

Alabama

AL-36

M.B. Truitt Family
Route 5
Opelika, Alabama

THE TRUITT FAMILY - TENANT FARMERS

By Preston Klein

Mrs. Truitt was sitting on the back porch of the four room house shelling peas while she rested from the wash that was then flapping on the line.

"You'll have to excuse us," she said, "but when I wash, I put the chillun out in the yard and the baby, Helen, jest crawls all over this red yard and never do look like she's been cleaned up."

Mrs. Truitt would not let me sit on the back porch and led the way from the rear yard through the combination kitchen and dining room to the living room, so I told her to bring the peas on and work while we talked.

The house is a small frame structure, painted gray, with a small side front porch with entrance into the living room. All rooms are sealed inside, painted, and crowded with furniture. A bathroom is at the rear.

In the living room is a small fireplace. Around the mantel shelf is tacked a three or four inch edging of lavender crochet, with a wax figures adorning each end. The windows have scrim glass curtains and rayon brocade drapery at the sides. Furniture includes a bed, radio, living room suite of mahogany and cane, with plush cushions, and an end and library table.

The house is in good repair so far as could be seen.

Closed doors prohibited a look at the remaining two rooms, which supposedly, are bedrooms.

There is no piano or organ, however, hidden away in either of these rooms because Mrs. Truitt made this remark:

"One thing we regret - not being able to give the chillun piano lessons."

There are six children in the Truitt family, five girls and one boy.

Mrs. Truitt says: "It ^s who' do take a heap to feed and clothe them.

"We git up soon, fer the bigger chillun leave soon on the truck, fer school. They don't have time to do nothin' 'till night, such as cleaning up the littluns'.

"While I'm fixin' breakfast, they is gittin' ready fer school. Well, I dunno whether you'd like our breakfast er no. Sometimes, we has what we think is a good breakfast, and sometimes, its short.

"I tries to give my old man a boiled dinner, such as turnip greens, peas, or collards, and for supper I save some of the cold greens fer the kids and make biscuit or thin hoeecake er egg-bread and fry a little meat if we has it.

"But the chillun and the old man all love syrup. We generally make enough sorghum and ribbon cane to do us and it satisfies them most of the time.

"No'm," Mrs. Truitt answered an effort to purchase cane. "We don't have no cane to sell. We'll jest git by with hit fer syrup. Its been so dry, the stalks ain't nothin' and the joints are so short, they don't make much."

"No'm, she replied to another purchasing sally, "we

ain't got no goobers neither. Well, we got some, but they ain't thrashed yet, and they belong to Mr. H.C. anyhow. He's our landlord. 'Course, we allus give the chillun some.

"Mr. H.C. jest can't be beat. He's a fine man, the best boss I ever worked for. If we don't 'come out,' and git behind, he helps git the chillun the things they need. I ^sho^s do appreciate hit too."

Mr. ~~M.B.~~ Truitt, who had helped with the washing, and then gone about other chores, came into the living room in time to catch the last of Mrs. Truitt's conversation.

More detail -
"I done pretty well," he said, "'till about five years ago when the gover'ment got ter messin' with me, and cut us down so.

"I never did go no further than the fifth grade," Mr. Truitt continued. "I'm the oldest in my family and had to quit and go to work so some of the others could go ter school. I sure do want my chillun ter go as fer as they kin, 'cause schoolin' sho' does help ter get 'em good jobs.

"No'm, I ain't got no car. I've had the money two or three times ter buy a car, and then I think better of it, and don't do it, but I do wish I owned a home.

"You mean, what am I doin' today? I'm cuttin' velvet beans and hay.

"No'm, I don't know as there's any better or worse times. When we git behind and out of things we does with-out 'till we ketch up.

"I'm starting on wages now. Times been bad. I git fifteen dollars a month, and have my own patches.

"I like farmin' though, better in public work.

"I don't know much about what's goin' on. I read the papers some, but I kinder lost interest 'cause I got behind and couldn't catch up no more with what's goin' on."

Mr. Truitt hesitated slightly after a question as to his religious beliefs.

"We belong to the Baptist Church, but we jest never did move our membership from Rock Springs, up in Chambers County. Ain't much we can pay, but we send a little money when we can.

"What do I think of the young folks? Well, some of the things they do these days is something else, ain't it? Now, some of the things will do all right and some of the picture shows are okay. I like ter go myself when I can, but we have so much work on us all the time and, too, I have a big doctor bill right often, and it pretty near keeps us stripped.

"But I keep right on workin', tryin' ter get ahead. You know, work won't hurt nobody, unless they're lazy."

When mention was made of the flowers in the Truitt yard, Mr. Truitt said:

"Yes'm, our flowers has been right pretty and any-time in passin' you can stop. Mt wife will be right glad to divide what she's got with you."