

**Conference Title:** The Social Archaeology of Southeastern Frontiers

**Rationale:**

The goal of this conference is to present the current state of archaeological and ethnohistorical scholarship on the development of the American frontier in the colonial southeast. It has been pointed out that many historians of Colonial North America became ethnohistorians because of their explicit interest in frontiers, which has been a central theme of U.S. ethnohistory throughout the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Conceptions of the frontier have evolved throughout this period. In the past few decades the New Western historians and the New Indian historians have been the most articulate proponents of moving away from the notion of a frontier as an inevitable wave of advance, and replacing it with a view of frontiers as contested spaces. As a result, North American colonial borderlands are now conceived of as regions of multi-faceted power relations and fluid categories of gender, race, and status.

Frontier and border research in anthropology has arrived at a similar place as ethnohistorical research, although the origins are somewhat different. Studies on ethnicity were important for drawing attention to the ways in which groups distinguished themselves from one another. But the discipline has greatly expanded its notions of borders to consider how they may: (1) order social relations and signal membership in national and ethnic groups (social boundaries); (2) separate worlds of meaning (cultural boundaries); (3) demarcate geopolitical space (territorial boundaries). The historical construction of borders and frontiers may incorporate different combinations of these practices and views. As a result, recent research views borderlands as shifting zones of society, culture, and territory at the fringes of political systems. More recently, there have been calls to bring archaeological views of frontiers in line with those of these allied disciplines, where the material record can be used to address how the constitution of frontiers was an ongoing process emanating from cross-cutting relationships between groups, rather than an outcome dictated by a dominant group. A primary objective of this conference is to demonstrate archaeology's importance in this regard.

Several important themes are either missing or underemphasized in frontier and border research among all of these approaches. Long-term historical analyses are insufficiently pursued; the articulation of various scales of the frontier process is often eschewed in favor of either micro (e.g., the household) or macro (e.g., geopolitical) perspectives; and, the contribution of all sides to the construction of life along the frontier is often overlooked in favor of colonial powers. Contributors to the conference are charged with pulling together various strands of archaeological and ethnohistorical data to overcome these drawbacks, and to examine pluralized notions of the frontier in the Southeast.

## **Abstracts (in order of presentation)**

### **1) African and Native American Inter-settlement Interaction on the Florida Frontier**

**Terry Weik**

**University of South Carolina**

This paper explores the intersection of variables and processes affecting regional settlements founded by Africans and Native Americans in late colonial Florida. Africans who escaped from slavery and Native Americans known as 'Seminole' who sought autonomy on Southeastern borderlands present difficult challenges to archaeologists seeking to understand their engagements with each other and Europeans. While historical and cultural studies of 'Seminole Indian' and African Seminole ethnogenesis have discerned a range of interpersonal and group relationships for some well-known places, research has yet to provide clear frameworks for systematically examining relationships between multiple settlements. The factors examined in this study of African Seminole and Seminole Indian interaction and settlement include environmental features, political-economics, spiritual life, vectors of transportation and communication, and toponymy. A critical reading of documents and other evidence is as important as procedures for recognizing spatial patterns or measures such as nearest neighbor distances. From this type of regional analysis, complicated issues of collaboration, coexistence, and conflict arise that challenge simple conclusions about power, residence, and cultural identity.

### **2) Rethinking Colonial Frontiers in the Southeastern United States: The View from Spanish Florida**

**John E. Worth**

**University of West Florida**

Until quite recently, colonial frontiers have perhaps most commonly been viewed territorially, comprising broad zones of predominantly aboriginal habitation bordering spatially-restricted zones of colonial settlement. A contrasting perspective is offered by a recent anthropological re-evaluation of the colonial system of Spanish Florida, which incorporates missionized aboriginal populations as assimilated components of a new, spatially extensive, multi-ethnic colonial society which was simultaneously integrated into a much broader social and economic system with sometimes far-reaching connections across that same frontier. In this paper I will discuss the implications of this definition of frontier as an interaction zone among cultural systems at many different scales of integration.

### **3) When Moral and Capitalist Economies Collide: Embourgeoisment and the Colonial Southern Frontier**

**Cameron B. Wesson**

**University of Vermont**

European colonial enterprises in North America produced a landscape in which the moral economies of Indigenous groups collided with the emergent capitalist political economies of the colonizers. Archaeological and historical evidence indicates that these interactions altered many pre-contact Native American economic practices, and had profound consequences for other aspects of their societies. In this paper I suggest that these changes represent a process of embourgeoisment on the part of Southeastern

Indigenous groups, as individuals and social groups sought to alter perceived inequities in social and political practices. Using archaeological and ethnohistorical data from the Upper Creeks, I contend that Native Americans on the colonial Southern frontier were not passive victims of the capitalist mode of production, but actively engaged it as a social leveling mechanism.

#### **4) Developing Frontiers In Creek Zooarchaeology**

**Barnet Pavao-Zuckerman**  
**University of Arizona**

Having emerged from the Turnerian past, contemporary archaeological frontier research emphasizes process and innovation over place and displacement. Frontier theory is frequently employed as a more nuanced and empowered alternative to core-periphery models. However, while acknowledging the valid critiques of core-periphery frameworks, we must be careful to not merely replace “peripheries” with “frontiers” in pairings with “cores”. One critique of core-periphery interactions is a lack of temporality, a critique that can be (and has been) just as easily applied to frontier theory. When do frontier interactions emerge, how do they persist and change, and when do they end? Using historical zooarchaeology, I explore the role of animal exploitation strategies in the emergence, persistence, and dynamism of the Creek colonial frontier. The deerskin trade, center stage for interactions between Creeks and Europeans, was one aspect of a longitudinal process of frontier interactions and innovations in human-environment interactions. Involvement in the deerskin trade was a novel strategy for “going on” under much-changed political and economic conditions, but it was not the first, nor the last frontier innovation for the Creeks.

#### **5) Populating and Pluralizing the Savannah Frontier**

**Charles Cobb and Chester DePratter**  
**SCIAA, University of South Carolina**

Widescale native population upheavals characterized the colonial Southeast. Many of these movements were in response to immediate threats, such as dislocations from armed conflict or flight from slaving expeditions. However, in many areas premeditated migrations led to the formation of frontiers between colonial and Indian territories. We examine how the Savannah River Valley received successive directed movements of numerous groups over the course of a century, in response to the growing English presence in Carolina. Preliminary analyses of Ft. Moore collections, combined with reviews of protohistoric archaeology along the Savannah Valley, provide insights into processes of plurality and hybridity engendered by population flows.

#### **6) A Frontier Born of Fear: The Colonial Township System and the Archaeology of Saxe Gotha**

**Natalie P. Adams**  
**New South Associates**

During the 1730s, part of South Carolina’s push westward consisted of planned township system. This brought groups of poor Swiss-Germans, Irish Protestants, Welsh Baptists, and others to settle the backcountry in order to create a buffer between the wealthy, populated lowcountry and Indian territory further west. It was also used to offset demographic extremes caused by the increasing importation of African slaves and worries regarding potential slave revolts. Archaeology associated with the Swiss-

German township of Saxe-Gotha illustrates the uneasy feelings the settlers had over their precarious position in the backcountry before and during the French and Indian War. It also illustrates that trade between townships, particularly those of the same ethnic background, may have been a way to create community identity and maintain Old World ties in an unfamiliar land with many challenges.

### **7) Economic Strategies and Institution Building in the Backcountry**

**Kenneth Lewis**

**Michigan State University**

In its role as a central settlement on the frontier of eighteenth century South Carolina, Camden played a distinctive role in the settlement of this region and the transition of the Backcountry into a viable component of British North America. The nature of this change centered around the creation of central institutions that constituted the basis for integrating its economy, society, and political systems. Although the changes associated with this process may be observed, in both historical and archaeological sources, on a broad scale, they cannot be fully understood without analyzing regional development on the narrower scale of communities and the strategies employed by key individuals within them. This study explores the degree to which such strategies not only implemented the course of the larger process of frontier integration, but also resulted in emergent effects that affected its course. An awareness of their role is crucial to understanding the course of regional development, as well as its manifestations at the settlement level.

### **8) Persistent Production: Aboriginal Pottery in the Lower Mississippi River Valley, 1760-1850**

**Rob Mann**

**Louisiana State University**

In much of the northeastern woodlands aboriginal pottery production seems to have rapidly disappeared soon after the arrival of Europeans. In the southeast, however, aboriginal pottery production persisted among many groups for well over a century after European colonization. Red slipped, finely shell tempered ceramics are found in numerous colonial contexts in the Lower Mississippi Valley (LMV), including urban households, Mississippi River plantations, multiethnic trading communities, and aboriginal camps and villages. Yet, few studies have attempted to understand the persistence of pottery production in the LMV and many that have tended to fall back on functionalist interpretations. This study adopts a political-economic perspective on gender and the relations of production during the colonial period in order to better understand the persistence of pottery in the LVM during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

### **9) Material Frontiers: Cloth Trade and Production along the 18<sup>th</sup> century**

**Louisiana/Texas Border**

**Diana Loren**

**Peabody Museum, Harvard University**

Bolts of cloth and pre-made clothing were some of the more popular requisitioned items for Native, French, Spanish and mixed-blood peoples living along the 18<sup>th</sup> century Louisiana/Texas border. Archaeological evidence for this exchange is evidenced by lead bale seals and remnants of cloth recovered from sites, such as Presidio Los Adaes.

While these objects shed light on the impermanence of colonial boundaries, in that cloth seems to be freely traded between the two colonies despite bans on such interactions, perhaps the more intriguing question is how European-produced cloth married with Native-produced cloth to impact the dress of individuals living in along this frontier. Additionally, what is the significance of the single ceramic spindle whorl recovered from a house from the Spanish Presidio of Los Adaes? What does this one object as well as other items related to cloth trade and production tell us about the how colonial individuals covered their flesh and embodied self through practices of dressing? In this paper, I explore these issues through the material and archival record of Presidio Los Adaes.

### **10) Interior Frontiers: Historic Settlement in Western Louisiana and Middle Missouri**

**Steven D. Smith**  
**SCIAA, University of South Carolina**

Frontier expansion is popularly conceptualized as being a progressive march westward to the Pacific. In fact, the settlement of eastern America after the Revolution was not a tsunamic wave but a dendritic rush along waterways and ancient Native American paths, leaving behind large unpopulated areas that would not be fully settled until the late 19th century. Typically, these interior backwaters or frontiers, surrounded by more densely concentrated population and development, were isolated landscapes lacking the fertile soils necessary for successful agrarianism. Yet they did have valuable timber resources awaiting eventual exploitation in the early twentieth centuries. Then they were rapidly exploited only to be returned to backcountries once the trees were gone. Two case studies are offered as examples of interior frontier settlement; western Louisiana, part of which became Fort Polk, Louisiana, and the upper Ozarks of Missouri, part of which became Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

### **11) Chesapeake Frontiers and Algonquian Community Construction Before and After Contact**

**Martin Gallivan and Christopher Shephard**  
**College of William & Mary**

A growing body of scholarship emphasizes a view of frontiers as dynamic zones of political, cultural, and economic interaction. Much of this research draws on histories of European colonialism that resulted in hybridized cultural practices and novel social categories along the geographic edges of state authority. This paper draws on similar notions of interaction along social boundaries, but shifts the frame of reference toward Virginia Algonquian perspectives on frontiers and their incorporation through strategies of community construction. The James-York peninsula in the Chesapeake functioned as a frontier between culturally- and socially-distinct Algonquian traditions beginning circa AD 1500 and became a zone of expanding military and political influence for Wahunsenacawh (i.e. Powhatan) by the end of the sixteenth century. With the 1607 settlement of Jamestown on the peninsula, Wahunsenacawh drew upon time-tested strategies of violence and incorporation in an effort to bring Jamestown – a frontier settlement – into the Powhatan orbit.

### **12) Historic Cherokee Homesteads at the Ravensford Site**

**Paul Webb and Tasha Benyshek**  
**TRC**

Large-scale data recovery excavations at the Ravensford site near Cherokee, North Carolina, resulted in the discovery and complete excavation of four early to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Historic Cherokee homesteads associated with the historically-documented Cherokee town of Nununyi. The four components are spread along the Raven Fork of the Oconaluftee River, each containing the remains of from one to three paired winter house/summer house complexes. Each area also includes a small number of extramural pit features and apparent (but unexcavated) human graves. Analysis of the architecture, layout, material culture, and occupational history of these homesteads provides a glimpse of the latter stages of occupation of this Cherokee town, and allows comparisons with both contemporary descriptions and modern-day reconstructions of Cherokee life on the 18<sup>th</sup> century Southeastern frontier.

### **13) European Contact and the Cherokee Town at Coweeta Creek**

**Chris Rodning**

**Tulane University**

During the eighteenth century, European trade goods circulated widely through Cherokee towns in the southern Appalachians, and in some cases, traders lived in Cherokee towns or in nearby trading posts. What effects did more sporadic and less direct access to European trade goods have on Cherokee towns during the seventeenth century? Nonnative traders made several visits to large Cherokee towns during the eighteenth century, especially after 1715, but what kinds of trade goods reached native towns in the southern Appalachians before 1715? This paper considers these topics with reference to archaeological finds at the Coweeta Creek site, the location of a late prehistoric and protohistoric Cherokee town in the upper Little Tennessee Valley of southwestern North Carolina, and a location relatively far removed from the routes of sixteenth-century Spanish expeditions and the locations of major eighteenth-century English settlements and trading posts.

### **14) “An Excellent Barrier to the Province”: The Catawba Frontiers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

**Brett H. Riggs and R.P. Stephen Davis, Jr.**

**Research Laboratories of Archaeology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

For centuries, the Catawba Nation held its ground through successive “frontiers,” devising strategies that enabled its communities to negotiate the early colonial shatter zone, withstand the onslaught of European settlement, and, eventually, accommodate Anglo-American hegemony. During the colonial era, the Catawba Nation bolstered a declining population with the displaced remnants of other native groups, and strengthened its position by military alliance with the English colonies, forming “an Excellent Barrier to the Province.” The Catawbas threw their lot with the colonists during the American Revolution, and earned special consideration in the new republic, where they created economic roles that were advantageous and non-threatening to their American allies. Archaeological evidence from the Catawba sites of Nassaw (ca. 1750-1759), Old Town (ca. 1770-1780) and New Town (ca. 1781-1818) reveals material aspects of the processes of multi-ethnic amalgamation and coalescence, militarization, territorial management, and seasonal itinerancy and attests the material successes of these strategic adaptations to the European presence.

### **15) Summary**

Michael S. Nassaney  
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