

Indian has become  
one of leading  
recreational factors



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Indian Temple Mound In the heart of downtown Fort Walton Beach, Florida lies a magnificent hill of earth created by prehistoric Native Americans as a political and religious center. Built about 1,400 AD, this structure of earth is known today as The Indian Temple Mound. This temple mound represents one of the most outstanding artifacts left by the early inhabitants of the area.

Not only is it thought to be the largest mound located on saltwater, but also it could possibly be one of the largest prehistoric earthworks on the Gulf Coast. Many events that took place so long ago in the past have been discovered due to the objects found in this mound. In 1961, The Indian Temple Mound Museum was built. This museum was the first municipally owned museum in the State of Florida. Today the museum has a two-dollar charge to enter, yet it has become one of leading recreational factors in which draws people from around the world to the area of Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

The museum houses interpretive exhibits depicting 10,000 years of Native American occupation. Over 6,000 artifacts of bone, stone, clay, and shell are found within this museum, as well as the largest collection of Fort Walton Period ceramics in the Southeastern United States. Although every artifact present in The Indian Temple Mound Museum offers clear evidence of cultural sophistication and artistic skill, the more interesting artifacts I encountered were the Ware Human Effigy Urn, the Buck Burial Mound Urn, and the Pump Drill.

In 1971, the Ware family found pieces of a clay vessel at a small mound, possibly a domiciliary or a house mound, about four miles west of The Indian Temple Mound Museum. The pieces were made of light brown to tan colored clay, coiled into a rough shape with features molded on the outside. When the clay fragments were carefully placed together, an Effigy (made to look like) of a human male was formed. Although it is unknown, the figure was probably made to resemble a specific individual. Like a portrait, this figure shows details of clothing and decoration. The hair is worn pulled back and a decorative band resembling a crown surrounds the head. The eyes are closed, suggesting a man already dead. The ears contain a set of decorative earrings that dangle.

The body is naked, but bracelets can be seen on the wrists and a lip ornament is worn in the pierced bottom lip. The use of this bowl is still unknown today. It would seem to have been a jar for holding liquid in a ritual situation, yet the back has two pierced holes as if the figure was made to be suspended. Perhaps it was secured to a support for display. Maybe one day in the future, the mystery use of this item will be revealed. The Buck Burial Mound Urn is one of the more unique artifacts made by the Prehistoric People. Found at a cemetery mound of the Woodland Time Period, this urn is thought to have held the cremated remains of an important individual.

The urn is colored in black, white, and red- colors of the earth and sacred to the Prehistoric People who made this vessel. Unlike many other vessels, this was made from clay using two methods. The body was created using coils of clay placed atop one another. The legs were made of slabs molded from the outside leaving the center of the legs square. The head has a topknot  
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hairstyle and ears which are pierced. The face is blackened to resemble a ritual mask, while the body is covered by a red and white design which is thought to resemble a feathered cape.

The figure has clearly human hands and feet, but it also has two projections much like stumps. These are thought to represent a two-legged stool. The coloring and style suggest a cultural contact with Central or South America, but this artifact is most closely related to the Mississippi River Valley regions. An ancient handy tool used for cutting holes into wood, stone, bone, leather, shell, and clay is called the pump drill. This drill is not an Indian invention, however it was brought to the