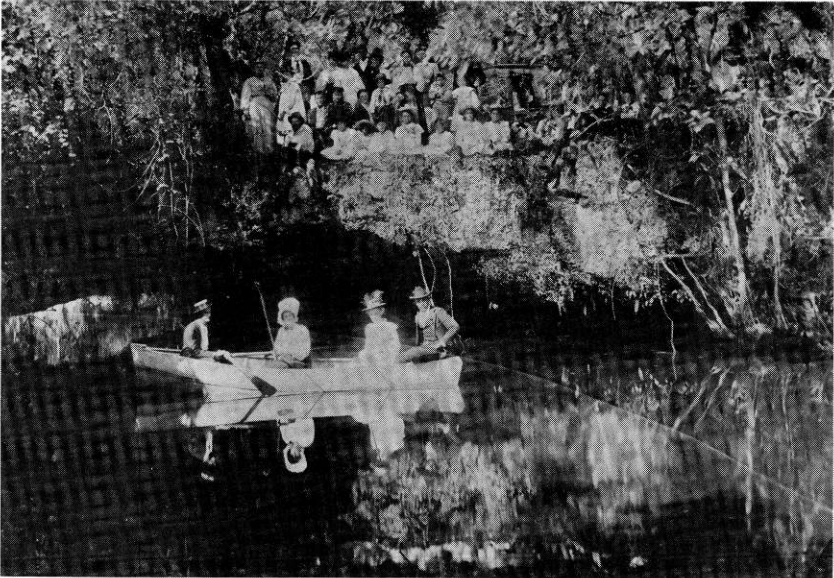


Arch Creek: Prehistory to Public Park

By Emily Perry Dieterich



An Arch Creek outing, circa 1897.

HASF Collection

Meet me at the bridge. The natural limestone bridge. Meet
me at the bridge at old Arch Creek . . . the little natural bridge.
The natural bridge where all good friends meet.

*from the song "Meet Me At The Bridge",
by Jessie Freeling*

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Arch Creek — perhaps no other South Florida landmark evokes more colorful mental images. By definition, Arch Creek is a body of water which historically flowed from the Everglades eastward into Biscayne Bay. Frances Densmore described it as “an avenue to the depths of the Everglades . . . where rare beauty of vegetation may be seen . . .”¹ For Tequesta Indians, Arch Creek was the shady oak tree hammock which provided food and shelter. For early pioneers, Arch Creek was a favorite picnic spot. For passengers on the stage coach route, Arch Creek was the long awaited rest stop. It was also the last stop for boats on sightseeing tours from Miami. Throughout the years, enterprising individuals tried to develop the area, prosper from its uniqueness, incorporate it, re-route it and even destroy it. Artists have painted pictures of it and written songs about it. The concentration and range of activities associated with the Arch Creek area is truly amazing. Even more amazing is the fact that portions of this beautiful place have survived relatively intact.

No description of the Arch Creek area would be complete without reference to the natural limestone bridge which spanned the creek and gave it its name. In a discussion of south Florida geology, archaeologist Irving Eyster noted,

Of all the openings in the limestone ridge, Arch Creek was the most unique. Here the water cuts under the oolite limestone, rather than through it. This left an arch forming a natural bridge . . . ²

A variety of interesting theories have been proposed regarding the formation of this geological curiosity. In historian Thelma Peters' *Biscayne Country*, she writes the following account:

When the arch was created is not known. One theory of how it was created is this: Arch Creek was an underground stream . . . until one day it lost its cover through erosion or by an earthquake . . . except for forty feet where the solid rock refused to fall. (Lest the earthquake theory be lightly dismissed, there has long been a myth that New River of Fort Lauderdale was the result of an earthquake).³

Bert Mowers, an avocational archaeologist, described the natural bridge as “originating from a partially collapsed cavern roof.”⁴ Archaeologist Dan Laxson suggests still another theory:

. . . Arch Creek runs through the only natural bridge forma-

tion in south Florida. Originally, the creek was a horizontal solution hole. Swampy, acid-charged ground water gradually weakened the roof of this tunnel until large pieces caved in, eventually forming an open limestone gorge.⁵

Regardless of its origin, the natural bridge was undoubtedly one factor which made the area so attractive to prehistoric Indians, and, later, to the pioneers of the Arch Creek area in the 19th century. Approximately 40 feet long and 20 feet wide, the bridge was the focal point of much human activity throughout history.

Botanist John K. Small described the archaeological site at Arch Creek as having “. . . evidence of much activity, in the way of kitchen middens, village sites, and burial mounds.”⁶ The site was recorded in the Florida Master Site File by archaeologist John Goggin in 1952.

Laxson was the first to excavate the site in 1956. He described the soil as sand over a basal formation of pot-holed limestone which frequently appeared at the surface. An area of black dirt indicated the site's boundaries, within which a total of eight pits were excavated. Laxson recovered over 300 pottery fragments, a dozen *Strombus* shell tools, bone points and a stone pendant. According to the Everglades Culture Sequence, the stratigraphy and the ceramic time markers indicated the most intense occupation of the site was during the Glades II period (A.D. 750-1250).⁷

A joint excavation of the site was undertaken by the Broward County Archaeological Society and the Miami-West India Archaeological Society in 1972. The team excavated eight pits, recovering over 6,000 pottery fragments which represented the Glades II period. Only a few Glades I period (500 B.C. - A.D. 750) pottery fragments were recovered, and even fewer Glades III period (A.D. 1250-1700) time markers.⁸

The most extensive work at the Arch Creek site was conducted by archaeologist Robert Carr in 1975 for the Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management. Considerable care was exercised in this project, which succeeded in locating a relatively undisturbed portion of the site. A total of eight pits were excavated yielding over 2,000 pottery fragments, numerous artifacts and faunal remains. The ceramic assemblage and radiocarbon dates obtained from Carr's study indicate a long occupancy of the site, covering almost the entire Everglades Culture Sequence.⁹ The dates of occupation suggested by Carr are 500 B.C. through A.D. 1300, with the most intense occupation between 300 B.C.

and A.D. 100. Carr reports the area was “no longer the site of a large village after circa A.D. 1200.” As an explanation, he suggests,

. . . the demise of the Arch Creek village reflects a population shift by its occupants to other village sites . . . reflecting a trend towards greater nucleation of coastal groups in or near emerging town settlements in South Florida, such as the town of Tekesta at the mouth of the Miami River.¹⁰

Archaeological excavations, research, and references in the literature, help to recreate the following chronology for the Arch Creek area, beginning in prehistoric times and continuing through the 20th century.

The area around Arch Creek was one of many prehistoric Indian habitation sites along Dade County’s estuaries. Other large villages were established around the same time at Oleta River, Surfside, Little River, Miami River and Snapper Creek. Arch Creek was the site of a substantial village which was able to support a sizable population due to the abundant natural resources in the area.

The oak tree hammock, adjacent to the creek, provided much needed shade and shelter for the Indians, as well as nutritious plants, nuts, and berries. Biscayne Bay, less than half a mile away, offered a variety of food sources: fish, shellfish, shark, manatee, and turtle. To the north of the hammock were pine flatlands, home of the important coontie plant, (*Zamia integrifolia*), whose roots the Indians ground to make an edible starch-like paste. According to botanist Dan Austin, “the plant was a staple starch source for the Glades Indians . . . and also later for the Seminoles and European settlers.”¹¹ Arch Creek provided access into Biscayne Bay and the interior Everglades and, of course, the natural bridge allowed the Indians to cross the creek without getting their feet wet.

The historic Tequesta and Seminole Indians may have occupied the area around Arch Creek on a seasonal or temporary basis from circa A.D. 1300 through the 1800s. Evidence confirming this theory was long ago destroyed by surface disturbance to the site.

During the Third Seminole War (1855-1858), U.S. troops built a military trail between Fort Lauderdale and Fort Dallas in Miami. It used the natural bridge at Arch Creek.

It follows through its whole extend a dry belt of country grown up with pine, palmetto, koontie, and crosses three streams; the Boca Raton, Arch Creek — which is spanned by a natural bridge — and Little River.¹²

The trail was actually a portion of a rock road, built by order of Captain Erastus Capron, linking Fort Dallas with Fort Capron five miles north of Fort Pierce.¹³

Unconfirmed reports indicate an arms dealer who sold guns to the Indians during the Seminole Wars lived near the bridge.¹⁴ Known as Luis the Breed because he was part Indian and part Cuban, Luis was supposedly killed during one of the many bitter battles at the natural bridge.

Having served its purpose, the trail was abandoned and in many places obliterated. Soon after this, a coontie mill and water sluice were constructed at Arch Creek.

As indicated earlier, the coontie plant was an important food source for Indian tribes in south Florida. The plant, which once grew abundantly in the pinelands around Arch Creek, has been the subject of much ethnobotanical research.¹⁵ A brief review of these studies is important to an understanding of the significance of the mill site at Arch Creek.

The plant and its edible by-product have been referred to by a variety of names in the literature: koonti, koontie, coontie, coomtie, cunti, comptie, compte, arrowroot, arrowroot starch, comfort root, flour root, and Indian bread root.¹⁶ The coontie plant belongs to the genus *Zamia*, a member of the ancient cycad family, and is widely distributed from Florida to Brazil. The common species in southeastern Florida is *Zamia integrifolia*. According to Emile Moya, "the plant seems to prefer limestone soils, doing well on the eroded late Pleistocene rocks of southern Florida, Yucatan, and the West Indies . . .".¹⁷ Superficially, the plant may appear to be a small palm, or heavy fern, with its neat rows of stiff, pinnate leaves. Coontie reaches a maximum height of only two and a half feet and most of the plant's structure is found underground in the heavy stem or tuber which may weigh several pounds. The stem, which is commonly referred to as a root, resembles a sweet potato and is composed of a tough fibrous material with a high proportion of starch grains. Additionally, the root contains a soluble poisonous compound, probably a glycoside.¹⁸

The first step in processing coontie involves cutting the roots into small pieces. The pieces are then grated or ground into a moist pulp. The pulp is washed and strained, separating the starch from the fiber and removing the toxin. The starch which remains is allowed to settle, the water is drained off, and the process is repeated. The author's experience indicates the water will exhibit a reddish

cast until the poison is entirely removed. The starch is then dried in the sun for several hours. The result is a powder-fine, high quality starch with a sweet, vanilla-like flavor.¹⁹

According to Sleight, "the earliest reference to the use of the roots for making of 'bread' by the Indians of Florida is to be found in the *Memoir of Hernando d' Escalante Fontaneda*, dating from about 1575."²⁰ John Fix reports the Tequestas and Calusas prepared a "pudding" from coontie roots which was a basic ingredient in almost every meal.²¹ A study by Austin revealed the Seminoles called it "coontie-hateka" or "white bread", from which the word coontie is derived.²²

During the 1800s white settlers in south Florida learned the art of preparing coontie starch.²³ Not only did the pioneers enjoy the culinary rewards of the coontie plant, but they turned the process into a profit-making business which endured almost a century. The backyard manufacture of coontie starch was a dependable source of cash for early pioneers until about 1900 when commercial mills began operating.²⁴ According to Ernest Gearhart:

. . . manufacturing starch from the coontie root is probably the earliest known industry in Dade County . . . it has been established that white settlers engaged in the industry some time prior to 1840.²⁵

Probably the best known of the commercial mills was owned by Albert Hurst located at Northeast 2nd Avenue and 103rd Street. The mill turned out two tons of high quality, fiber-free starch a day, most of which was sold to national baking companies for biscuits, crackers, cookies and spaghetti. As early as 1845, George W. Ferguson also owned a large mill which sometimes employed as many as 25 workers. Ferguson's mill was located about three miles up the Miami River at present day Northwest South River Drive and Northwest 28th Avenue. The *Florida Tropical Cookbook* contains many recipes for using coontie in sauces, gravies, puddings and pies. Reportedly, coontie starch was also good for burns.²⁶ A by-product of the industry was the decayed pulp which made an excellent fertilizer for fruit trees.²⁷

Most of the earlier mills were makeshift and operated by hand. The Hurst mill utilized steam for power to turn the grinding wheel. But one of the most unusual mills was operated at Arch Creek and was powered by running water. The only known reference to the Arch Creek coontie mill comes from Rose Wagner Richards'

Reminiscences of the Days of Miami, published by the *Miami News*, in 1903. Mrs. Richards gave the following account:

It was in the fall of the year, 1858, that Mr. George Lewis returned to Miami . . . desirous of finding a good location on which to build a factory and engage in the manufacture of starch. Such a place he and Mr. Robert Fletcher, who was to share in the enterprise with him, found on Arch Creek . . . The factory was built immediately on top of the arch. On the south side where a ditch was cut through the rock, can yet be seen, and where the water was made to flow through after the main passage beneath the arch had been closed up sufficient to cause the water to rise and flow through the ditch with such force as to turn the water wheel attached to the machinery used in the factory. A year or more of time was consumed by them at this place and not succeeding as well as they could have wished, the place was abandoned by them altogether.²⁸

The seemingly inexhaustable supply of coontie gradually disappeared in the early 1900s. The Hurst mill was destroyed by a hurricane in 1926 after it moved to Southwest 104th Street and U.S. 1 and was never re-built. The slow growth habit of the coontie plant was not conducive to cultivation, and their natural pineland habitat was the first to feel the crunch of the bulldozers during the land boom of the 1920s. The mill at Arch Creek, although unsuccessful in the starch business, was certainly unique in operation. It is one of the only known coontie mills to have used a sluice and the only excavated mill site in south Florida.

Township 52 South, Range 42 East was officially surveyed in 1870 and the natural bridge and surrounding tree hammock were duly noted on the map.²⁹ Settlers in the 1870s included Mike Fallon, William S. Milliken, Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Rhodes and their two children, the brother of Mrs. Rhodes, Benjamin Coachman, and Mr. and Mrs. William Fogg. Milliken died February 5, 1876 and was buried close to the natural bridge.³⁰ A large granite tombstone marked his grave which remained until at least 1934. An article in the *Daily News* indicated that the grave had been disturbed through the years reportedly because the word "treasure" was used in the epitaph.³¹

The J.R. Rhodes family came from the Carolinas and settled near the arch on the south side. Mr. Rhodes was known as "Arch Creek Rhodes" to distinguish him from Samuel Rhodes of Coconut Grove.³²

Mrs. Rhodes, in crossing the arch one day, met and killed the largest rattle-snake with a small garden hoe, that I have ever heard of being killed in the country, the snake measuring 6 feet 9 inches. The skin was preserved as a trophy. She was a plucky little woman, and thought nothing of what she had done.³³

The Rhodes moved away in 1877. According to Peters, Charles J. Ihle deserves the title of First Settler in the vicinity of Arch Creek. In 1891 Ihle bought 80 acres, for a dollar an acre, and planted fruit trees, coconut palms and landscaped his property with tropical plants. In 1922 the Deloss LeBaron Perrine family purchased the Ihle property. Mr. Perrine published *Tropic Magazine*, which featured articles on outdoor life and sightseeing in Florida. He used a photo of the estate on the cover of the magazine in April, 1925.³⁴

Rattlesnakes were not the only over-sized creatures that lived at Arch Creek. In 1874 William T. Hornaday, a taxidermist in Miami waged a vicious battle with a 14'2" crocodile in Arch Creek. Hornaday claims it was the first true crocodile ever captured on American soil.³⁵ "Old Crock" was stuffed and put on display in the United States National museum.

Commodore Ralph Munroe and Charles Peacock, early Coconut Grove pioneers, engaged in a ferocious fight with a 14'8" crocodile in Arch Creek. They succeeded in capturing and killing the 1,200 pound saurian which was exhibited at the American Museum of Natural History in 1887.³⁶

Perhaps the most colorful account comes from Dr. John G. Dupuis of Lemon City, who wrote the story of "Gladiator, The Crocodile of Arch Creek."³⁷ According to Dupuis' Seminole Indian friends, Gladiator's parents were huge crocodiles that resided in Indian Creek. Gladiator was "blown by a very severe hurricane when he was a baby into Arch Creek River and was immediately adopted by a mother Manatee (Sea Cow) who protected him . . ."³⁸ Gladiator became a "vicious and terrific fighter and if a shark or saw fish or animals invaded his home he executed them without fear or favor . . . but in all the time he resided at Arch Creek he never fought or annoyed any of the Manatee family in his chosen homestead."³⁹ Dupuis terminated Gladiator's fighting career and hung the croc's skin in the reception room of his White Belt Dairy Farm.

The first county road built at taxpayers' expense was completed in 1892. According to Peters, the road "ran from Lantana

at the lower end of Lake Worth to Lemon City on Biscayne Bay, sixty miles, 'built' at a cost of twenty-five dollars a mile . . ."⁴⁰ In 1890 E.L. White was commissioned to build three ferries, in conjunction with the county road, to cross Little River, Snake Creek and New River. There was no need for a ferry at Arch Creek as it had a natural bridge.⁴¹ A hack line (stage coach), "consisting of a springless wagon drawn by mules, with boards to sit on and a canvas for shade, began operating in 1893."⁴² Peters reports "the stage coach . . . made the last rest stop southbound at the arch — there were no facilities but plenty of bushes and good water if one had a long reach."⁴³ A portion of the trip was described by Guy Metcalf, editor of the *Tropical Sun* newspaper:

At noon (of the second day) we reached Arch Creek where is to be found a natural rock bridge under which runs the clear, deep waters of the creek, full of the finest fish, which can be seen gliding hither and thither.⁴⁴

"The military trail of the Seminole Wars, the first county road, and later the Dixie Highway, all followed almost identical routes crossing the natural bridge at Arch Creek."⁴⁵ Peters calls it the "Check Point Charley of the Bay country, the welcome mat for early tourists, and a natural phenomenon that all South Floridians came to regard with pride, even awe."⁴⁶

Other south Florida pioneers besides Lewis, who built the coontie mill, took advantage of the natural bridge and sought to prosper from it. Unlike Lewis, however, Clarence Billings capitalized on the beauty of the Arch Creek area and operated a sightseeing tour between Miami and the natural bridge. The *Metropolis* reported that Billings had cleaned out the obstructions in Arch Creek so he could operate his launch, the *Laura*, which drew only twenty inches of water. "It was a good trip, the paper said, because of 'the deep gorge near the Natural Bridge, the bridge itself, the tropical foliage covering the banks of the winding streams, the trees covered with immense orchids, the alligators sunning along the banks . . .'"⁴⁷

Pioneer Caroline Washburn-Rockwood took a sightseeing trip from the Peacock Inn at Coconut Grove to the natural bridge, and wrote the following account in her book, *In Biscayne Bay*:

About two hundred yards ahead the coral had formed a solid mass across the river . . . leaving a natural bridge, on which vegetation had taken a luxuriant hold, while a transparent veil of vines half revealed the upper waters of the creek beyond

. . . The tide was low enough to allow the boats to go under the arch, and they followed the creek a mile farther toward the Everglades, where quantities of white lilies were growing among the waving grasses.⁴⁸

The residents of the community and nearby towns appreciated the beauty of the Arch Creek area too and utilized it for rest and relaxation. Pupils of Miami's first downtown school celebrated the end of the school year with a picnic at the natural bridge in May, 1887. According to Peters, "barbecues, fish fries, political rallies, Easter egg hunts, community Thanksgiving dinners, and even on one occasion a baptism, were held there."⁴⁹

Not only did Ralph Munroe capture crocodiles at Arch Creek, but he also captured the beauty of the area on film. According to Munroe's uncle, Alfred, "the narrow river, which most of the way is bordered by mangrove trees, whose roots shoot out from the body of the trees twenty feet above . . . together with the long hanging moss make pictures that are worth coming down to see."⁵⁰

Another enterprising pioneer, Captain John Welsh, was attracted by the beauty of the Arch Creek area. Welsh's pet project was the town of Natural Bridge. He bought 160 acres of land immediately surrounding the arch and planned his town.⁵¹ Among other ideas, his design included building a hotel in the oak tree hammock. To promote the town, Welsh offered prospective buyers a boat ride from Miami to the natural bridge. The end of the trip, Arch Creek, was the most popular part:

. . . the launch passed through thick mangroves arching overhead, across the salt marsh, and into the shade of the dense hammock. Alligators sunning on the banks plopped into the water . . . and startled birds awkwardly took wing. When the tide was low enough Welsh provided a rowboat so his guests could have the thrill of passing under the arch.⁵²

George Hinckley, a wealthy restaurant owner and nature lover, moved to the Arch Creek area about 1910. He built a house near the oak hammock where he made a hobby of enhancing the natural beauty of the area and sharing it with others. Hinckley trimmed sections of the hammock, planted tropical trees, laid out trails, and provided picnic tables. According to Peters, "he even had two peacocks to entertain his visitors."⁵³ The *Metropolis* reported that Hinckley "was getting his place to look like a park."⁵⁴ Hinckley also built a refreshment stand where he sold cold drinks and souvenirs.



A rare picture of the Shell House at Arch Creek.

Courtesy of Emily Perry Dieterich

The refreshment stand was later enlarged and became known as “the shell house,” because the outer walls were covered with conch shells. Peters reports,

. . . during Prohibition when tea rooms were in vogue, this building was known as the Arch Creek Tearoom. (*Metro-polis*, October 27, 1921). The tearoom almost overhung the stream near the arch and was itself the subject for many souvenir postcards.⁵⁵

The town of Natural Bridge, or Arch Creek as it later became known, grew and prospered in the early 1900s. A group of people from Elmira, New York, established a winter colony where they grew grapefruit and tomatoes. The Elmirans are credited with the first organized settlement in the area.⁵⁶ The Florida East Coast

Railway came through and established the Arch Creek depot in 1903, about a half mile south of the natural bridge. A post office opened the same year and classes began at the Arch Creek School in 1905. By 1920 Arch Creek boasted a population of 307 residents.⁵⁷ The real estate boom in the mid 1920s transformed the small community into a fast-paced city. Arch Creek incorporated as the Town of Miami Shores in 1926.

Portions of the oak hammock were cleared for a trailer park in the 1950s. Known as the Seabreeze Trailer Park, the owners destroyed much of the native vegetation surrounding the trailers. The trailer park operated for approximately five years before the property was sold.

In 1957 the first of many threats against the natural bridge and the Arch Creek tree hammock materialized. A flood prevention program designed to drain low-lying areas placed the arch in danger. The Army Corps of Engineers proposed blowing up the bridge or rerouting the creek. *The Miami Herald* announced, "one of Southeast Florida's historic landmarks may be doomed . . . Dade County engineers say that the bridge must be sacrificed for better drainage of the area."⁵⁸ Fortunately, protests from the Audubon Society, the Historical Association of Southern Florida, and local residents prevented either of the alternatives from becoming a reality. Coincidentally, this was the same year that Laxson published his report indicating the presence of an important prehistoric Indian midden in the hammock. *The Miami News* featured the natural bridge in a "Believe-it-or-Not" column in 1958.⁵⁹

It was not until the 1970s that the Arch Creek area again received such widespread public attention. The Chrysler Corporation, owner of the property in 1972, proposed to build a used car lot where the oak hammock stood. Citizens' groups such as Tropical Audubon Society, Miami-West India Archaeological Society and the Arch Creek Trust were outraged at the idea of destroying the beautiful tree hammock and paving the ground with concrete. The groups initiated an extensive campaign aimed at saving the land from destruction. Meanwhile, the Chrysler Corporation gave the Broward County Archaeological Society 60 days to conduct salvage excavations in order to determine the property's archaeological significance.

Finally, after almost a year of intense lobbying, the Florida Cabinet voted unanimously to preserve the property. *The Miami News* reported that \$822,000 was allocated from the state's land

acquisition trust fund to buy 7.9 acres east of the creek which would be developed into a state park.⁶⁰

Within hours of signing the official documents one month later, the natural bridge collapsed into the creek. Fortunately no one was hurt, but unfortunately, the newly acquired property was without its most prized natural feature. Initially there were claims of sabotage but explosives were finally ruled out as the cause. There are almost as many theories regarding the mysterious collapse of the natural bridge as there are about its original formation. Erosion and old age were finally determined to be its downfall, combined with auto traffic and vibrations from nearby railroad tracks.

In 1975 state officials held a ground-breaking ceremony for a museum at the park. It was at this time that archaeologist Bob Carr excavated the Indian midden in order to gather interpretive data and materials for displays in the proposed museum. Between 1975 and 1978, state funds for the building were directed elsewhere and nothing more than breaking the ground was ever accomplished.

In 1978 Dade County leased the property from the state and began planning a park. The early 1980s brought clean-up crews to the property and construction began on a museum.

An unfortunate incident occurred in November, 1980. A North Miami police officer, Carl Mertes, died in the line of duty on the property. Today the park bears his name in its title.

During the summer of 1981 the Youth Conservation Corps planted over 500 trees and established a nature trail through the hammock. Also in 1981, the Dade County Historic Survey and archaeologist Irving Eyster discovered and excavated the historic coontie mill sluice. Among the artifacts recovered by Eyster were a clay pipe bowl and stem, a fragmented Spanish olive jar, ginger beer bottles, ironware, faunal bone and several pieces of Indian pottery. Eyster succeeded in locating the area that contained the water wheel and the location of the gate which controlled the flow of water. Many charred timbers and charcoal were found, indicating that perhaps the mill was burned.⁶¹

Arch Creek Memorial Park for Carl Mertes was officially dedicated on April 25, 1982. Much publicity preceded the ceremony announcing the long-awaited event and detailing the controversial history surrounding the new park. According to *The Miami Herald*, over 700 people gathered for the celebration, and nearby streets were closed to traffic.⁶² Community citizens and officials participated in an emotional program full of reminiscences,

speeches and proclamations. The Historical Association of Southern Florida presented the park with a handsome historic marker which was unveiled at the ceremony.

Arch Creek Park is a passive park, designed for nature-lovers, birdwatchers and students of history and archaeology. The park environment promotes quiet contemplation and leisurely hikes.

The facility at Arch Creek Park is an architectural conversation piece, designed as a replica of a late 1800s Florida "cracker" style house. The exterior walls are western red cedar, stained gray for a weathered appearance, and a tin roof covers the building. A wide porch wraps around the outside. Inside is a beautiful yellow cedar, oak and teakwood floor and solid douglas fir beams stretch across the high ceiling.

The building functions as a museum and nature center. The exhibit area features interpretive displays illustrating the natural and archaeological history of the Arch Creek area. As one of only two publicly accessible archaeological sites in Dade County, the park offers educational experiences that cannot be found anywhere else in the area. Students may participate in special programs where they assume the role of archaeologist, botanist or bird-watcher.

Today, a primary concern at Arch Creek Park is the preservation and protection of the native tree hammock and the archaeological sites. A comprehensive botanical plan, developed by naturalists and the park staff, is currently in use. The plan contains an inventory of existing plant species, and guidelines for preservation, re-vegetation, and maintenance of the tree hammock.⁶³ As of 1983, over 150 native Florida species and 65 exotic plant species were growing in the park. Included in the list are several "threatened" or "endangered" plants such as coontie, coral bean and Hercules' club.

Arch Creek Park was designated as a local historic site in 1985 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places a year later. The archaeological sites are protected in two ways: by the Dade County Historic Preservation Ordinance and by standards set forth by the National Park Service. Also in 1986 a life-long dream of many local residents came true. After years of fundraising, a replica of the natural bridge was finally constructed.

The history of the Arch Creek area "has always been a history of tears and triumphs, of trees and treasures and torment . . . It is in our battle to preserve this place that we have realized the very es-

sence of its history.”⁶⁴ The challenge at hand is to protect this precious piece of Miami’s history so that future generations will be able to appreciate its beauty and cross the creek without getting their feet wet.

NOTES

1. Frances Densmore, “Seminole Music, Smithsonian Institution Bulletin #161,” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1956) p. 7.
2. Irving Eyster, “Excavations of the Arch Creek Mill Site,” (Report on file at the Dade County Historic Preservation Division, Miami, Florida, 1981) p. 8.
3. Thelma Peters, *Biscayne Country*, (Miami: Banyan Books, Inc., 1981) pp. 167-168.
4. Bert Mowers, *Prehistoric Indian Pottery in South Florida*, (Hollywood, FL: By the Author, 1975) p. 2.
5. Dan Laxson, “The Arch Creek Site,” *Florida Anthropologist* 10 (1957): 2.
6. John K. Small, *From Eden to Sahara: Florida’s Tragedy*, (Lancaster, Pa: The Science Press Printing Company, 1930) p. 44.

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7. Laxson, "The Arch Creek Site," p.1. See Robert S. Carr and John G. Beriault, "Prehistoric Man in South Florida," in Patrick J. Gleason, ed., *Environments of South Florida: Present and Past II*, (Miami: Miami Geological Society, 1984) pp. 1-14 for dates and a description of the Everglades Culture Sequence.

8. Broward County Archaeological Society and Miami-West India Archaeological Society, "The Arch Creek Site, Dade County," *Florida Anthropologist* 28 (1975): 4.

9. Robert S. Carr, "Excavations at the Arch Creek Site (8Da23)," (Report on file at the Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management, Tallahassee, Florida, 1975) p. 47.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

11. Daniel F. Austin, "Historically Important Plants of Southeastern Florida," *Florida Anthropologist* 33 (1980): 18.

12. Lieutenant J.C. Ives, *Memoirs to Accompany a Military Map of the Peninsula of Florida*, (New York: M.B. Wynkoop, 1856) pp. 18-19.

13. M. Brannan, Department of Florida Letters Received - 1857, A-F, Record Group 393, Letters Received from M. Brannan, 1857. (On file at the National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

14. Peters, *Biscayne Country*, P.168 and Federal Writers Project, *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939) p. 319.

15. See Adin Baber, "Food Plants of the DeSoto Expedition," *Tequesta* 1 (1942): 34-40; John C. Gifford, "Five Plants Essential to the Indians and Early Settlers of Florida," *Tequesta* 4 (1944): 36-44; Frederick W. Sleight, "Kunti, A Food Staple of Florida Indians," *Florida Anthropologist* 6 (1953): 46-52; Thelma Peters, *Lemon City*, (Miami: Banyan Books, Inc., 1981) pp. 230-231 and Austin, "Historically Important Plants of Southeastern Florida," pp. 17-31.

16. Sleight, "Kunti, A Food Staple of Florida's Indians," p. 46.

17. Emile De Boyrie Moya, Marguerita K. Krestensen and John M. Goggin, "Zamia Starch in Santa Domingo," *Florida Anthropologist* 10 (1957): 18.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

19. The author wishes to thank Dr. Thelma Peters for sharing the secrets of processing coontie and the delicious cupcakes which were prepared with coontie starch.

20. Sleight, "Kunti, A Food Staple of Florida's Indians," p. 49.

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