

ABSTRACT

Phase III data-recovery excavations conducted at the Beech Ridge Site revealed a stratified sequence containing late Paleoindian through Late Archaic components associated with low densities of lithic debris. The earliest component identified at the site was represented by a Dalton-Hardaway occupation, contained within a late Pleistocene paleosol B horizon that marked a former surface of occupation across the Beech Ridge landform. This component was followed by small Early and Middle Archaic occupations—represented by Palmer/Kirk, LeCroy, Morrow Mountain, and Brewerton points—all recovered from a moderately thick C horizon of eolian origin. Late Archaic to Early Woodland cultural materials were recovered from the top of this C horizon and the base of the surface A horizon capping the site's stratigraphic column. Later Middle and Late Woodland period components were present as well, represented by Coulbourn, Mockley, and Townsend ware ceramics.

Analysis of debitage patterns from buried contexts within a large block excavation revealed a series of very low-density flake clusters of differing raw material types. These clusters, or “events,” were interpreted as the loci of discrete episodes of toolkit maintenance, or areas where the resharpening of hafted biface implements took place. Little evidence was encountered for primary lithic reduction in any area of the site.

The series of low-density components dating to the late Paleoindian and Archaic stages are interpreted as short-term game-monitoring stations situated along the edge of a relict stream drainage tributary to the St. Jones River. The lack of hearth features or other facilities from the relevant sampled contexts supports the view of these early components as transient.