

# WHITE SPRING(S) POST OFFICE by Thomas Lera

White Springs is a small Hamilton County town along the Suwannee River in northern Florida. It is at what originally the junction of the post road that connected Jasper with Suwannee Shoals and Alligator (later Lake City), and the road that connected Blount's Ferry and Benton with Little River.

The White Spring(s) post office was established April 13, 1842 with William M. Reed as postmaster, and service by postal route No. 3517. On April 14, 1851 William P. Purviance was awarded the route for \$620 annually. It left from Alligator at 1 p.m. Wednesday by White Springs, Jasper, Jennings, Belleville, Cherry Lake, Clifton and Aucilla, arriving at Monticello, by 8 p.m. on Friday, a total of 96 miles. The return occurred between 5 a.m. Saturday and 12 p.m. the next Monday. <sup>i</sup> The map is of Northern Part of Florida [Figure 1]. Compiled and Published at the U.S. Coast Survey Office, A.D. Bache Superintendent; 1864. Drawn by H. Leidenkohl at 1 inch to 10 miles. <sup>ii</sup>

During the stampless mail period, there were six different types of postmarks recorded with Type VIB shown below. On April 29, 1853, the Type VI postmark changed to a circle date stamp with the town name White Springs.



The cover with the clear strike [Figure 2] of White Springs, is a Type VIB CDS, Aug 29, 1853, with a PAID 3 in a 24mm circle, and a Type C "5 in circle" rate deleted with triple strike of type 15 x 7mm straight line PAID (only known PAID example).

In 1836, Bryant & Elizabeth Sheffield constructed a hotel and spring house, and advertised the mineral waters' ability to cure nervousness, kidney troubles, and rheumatism, among other problems. The spring was initially called Upper Mineral Springs, was later renamed White Sulphur Springs, and became very popular as Florida's first tourist attraction. <sup>iii</sup>



White Springs was incorporated in 1885 following the Civil War, and the tourist business slowly returned to the resorts around the spring. Health seekers arrived, first by stagecoach and then by the Georgia Southern and Florida Railroad.



Figure 3

In 1903, the spring was enclosed by concrete and coquina walls that included multiple water gates and galleries to prevent water intrusion from river flooding. A four-story wooden bathhouse was constructed around the spring,<sup>iv</sup> next to a resort with 60 rooms to accommodate up to 200 guests, doctors' offices for patient examination and treatment, dressing rooms, space for concessions, and an elevator [Figure 3, Commercial chrome postcard #58276, published by McLeod & Sons, White Springs Florida c1910. Courtesy of the Thomas Lera Collection.]. At the time, water flow was calculated at 32,400 gallons per minute, or nearly 47 million gallons per day.

[Figure 4; Spring image from the 1900s. Commercial chrome postcard, printed by Hugh C. Leighton Co., 1907 or 1908 (Courtesy of the Thomas Lera Collection).]

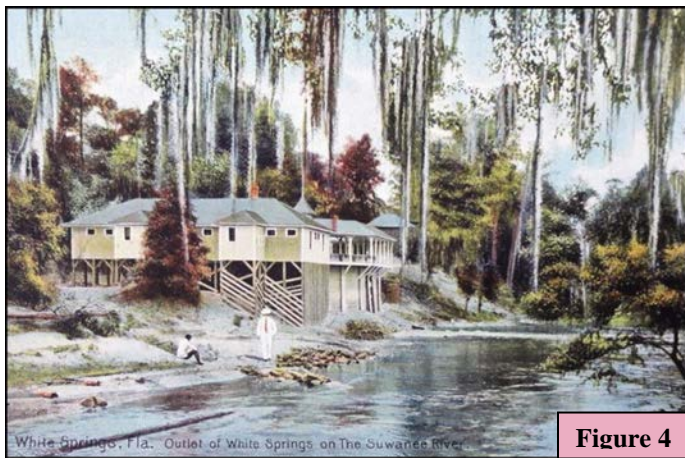


Figure 4



Figure 5

In the 1980s, Union Carbide's phosphate plant mining operations hit the springs' aquifer which caused, you guessed it, a huge water geyser resulting in the spring drying up. Today the spring has only the covered walkway around the top of its original foundation. No swimming or taking of the waters is allowed, as only murky, stagnant water puddles the ground, once covered by the mineral water. Figure 5 shows the Springhouse at White Springs 2016, Photograph by Thomas Lera.

<sup>i</sup> *Florida Stampless Postal History 1763 – 1861*. 1999. Deane R. Briggs, M.D., ed. David G. Phillips Publishing Co., Inc. North Miami, Florida 33261-1388, pp. 46. 303-304. Images from *Florida Stampless Postal History 1763 – 1861: Second Edition* in publication.

<sup>ii</sup> Northern Part of Florida. Compiled and Published at the United States Coast Survey Office, A. D. Bache, Superintendent. 1864. Drawn by H. Lindenkohl. 1 inch to 10 miles. 19 x 25. Published. Railroad lines and State boundary in red; drainage features in blue. Roads, swamps, lighthouses, forts, towns, and smaller settlements are shown, and scattered comments describe the vegetation. RG 23: Special Maps.

<sup>iii</sup> [“History of the Town of White Springs”](#). *City of White Springs, Florida*. Accessed December 25, 2016.

<sup>iv</sup> [“Interior of Bath House, White Springs, Florida.”](#) 191?. *State of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services*. Accessed December 25, 2016.; [“Bath House, Spring Street, White Springs, Hamilton County, FL”](#). *Historic American Buildings Survey (Library of Congress). Historic Map Works*. Accessed December 25, 2016.