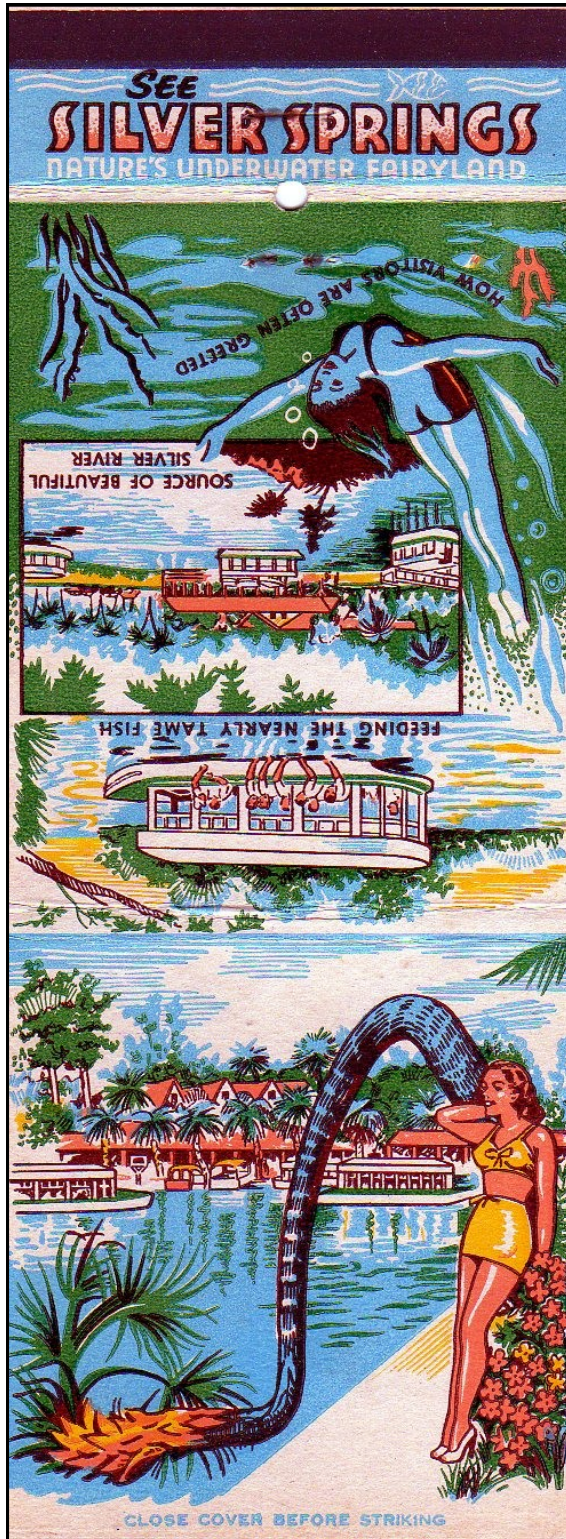




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Florida's *Silver Springs*

Silver Springs, founded in 1852, is an unincorporated community in Marion County, Florida. It is the site of Silver Springs, a group of artesian springs and a historic tourist attraction that is now part of Silver Springs State Park. The community is part of the Ocala metropolitan area.

One of Florida's first tourist attractions, the springs drew visitors even before the U.S. Civil War. Glass-bottom boats have been a popular way to see the 242-acre complex. A small amusement park with various animals, a concert stage, a carousel, and exhibits also developed.

Since the mid-19th century, the natural environment of Silver Springs has attracted visitors from throughout the United States. Glass-bottom boat tours of the springs began in the late 1870s. In the 1920s, W. Carl Ray and W.M. "Shorty" Davidson, after leasing the land from Ed Carmichael (upon whose death the springs were left to the University of Florida), developed the land around the headwaters of the Silver River into an attraction that eventually became known as Silver Springs Nature Theme Park. The attraction featured native animal exhibits, amusement rides, and 30 or 90-minute glass-bottom boat tours of the springs. The 1934 'Princess Donna' is the oldest and only remaining operational boat from this by gone era. The "Princess Donna" currently operates on Jug Creek in Bokeelia Florida. In 2013, the State of Florida took over operations of Silver Springs and combined it with the adjacent Silver River State Park to form the new Silver Springs State Park. The T. W. Randall House on the National Register of Historic Places is located to the northeast.

Several defunct tourist attractions were once located near Silver Springs. The Western-themed Six Gun Territory theme park, which included several attractions such as the Southern Railway & Six Gun 3 ft narrow gauge railroad, operated from 1963 to 1984. The Wild Waters water park also existed in Silver Springs and operated from 1978 to 2016. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_Springs,_Florida]