

Methodist churches of the area. A commemorative cookbook also will be published.

When the Maries County Fair rolls around in September, it will be the 50th year that it has been held at the fairground in Vienna. Prior to 1946, the event, which was called the "Old Vienna Community and School Fair," was held on the public school grounds.

The land where the fairground is located was purchased from Tim Tackett for a total of \$2500, one

thousand of which was paid as the first installment.

Although not officially celebrating an anniversary, Visitation Catholic Church in Vienna has contributed considerably to the community's rich spiritual and historical heritage. The present, impressive building was erected between the years of 1907 and 1910 mostly by parishioners who followed the architectural plans of Fred Brunk. The cornerstone was laid on May 15th, 1907.

All the stonelike cement blocks

used in the construction were made by a unique blockmaking machine, which also produced blocks for other buildings that were constructed in Vienna during this period of time. The machine was owned by the parish priest, Father Fugel.

The church building was dedicated in May, 1910. During that year, members of the parish donated and installed beautiful stained glass windows that have few rivals in this part of the state.

Shafts of diffused light pour through these windows during the

day, illuminating the stained glass biblical scenes with such a brilliance that viewers can easily imagine the light comes directly from heaven. The scenes are breathtaking as well as inspirational.

Some interior renovation is taking place this summer at Visitation Catholic Church. When completed, the remodelling will nicely update church architect Brunk's original plans that were designed to lift the minds and hearts of its parishioners to heavenly things.

RESCUING THE PAST

A Story Of The Maries County Historical Society's Research Room By Mozelle Hutchison

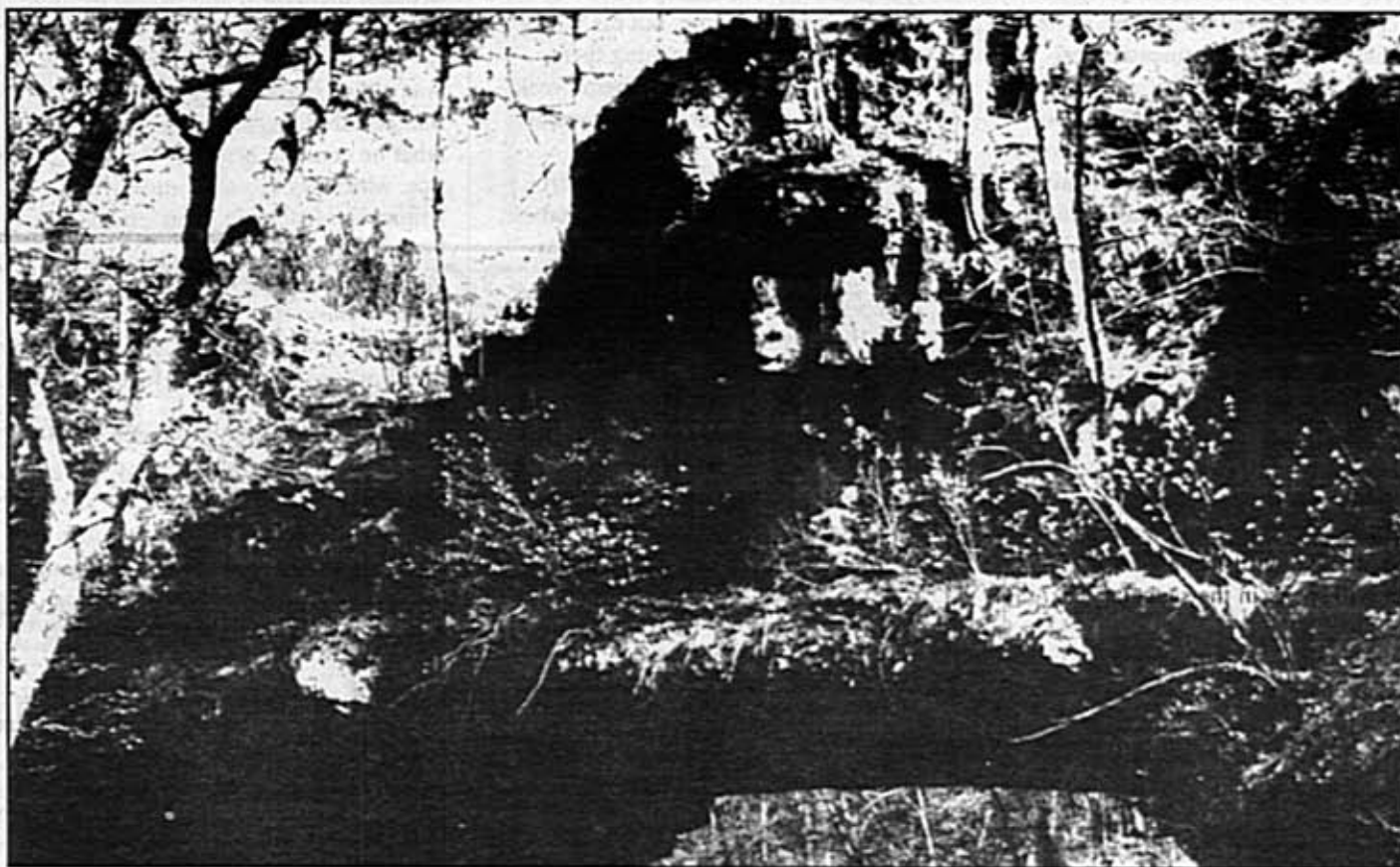
SCENE ONE: TEN YEARS AGO, 1986: It was a dark and stormy night. Through a small window, intermittent flashes of lightning illuminated the gloom of a basement room in the Maries County Courthouse in Vienna, revealing homemade wooden bookshelves filled with large, leather-bound books containing the county's history.

Here were records of the transactions of the people for well over one hundred years, old-fashioned script filling page after page. Gold lettering stamped on the spines spelled out the contents inside: "Personal Tax Book," "Soldiers' Biography Record," "County Home Record," and "County Stray Book"—each one with additional lettering, "Maries County."

Most of the volumes pre-dated the building they were now occupying, their recordings having been made in the old brick courthouse constructed after the first one burned in 1868.

As the intensity of the thunderstorm increased, the rain began to fall more heavily. Soon, errant trickles of water entered through tiny cracks in the basement walls and spread across some of the lower shelves. Once again, the pages of some of the old books began to absorb the water. The pool on the floor eventually reached the opposite side of the room. Later, the thunder rumbled away to the east, but some of its wet bounty would remain in this small and airless space for many days before evaporating.

SCENE TWO: Early 1987. To an upstairs room opened to them by the County Commissioners, members of the Historical Society of Maries County carry nearly 400 heavy volumes of records. The volunteers



NATURAL BRIDGE on Clifty Creek, Maries County.

clean each page of every salvaged book, wiping away the dust and mold and mildew to reveal the browns, maroons, and reds of their leather covers. The books are then placed on metal shelves purchased by the members. They will be joined later by early school and church registers, store ledgers, various journals, transcriptions, accounts and documents. Each one has a great number of stories to tell.

The room is designated as the "Old Records Room" and phone numbers to contact for admittance are

placed on the door. Volunteers from the Society encourage all who wish, to come and use the materials stored within.

SCENE THREE: Summer, 1993. The Old Records Room has evolved into the Research Room in the Maries County Courthouse, and it is now a busy place. The Historical Society of Maries County has added a great amount of material—books and other publications—enabling the modern-day researcher to look into the past of not only Maries County, but also

neighboring Osage, Miller, Phelps, Crawford, Texas, Pulaski, Franklin, and Gasconade Counties, through census, marriage and cemetery records.

At a long table a member proof-reads stories to be published in their third volume of Maries County history. Earlier efforts had produced the publication of "The History of the Post Offices and Postmasters of Maries County," "Indexes to Marriage Book B, 1881-1890," and the "1880 Federal Census of Maries County, Missouri."