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THE OLD COUNTRY STORE IS BACK

By HAMPTON DUNN

WHITE SPRINGS --- Antiquity is not news in this interesting part of Suwannee River country. But there’s one landmark that stands out above the others: It’s the old Adams Country Store in downtown White Springs.

For nearly 100 years, the general store operated under the Adams banner, finally closing in 1958. R. W. Adams established the merchantile business in 1865, at the close of the Civil War, and it bore his name until 1905. In that year it was incorporated as Adams Brothers, and was run continuously by members of the family until it was shuttered.

Now, the old country store sold everything that anyone would need --- from coffins to horse collars to needles and thread. The store shut down only after the demand for such items as trace chains, singletrees, axle grease and sassafras tea ended.

The Adams family got out, but the Admas Country Store lives on! In 1970, the Suwannee River Crafts Guild took it over and made it a popular outlet to dispense local crafts to the tourists. The store is in sight of the entrance to the famed Stephen Foster Memorial on U.S. 41, giving the Guild exposure to the 150,000 visitors who come to the memorial annually.

Residents of eight counties involved in the Guild project --- they're Levy, Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette, Suwannee, Hamilton, Madison and Columbia --- make and sell all kinds of curious crafts here. Why, you can buy jellies, relishes, pickles, homemade syrups, quilts, bedspreads, aprons, shawls, bonnet dolls, brooms, corn-husk brushes, homemade lye, soap, ceramics; well, just about anything you can imagine, here at Adams Country Store.

White Springs, which straddles the serene Suwannee, is one of the oldest resort towns in Florida. The Indians discovered it first, enjoyed its river and warm mineral spring. Later it became a delightful spot for fun-seekers in ante-bellum days. A fire swept the business area of White Springs on Feb. 24, 1911 --- but Adams Country Store escaped.