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Hindu temple with Christian cross is meditation spot

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



HINDU TEMPLE WITH CHRISTIAN CROSS IS MEDITATION SPOT

By HAMPTON DUNN

LAKELAND -- On a hillside on the Florida Southern College campus here overlooking Lake Hollingsworth is erected the only imported Hindu temple in the United States.

This unique religious structure serves as the keystone in a Garden of Meditation. There's a reflection pool in front and seats for visitors. Statues of two elephants are at the entrance, and near the temple itself is a statue of a sacred cow. Each statue is believed to be some 500 years old.

The late Dr. Frederick B. Fisher, one time Methodist bishop in India, presented the temple to Southern. Brought 15,575 miles from Benares, holy city of Hinduism, the temple is small because Hindus worship singly instead of as a congregation. The chapel is hand-carved in 239 pieces of red sandstone and is 25 feet high.

Bishop Fisher, who had planned to erect the temple elsewhere in the country as a Mecca for his friends of all races and religions, was invited to the Southern campus in 1938 as a Founders' Week speaker by the late President Dro Ludd M. Spivey.

Impressed with the spirit of the campus, Bishop Fisher said: "Here, we shall erect the temple." He died less than a month later, but his widow went ahead with his plans to bring the Hindu temple to the Methodist-related campus.

The cross of Christianity atop the temple recognized the conversion of Indians to Christianity by Dr. Fisher. He baptized many and prophesied, "Today, I have seen these hundreds start on a new path. They are weak Christians ... but they have started on a new road. I have this day crowned this Hindu temple and this entire village and all these hundreds of human hearts with the cross of Jesus Christ. It is a prophetic symbol of the future. "

