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## Horr's Island Yields A New View of the Florida Archaic

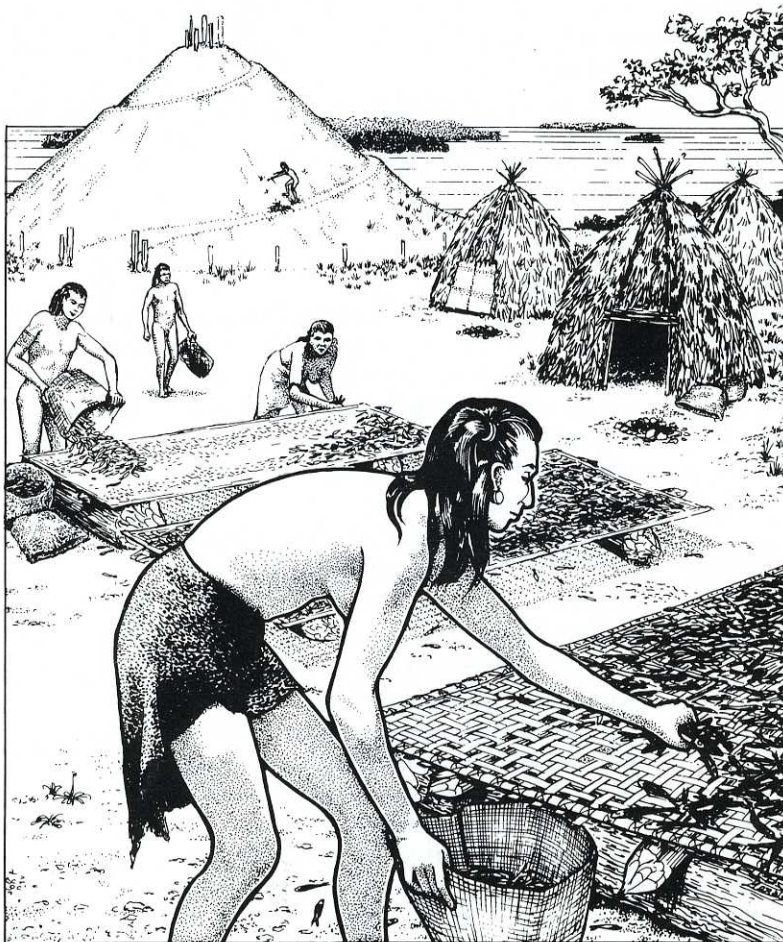
*Claudine Payne*

Every so often in archaeology, something happens to shake up the established view of prehistory. Sometimes the trigger is the discovery of a new site; sometimes, it's the introduction of a new technique. In the case of Horr's Island, it was a bit of both.

Archaeologists have known about the Late Archaic shell mounds and middens on Horr's Island near Naples for some time. But it was not until 1989, when Ronto Developments Marco made possible a full-scale archaeological investigation, that the true nature of the site became clear.

Archaeologist Mike Russo, who ran the project, had not worked much in southwest Florida before, but he turned out to be just the right person for the task. He was an expert on the Florida Archaic, and he had extensive training in zooarchaeology, a specialty that deals with the study of the archaeological remains of animals. This fortuitous combination of site and archaeologist led to a new view of Archaic peoples and their lifestyle.

First, the establishment view: During the Archaic period (6500-1000 B.C.),



people lived off the land, gathering wild plants and small animals, fishing and shellfishing, and occasionally hunting larger game. People lived in small groups and moved with the seasons. Because they were often on the move, their houses, if any, were temporary. They built no

permanent structures, no mounds of any sort. When people died, they were buried where they died.

What Russo found did not fit with this established view. His excavations in the area designated 8CR209 revealed more than 600 postholes, probably representing many small circular houses. It seemed that by 2800 B.C. people were living on Horr's Island year after year.

Russo knew that this interpretation went against the conventional view of mobile Archaic hunter-gatherers. So he took a closer look. Here's where the new techniques come into the picture.

Archaeologists frequently use seasonality studies to figure out when a site was occupied. Some animals have a clear seasonal growth pattern, which is reflected in their bones or shells. Study of these remains can determine at what season the animal was collected, thereby indicating when people lived at the site.

For the most part, these studies have been limited to a few species like quahog clam and deer. Russo took this idea further and developed ways of deter-

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