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Indians frolicked at Florida playground area

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



INDIANS FROLICKED AT FLORIDA PLAYGROUND AREA.

By HAMPTON DUNN

FORT WALTON BEACH --- This delightful section of Florida is heralded as the "Playground Area" and it is just that for numerous tourists who enjoy the beaches and other recreational facilities.

But, going back hundreds of years, there is evidence the Indians fell in love with the Gulf Coast to relax and play. And right here on main street in the heart of FWB today stands the most accessible large Indian Temple Mound on the coast of North America. It covers more than an acre of ground and it took more than 500,000 basket loads of earth to build. The primitive red men constructed it by manual labor over a long period of years.

During the so-called Fort Walton Culture (1300 A.D. to 1700 A.D.) the Temple Mound was the swinging civic, social and religious center of the Indian tribes, which came from all over Northwest Florida and Southern Alabama.

The Indians of that Culture buried their dead in cemeteries, but some burials have been discovered in the Mound, probably of Indians in later periods. There was an excavation in 1861 and at a depth of 18 inches there were found, "Great skeletons of men in perfect state of preservation... They crossed each other and were filled with a four-inch layer of preserving matter, a mixture of lime and some other mineral substance." Confederate soldiers removed the skeletons, displayed them at their fort which was burned later.

The Temple Mound property was acquired by the City of Fort Walton Beach in 1959. It is a national landmark designated by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. An Interesting museum also is operated here.

