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Fort Walton Beach and the 'Pensacola Peoples'

 by [Matthew MacDonald](#) | Contributor | January 4, 2016



I will be the first to admit it: my neighborhood and the surrounding area looks a bit boring.

There is no bustling metropolis. There is no 'scene' (art, music, or otherwise) to speak of. Even the local shopping mall leaves something to be desired. There is urban sprawl as far as the eye can see.

While it may appear that I am dumping on my current locale, I assure you I am not. I'm just telling you what I see on a daily basis.

As I have mentioned before, when I relocated here with my family, my wife and I treated every time we left the house like an exploration. On one of our journeys, I spied, with my beady little eye, The Fort Walton Beach Indian Temple Mound. It is located in one of the most easy to miss areas I have ever seen in my life.

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Located on a little triangle of land, bordered by Miracle Strip Parkway, Eglin Parkway SE, and Florida Place SE, The Indian Temple Mound is, in my mind, lost amidst the restaurants and tourist traps.

It's a sad but reasonable fact. Fort Walton Beach sits on [Destin's](#) backdoor. Both are equally nice cities but tourists go to Destin because it is the center jewel of the Emerald Coast. Additionally, both cities are economically happier when it's tourist season.

One day last week I had a thought: "*How many people know about the history of Fort Walton Beach and it's Indian Temple Mound?*"

The Fort Walton Beach Indian Temple Mound is believed to have been built around 800 CE by the Pensacola Peoples.

From what archaeologists have been able to excavate, we have learned that the Pensacola Peoples have relied more on coastal resources despite the fact that they were very successful agriculturally. Additionally, we have learned that the mound itself served as the 'town hall'. At it's top was the temple and residence of the Tribal Chief. Surrounding the mound at it's base was where everyone



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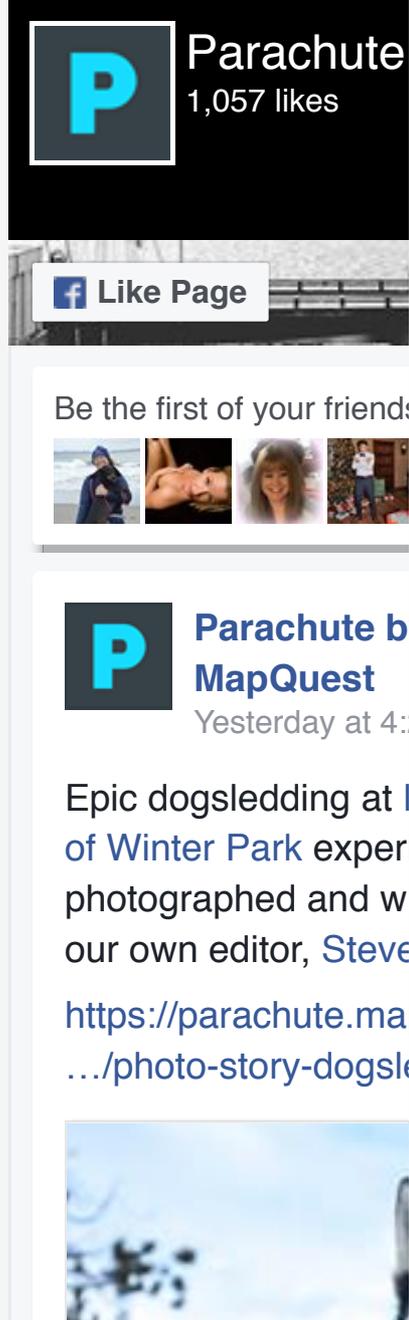
else was presumed to live.

As the chief died, it was believed that he was buried in the mound. After his burial, another layer of earth was added to it. Hence the mound's large stature. Eventually the mound was believed to have been abandoned in the 1600's. One of the more popular theories has to do with the growing anglo-saxon occupation of the country at the time.

In the 19th century the mound was put back into use when the area at large was re-inhabited by the Confederates during the Civil War. During this time, the mound served as a camp for those who were ordered to guard the Santa Rosa Sound and the Choctawhatchee Bay.

In the 1960s, a museum was established on the mound holding the esteem of being Florida's first municipally owned and operated museum.

While there is something to be said for having a gluttonous and lethargic vacation soaking up as much Vitamin D as possible, and while it is reasonable to think that there really isn't much to the city that you call home, it never hurts to look to the past in order to see what came



Facebook post from Parachute MapQuest. The post features a blue profile picture with a white 'P' and the text 'Parachute MapQuest' and '1,057 likes'. Below this is a 'Like Page' button. The main content of the post is a photo of a person dogsledding, with the text 'Epic dogsledding at [redacted] of Winter Park exper [redacted] photographed and w [redacted] our own editor, Steve [redacted] https://parachute.ma [redacted] .../photo-story-dogsl'.

before you.

[The Indian Temple Mound Museum is located at:](#)

139 Miracle Strip Parkway SE

Fort Walton Beach, Florida 32548

Their normal hours of operation are:

Monday through Friday 12:00pm - 4:30pm

Saturday 10:00am to 4:30pm

Matthew MacDonald is a freelance writer currently residing in Northwest Florida. There hasn't been a 'writing hat' he hasn't worn.

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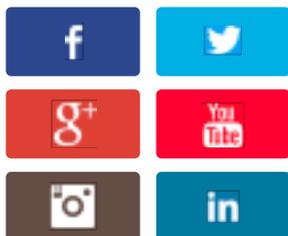
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