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PRELIMINARY ARCHEOLOGICAL  
EXPLORATIONS AT  
WEEDEN ISLAND, FLORIDA

by  
J. Walter Fewkes

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(WITH 21 PLATES)

BY  
J. WALTER FEWKES  
Chief, Bureau of American Ethnology



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INTRODUCTION

The first printed account of any considerable size of the prehistoric shell and earth mounds near St. Petersburg, Florida, known to the author, was written by Mr. S. W. Walker and published in the Smithsonian Report for 1879.<sup>1</sup> This account considers many shell heaps situated on Hillsborough and Tampa bays, as well as others some distance along the west shore of Florida. Of the many prehistoric mounds that formerly stood on the site of the present city of St. Petersburg, only one (pl. 1, fig. 1) remains intact at the present time. Fortunately this ancient monument was saved from vandals and occupies a conspicuous position in Hospital Park, but the others, including six of considerable magnitude, have shared the fate of many other Floridian mounds. The great majority have been carried off and used in the construction of roads in the city, for the shells of which they are composed have a commercial value for that purpose. The Bull Frog Creek Mound, one of the most extensive in 1879, is now (1924) entirely obliterated.

In his studies of Florida shell heaps, Mr. Walker made excavations in some of those on Tampa Bay, where there were several mounds of size, and prepared a map illustrating their distribution. His articles on shell heaps appear to be the most important yet published on that region. Among these the mounds at Papy's Bayou, which are near, perhaps identical with those on Weeden Island, the subject of this paper, are thus described by him:

These mounds are situated on a narrow peninsula on the north side of Papy's Bayou, on Old Tampa Bay. The place is known as Piliant's Hummock, and has been settled at some time in the past, but I presume the settlers fled before invading hordes of mosquitoes and sand flies. A few tumble down houses in a small clearing, surrounded by straggling orange and lemon trees, will serve

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Walker published several papers on Florida, among which are two articles dealing with antiquities of Tampa Bay: one entitled "Preliminary Explorations Among the Indian Mounds in Southern Florida" and another, "Report on the Shell Heaps of Tampa Bay, Florida."