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ONE No. 1024-0618 Expires 10-31-87

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

#### National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms

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#### 7. Description

Condition _X_excellent (sluice)deteriorated	Check one unaltered	Check oneX original site
good ruins X unexposed (midden)	altered	moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Arch Creek Historic and Archaeological Site is located in north Dade County, Florida, within a physiographic region known as the Atlantic Coastal Ridge. The site involves three major contributing resources: a prehistoric Indian midden, an historic coontie mill sluice and the location of a portion of the Military Trail established during the Seminole Wars. The midden and mill sluice are situated along Arch Creek, which transverses the coastal ridge and historically drained eastward from the Everglades into Biscayne Bay. The midden is situated within an oak hammock on the east bank of the creek; the mill sluice is on the opposite bank. The former Military Trail, presently occupied by an unused one-lane asphalt road, extends to the northeast of the mill sluice as a 40-foot by 1,325-foot extension of the nominated property. Since the turn of the last century developmental pressures have eroded areas of the hammock and the site integrity. However, a good portion of the northern section of the Indian midden and the entire mill sluice have been preserved. The resources are located within a public park administered by the Dade County Parks and Recreation Department.

Excavation of the black dirt prehistoric midden suggest that it originally encompassed about five acres, extending 300 meters along the northern bank of Arch Creek and approximately 200 meters inland. It is located within a tropical hardwood hammock, adjacent to the creek, where many native Florida plant species may be found, including live oak (Quercus virginiana), gumbo limbo (Bursere simaruba), pigeon plum (Coccoloba diversifolia), and strangler fig (Ficus aurea). In the past, a slash pine (Pinus elliottii) grew to the north of the hammock and a mangrove swamp lined the creek to the south. Arch Creek provided access to the interior Everglades, and Biscayne Bay which is less than half a mile away from the hammock.

The urban development of Dade County has had an adverse impact on the integrity of portions of the Indian midden. The construction of a trailer park on the tract in the 1950's disturbed the upper strata of the midden and created deeper disturbances at the location of certain structures and trailer pads. Evidence of bulldozing was reported by Laxson (1957) on the south end of the midden where much of the upper level was pushed into the mangrove swamp. During the 1960's the construction of northeast 135th street arbitrarily divided the midden into northern and southern sections and destroyed the area where the road's pavement was laid. The construction of Biscayne Boulevard, the eastern boundary of the midden, seems to have missed the major part of the site.

These repeated disturbances have, in effect, destroyed the stratigraphy of the southern section of the midden. Approximately 50% of the site should be classified as disturbed, while the remaining half is fairly well preserved, particularly the lower stratigraphic levels. The best preserved portion of the midden is directly north of northeast 135th street and is included within the boundaries of the nominated property. A large portion of the native Florida plant hammock is also preserved within the nominated property. Several plants, including coontie (Zamia intergrifolia), coral beam (Erythrina herbacea), and Hercule's club (Zanthoxylum fagara), are designated as threatened or endangered on the state plant species lists.

#### 8. Significanc

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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Arch Creek Historic and Archaeological Site is significant in the area of prehistoric archaeology as one of the last remaining coastal sites in southeast Florida. Research indicates a habitation range from 500 B.C. to 1300 A.D., a period spanning the entir Glades Culture Sequence. The site is also significant in the area of historic archaeology and industry as the only excavated countie starch mill in southeast Florida and the only known mill to use a water sluice in its operation. Finally, the site is significant in the area of transportation due to the many roads which crossed the natural limestone bridge over Arch Creek, including a portion of the Military Trail established during the Seminole Wars, the first county road and the Dixie Highway.

The Arch Creek Site is located within a culture area of Florida defined as the Tegesta sub-area of the Glades Culture area by John Goggin (1948:102). This classification was revised by Griffin (1974) as the Circum-Glades area, and more recently as the Glades area (Carr 1981). The Indian midden's location, about half a mile west of Biscayne Bay, near the interface of the Atlantic Coastal Ridge and what was once a mangrove forest, is typical of the prehistoric settlement system of coastal southeastern Florida (Carr 1981). A total of seven rivers and creeks drain from the Everglades into Biscayne Bay, and all have at least one prehistoric habitation site associated with the coastal ridge/mangrove interface. The significance of the midden is that it contains data about the prehistoric culture of the extinct Tequesta Indian culture. The site may be likely to yield information in the future which will prove important to our understanding of South Florida prehistory. Previous excavations at the site have already contributed to our knowledge of prehistoric sites in southeastern Florida.

John K. Small (1930:44) first described the site as having"....evidence of much active in the way of kitchen middens, village sites and burial mounds." The site was first record by John Goggin in 1952 in the Florida Master Site File. Numerous excavations by amateur a professional archaeologists have been conducted in the midden during the past 30 years. Laxson (1957) excavated eight pits in the area adjacent to northeast 135th street in 1956. Arthur Marler, an amateur archaeologist, excavated nine pits in 1967 in the same vicinity a Laxson's investigations. A joint project was undertaken by the Broward County Archaeological Society and the Miami West-India Archaeological Society in 1972 in which eight pits were excavated. The most extensive archaeological work was conducted by archaeologist Robert Carr in 1975, for the Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management. All of these excavations have resulted in the recovery of at least 10,000 pottery sherds, a variety of shell, bone, and lithic artifacts, and the dissovery of a single human burial. A large quantity of shell refuse, faunal bone and charcoal was also collected.

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Keeper of the National Register

Chief of Registration

Attest:

GPO 911-300

date

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The second component of the Arch Creek Historic and Archaeological Site is the location of an historic coontie mill and water sluice. The roots of the coontie plant were processed by early Miami pioneers to produce a high quality edible starch. The sluice is located on the northwest bank of Arch Creek between the Florida East Coast Railroad and the creek. (Photo #4). The crescent-shaped sluice was constructed by cutting a six-foot deep trench through oolitic limestone from a point upstream of the natural bridge to point downstream of the bridge. The mill was built immediately on top of the natural bridge. The space beneath the bridge was dammed, forcing water through the sluice with such force to turn a water wheel attached to the machinery used in the mill: The water rushing through the sluice could be controlled by a gate adjacent and downstream from the wheel. Presumable several structures were associated with the maill operation, including the factory and perhaps other buildings which were used for storage or living quarters. The Arch Creek mix was not as successful as anticipated and was abondoned ca. 1860. After the mill ceased operation, the sluice was filled in and became part of a road which used the natural bridge cross Arch Creek.

The mill sluice was excavated by Irving Eyster in 1981, under contract with the Metro-Dade Historic Preservation Division. The former military trail on the west approach had be paved with asphalt over compacted rock and a backhoe was required to remove the paving and crushed fill. All soil and archaeological data were removed and the boundaries of the sluere determined by hand shoveling and cleaning (Eyster 1981:22). Two distinctive features were uncovered in the excavation. Feature A was the cut-out area of limestone that contains the water wheel. Feature B was the location which contained the gate which controlled the flow of water running through the sluice (Eyster 1981:24). Many charred timbers and a large quantity of charcoal was found in the sluice. Also recovered were 40 cut limestone blocks of a size and shape typical of those used under wooden buildings for support. The wood and blocks may have been part of structures associated with the mill which were destroyed and burned and used to fill in the sluice.

Presently, the mill sluice stands empty and uncovered, spanning approximately eighty feet by four feet in a semi-circular shape. It has been well preserved due to the large quantity of fill which was deposited within it. The sluice has remained in excellent condition since its excavation, although erosion and weather have caused crumbling in several areas of the walls. A 30-foot section of a retaining wall from the natural bridge which formerly spanned the creek remains in-situ at the southern end of the sluice. The northern end is clearly visible from across the creek to the northeast. The boundaries of the mill sluices are also within the nominated property.

A final component of the Arch Creek site, unfortunately, no longer extant, was a natural limestone bridge which once spanned the creek. Approximately 40 feet long and 20 f wide, the bridge was undoubtedly one factor which made the area so attractive to prehistori Indians and later, to the pioneers of the Arch Creek area in the 1800's. Presumably the creek's drainage eroded the oolitic limestone in such a way as to have created a natural bridge that joined both banks across the creek. Unfortunately, the bridge mysteriously collapsed into the creek in 1973. Its rocky remains were subsequently dredged and placed on the east side of the creek. An historical marker, presented by the Historical Association of Southern Florida, stands at the site commemorating it as one of south Florida's earliest landmarks (photo #3).

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The Arch Creek site is presently located within the boundaries of the Arch Creek Park, a state-owned public park administered by the Dade County Parks and Recreation Department. A contemporary interpretive center located on the east bank of the creek adjacent to the mill sluice functions as a museum and nature center for the park. The building is a replica of a late 1800's Florida "cracker" style house, complete with the roof, wrap-around porch, and cast iron stove. The exhibit area is fashioned along interpretive lines with displays illustrating the natural and archaeological history of the Arch Creek area. Artifacts recovered from past excavations are on display as well as a collection of postcards, paintings, and photographs of historic Arch Creek.

Arch Creek Park offers a year-round calendar of events open to the public, including lectures, films, and workshops for adults and children. Educational programs have been developed especially for school groups. As the only preserved archaeological site in Dade County with public access, the park offers experiences that cannot be found anywhere else in the area. The educational programs include guided tours on the one-quarter mile nature trail, archaeology workshops, and plant and bird identification classes.

Contributing Resources: 3

3 Sites (Indian midden, mill sluice and location of military trail)

Noncontributing Resources: 1

1 Building (Park museum and nature center)

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Although evidence of Paleo-Indian and Archaic occupation is lacking, the ceramic assemblage and radiocarbon dates indicate the site was in use between 500 B.C. and A.D. 1300 (Carr 1975:34). Spanning approximately 1800 years, this stretch of time covers the entire Glades Culture Sequence. The data can be effectively used to reconstruct prehistoric subsistence and technological activities, particularly for the Glades I and II periods (500 B.C.-A.D. 750 and A.D. 750-1200).

Glades I period use is indicated by the radiocarbon dates analyzed during Carr's excavation (1975: Table 4). The dates range from 400 B.C. to A.D. 600 and all occur within the Glades I period. Also indicative of this period are such key ceramic types as the Ft. Drum decorated ware, Cane Patch Incised, and Opa Locka Incised, which are common to the lower strata of the midden. According to Carr, intensive occupation of the site probably began between 300 B.C. and A.D. 1 (1975: 36).

A Glades II period occupation is well represented throughout the midden. The stratigraphy and ceramic time markers encountered by Laxson (1957) indicates occupation during this time. Over 6,000 pottery sherds from the Glades II period were recovered by the Broward County and Miami West-India Archaeological Societies in 1972. Shell tools, bone points, and worked shark vertabrae and teeth were also found. Carr's report (1975) suggests a lesser degree of occupation during this stage than the previously mentioned studies.

Evidence of occupation during the Glades III period (A.D. 1250-1700) may have existed at the site, but bulldozing and other distrubances over the last 50 years probably account for the almost total lack of such indicators. Laxson (1957) reported recovering only 1 sher from this period and only a few Glades III time markers were found during the Broward Miami West Indian excavations (1972:8).

A major prehistoric component associated with the Arch Creek site is a burial mound, referred to earlier by Small (1930). This may be the mound that was excavated by a pioneer resident, Florence Miller in 1899 (Miller n.d.). She found, "skeletons buried on a level in a circle, heads in feet out." The mound was located west of the natural bridge but has since been destroyed (Carr 1975:18).

Human burials are associated with the Arch Creek midden. A human burial was partially uncovered by Carr on the last day of the project in 1975. However, wet weather and a lack of time prevented a complete recovery. The date of the burial was not determined, but it appeared to be associated with a Glades II period soil zone. Carr estimates the skeleton was of a 30-45 year old male. No quantitive measurements or analysis has been undertaken to date.

The second level of significance regarding the Indian midden concerns the information which may result from future excavations and research at the site. Although many of Dade County's coastal sites have been subjected to various archaeological investigations, aside from the salvage excavations of the Granada site (Bonath 1980), there has been

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very little indepth analysis of these sites. Arch Creek is one of the last remaining examples of coastal sites in Dade County.

Protecting and preserving the Arch Creek site will allow future scientific studies to address a variety of archaeological issues. With a careful research plan, questions concerning seasonal occupation patterns, artifact technology, and ethnobotany could be investigated. For example, how the human exploitation of shellfish has altered species size through time could be researched at Arch Creek. It is highly likely that additional burials exist with the Arch Creek tract. Future excavations might yield information concerning prehistoric mortuary patterns and other data for physical anthropologists.

Historic significance at the Arch Creek Site is present within every feature of the tract. The mill sluice, the natural bridge, the tree hammock and Arch Creek are all connected with the history of southeast Florida. The area was the focal point of much human activity throughout history. (Carr 1975 1975; Parks 1977; Peters 1976, 1981).

The Arch Creek mill is important because of its association with the coontie starch industry in Southeast Florida. It is well documented that Indians of the historic period and possibly of the prehistoric period, used coontie roots for making bread or pudding (Sleight 1953; Fix 1963; Austin 1980). The knowledge of preparation and cooking with coontie starch was absorbed by white settlers in south Florida in the 1800's. (Burkhardt 1952; Gearhart 1952; Moya 1957; Peters 1976, 1981). Not only did the pioneers enjoy the culinary rewards of the coontie plant, but they turned the process into a profitmaking business which endured almost a century. According to Gearhart:

"manufacturing starch from the countie 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" (1952:55).

The coontie starch industry was the major commercial activity besides wrecking, in southeast Florida during the early to mid-nineteenth century. The mill at Arch Creek, although relatively unsuccessful in the starch business, was certainly unique in operation. The only known reference to the mill comes from A. C. Richards in her publication, Reminiscence of the Days of Miami, published in 1903. According to Richards, the mill was established in 1858 by George Lewis and Dr. Robert Fletcher (1903:23). It is the only known mill to use a sluice and the only known site of a starch mill in south Florida.

Even before the mill and sluice were constructed at Arch Creek, the area played an important part in south Florida's history. According to the historical marker which stands at Arch Creek:

"In the early 1800's, Seminole Indians lived in the area until forced out by United States soldiers during the Second (1836-1842) Seminole War. During the Third (1855-1859) Seminole War a military trail connecting Fort Dallas and Fort Lauderdale passed over the bridge."

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The military trail referred to here is actually a portion of a road built in two stages by Captain M. Brannan, Captain Abner Doubleday, and Lieutenant Weber in 1856 and 1857 (Brannan: 1857). Having served its purpose, the trail was abandoned and in many places became obliterated. The following year the mill and water sluice were established at Arch Creek.

Several years after the mill ceased operation, the first road in Dade County built at taxpayers' expense was constructed. The road was completed in 1892 and a hack line (stage coach), consisting of a springless wagon drawn by mules, with boards to sit on and canvas for shade, began operating in 1893. 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".

The Military Trail of the Seminole Wars, the first county road, and later the Dixie Highway, all followed almost identical routes crossing Arch Creek at the natural bridge. Peters calls it the "Check Point Charley of the Bay county, the welcome mat for early tourists, and a nutural phenomenon that all South Floridians came to regard with pride, even awe" (1981: 167).

The Arch Creek tract has always been a popular source of enjoyment, rest, and relaxation. During Miami's pioneer period, the area was a favorite picnic spot. One of the first large picnics was held at the natural bridge in May, 1897. The occasion was an end-of-school celebration by the pupils of Miami's first downtown school. According to Peters, "barbecues, fish fries, political rallies, Easter egg hunts, community Thanksgiving dinners, and even on one occasion, a baptism, was held there" (1981:183).

The beauty of the Arch Creek tract was admired by early south Floridians, and several pioneers sought to prosper from it. The Metropolis, February 12, 1897, reported that Clarence Billings was operating a sightseeing trip on Arch Creek. "It was a good tourist trip 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..." Caroline Washburn-Rockwood provides a detailed description of her sightseeing trip to the natural bridge in her book, In Biscayne Bay, published in 1896. Commodore Alfred Monroe, a 19th century naturalist and historian, was probably the first to photograph the Arch Creek area. He wrote that the beauty of Arch Creek "makes pictures that are worth coming down here to see" (Parks 1977:53).

A refreshment stand was built at Arch Creek in the early 1900s by George Hinckley, a wealthy restuarant owner and nature lover (Peters 1981:183). The refreshment stand was later enlarged and was commonly referred to as "the shell house", for the outer walls were covered with conch shells. Peters reports:

"during Prohibition when tea rooms were in vogue, this

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building was known as the Arch Creek Tearoom (Metropolis, October 27, 1921). The tearoom almost overhung the stream near the arch and was itself the subject for many souvenir postcards (1921:183).

No remains of this building presently exist.

In 1957 the first of many threats against the natural bridge and the Arch Creek hammock materialized. The arch was endangered by a plan to drain low-lying areas in a flood prevention program. The Army Corps of Engineers proposed blowing up the bridge or rerouting the creek. Fortunately, a series of protests from the Audubor Society, the Historical Association of South Florida, and local residents prevented either of the alternatives from becoming a reality. Coincidentally, this was the same year that Laxson published his report that documented the presence of a prehistoric Indian midden in the hammock.

Not until the 1970's did the Arch Creek area again receive such widespread public attention. The Chrysler Corporation, owner of the property in 1972, planned to build a used car lot within the oak hammock. A request was made to the North Miami Beach City Council to re-zone the property for light industry. The requested was approved and the public battle cry was heard once again. Citizens' groups such as Tropical Audubon Society, Miami-West India Archaeological Society, the Keystone Point Homeowners Association and individuals that were to form the core of the Arch Creek Trust were outraged at the idea of destroying the beautiful tree hammock and archaeological site and covering the area with concrete. The groups initiated an extensive campaign aimed at saving the land from destruction, which included letter writing, political lobbying, media coverage, and appeals to local and state governments. Meanwhile, Chrysler Corporation gave the Broward County and Miami-West India Archaeological Societies 60 days to conduct salvage excavations in order to determine the property's archaeological significance.

After almost a year of intense lobbying, the state of Florida purchased 7.9 acres east of the creek for development as a state park. The park was subsequently leased from the state by Dade County in 1978 and in 1980 a museum and nature interpretation center was constructed. The Arch Creek Trust was the catalyst for the acquisition of funds in excess of \$250,000 for the facility. The organization remains committed to the preservation of the park and has continued to raise funds and supply volunteer services in the restoration interpretation and enhancement of the park.

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