

## [Patience Flucher & Family]

26017

Federal Writers' Project

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Patience Flucher & Family

118 W. 5th Street

Lakeland, Florida

### PATIENCE FLUCHER & FAMILY

Patience lived in North Lakeland, known us "Teaspoon Hill" at 118 W. 5th Street, in a ten room two story weather-board house that's unpainted. There are two long front porches lower and upper. On the lower porch there are few rusty flower pots. A swing and a chair are on the upper porch.

The house is typical of a few that are located in this part of the colored section. There are located in this section lots of old time settlers who owns their homes.

Patience's family group, with the exception of the two children work out in service. The women are in domestic service, and the men do common labor work. Patience is not able to work. She stays at home and looks out far the general welfare of the home.

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Patience's family group consists of three women, three men, and two children. Through their employment they try to pool their income toward the maintenance of the home. The members of the family are very congenial towards each other. They are considered to be respectable and conduct themselves with respect in the neighborhood.

Patience said, "I sit near this window all of the time. It is too cold to sit there today. I had to get near this fire place to keep the wind off of me. I believe this is the coldest day we have had this year. She was sitting on a small wooden stool between the fire place and the bed. On entering the room she was busy figureing on a tablet, she immediately put the tablet under a [pillow, and?] opened her pocket book and put away her pencil.

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Patience is medium in weight, five feet & five inches in height, and dark brown in complexion. [She?] wore a light cream color sweater, her dress was blue. The shoes were old and [cut?] on the sides. All in all her [make?] up was clean.

The room she occupied was very small. There was an [old?] iron bed with clean bedding on it, a rocking chair, one chair filled with books, an old time dresser with a clock on it, a lamp, several dream books and other trinkets.

"Well I am trained to talk to goverment people. Lots of white ladies have called and they asked me everything about my life and that of the family. I know it by heart now. I even sent home and got a record of the families birth dates. I have them in my Bible." She walked over to the dresser and brought forth a small Bible. Turning to the section where the family was recorded." Now I can tell you when every one was born. My brothers, Green Johnson, born 1897; Mark Johnson, born 1901; My sister Eliza Johnson, born [?], Green has two children, Lauvina, born 1923, and W.J. Born [1906?]. They were all born at Jasper, Florida. I was born December 18, [?] at Jasper, Florida. I lived there until I was twenty two years old. My parents were Sam and Carrie Johnson. Father died January 3, 1936 [t?] the age of sixty six years old. Mother died December [?], 1918 at the age of forty

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two years old, my parents were sharecroppers near Jasper. I was brought up on the farm. I learned how to work and do lots of things. I can do hard work and it don't hurt me. I used to hoe and pick cotton. Before I left the farm I learned to work for white folks.”

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“When I left the farm I went to Manatee, Florida. I remained there until 1930. Coming to [Lakeland?] in December of that same year. I have been married twice, my first husband was Thomas Roux, we married in Jasper. We have been seperated twenty one years. The last [I?] heard of him, he was supposed to be living in Manatee, Florida. I had a white man to tell me when I was married to Thomas to leave him. At that time he was so cruel to me. He said, If I stayed I would'nt be fit for any one else while I was young. I later married George Fulcher [in?] Manatee. I have been seperated from him about fourteen years, I did'nt do any [better?] with him. [Men?] back during them times had a habit of beating up [women?]. They used to say ‘you have to beat them to make them love you. But I was the wrong woman for that. You don't have to beat me to make me love you. Since that time I have tried to make it myself through life. The road has been pretty hard at times, but I have been able to pull through some hard places.”

“By having my family together, we have [been?] able [?] do the best we know how. Eliza works out in service only doing days work, [claiming?] that she makes more doing days work. Some time she averages around five and six dollars a week. Evelyn, works out in service also, [she makes?] four dollars a week. My brother Green, works on the [hard?] road. Some time that work is not regular. Mark works for the City [of?] Lakeland, caretaker for the Oak Hill Burial Park. Mark make two dollars and fifty cents a day. [Loutina?], goes to Washington Park High School, she is in the eighth grade. I think W.J. is in the fifth grade. That W.J. is some boy. It is hard to keep him home at nights. His [??] [whips?] him, he'll go just the same. I am glad he is taking up Scouting, maybe that will help to learn him something. His teacher said he is [mischievous?] in school.

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It looks like the more you beat him the more he tries to do. The other night he started out with the Scout Boys and slipped away. His father went to the Park where the boys met and there was no W.J. The next morning I heard his father asking him how was the Scout meeting. He twisted round and round. Finally he asked him who made the first Flag in the United States. W.J. said, George Washington. Everybody down stairs screamed. After W.J. lied and lied, then his father told him he was at the Scout Meeting. Man, he fell [?], so surprized. Then he tells his father that he stole off from the boys and went to the basketball Game. Olen is on the N Y A. He recieves a check every two weeks for five dollars or more, I have never seen his check. He secures [odds?] jobs when off duty, and likes to wear good clothes. Now and then he gives me something towards the rent and food. That's the way we try to live.”

“When I was in Manatee i used to work in the celery field picking celery. I made as high as twelve dollars and fifty cents a week. When I first came to Lakeland I worked out in service and the highest I made was eight dollars. The last place I worked was at Dr. R.R. Sullivan, who lives at 831 S. Boulevard. He was a good man to work for.”

“When I was taken sick I was working for Dr. Sullivan. He did everything in his power to cure me. His nurse and the Doctor examined me good, took blood test and gave me medicine of all kinds and that did not do me any good [?] finally gave up. The sore you see on my leg started from an itch and it would go all over my body. At night I would scratch all over. Then it started to spread. All this happened six years ago. I had to stop work 5 and come home, I have used every thing that people tell me to use, been to root workers. Some of them said that I was rooted by some one. Some times I think that my old man had me rooted.”

“I have some one working on me now.” Patience reached under the pillow and produced a card [stating?],” this is the lady who sends me treatment for my leg.” Quoted as follows: You can win health, Love, Success, and Happiness- Madam Jackson, [Palmister?], Mobile, Alabama, R 40, Box 338. Is my wife true? Is is best to make a change? Will I

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have better health? Is my sickness natural? Will I travel? Am I being watched? Is there a treatment? Should I gamble? How can I succeed in business? How can I make my home happy? How can I conquer enemies? How can I marry the one I love? How soon can I marry? How can I Make any one love me? Is my investment safe? How should I invest my money? Will I win or lose my case? Have I any enemy? How can I control my friends? What is the cause of my illness? Are my partner happy? AM I in danger? Will I ever have any children? The outcome of the courts? Is my husband true? See this palmister at once and have these and many other questions answered for you. Look for the large hand on the side of the house. Davis Ave & Butler Lane.” Patience said this is the treatment that I am getting and it is getting me well. She sends me treatment every week. The big sore you see is healing slowly, it still hurts when I walk or stand on it a long time. When you have tried every thing, you have to believe in somebody. Another root worker put me in touch with Madame Jackson.”

During this conversation Olen came into the house and came directly to his mother's room. He said, “I am cold and the lady said it was too cold to work today. I have to go down to the W P A office to see the N Y A Supervisor.” He went to his room and 6 returned, dressed neatly in gray trousers with [spats?] on, and a double breasted blue coat with a scarf around his neck. “I bought my spats from Sears and Roebuck & Company, they cost me forty-nine cents, they keep your ankles warm, I noticed lots of Northern [people?] wearing them around The Tourist Center.”

Patience said, “A white man from Michigan wanted to take him North, but he would not go because he wanted to stay at home so he could look after me.”.

“I attended school at Jasper, Florida. I only went as far as the fourth grade. My first teacher was [Bish?] Riley. I will never forget him. Isn't it funny you never forgot your first teacher. [?] went to a little one room school, built back in the pines. I will never forget [them?] days. I can see my little old wild self running around now. The children should be happy now, they have good schools and good teachers. The teachers back there did not have

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to know as much as they do now. It was something big to be a teacher then. The whole community looked up to him. I only wish I had the chance the boys and girls have now. I tell my children they better get all the education they can while they are young. They will need it when they grow older. Now all they have in their heads is a good time. I have one girl Evelyn, who won't stay home at night. she has taken to drinking, I don't see where she [picked?] it up, it don't run in the family; and no one in the house drinks. Since they started this [?] business, its hard to tell [what?] these fresh girls will do now a days. She had no business quitting school. A mother [sees?] hard time rearing children now. [You?] talk [?] a home, that is out of the question, [busines?] trying to raise the [?] children, all I own is this little furniture. [?????????] all.

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"I have decided not to worry bout [any?] thing, I just sit here and attend to my business and look out of the window, and watch people and cars go by."

"I do worry about going to church, all of the family goes to [Bethel A M E?] Church, located [??] [Dakot?] Avenue. Since I have been sick I am not [able?] to give to the church, I have to [keep what few pennies I get?] to buy [aspirin?] tablets and other little [medicine?] for my leg. [?] is [???] the rest. She tells me all what happen in church when she comes home. I see the pastor drive by some times, he never stops. When you get sick [everybody?] forgets you. When you have money for the church, you are known as a good sister. Its'sister this and sister that. Nothing like the olden times. Every member of the church would come around to see you, and try to help you. You could be dead and buried, they would never know anything about it. I am not against the church, but I do think that the church is not trying to save souls, they are trying to see how much money they [can?] raise. That's the way it looks to me. Every time I turn around there is some [?] on. H!Ha! there [?] be [??] in them [?]."

Patience seemed to have all of her articles under the pillow, she reached again under the [?] and brought out [??] of [?] cigarettes, stating, "[parden me?] for [smoking?] it [helps?]

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my nerves. Lighting the cigarette she [????] How the [family helps?] her. "I have lots of [help?] from [?] girls, they do the cooking for me and the [?]. Some are better [?] than others, I [can't?] eat very much I only [??], fresh buttermilk, use no meat, no acid food, plenty of vegetables, and [mighty?] little sweets. The rest of the family eats lots of [meats and every?] thing & else. That boy W.J. can put away some food. He runs all day and night, and no wonder he is so hungry when he comes home. Some times the girls bring good things home from where they work. That's the only time I get a little dessert. [?] tried to have a garden to grow some vegetables but the soil was too poor, and the men folk too lazy. We have'nt tried any more."

"No, no one votes in our house, my brothers don't think along that line. Where we come from a colored man better had not look like he wanted to vote, so naturally they do not think about such a thing down here."

Eliza came in from her days work and sat down like she was tired. When questioned about her work, she said, Mister please let me rest cause I have been through something today." Finally she said, "I put out today, every time I turned around Ole [?] had something for me to do. Believe me she got all the grease out of me today. I was happy when the taxi rolled up. Yes they pay my taxi fare. We would'nt make very much if they did not pay our fare to work. I mostly get two dollars a day at some places. I have regular people to go to. I can get all the work I want, the white people know me, I happen to put out a good days work, so they tell their friends and they try to get me to work for them. All I want them to tell me what to do, and I do it. Every body don't know how to clean a house. You can't take any old thing and clean furniture and rugs. You have to know how, then you don't have trouble holding down your job. My white folks are very nice to me, some of them I have been working for nearly three years. They stay here the year round. I don't worry about working for tourist, I have to live through the summer."

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“We hav to have uniforms. I wear this blue uniform trimmed in white. It keeps you from soiling up so many clothes. I usually go to my work at 7:30 and I am through my work on one job by three oclock. Sometimes they bring me home. I like that because you loose lots of time waiting for a taxi, they don't come when you call them.”

Eliza said that she had to go to work for herself now. I have a weeks washing to put out.

The front room of this house is very spacious. It has a fire place in the North-East corner, an old [victrola?], a and dresser , sats sat in the South-East corner. One long bench given by some of their white friends, and couple of wicker chairs with a wicker table sitting in the center of the room. There was no covering on the floor.

Next to this room was the dining room with a large dining table in the middle of the floor. A small stand was next to the wall with books and tennis rackets on it. A bango without strings was hanging on the wall. The steps leading to the second floor are located in the dining room.

There was a small bed-room next to the dining room which was occupied by Green. In it was a double iron bed, one chair, and his clothes hung on nails on the wall. There was no covering on this floor.

The kitchen was very small, the big stove nearly took up all of the floor space. Over the stove were shelves for the pots and pans, the dishes were in an old closet. The walls were covered with soot from the wood stove.

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The rooms on the second floor were very small, the double beds in them takes up nearly all of the floor space. In some of them the walls were ceiled. In the hallway sat a sewing machine with a few magazines on it, “these magazines are given to [?] by the white people she works for. The children read them sometime.” The house was clean throughout.



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“It [keeps?] me hustling to keep our rent money together. I pay my rent to Mr. Oates a white man, who is the agent for Rev, [Raodes?] the owner of this house. He pastor a Baptist Church in Tampa, Florida. We pay three dollars a week rent, and that is to much for this old big house. you see for yourself we have no conveniences. We have to use that old ramshackle out house, and the pump is broken. Our washing is heavy, the men have to have clean overalls and that takes lot of water to keep them clean. We have to take turns when we bathe, there is only tree was tubs out in the back yard. I want to put a cover over that bench where I wash. on hot day I have to do all of the washing out in the hot sun.”

In the back yard, there was a wire enclosure for the chickens and an old [?] hen house. Two large Spaniel dogs lay lazily in the yard. They were very friendly. The whole back yard was wired in. There was lots of debris lying around in the yard. Clothes were hanging on the many clothe lines stretched across the yard and flapping in the wind.

“I wish I could get well, dawned on Patience and as she led me around the house. If I had some pull maybe I could get into the hospital and have my leg treated. Poor people see's a 11 hard time. I have tried to get help for my leg, and all I get is excuses. Now you know that sort of disheartens a person. Like I said if I was able to work I would'nt worry anybody. I am not a bad woman, I just fell into hard luck. When I was out in service I gave good service and was well liked. The young people don't work the hours we had to when I was able to work. Things have changed so rapidly, one can hardly keep up with the times.”

“I carry insurance on all the members of the family, that is the only way I can look out for the rainy day. I carry it with the Industrial Life Insurance Company. It costs me One dollar a week. That's for both Sick and Accident and Straight Life. It's a good thing to have, one never knows when we will get sick, and die.”

“I understand that the speaking at the Auditorium by Madame Mary McLeod [Bethane?], was good. I hear it was the largest crowd that they ever had in the Auditorium since it was

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built. Olen received a card from his Supervisor telling him to be present to the speaking. I think it is nice that young people can do something worth while. I am proud because Olen [in?] in it.

I sit on the upstairs porch and watch them boys and girls play on the playground some afternoons. That's something new for our folks in Lakeland, we didn't have that before we had the W P A, Olen he helps around the tennis court at the Tourist Center. I [??] talking about Mr. Hendrick, the tennis player. Olen is crazy about him, cause he teaches him lots about the game.”

“You asked me what I had to do when I was out in service, I don't think that there is much difference, the girls now have 12 to do the same [?] of work. [?] some have those new [?] things to work with, and that's makes it much easier. Where [??] the electric polishers, it don't take long to polish floors. Some places I had to get down on my knees. [?] used polish mops. [?] the electric machines [???] work much easier if you are lucky to get [?] in home that has one. In small families you have all the work to do from cleaning up, to cooking, and washing. I just think a colored man is lucky when he marries a colored woman. he gets a wife, housekeeper, cook and wash woman. Yet some of [??] are not satisfied. If they had to put out like some of them white men I bet they would be satisfied.”

“I hardly [??], I would like to go down town sometime [?] [window?] shop. That would be about all. I have no money to do any-thing with. It would be a big change to get out from this place. I sit and see the sam e thing every day. It is no easy thing to sit down all day [?]. You can think of more things to [??] more things not to do. Green [??], they like to sit around in front of some of the stores and listen to gossip. [?] How I get my [?] news.”

[?] who is [full?] of life said. “I take my [sport?] out in going to movies, with my boy friend who takes me twice a week. They have good pictures, I don't like cowboy pictures all that shooting and running is too much for me. Oh yes, I attend church, I go to nearly all the [??] services, but I still like my movies.”

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Patience said, "I don't [??] to [?] bout the government, but I think this relief business has helped people, I know 13 it has helped me. The people [?] never forget [?] Roosevelt. He has kept many a door open, but I think sometimes people soon forget what you [?] for [?]. They cry when their ribs [are?] in, and as soon as you [?] them out they soon forget. That's right I have seen it. I once got a [sack?] of flour [?] at the welfare office, and another colored woman had a sack much smaller than mine, she fussed something terrible because mine was larger than hers. At that time she didn't understand that they gave you things according to the size of your family. That's the way it goes. I have seen it. [I still?] say I am [?] for what they do for my boy [?]. It is God's will and his will, willbe [?]."

"I better be [?] them [?????] on the stove, it is near time for the children to come home from school. They [hardly?] ever [eat?] much lunch and I know they will be hungry. You [?] seen first, I have to take my time walking down the steps. I can't put much [?] on my leg and I use the [banister?] for [??] down."

"I think the front door is open, and [if?] you want to know any more I will be glad to talk with you. Eliza said yes I have [??] to tell you. Goodbye."