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POOR PONCE, HE MISSED THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

By HAMPTON DUNN

WHITE SPRINGS --- Too bad Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon, who discovered Florida in 1513 looking foci the fountain of youth, wasn’t fluent in the Indian language. He may have located his goal right here.

Long before white man came, the Indians labeled the mineral springs here "Medicine Waters." It’s said the various tribes so respected the healing qualities of the springs they had an agreement with one another that no fighting would take place within a radius of seven miles. Sacred ground they called it. The red man came from all parts of Florida and Georgia to enjoy the soothing waters which they believed cured rheumatism and other ailments.

A sign at the old springhouse, a landmark from the days when this village was one of the states most famous resorts, reminds us that "If Ponce de Leon had only known about this spring, he would have had to hunt no farther for the Fountain of Youth."

The springhouse is four stories high and the river has risen up to the top platform. The spring itself is 14 feet deep and pumps 30,000 gallons of water a minute. Containing iron, sulphur, calcium, magnesium and chlorides, the mineral spring reportedly has helped victims of arthritis, rheumatism and kidney trouble.

Famed Seminole Chief Osceola was born and reared near here in Hamilton County. He lived by a beautiful winding creek Sal Marie, named for his mother.

White Springs is just off Interstate 75 near the Georgia border. Across the street from the springhouse is the Stephen Foster Memorial.