

[Dan and Amelia Threet]

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Paul Diggs

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Threet, Dan and Amelia

Washington Park

Lakeland, Florida

DAN AND AMELIA THREET

(Commonly known as Doc Threet)

Located on the West side of "Washington Park" lying between 7th St, in North Lakeland, (commonly known as Teaspoon Hill) is located Dan and Amelia Threet. He is known by all as Doc Threet. They live in a four room house that was once set aside for a community house in the Park.

Some years ago this plot of ground was donated to the City by Mr. Vinc Stephenson, who is known as Judge, he was once a Justice of Peace in Lakeland. This white gentleman deeded this track of land to the City of Lakeland to be used as a Park for Negroes. In 1910 the City of Lakeland accepted it. In 1926, Louise Rochelle (now Louise Diggs) organized a group called, "The Civic Improvement League" saw fit to improve it. In making their

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plea to the City Fathers, they were granted the necessary funds to make the necessary improvements.

At that time in 1926, they erected a band stand, layed cement walks, and built tennis courtswith lights for night playing. A sun dial was placed east of the band stand, and a building to the west side for a community house. The park has numerous water oaks scattered in it, which makes it a very desirable place to relax. During the year of 1934 the F E R A remodeled the band stand.

In the mean time through the popularity of this beautiful park, there was need for someone to care for it. L.B. Brown was first given the priviledge to live in this cottage. After he left in 1935. Doc, was given the job as care taker. This position he holds today along with the responsibility of taking care of 2 other City owned property built for Negroes in Lakeland, Florida. The Colored Auditorium, and the Colored Library.

Doc, was approached for an interview. He was sitting on the porch smoking. He said, "come in and have a seat." "Well I am nothing but a hard working man, and there is not much that I can tell, But I have seen plenty go on here in Lakeland.

This conspicuous character is seen daily around, and is known by all of the older citizens, and boys and girls who visit the Park. He is very pleasant and obliging at all times. Doc is five feet and six inches in height, weigh on hundred and thirty five pounds, dark brown in complexion, with a few gray hairs visible in his head.

" I was born in Valdosta, Georgia. My parents were [Wash?] and and Hattie Winn. After the death of my father, my mothered married again to Nero Threet There were share-croppers on a large farm, and I remained [on?] the farm [nd?] worked part of the time. Doc's family only consisted of his two sister, Viola and [rosa?], (deceased) " I remained on the farm until I was ten years old, during that time I attended school. I was taken to Florida

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by my uncle Charlie Williams. They settled in Lafayette County. I married my wife Amelia Roberson, August 18, 1898 and later came to Lakeland, Florida, in December 1914.”

“I recall the first jail, which was a one story wooden building located in front of the Adair Athletic Field, on North Florida Avenue, near Third Street. This spot is now the home training ground for the Detroit Tigers. And is considered one of the best training grounds in Florida.”

“There were only three houses located this side of Pear St. They were located in groves and woodland. One of the houses I 3 purchased.”

“ While in Georgia I learned my A B C's. We studied out of the Blue Back Webster. I lived in a town called Luraville, where I was made to attend school four months out of the year. I went to school often and on for sixteen years. I went as far in the Arithmetic as the United States Money. At that time that was considered good. Prof. W.A.Rochelle, the principal of the Elementary Department at Washington Park High School taught me for a couple of years in Lauraville. He was considered a fine teacher at that time. Through my schooling, what little I had, it has made me see what I could do for my childrens Some have finished the High School, and [om?] the grades. All of them are able to know right from wrong.”

“Lottie Mae and Farabelle live with me, they both have finished the Washington Park High School. Lottie Mae works on the N Y A, assisting in the recreation department. Farabelle remains at home and takes care of her mother who has a stroke in December, 1937. Farabelle is not a very well girl, at times she suffers with her heart.” Farabelle was sitting on the front porch in a rocking chair. She is very [pleasant?] and seems to be very dutiful around the house. Lottie Mae was sitting in her mother's bed room talking to her mother. Both girls were neatly dressed. Lottie Mae asked how the people liked the Pageant that was held at Bethel A M E Church. She was one of the participants in the play. Those away from home are Nero, (who is married and lives in [?], a colored section of Lakeland.)

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Alice, (she is married and lives on 8th St,) K. C. Hattie and Rosa are away from home and are still single.

“ When I was sixteen I began working in the gin mill, ginning cotton. I stayed on this job until I became boss man. At 4 that time there was plenty of cotton growing in the northern part of the State. My first job in Lakeland was with the American Express company. I was a helper during the Christmas Holidays. Afterward they kept me because I was a good worker. Later they cut help [and?] kept the old helpers. I looked [around?] and found a job with the Lakeland Manufacturing Company, hauling lumber. On this job I received \$ 1.50 per day. ”

“ After working for several years, I began carpenter work, and taking contracts for grubbing. This I followed until I accepted a job with [the?] [Washington?] Park High School, as janitor. I began working on this job in 1930, and remained until [1935?]. They paid me \$60.00 a month. I learned a great deal on this job by coming in contact with the teachers. Of course I lost out on this job due to colored folks mouth. A lie was told on me, and I could never straighten it out.”

“ During this time I became ill, and nearly lost my health, after going [?] [relief?]. You remember when you put me on relief , ,when you [had?] charge at the Old Colored Hospital. Well soon afterwards they sent you away, and the treatments I took put me [back?] on my feet. After I was able to work again, the City gave me more work taking [care?] of the grounds and the building for our people.”

“ I clean up the Auditorium and the Library [and?] take care of the grounds. They pay me \$44.00 a month. Of course this amount is not enough to take care of my family. What little bit Lottie Mae makes goes for her clothes. You see she is young, and needs pretty things like other girls to wear. I try hard to look after everything in connection with my work. What I am [thankful?] is that I have a good boss [man Mr. derman?] is the Director of the Recreation Department of the City of Lakeland, Florida.

Library of Congress

5

“ Speaking of voting- thats something that a man has to know what he is doing.I use to vote regular in the City [elections?], but of late I have only registered. I workedfor the city folks and if I go messing in politic I might vote for the wrong man, and off goes my head. No Siree! I don't fool with voting. You know a half loaf of bread is better than no loaf. I [mean?] it is better for folks to be satisfied with what they have sometime than to be grabbing ,and miss out. You know what them old one's will do, but you have no guarantee on them [ne?] one when they get in office.”

“ I need my job now, with my wife sick in there. She is helpless and we have to tote ‘ her from place to place. Now what would I look like fooling around now. Huh! all I can do is to attend to my own business.”

“ All of my life I have had good jobs, and made a living for my family.” Amelia, who can hardly talk, expressed herself at this remark, and [said?], “he certainly has taken care of his family and is doing a man's part now.” Amelia [sits?] in a rocking chair during the day time, when the weather is good she [i?] moved to the front porch, and allowed to sit in the sun. “ [You know?] I thought I was a goner when I was stricken down with [rhumatism in 1933?].” Doc said. “ I worried more than I should, but thanks the good Lord I am still able to work and take care of my wife.”

“That's the reason why I try to keep faith with [God?]. I have always been religious. I have been a member of Bethel [A M E?] Church ,located on North Dakota Avenue[,?] for twenty seven years. My whole family belongs to this church. I have [served?] in every office in this church. I have been Sunday School Superintendent for thirteen years . I don't go to church as regular as I should.

6

I hate to say it, but if you don't have money [now?] there is no need of going to church, you don't get that old time religion any more.”

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“ I need all the money I can rake and scrape. My medical bills is awful high. Every time you call a Doctor it takes your weekly salary; to say nothing about the cost of the prescription. I still [feel?] the effects from my rhumatism, and take some little pills now and [then?]. Farabelle, hasto [have?] medicine too. All of this expenses [fall on?] me.”

The little cottage contains four rooms, very badly in need of painting on the exterior, the rooms are very small and the walls are [?] with beaver board, two of the rooms are used [for?] bed rooms, kitchen [and?] a bath room that is modernly equipped. They have [the?] use of electricity furnished by the City free, and their rent is likewise. Doc has built on the north side of the house a small stand from which he sells snowballs, candy, soft drinks, and etc. This priviledge is granted by the City.

In front of the [house?] there are benches scattered around under the water oak that give shade to the place. There are flowers and shrubbery growing in front of the house. In the back of his house he has wired in a large [space used?] for chickens. Penned up in a small box was a coon, that was [captured?] when he was small. Doc has tamed him, on taking him out of the box he climbed all over his head and shoulders.

Doc, in talking drifted back to his childrens, stating that one [was?] drowned while swimming in a clay hole, nother was accidently shot by a boy [playing?] with a gun. The rest died natural deaths [from?] illness.

Amelia said, “ that she was a good women when she was well.

7

I was a mother of thirteen childrens, only seven living now. If all of my children [had?] married I don't know what would have happened to me. Since I got [in?] this fix.” Amelia is very small and her [lower?] limbs [look?] like they have wasted away since she has been unable to walk. Amelia said, “ that her appetite was very good, and she like plenty of chicken.”

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The general appearance of the interior was clean. the bed rooms were furnished with inexpensive furniture.

Lottie Mae begged to be excused, and [ent?] into the kitchen tp to prepare dinner. She was asked what good things she was preparing. She said, "my mother has to have some special things cooked. But we like most anything. My father is a great meat eater, but we don't give him very much since he had that sick spell, We use a plenty of vegetables with corn bread and biscuits. We eat very little sweets because we can't afford them. I studied home economics while in [High?] School, and I understand what is good for people to eat. I am a pretty good cook if I must say so. Ha! Ha!. Maybe I will get a good husband some day.

Doc said, "you aught to get a good husband." Lottie Mae replied, " Changing her attitude about a good husband, what for? to starve to death. Men now of days can hardly take care of them selves. Muchless trying to take care of a wife." As the conversation ran on about marrying, Doc said, " all [young?] girls should marry before it is too late."

Doc is very handy around the house, most of the article built [around?] his [place?] was made by him. He showed me a chair that was built, which [was?] durable and well built. He is considered a home man. When not busy round the park attending to the lawns and shrubbery, he can be found sitting on the front porch near his little shop chatting with friends who constantly visit the place.

8

Farabelle is considered a good tennis player, and she makes use of the tennis court that is about fifty feet form the house. Lottie mae is musical and has a nice voice, and some what interested in [dramatics?]. She recently assisted with a WPA plat play .

This seems to be the way that they find pleasure in their liesure time activities.