and are typically dated from 7,500 to 5,500 B.P. Later Middle Archaic points include the Guilford-related Brier Creek type (6,000 to 5,000 B.P.). In addition, Sykes, White Springs, and Benton types are usually found associated with this period.

These technological shifts in biface morphology are evidence of a continued shift in hunting strategies likely related to the Altithermal Optimum, a warm period during roughly the interval from 9,000 to 5,000 B.P. This warming forced a vegetation shift in which pine expanded across the landscape, at the expense of mixed hardwood forests. Some researchers have suggested these pine forests would not have been as productive for human usage and therefore abandoned. Elliott and Sassaman (1995) state that Middle Archaic groups may have consolidated their mobility ranges, preferring to inhabit the Piedmont region rather than the lower Coastal Plain region. Anderson et al. (2007) suggest that replacement of mixed hardwood forests by pine forests and cypress swamps restricted people for some time to remnant stands of hardwood forests within river valleys, and that human populations either stabilized or decreased during this time. Middle Archaic human occupations are known from shell midden and earthen sites with dense occupational debris and numerous burials along major drainages of the Midsouth and lower Midwest. These sites were likely occupied during much of an annual round of hunting and gathering lifeways, serving as locations of social aggregation and likely specialized burial areas (Anderson et al. 2007:459).

Long-distance exchange networks, as evidenced by the presence of coastal shell and Great Lakes copper, emerged by ca. 7500 B.P. Localized exchange networks, likely serving to reduce conflict and subsistence uncertainty among geographically close groups, were also operating by this time based on the distributions of items such as bone pins, bannerstones, and elaborate bifaces (Anderson et al. 2007). The emergence of communal monumental architecture is evidenced by the construction of earthen mound complexes by ca. 6000 B.P. in nearby Florida. Territorial circumscription between groups is identified by appearance of some evidence for conflict in the Midsouth and lower Midwest in the form of burials with embedded bifaces, scalping marks, and perimortem fractures. Variability in mortuary treatments suggests status differentiation was also emerging during this time, but is thought to have been achieved rather than ascribed based on the lack of evidence for heritable ranking (Anderson et al. 2007:459).

In the Southeast, Late Archaic components (ca. 5,000 to 3,000 B.P.) are recognized primarily based on the presence of certain projectile point forms and other trends initiated during the Middle Archaic, which continued to grow in scale throughout the Late Archaic. Diagnostic projectile point types include Savannah River Stemmed, Paris Island, Benton, Pickwick, and Ledbetter (Elliott and Sassaman 1995). Fiber-tempered pottery in much of the southeastern United States is generally considered under the rubric of Stallings Island, Orange, Wheeler, and Norwood Series, and it is thought to mark the transition between the Late Archaic and Early Woodland periods (i.e., Terminal Archaic). In the Okefenokee Basin, earliest human occupations documented thus far, such as at the Martha Dowling North site (9CR34), are associated with Late Archaic occupations with fiber-tempered pottery found within live oak hammocks around the edge of the swamp and on interior islands. The majority of this pottery is St. Simons, a thick, plain variety common along the Georgia coast (Kirkland and Cook 2007:16).

By the end of the Late Archaic (ca. 5,000-3,000 B.P.) wild plant foods were collected in such frequency that morphological changes characteristic of domestication appear in several local species such as goosefoot, sumpweed, sunflower, and gourds (Smith 1992; Anderson et al. 2007). Archaeological evidence indicates that people grew small amounts of squash, sunflowers, and other seed-bearing plants in simple gardens to supplement their hunting and gathering diets (Sassaman and Anderson 2004:105).