Boom-time Inn still a delightful spot

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WAKULLA SPRINGS --- An off-beat attraction near the capital city of Tallahassee is lovely Wakulla Springs --- the deepest spring in the United States: The spring rises from a cavern deep in the limestone rocks, 200 feet or more below the surface of the sparkling, clear lake.

A landmark dating from the Florida real estate boom-times is the Wakulla Springs Lodge, an 80-room structure that houses guests who come to enjoy the beauties of nature and relaxation here at the spring. Politicians are among frequent visitors to this "hideaway."

There’s a mystery about how the name Wakulla is supposed to mean "mystery." It obviously comes down from the Indians, but something was lost in the translation. Some say that it is indeed the Indian word for "mystery." But other experts say that since Wakulla was probably a Timucuan word, it is unlikely that its literal meaning will ever be known. It may contain the word "Kala" which signified a "spring of water" in some Indian dialects.

Wakulla Springs is 20 miles south of Tallahassee on State Road 61. It’s a part of a huge, 4,000-acre tract of woodland owned by Ed Ball, an area kept as near to its native state as possible. It’s unique among Florida tourist attractions in that is eschews the commercial look that goes with most of them.

Actually, with the giant hole spouting out 350,000,000 gallons of water a day from a single fissure, Wakulla in all probability is not only the largest spring in Florida and the United States, but anywhere in the world.

In the wilds surrounding the spring centerpiece a visitor might see almost every variety of wild fowl, especially cranes, herons and ducks, to say nothing of many kinds of reptilian life such as turtle, alligators and serpents.

For more local color, listen to this Indian legend: Small "water people, " four inches tall, with long hair, once held dances in the depths of the springs on moonlight nights, and at a certain hour a warrior appeared in a stone canoe, frightening them away.