

The Estatoe Towns

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Introductory Note: This brief report was written about 1970 by Marshall Williams. We are delighted to publish it here as Lamar Institute Report 142. It has been lightly edited by Mark Williams of the Institute.

On June 28, 1760, The South Carolina Gazette listed the towns then extant in the Cherokee country, following the list with this observation:

Those who consult maps will find more towns mentioned than in the above list; which is owing to a custom the Cherokees have of frequently breaking up one [town] and settling another.

These broken up and resettled towns often carried their town names with them. It seems probable that the parent town did not cease to exist suddenly, but gradually became an "Old Town" as the population shifted to newer centers. Thus, there at times co-existed two or more towns with the same name. Such a situation existed with the Cherokee towns named Estatoe.

The spelling *Estatoe* is the one most generally found in mid-to-late eighteenth century maps. There is, however, a wide variety of spelling, as is true with most English versions of Cherokee town names. The most common variation involves the first syllable, making the name *Eastatoe*. In the former spelling (*Estatoe*) it seems that the initial letter E would be pronounced as a short vowel (eh); however, the wide and very early use of "East" as the first syllable may indicate the actual pronunciation. One can never discount local tradition, and in Pickens County, South Carolina, is a stream called Eastatoe, and the local populace pronounces the word in this manner, with the final e being pronounced as a long e ("ee").

There were three towns named Estatoe, all being, apparently, sequential in settlement. The earliest reference I have found to the name is in a journal kept by Colonel George Chicken in the years 1715-1716 (Cheaves 1894). He states that "there was a greatt

ball play att Esttohoe agenst ye peapl of Tugaloe....", while referring to the Estatoe on the Tugalo River in northeastern Georgia. In the year 1721 a religious organization published a census of the Cherokee towns (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel 1721:173). This census listed *Old Estatoe* (40 men, 50 women, 34 children), and also listed *Eastatoe*, 150 men, 191 women, and 281 children. Noting the ratio of women to children it seems likely that the older women remained behind in Old Estatoe while the younger women migrated to Eastatoe, the newer town. The listing of the towns in the census was presented in order as one progressed westward from the Keowee River valley in South Carolina toward the Tugaloo River, thence northwestward toward the mountains of the middle settlements. In this sequence, *Eastatoe* was listed adjacent to *Chaugee* (Chauga) Town, which is known to have been at the confluence of the Chauga and Tugaloo Rivers in Oconee County, South Carolina. Then, further northwest toward the mountains, the towns of *Tuckareechee*, *Stickowee*, and *Old Estatoe* were listed, in that order. *Kewokee* and *Eascenica* were the only two towns listed on the Keowee River. The entire census is included here in the Appendix.

The term "Old" as applies to the Estatoe that lay north of *Stickowee* town (in the mountains of present day northern Georgia, in the vicinity of Clayton) must certainly mean that by the date of this census in 1721 that this Estatoe was slowly being depopulated in favor of the newer *Eastatoe* southeast on the Tugalo River. This latter town was located north of Jarrett Manor in present-day Stephens County, Georgia, and is to be equated with archaeological site 9St3 (Kelly and DeBaillou1960). Some years later, in 1725, Colonel Chicken made another journey into the Cherokee country. On July 19, 1725, his party left *Tomassee* (in what is now central Oconee County, South Carolina), at 11:00 AM, arriving at

Tuccareecho at 5:30 PM, 18 miles distant (Mereness 1916:108). There seems to be no doubt that this latter town was the one designated in most documents as *Tuckareechee*. They left this town at 9:00 AM the next morning, arriving about 3:00 PM at Old Estatoe. While Mereness indicates in a footnote that this Old Estatoe was on the Tugalo River all other evidence indicates that Chicken was referring to the "Estatoe-in-the-mountains", located in what is now Rabun County, Georgia, near the present town of Dillard. But a still newer, third *Estatoe* was being founded to the northeast deeper into South Carolina, and the Tugalo River Estatoe was now acquiring the "Old" designation. On September 16, 1725, Colonel Chicken visited "Old Estatoe" (the one on the Tugalo River), leaving this description (Mereness 1916:150):

Old Estatoe is a large town and very well ffortified all round with Punchins and also ditched on the Outside of sd Punchins (wch Ditch) is stuck full of light wood spikes...I also observe that there are Sevr1 New fflankers made to the ffortifications of the Town and the Town House is enforted.

Thus, by 1725 the Tugalo River Estatoe had acquired the title of "Old", no doubt because of the now existing third Estatoe in South Carolina, called *New Estatoe*. From time to time documents refer to *Old Estatoe*, sometimes meaning the one in Rabun County, and sometimes the one In Stephens County on the Tugalo River. The journey of six hours between *Tuccareecho* and *Old Estatoe* (in Clayton County) indicates that the distance between the two would be about 16 miles. Corroboration of this estimate may be found in The Journal of Christopher French (French 1761) who visited the area with Grant's army in 1761. French gives a total distance from *Tuckareechee* to *Estatoe Old Town* as 15 miles. One of the Estatoe towns was considered a mother town in 1730, and though the reference is

uncertain as to which town it was, it seems that the oldest one would be the most likely (The Historical Register 1731:1). The inferences in the foregoing sources, then, are that by 1721 the "Estatoe in the Mountains" was an Old Town, still important, though with a reduced population. Co-existent with this town was the Estatoe (called Eastatoe by Chicken) on the Tugalo River, which, as we see, was also known as Old Estatoe. As to when the original mountain Estatoe town split occurred is not known, but it was not a recent event in 1721. Kelly and Neitzel in their report on the excavations at the Chauga mound in Stephens County speculated that the Cherokee occupation of Estatoe on the Tugalo River may have begun around 1600 A.D (Kelly and Neitzel 1960). However, this is not proved conclusively.

Near the end of the first third of the eighteenth century another Estatoe began to appear on the maps, this time in what is now Pickens County, South Carolina, on Estatoe Creek, a branch of the Keowee River. Many of the contemporary sources refer to this town as New Estatoe. Meriwether indicates that James Beamer entered the Cherokee trade in 1724, and had lived most of that time at Estatoe (Meriwether 1940:192). Since it known that Beamer was a trader at *New Estatoe* in Pickens County one may conjecture that he set up shop there when the town was new. At any rate, it appears from the evidence that this *New Estatoe* began its existence sometime before 1725, when the Tugalo River Estatoe was then being referred to as "Old".

In 1751 South Carolina set forth a scheme to organize the Indian trade. One of the facets of this scheme was to group all Cherokee towns into districts. Only one Estatoe town is listed therein -and since it was listed, or grouped with the Lower Cherokee towns of *Cheowee* and *Toxaway*, it may be identified as the Pickens County New Estatoe on the branch of the Keowee River. The obvious inference is that the two "Old Estatoes" had

ceased to function as towns by mid-century. However, this may not be strictly true, since one record (South Carolina Gazette, August 14-21, 1776) indicates that the Estatoe-on-Tugalo was destroyed by "Col. Jack" in 1776, during the Cherokee phase of the American Revolution in the South. At any rate, at the time in question the two older *Estatoes* were not considered important enough to be considered in the grouping of the Cherokee towns.

Colonel Archibald Montgomery, whose punitive expedition to the Cherokees in 1760 led to the destruction of many of the lower towns, described the houses at the Pickens County *New Estatoe* as "neat and convenient, and well provided with every necessary of life" (Montgomery 1760). He indicates that there were over two hundred houses at New Estatoe, "besides the Town House". While we have no specific descriptions of the architecture at New Estatoe, there is one good description of the Cherokee structures in this period (Draper 1776), and it seems unlikely that this would differ greatly from the architecture of 15 years earlier:

"...they raise in each of their towns a large house, which they call town, or in other terms, a pow-wow house; they raise it partly round, first by four large forks stuck up in the ground upright, then from each of these forks there goes a beam to the other, which forms a sort of a frame, and by lathes and other small pieces of timber, forms it a hollow square, and then brings it to a top much resembling our home-made barracks sheds, covered with bark or grassy sods; the door entrance is extremely narrow or straight, and when in, it is as dark as a dungeon, having no chimneys, windows, or any other hole where light may shine. We allowed that in these houses, it all being so tramped around, where they have had a fire. Their dwelling houses is made some one way, and some another; some is made with sapplins stuck in the ground upright, then lathes tied on these, with splits of cane or such like; so with daubing the outside and in with mud nicely, they finish a close, warm building. They have few or no chimneys, and their fire is in the middle of the houses".

Warriors from *New Estatoe* were very much involved in the outbreak of the Cherokee War in 1760, and in the troubles leading up to it. Montgomery's expedition of chastisement led him to destroy New Estatoe on the morning of June 2, 1760, although most of the inhabitants had fled before his arrival. As with most of the towns destroyed in this war, it was soon rebuilt, and its surviving inhabitants returned. In January, 1769, after the British had withdrawn its garrison from Fort Prince George five months earlier, the trade factory at *New Estatoe* was offered for sale (South Carolina Gazette January 26, 1769). The life of the town continued, however, until 1776.

In July, 1776, the Cherokees, at the urging of the British, attacked the frontier settlements of both South Carolina and North Carolina settlers. To counter this on the South Carolina side, militia detachments under commanders Thomas and Neal struck at the lower towns, being a part of the overall command of General Williamson. *New Estatoe* was the first to fall. On Saturday, August 3, 1776, the militia took its position two miles outside of the town, Colonel Thomas' men on the right flank, the light horse cavalry of both regiments on the left flank, and Colonel Neel's regiment in the front center. In this order they rushed the town, only to find that all the inhabitants had fled. Finding no battle to fight they burned the town, and marched then downstream to *Qualatchee* and *Toxaway*, which they also destroyed. This *Toxaway* was also a namesake of an earlier town of that name on the Tugalo River.

After this, references to New Estatoe in contemporary sources disappear. The following year (1777) the Treaty of DeWitt's Corner forbade any continued occupation by the Cherokee below the prescribed boundary line, which apparently lay north of the site of *New*

Estatoe. There is no record to indicate any rebuilding activity there after the 1776 destruction of the town. By the terms of the 1777 treaty the Cherokees were permitted to harvest the currently planted crops, but they could not replant for the following year's harvest. It seems likely, therefore, that any archaeological investigations at the site of New *Estatoe* would reveal a town abandoned in the haste of a moment, because of the immediate danger of the approaching army - a frozen capsule of eighteenth century Lower Cherokee life. Indeed, *New Estatoe*, with its probable beginnings in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, and its termination on August 3, 1776, presents a neatly packaged catalog of what life of the Cherokee must have been like during that period, and, quite possibly is unmixed with any earlier occupational debris. For any specific study of the eighteenth century Lower Cherokee, therefore, an archaeological investigation at the New *Estatoe* site would be of great importance.

There existed, then, three towns named *Estatoe*, and apparently there was an overlap to the existence of all three. First, the one in Clayton County, Georgia near Dillard, then the one on the Tugalo River in Stephens County, Georgia, and finally the one on the branch of the Keowee River in Pickens County, South Carolina.

Appendix

A True and Exact Account of the Number and Names of All Towns Belonging to the Cherrikee Nation, and the Number of Men, Women, and Children Inhabiting the Same, Taken Anno 1721 (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel 1721).

| No. of Town | Town Names | Men | Women | Children | [Interpretation] |
|-------------|--------------|-----|-------|----------|------------------|
| 1 | Kewokee | 168 | 155 | 137 | Keowee |
| 2 | Eascenica | 44 | 42 | 48 | Seneca |
| 3 | Oakenni | 57 | 52 | 75 | Oconee |
| 4 | Tomatly | 42 | 68 | 42 | Tomassee |
| 5 | Cheewokee | 71 | 71 | 77 | Cheowee |
| 6 | Tockaswooh | 50 | 60 | 60 | Toxaway |
| 7 | Toogellow | 70 | 66 | 68 | Tugalo |
| 8 | Chaugee | 80 | 60 | 60 | Chauga |
| 9 | Eastatoe | 150 | 191 | 281 | Estatoe (Middle) |
| 10 | Echie | 55 | 50 | 44 | Echay |
| 11 | Chattoogie | 30 | 40 | 20 | Chatooga |
| 12 | Tookareehga | 60 | 50 | 45 | Tuckareeche |
| 13 | Stickowee | 42 | 30 | 30 | (Near Clayton) |
| 14 | Old Eastatoe | 40 | 50 | 34 | (At Dillard) |
| 15 | Mougake | 57 | 31 | 42 | |
| 16 | Echoee | 44 | 30 | 36 | |
| 17 | Nookassie | 53 | 50 | 39 | |
| 18 | Cunnookah | 89 | 59 | 54 | |
| 19 | Cattojay | 48 | 51 | 39 | |
| 20 | Elojay | 58 | 50 | 64 | |
| 21 | Wattogo | 64 | 59 | 53 | |
| 22 | Torree | 59 | 60 | 69 | |
| 23 | Cowyee | 78 | 78 | 102 | |
| 24 | Tasskeegee | 60 | 62 | 64 | |
| 25 | Erawgee | 43 | 49 | 41 | |
| 26 | Tookareegha | 74 | 114 | 36 | |
| 27 | Kittowah | 143 | 93 | 47 | |
| 28 | Stickoe | 97 | 90 | 96 | |
| 29 | Noonnie | 60 | 56 | 60 | |
| 30 | Suskasetchie | 150 | 140 | 145 | |

| No. of Town | Town Names | Men | Women | Children | [Interpretation] |
|-------------|----------------|-----|-------|----------|------------------|
| 31 | Tarahnee | 72 | 11 | 7 | |
| 32 | Echotee | 59 | 97 | 65 | |
| 33 | Tuckoe | 34 | 33 | 27 | |
| 34 | Turrurah | 60 | 40 | 22 | |
| 35 | Wooroughftie?] | 30 | 20 | 12 | |
| 36 | Taseetchie | 36 | 44 | 45 | |
| 37 | Quannissee | 37 | 31 | 36 | |
| 38 | Cheowee | 30 | 42 | 42 | |
| 39 | Tomotly | 124 | 130 | 103 | |

Totals: Men 3510
 Women 3595
 Children 3274
 Souls in All 10,379

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