

THE ARCH CREEK CHRONICLE

BRIDGING GENERATIONS



THE ARCH CREEK CHRONICLE

*A publication of the Arch Creek Trust, Inc.,
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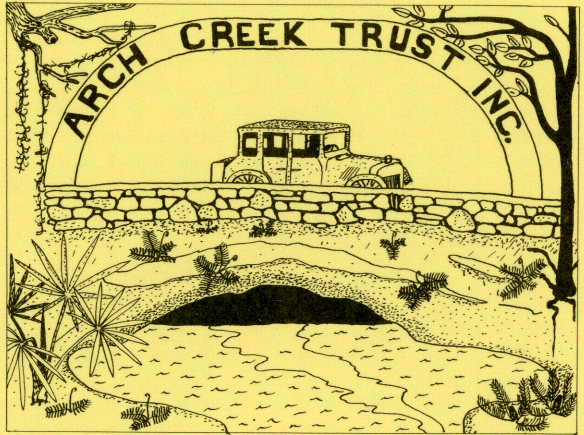
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THE ARCH CREEK CHRONICLE

Volume I, Number 1

The purpose of the Arch Creek Trust, a not for profit organization, is to preserve, protect and defend the natural flora, fauna, archeological artifacts and natural character of the Arch Creek Area; To advise the State of Florida, Metro-Dade County and/or the City of North Miami as to how best preserve, protect and defend the natural flora, fauna, archeological artifacts and natural character of the Arch Creek Area; and to bring to attention of the public the needs of the area and support to those working to preserve it.

Article I, the by-laws of the Arch Creek Trust.

CONTENTS

Letter from the Editor	Page	1
Calendar of Events	Page	2
Arch Creek Park Up-Date	Page	3
Plant Profile	Page	4
Focal Point	Page	5
Feature Article	Page	7
"Considerations for the Coontie Mill Site"		

THE LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
by J. Dallas Love

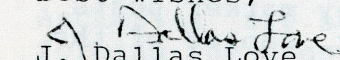
Let me take this opportunity to introduce you to The Arch Creek Chronicle. In keeping with our purpose as an educational, non-profit Trust, there is no better way to reach out to our members and those who may benefit from the work we do than through a publication such as this. In the past, the telephone and the monthly bulletin have been our tools to pass the word. Now is the ideal time, with the recent election of new officers and Board members, to imprint a style that fits their commitments. With the loss of Alice Cohen, The Arch Creek Trust is responsible for carrying on her inspiration, so that we all will know her as you have. It is for this reason that the past leadership should be commended in choosing the reconstruction of the Natural Bridge as their first priority. The symbolism cannot be lost on those who have supported us so generously in the past. As a Trust, our membership is The Bridge between those who have known the Arch Creek area and the many who will come to know it through time. Thus, The Arch Creek Chronicle, will serve as a permanent reflection on our research and observations.

The character of the Arch Creek Trust will change as we welcome the new members whose lives parallel ours during this time. However brief our acquaintances are, it is because we rally around an idea, that we have come to know one another. The idea is that the natural character of the Arch Creek area has something to teach us. Something so fundamental, that we need only to expose ourselves to its presence to be rewarded. It does not have to be hyped, wrapped, probed, altered or perfected in any way for us to appreciate it. But, mankind in our finite wisdom will be forever placing designs on scraps of earth such as the one we are entrusted with. It is

in this context that we must redouble our efforts to find common ground and work toward the same goals. There will always be some differences of degree between individuals, but there are bound to be battles ahead with others with opposite ideals. Our undivided attention will be required to overcome these obstacles.

The Arch Creek Chronicle will be the forum for members to submit their ideas to the Executive Board. Then, as priorities are set, the leadership of the Trust can guide the membership in a concerted thrust. If we can pare down our problems and tackle our set goals in unison, we will realize the greatest possible success. Our limited dollars will be used most effectively under this program. It is now my pleasure to serve the members of the Arch Creek Trust as Editor of The Chronicle.

Best wishes,


J. Dallas Love
Editor

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 1, 1986	Park Liaison Committee Meeting.
October 6, 1986	A.C.T. Board Meeting.
October 18, 1986	Special tour of the Old Cutler archeological site.
October 20, 1986	Regular A.C.T. Meeting. Guest speaker: Barbara Roberts from <u>The Barnacle</u> .
November 1, 1986	PLANT SALE & FLEA MARKET!
November 3, 1986	A.C.T. Board Meeting.
November 5, 1986	Park Liaison Committee Meeting.

- November 17, 1986 Regular A.C.T. Meeting.
 Guest speaker: Bob Carr,
 Dade County Archeologist.
- December 1, 1986 A.C.T. Board Meeting.
- December 3, 1986 Park Liaison Committee
 Meeting.
- December 15, 1986 Regular A.C.T. Meeting.
 Guest speaker: Joe Podgor,
 Dade County Department of
 Environmental Resource
 Management.

ARCH CREEK PARK UP-DATE

Paddi Cunningham, Park Naturalist, has advised The Chronicle that a "Trail Guide" is now in print for visitors who wish to take a self-guided tour of Arch Creek Park. Trees that can be seen along the nature trail can be identified by matching the numbers in the booklet with the blue and grey marker posts dispersed throughout the park. Copies of the Trail Guide are available at the Nature Center/Museum for \$.25. This is a valuable tool for teaching children and refreshing your skills.

The Fall Plant Sale is November 1, 1986, so you have only four weeks to finish potting and cleaning up the ones you would like to donate. Flower cuttings still have time to take root if you act fast. Remember that all plant material must be at the Park by 9:00 am sharp so that they may be inspected by the Florida Agricultural Department and certified safe to sell. Save yourself a trip home by noting this conscientious rule. Information about availability of booths and vender rules may be obtained by calling these numbers; 751-6755, 821-8375 or 758-1184. If you must leave a message, be sure to have a number where you may be reached at various hours.

PLANT PROFILE
The Marsh Milkweed

The Marsh Milkweed, *Asclepias incarnata*, may be found blooming in Arch Creek Park from July through September. One example can be seen on the trail between the Nature Center and the shade house. Unlike its dry prairie relative, the medicinal *A. tuberosa*, the Marsh Milkweed has a bicolor flower, with red outer petals and yellow centers. The leaves are smooth to velvety, with straight margins and taper to a point. The common Butterfly Milkweed, on the otherhand has an orange flower and uses hairy leaves with a ruffled margin as a means of preserving moisture in the dry habitat it prefers.

Several species of butterflies, notably the Monarch, use milkweeds as host to their larval stage. The nectar attracts a wider range of adult insects. Thus, all of the many *Asclepias* are superb bait for wildlife by forming the ground floor of one food chain. While the Marsh Milkweed may occasionally become ravaged by chewing insects, they make up for that by being prolific seed bearers and freely branching from below the point of any major damage.

The latex produced in the leaves and the cambium layer of the skin is comparable in quality to that of the *Ficus*. In times of shortages, the old research is dug up to reveal how fickle people are in choosing which plants have "commercial value." The latex can be distilled to make hydrocarbons for fuel and rubber. The windborne seed umbrellas are moisture resistant and have successfully been used as a goose down replacement.

If you wish to naturalize the Marsh Milkweed in your yard as an attractant for wildlife, choose a low lying or wet location. There will be fifty or more specimens at the Arch Creek Trust plant sale for purchase.

FOCAL POINT

The Tarpon

Visitors to Arch Creek may have noticed an unusual amount of commotion in the pools around the bridge reconstruction. The carpet of duckweed periodically parts to reveal the silvery roll of the Tarpon, *Megalops atlantica*. Turned on its side, the metallic hued scales reflect the sun like a mirror to grab your attention. With a splash, the Tarpon rolls when striking for a meal, during courtship, or for no apparent reason at all. Perhaps they are the exhibitionists of the fish world.

Tarpon inhabit the Gulf and Atlantic coasts of Florida, frequently moving into the brackish waters of Florida Bay and river estuaries. Arch Creek is an ideal location for these migrations. Growing to eight feet, the Tarpon is best known as a sport fish whose aggressive attitude earns the respect of those who hook one. The frolicking roll and "never say die" fight imparts a sense of living that is missing from our urban lives.

To enjoy the methodical antics of the Tarpon, simply find a quiet spot to sit, south of the railroad trestle at Arch Creek. Under cover of the canopy of duckweed, they are oblivious to any motion above. Therefore the Tarpon hit the surface up to twice each minute near the Florida Water Management District dam. And occasionally elsewhere north of that point. At night, Haulover Pier puts on a good Tarpon show with four to five footers cruising the pilings. With a quick flick of their body they send out a beacon from the available light on the pier. Whether it is day or night, now is the time to experience the Tarpon at its finest. Soon they may leave their shallow water haunts to seek out warmer waters.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Considerations for the Coontie Mill Site

With the designation of Arch Creek Archeological Site in the National Register, The Arch Creek Trust must direct some attention to the idea of reviving the Coontie Mill. This structure and the engineering precedent it represents, was singled out by The Dade Historic Trust as a major consideration in its selection. In that there is some disagreement in what the building resembled, it will be up to the Trust to assure that any effort to reconstruct the Coontie Mill is in line with our educational goals.

The first question to be answered is how best to show visitors and future generations the importance of Coontie production in South Florida. The methods, finished product and the particulars of the Arch Creek Site should be told. Will our contemporaries be able to understand the concepts without being exposed to the physical structure? Can the ideas and spirit of the Coontie Mill be achieved in the absence of a reconstructed building? There is equal weight for either argument.

The one ingredient that must be present in any scenario is the use of running water to inspire and set the imagination free. The Mill sluice should be excavated to become the water attraction of Arch Creek Park. Running water represents power, nature's force, as well as tranquility in its sound. Combine these virtues with a functional water wheel, and man harmonizes with nature to enhance life. Wind may be used to raise the Creek water to the height of the sluice run since damming it is unacceptable by any means. As the wind works in a cyclic manner, it may demonstrate to our visitors that progression is achieved with patience. The natural resources and unique location of Arch Creek Park can lend us insight into our everyday lives.

The original Mill spanned the entire width of Military Trail so that any replica is

going to obstruct the intended purpose of the current bridge reconstruction. That is as a "pedestrian bridge" across Arch Creek. Some modification of the Coontie Mill must therefore be acceptable. Considering the proximity of the Florida East Coast Railroad tracks, it is questionable whether it would be prudent to suggest placing a dwelling there. Restrictions on how close an occupied dwelling may be to the Railway would be difficult to argue against let alone insure. It is unreasonable to think that a Railroad mishap will not occur over the projected lifetime of the building. Ecologically, the fragile natural oolite limestone on the banks of the Arch Creek may not be able to withstand the impact of still another project. The unblemished surfaces must be less than fifty percent of the original by this time.

Should a compromise be reached concerning the size, location, safety and such, the final design must incorporate several ideas: first, is the educational demonstration of Coontie production, followed by the use of water as a power source to crush and squeeze Coontie roots into a product that will yield the starch in it. If the purpose were to simply tell the story, that has been accomplished. A museum or publication will be adequate to show visitors the methods used. On the other hand, if one wants to demonstrate engineering concepts that harmonize with nature as our pioneers learned they must, then the gears must turn in order to elicit a similar response in us.

One need that has been expressed by the Park staff is that of additional, secure storage. Any design that places a permanent dwelling in Arch Creek Park should satisfy this need to prevent the cluttering of the landscape with temporary sheds. Tools that are presently stored in the Museum, the shadehouse and the shed can be centralized for accurate inventory. Items that are used only occasionally, such as extra chairs, can be removed from the Museum and placed in storage.

Another criterion for reconstructing the Coontie Mill is the use of period materials and techniques. This has been done with the Museum in a superb manner. In the teaching process, how is much more important than what. Exposed or untrimmed portions of the building can be used for demonstration purposes. The Trust could add heritage seminars as part of the semi-annual Plant Sale as a means to promote Arch Creek Park. Building techniques are one of the trades that have been traditionally handed down by word and example. Thus it is in the best interest of the community for the Arch Creek Trust to advocate using the Coontie Mill as an active educational tool.

Our resolve should not be dampened in the event that we are unable to build the Coontie Mill. An exposed water wheel and perhaps some type of fire pit would achieve the purpose of the Trust. Regardless of the final outcome, it is preferable that function be highlighted rather than petrified artifacts. Hands on experience with Coontie starch production will show us the shortcuts discovered by the pioneers. The laboratory for these discoveries does not have to have walls. In many respects, this mode of experimentation may be the more authentic method.

Coontie roots may be crushed using the water wheel to turn rollers. The resulting pulp may be boiled to dissolve the starch so that it can be strained from the inedible fiber. The excess water may be removed with the aid of the sun. Of course a suitable substitute for actual Coontie roots can be used for the educational demonstration.

The use of wind, water and sun, all in abundance at Arch Creek Park, are typical of our South Florida heritage. Even the use of steam power can be construed as a logical step had the Coontie not been exploited to the point of being scarce. These assets can be set to work to capture the imaginations of Park

visitors. At the same time, we may set an example as to how we may coexist with nature without forfeiting our need to progress. By this means, the Trust will show urban economy side by side with Park ecology.

There will be a glaring need to make the Park act as a single unit once the bridge is completed. Unless we wish the critics to say we have built a bridge to nowhere. The Coontie Mill will put more purpose into the bridge than simply its historic presence. But still there is the scrap of Park land west of the bridge that is isolated and unaccounted.

To emphasize the bridge as the focus of Arch Creek Park, it is necessary to give it more function. One idea that is consistent with the goals of the Trust is to in fact make the bridge "center stage." By taking advantage of its generous width, visibility and aesthetics, the bridge can accommodate the interpretive functions of both the Park and Trust on a grand scale if need be. In this context, the Coontie Mill must not detract from that potential. The logical accompaniment to the bridge as a stage would be a sloped earth berm on the west side of Arch Creek. By providing a seat with a view, the bridge utility is enhanced.

An earth berm will provide additional advantages, such as; softening the noise from trains and the street; protecting any of the artifacts buried there from exposure and vandals; act as a dike to prevent toxic material and polluted run-off from entering the Creek; and add height to trees planted there so that their effectiveness is increased.

Multiple, flexible use is the theme for any plans that are approved for Arch Creek Park. With the mandate to be revenue generating, the Trust may make suggestions such as these where development upholds our educational charter. A positive cash flow for the Park protects manpower and material needs, thus ensuring Trust approval of the Coontie Mill site.

THE ARCH CREEK TRUST

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