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May 17, 1976

Mrs. Adele Van Sciven
90 N.E. 210th St.
Miami, Fla. 33162

Dear Mrs. Van Sciven:

I am glad to hear that engineers believe it is possible to restore the Natural Bridge of Arch Creek (though sadly the original is gone forever) in such a way that future generations can have a better concept of this historic spot. As a state park this area can again become a place of beauty though never quite like it was because of the unfortunate location of the dam.

In 1857 the Military Trail crossed the Natural Bridge. In 1892 when Dade County built its first county road connecting Lantana (Lake Worth) and Lemon City (Biscayne Bay) there were ten streams to cross - and the road was designed to use the Natural Bridge so there was one less bridge to build. A stage coach ran over this road from 1893 to 1896 and a regular reststop was at the Natural Bridge where travellers admired the phenomenon of the bridge and the beautiful hammock which surrounded it. In Miami's early days a sightseeing boat took tourists from Miami up the winding Arch Creek (where alligators could always be seen) to the Natural Bridge. At closing day of Miami's first school year, 1897, all the pupils, teachers and parents went in several wagons to the Natural Bridge for an all-day picnic. It is a spot which oldtimers hold dear.

I commend you for your efforts to restore the bridge and to preserve and beautify the area. The Historical Association of Southern Florida has many photographs of the bridge at various times and these would be helpful in designing the restoration. The stonewall guards were not built until around 1912. If I can be of any help in your project please let me know.

Sincerely,

Thelma Peters
President, Florida Historical Society