clay to the surface and the land was created. The formation of pottery recalls this act of creation of the Middle World.

Traditionally, pottery formation was one of the roles of women, and the knowledge needed to make pots was passed from one generation to the next. Pottery production starts with the gathering of specific clay from deposits in the earth. According to recorded Catawba Indian Nation tradition, these clay deposits are highly respected. Only what is needed is
taken, and a portion of the gathered clay is returned to the earth as an offering. Clay is then tempered (mixed) with sand, shells, or other materials to help it keep its structure during firing. The recipes used in this process were unique to different families.

Panel 3.4
Creating Pottery

Mixed clay is rolled into coils and wrapped onto a base to build up the walls of a pot. The walls are smoothed or polished with a polishing or burnishing stone before any decoration is applied. Burnishing stones were often prized possessions passed down in a family.

Decorative tools include sharp-ended sticks or bone splinters for incising, cane reeds for making punctations, and wooden paddles for stamping designs. Because men were often the woodworkers in a community, paddle stamps may be a point in which both men and women come together to finish the pot. In Catawba Indian Nation traditions, men collected wood to fire the pottery and accompanied women to dig clay, while children progressed from scraping to burnishing to creating full pieces of pottery as a rite of passage. Catawba Indian Nation men also traditionally create pipes.

The decorations commonly added to pottery during the time of Mulberry’s occupation often had significant meaning as images of the cosmos or
centering images. The fylfot cross, a cross with four swirled ends, is one of the most common motifs found at the Mulberry site and a representation of a centering design. Centering designs reflect the place of the Middle World in the center of the cosmos. Another common design is four looping corners that signify the four directions and one’s place in the center of them.

Muscogee (Creek) Nation people made pottery vessels for storing preparing, cooking, and serving food. Broken vessel fragments (sherds) were useful as lids, potholders, or griddles, and were ground into circular shapes to make disc markers. Clay was shaped and fired into numerous other forms such as smoking pipes and beads. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation traded and continued to make clay pottery up into the 1900s (post-removal times) and utilized European trade goods as well. The Catawba Indian Nation’s pottery tradition continues to this day, made now by both men and women.

The Mulberry Collection contains thousands of broken pottery fragments called sherds, and local collections contain entire vessels. Different pattern sherds could be displayed with reproduction stamping paddles. Reproduction stamping paddles could also be used interactively for visitors to stamp designs onto paper or into a small sand box. A fairly large portion of a reconstructed complicated stamped ceramic vessel with an applique rim (Provenience 628) was recovered in 1981 that would be perfect for this section of
the exhibit. Provenience 890/891M from the 1982 field season also holds an interesting reconstructed complicated stamped portion of a vessel.

Connecting Features/Structures

This section connects the built landscape of the Mulberry site to oral traditions and the importance of oral traditions in understanding the community of people who lived there.

Panel 4.1
Community Ceremonial Spaces

The Mississippian Period (900-1600 CE) during which Mulberry was inhabited was noted for its religious beliefs, social structure, and mound-and-plaza complexes. Mounds are large piles of carefully engineered earth built up in layers over time. Plazas are large open spaces that are often used for community gathering and ceremonial spaces. Mounds and plazas can occur separately in some communities but they are often found together. As many as 10 mounds were recorded historically at Mulberry, although only two remain visible today.

Mounds are community-built structures that hold social, political, and ceremonial importance. Mounds can represent different clans’ joint membership in a community.

Plazas are large open gathering places that also serve to tie the community together through ceremonies. One of the ways the plaza was historically
used was to celebrate the new year at the Green Corn Ceremony, or Green Corn Busk. This Busk takes place after the first harvest of corn and is a time of renewal, repair, and re-purification for the community. The term Busk comes from the Muskogean word *posketv* (busk-ee-duh), which means ‘to fast’ in the Muscogee (Creek) language.

**Panel 4.2**

**Using Walls to Separate and Protect**

In 2000 the remains of a palisade that likely encompasses the mound-and-plaza area (the mound precinct) of the community were found at Mulberry between Mounds B and C. A palisade is a wall made of wooden posts that encloses or protects an area. Palisades may be associated with warfare as a means of defense, but they can also be used as a general boundary between areas of the community. They are community-built structures. Things built by the community have the potential to inspire community unity and memories with those who help build and maintain them.

Walls create physical boundaries that divide spaces, separating one area from another. One of the purposes of the palisade around the mound precinct could be to divide the general community area from an area of ceremonial significance. The mound-and-plaza area is the place where many ceremonies and community gatherings occur. Surrounding the area
with walls can reinforce the idea that this is an area outside of the daily tasks of the community.

**Panel 4.3**

Placement of a Community

Mulberry was first and foremost a community of people. Knowing the ways that a community is set up physically and socially says a great deal about the people who lived there. The built environment of American Indian communities during the Mississippian Period included both public and private buildings. Examples of public buildings include temples, places of storage, mounds, plazas, and men’s houses. Private buildings include winter and summer houses: summer homes were open to the air and winter houses were built to maintain heat.

While men typically constructed buildings, women ran households. Many American Indian communities are considered to be both *matrilineal* and *matrilocal*. Matrilineal refers to tracing one’s heritage through one’s mother. Your mother’s family is considered your family, while your father’s family is not. Matrilocal means that once married, a man moves to live with his wife and her family. Matrilineal family members often lived in close proximity to one another, creating small extended family household clusters within the community.
The building uncovered at Mulberry in 1985 is typical of residential winter homes during the Mississippian Period. This house is square with a door on the southwestern corner, facing the mound precinct. It was built with four central support posts, a gable roof, an entry vestibule marked by a shallow floor depression, and walls lined with bench beds. It contained two possible graves inside near the doorway, and one grave outside just to the east. The burial of people within or near homes and in community cemeteries shows a continued connection from the living to the dead.

Muscogee (Creek) Nation people still bury the deceased in family cemeteries near their homes and it is customary to build grave houses over the grave. A grave house is a little wooden house with a fully shingled roof that sits on top of the grave and is symbolic to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation traditions in the Southeast.

Of Note: Death is a sensitive topic in American Indian communities. Many of the traditions associated with death are personal to communities and not openly shared to outside communities. Because of this, the topics of death and burials are only briefly mentioned of in this exhibit. Also, no artifacts associated with burials are on display in this exhibit.

Because this section is about features of the built landscape of Mulberry, displayable artifacts are a challenge. Maps, photographs, and illustrations are all useful in this section, but small-scale reproductions seem as though they would produce the best impact. If possible, the small-scale reproductions should have short explanations of the
materials and construction process of residential structures and palisades. RaeLynn Butler provided a photo of Muscogee (Creek) Nation grave houses (Figure 3.1). Having a small-scale reproduction of the palisade and household structure and a cross-section reproduction of a mound showing the layering can help to better connect a visitor to the features discussed in the panels.

Figure 3.1. Muscogee (Creek) Grave Houses (RaeLynn Butler, personal communication 2018).

Conclusion

This section includes the final historical textual information panel.

Panel 5.1

A Place Filled with Meaning

Mulberry is an American Indian town inhabited from 1250-1700 CE and likely inhabited by ancestral Muscogee (Creek), Catawba Indian, or Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations’ peoples. This thriving community was comprised of social, political, spiritual, and personal elements. Connecting ancestral oral traditions of three current Nations to the structures and
objects present help to show the ways Mulberry was a place filled with meaning.

Everything you do and interact with holds meaning. Meaning is shaped by your worldview and the traditions by which you were raised. Everyday activities such as eating or sharing meat from a hunt reinforce family ties and teach traditions. Everyday objects such as pottery vessels and houses represent and reinforce family ties and humans’ place in the cosmos. Gathering places such as mounds and plazas become places of significant events to the future of the community. Where you choose to situate your town or why a town becomes a mound center for other towns reflects the significance of that place to the community. Understanding the significance behind the elements of the landscape and the items left behind, we can better understand the way that people create spaces unique to their community and filled with meaning.

This panel is meant to express the purpose of the exhibit neatly and be a contemplative piece for people to leave with in mind. It can be accompanied by photographs or images of iconography in practice, such as the ways residential structures recreate the cosmos. A reproduction of one of the surviving copies of Catawba deerskin maps would illustrate how a map-maker centered a community and illustrated the social and political connections between the map-maker’s community and other communities (e.g. Waselkov 2006).
The last informational panel of the exhibit serves as a reminder that American Indian people are still living communities (RaeLynn Butler, personal communication 2018; Catawba Indian Nation 2018a, 2018b; Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians 2018a, 2018b):

**Panel 5.2**

**A Living People, Not Just a History**

The Muskogee (Creek) Nation, which is the fourth largest tribe in the United States, is located in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. With over 83,570 citizens, the tribe employs over 4,000 people and provides vital services to citizens such as health care, housing, education, and social services.

The Catawba Indian Nation, the only federally recognized tribe in South Carolina, is located in York County. With over 3000 members, they also offer vital services to their tribal members and the local community, including language and traditional arts classes.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, located in Cherokee, North Carolina, were separated from the Cherokee Nation and the United Kituwah Band who are now located in Oklahoma after removal through the Trail of Tears. They are a sovereign nation of over 14,000 members.

This panel was suggested by RaeLynn Butler and may be one of the most important panels in the exhibit. Many people think American Indian communities are historic communities, rather than living peoples. This panel should include the seals of each
nation along with their respective information. This is also a place in which images and programs of modern day members of the Nations can be featured. The final panel of the exhibit will be an Acknowledgements panel that names what is sure to be an ever-growing list of people who made this exhibit possible up to the time of its opening.

Summary

In this chapter I explained the collaborative process and exhibit script proposed in this thesis. Three American Indian cultural advisors were instrumental in the accuracy of these panels: LaDonna Brown, RaeLynn Butler, and Wenonah Haire. I thank them profusely for taking the time to read through my drafts and give suggestions and feedback. The panels detailed above cross five sections: an introduction, agriculture and hunting, connecting material, connecting features/structures, and the conclusion. Each of these section includes three to four panels connecting the place of Mulberry to environmental and material aspects of the oral histories of the Muscogee (Creek), Catawba Indian, and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Nations in an effort to better understand the people who lived at Mulberry during its lengthy inhabitation. These panels derive from a combined effort of the research and interpretations documented in the first two chapters and collaborative feedback. In the final chapter I reflect on the goals of this thesis and how I hope this process can be applied to other archaeological collections and exhibits in the future.
CHAPTER FOUR: MOVING FORWARD

The goal of this thesis was to reinterpret the Mulberry site and its artifacts and features through use of oral traditions of the Muscogee (Creek), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and Catawba Indian Nations and then use the recorded oral traditions and collaborative discussion to create an exhibit script outline for a future museum exhibit at the Native American Studies Center in Lancaster, South Carolina. Understanding the ways that people create places imbued with meaning through the objects and features with which they constantly interacted helps future generations to see a glimpse of a fuller picture of a community of people than an exhibit focused on the general functions of objects and features.

Hodder’s (2016) entanglement and place-making studies set a stage from which connections could be made between the built and natural landscapes and objects found at Mulberry and oral traditions. Entanglement posits that humans and things depend on each other in a deeply cyclical way that connects them: humans depend on other humans and things, and things depend on other things and humans all at once. Place-making reflects the ways that people connect physical spaces to themselves and their communities in meaningful ways. The objects and features around people shape places filled with meaning. The traditions surrounding a community’s natural and built
environments and objects highlight the ways the community values and maintains meaning-laden places and objects. Combining this fundamental interconnectedness of things and humans with concepts of place-making and recorded oral traditions allows us to interpret a narrative of the people who lived among these objects and features.

Understanding the place-making and entanglement of the objects and features of Mulberry required an understanding of the people who lived in the town. This interpretation began with the generalities presented in Indigenous worldview literature and then specified into the oral traditions of the local American Indian communities. Because Mulberry is likely the home of ancestral Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Muscogee (Creek), and Catawba Indian Nations’ peoples, the recorded oral traditions of these Nations were used in the final interpretation. Because these are distinct groups of people, they do not have the same views on all aspects of life. I have attempted to pull together the similarities in this interpretation without minimizing any one worldview. Working with American Indian cultural advisors was a valuable aspect of making sure that the final script presented in Chapter Three was as accurate and respectable as possible.

This interpretation is by no means groundbreaking, but it is part of an important step forward for cultural interpretation undertaken by museums and archaeologists. It can be easy to emphasize the functionality of objects and features of Mulberry and to express the town in an exhibit focused on that functionality, rather than the community behind those objects and features. The goal of this exhibit was to express Mulberry as a meaning-laden place created and maintained by a thriving community of people who
gave it that meaning. Incorporating oral traditions and collaboration in the interpretation presented in the final exhibit script created the platform from which this kind of interpretation was possible.

Because Mulberry has been of archaeological interest for over 150 years, during the three-year course of researching and writing a Master’s thesis, I could not feasibly address the full scope of archaeological material recovered from Mulberry. Instead I worked with two field seasons’ worth of excavation material from the 1981 and 1982 field schools to gauge a general understanding of the artifacts found on the site. These particular years were in desperate need for a recuration effort and allowed me to help rehabilitate a portion of the collection while working on this thesis. My work with the collection along with a review of some of the many reports written on the site throughout its archaeological history created the material categories that were interpreted in Chapter Two.

The interpretation detailed in Chapter Two and collaborative discussions came together to create the exhibit script in Chapter Three. Exhibit scripts require a truncation of information into text panels, artifacts, interactives, and dioramas. Many interesting and important artifacts were found throughout the site’s history. Because I was able to work with only a small portion of the artifact collection, this exhibit script is made up of text panels and suggested examples of artifacts, dioramas, and reproductions. This exhibit would have been lacking had I been able to utilize only the artifacts I was able to work with over the last two years. I sincerely thank those cultural advisors who took time out of their busy schedule to respond to me on this project and
for their support and encouragement of the concept of this exhibit and thesis. I hope that as this exhibit moves forward into final production, these cultural advisors will continue to contribute in choosing design themes and any more content that may be added over time. This exhibit eventually will be on display at the Native American Studies Center in Lancaster, South Carolina.

Moving forward, I hope the process of incorporating oral histories and traditions with material culture becomes more commonplace in the display of different cultures. It is easy to look at archaeological material and talk about only what an object may have been used for. Working with oral histories, ethnographies, and descendant communities allows for a fuller understanding of not just how any object was used but also the spiritual significance of its use; the ways that tool was created and how that method is taught from generation to generation; the social and political significance of the object; and many more aspects entangling an object with the community. The same thought applies to the natural and built features of the land on which these reminders of a people are found. By utilizing the physical, social, and spiritual history of a place and the oral tradition of the community as they pertain to material and features, we can strive to more fully understand the communities that lived there, built those structures, and used those tools. By working with descendant communities, we can both be reminded that many of the histories we work with are still living and breathing today and learn the ways in which communities continue to understand material connections without an academic filter. Talking about a place and the artifacts found upon it is only a fraction of a story: utilizing oral histories, ethnographies, and descendant communities to interpret
those places and artifacts in terms of the people who lived and used them allows for a much fuller story and understanding of the continuing importance of past places and artifacts.
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