EPISODE 1 – Out of Jamestown….I’m Here! - 1848

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
“Study the Past” ...... “What is Past is Prologue”

On 7th Street in Washington, D.C., there is a statue, depicting "Study the Past," that sits on the Pennsylvania Avenue side at the National Archives Building.

This is where our Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights are on display, the cornerstone documents of the United States,
“Study the Past” ...... “What is Past is Prologue”

“Study the Past”

The quotation on the statue's base has been attributed to a paraphrase of Confucius that reads: “Study the Past.”

The statue emphasizes the importance of studying history as the individualized “Study the Past” male figure with a “closed book” gazes down at you.
A historical and fictional biography as told by my Great Grandmother, Jane Tinsley Green, a 90 year old former southern slave, who provides a narrative to me of her love story, reflections about life and her family history from pre-slavery in the 1840’s through the 19th and the mid 20th century, up to the birth of my father, her grandson.
THE NARRATIVE

Prologue

Being a Negro in America is Tough. But We Made It

Out of Jamestown, Virginia......I’m Here ! – 1848

He Ain’t Gonna Break Me ! – 1855

The Coloreds Had Their Own – 1859

Troubles –a-Brewin’ – 1861

Trouble Don’t Last Always - 1866

Lee (Leroy) Green – 1868

The Courtship – He’s Mine – 1869

After the War – 1870-1875

After the Wars – 1910

Nick & Mariah – 1927

Negro Soldiers and Another War – 1933

Here I Am - .It’s Not Done Yet – 1938
Jane Tinsley Green was my Great Grandmother. Her surname Tinsley, was used prior to her marriage to my Great Grandfather; Leroy (Lee) Green.

I believe that she was a slave in the 1840’s on the Tinsley Plantation in Hanover County, Virginia about 10 miles outside of Richmond, Virginia.
This is a biographical and fictional historical story and reflections of a 90 year old former southern Negro slave woman’s life and her family history.

We start from pre-slavery in the 1840’s, through the emancipation of slaves in the 1860’s.
Through the 19th century and 20th Century American wars and up to the birth and life of my father, Harold Walker Greene, Jane Tinsley Green’s grandson.
Of course from a historical perspective, it is very hard to find information or data about slave family history, because few records were written and kept, and many records were destroyed over the centuries.
A lot of post and pre-slavery history was heresy, past down family tradition and gossip.

This method of compiling information about the life story of an individual is certainly not conducive to writing a truly accurate biographic account of that person’s life.
Hence, we must take an approach to writing a fictional / biography that attempts to fill in the gaps where true and historical facts are not available.
Parts of this book are real and based on the true facts that I have researched and I have learned from Green family history, lore, the U.S. Census Bureau, gossip from family members through my lifetime.
To fill in the gaps, I am compelled to add what I think happened in Great Grandmother Jane’s life to make her story whole.

Parts of this book are imagined and fictional portraits of a family with slave roots that moved thru a decade of good and hard times.
This is what I imagine would have gone on in the life of Jane and Leroy (Lee) Greene, my paternal Great Grandparents.

The decades they lived, as I see them, were rich in tradition and life, despite the horrors of war, slavery and hatred.
I have included as much facts and history as I could research, but forget that, just enjoy the story!

This is a love story and a family history as I envisioned, told in 1938 by my 90 year old my Great Grandmother, Jane Tinsley Green.
This is a tribute to my aunts and uncles who are all now deceased, the Grandchildren of Leroy and Jane Green, and the children of Nick and Mariah Green.

“Being a Negro in America is Tough, But We Made It!”
“Being a Negro in America is Tough, But We Made It!”

I am grateful for being an American and I thank GOD for leading me and my family on our walk of faith in HIS will in this great country.

D.Harold Greene
Author, Leroy (Lee) and Jane’s Great Grandson
EPISODE 1 – Out of Jamestown….I’m Here! - 1848

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing......but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
"Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”

I’m here! That’s all I know……I’m here!

I ain’t sure where I come from or how I got here, but I know one thing.......I’m here!
I jus’ know that it was GOD’s doin’ – God brought me here.

Somebody told me that I came from a place called Jamestown, Virginia…..fresh off a big slave boat, bare foot and ugly with a hundred other Negras.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
I can’t remember much at that time as I was just a young girl, barely two years old.

I do remember being brought by Massa James Tinsley’s plantation and being on a wagon full of other Negras, as we were called in them days.
Massa was the closest thing to being my daddy I’d know’ed….and he took care of me and the other Negras who lived in our small grove of shacks, actually a village about 100 feet from the BIG house.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
I was his favorite ninny and I worked in the big house kitchen.

I worked with Lula Mae, a big buxom kitchen hand, maid and mammy to the Tinsley children and also Ms. Loddie, the head women Negras of the Big house.
Ms. Loddie ran the Big house, and no one, not 'ner man, woman, nor child could buck Ms. Loddie 'sept Massa Tinsley.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
Ms. Loddie

Ms. Loddie ran everything ‘cause everyone ‘spect and said that Ms. Loddie was Massa Tinsley’s oldest Negra daughter.

She was half white, high yellow, with Negra feature….big lips and red hair. Red hair.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
Now how can a Negra, born of slaves, have red hair?

Ms. Loddie taught me a lot though and how to survive in this anti-Negra society.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
I was told to always say "yes sir" to Massa Tinsley and "yes mam" to Mistress Tinsley.

Ms. Loddie said if you disrespect the Massa, then you would be tied to a tree and whoop to every ounce of your life left in 'ya.

"Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing.....but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet"
Sheet, back then crackers was mean and they don’t play, ‘specially those white field masters, who run the plantation for Massa.

Ms. Loddie said ”stay away from them field masters and them field Negras, as they would get you in trouble”.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing......but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
Field Negras back then was valuable property of the Tinsley Plantation, and you don’t wanna mess with or hurt this valuable property.

Some of those Negras cost Massa as much as $15 - $25 dollars. That was a lot of money back then. A free Negra didn’t make that much in a year back then.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing......but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”

The buck, the big Negra male, was even more valuable as Massa used them for fighting other big Negra bucks from other plantations and for breedin’.

Yessss, don’t mess with or hurt valuable property, specially, valuable buck Negras.
“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing......but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”

Where I Comes From?

I t’aunt got no real schoolin’. Never did believe that you need it.

I had everything I need on the plantation and I was happy. I just went about goin’ to church a lot and to readin’ my Bible verses.
Massa said “Negras ain’t have no need for book learnin! other then the Bible”. He meant this too.

He said” I better not catch none of my Negras with a book”.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing......but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
He also said that any darkies caught reading a book, ‘specially the buck’s, would be beat or even hanged.

Sho nuf got the message to us’n, ‘sept for me, I was the plantations school marm.
“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”

I could read anything I want. Massa said that readin’ would make Negras uppity.

He said that he didn’t want no uppity Negras on his plantation.
Mistress Tinley overruled Massa though.

She said that a smart Negra would work harder if’n he believed that he had a future on the plantation and upward mobility.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”

I don’t know.

If you can’t be nuthin’ but a slave, then what kind of upward mobility can you have?
Who My Mammie?

I don’t know who my mammy was. I guess I ain’t got none. They told me she was over in Africa somewhere.

It don’t matter, Lula Mae was the closest person to being my mammy. She kept me in my place.
Workin’ in the kitchen kept my stomach full. I got all that good eatins’ that was left over from the Tinsley’s family meals.

Those folks had a lot of food left over and wasted it. Negras not working in the kitchen like me didn’t get no good meals like I got.
They often ate pork jowls, chittlin’s, pig tails, pig feet, pig ears, pig tongue and pork belly, parts of the pig left over that white folk wouldn’t eat.

I knew them chittlins’ weren’t good for me when I heard that they had to be cleaned of pig sheet before you ate them.
Field Negras also ate chicken parts that white folk didn’t want like chicken feet, chicken wings and chicken heads.

I gets dizzy just thinkin’ ‘bout this stuff. White folks ain’t give you no beef leftover.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
They loved their red meat and ate everything there was on a cow,.....down to the bone.

I guess I was lucky. I ain’t never went hungry.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing......but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
Goin’ to the Market

The Tinsley's were farmers in the Hanover County, Virginia.

They grew tobacco mostly, but they also grew cotton and sold their harvest at the market in Richmond, Virginia, a big city some 20 miles away.
That’s when we got into two buggy’s, one lead by Missy Tinsley’s fancy buggy with a white umbrella, two beautiful white hosses, and we was on a buck wagon, loaded with us Negras following her.

We’d be ridin’ long the Blue Star Highway, route number 17, to Richmond, Virginia.
Market day was the best ol’ time for me. We went every month to pick up rations, vittles and cleaning stuff for the kitchen.

Missy often road with her beautiful expensive white hat on with a matching black and white umbrella to shade her from the hot Virginia sun.
“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”

She also had a little jug of a cold liquid, she said it was sweet tea, but I think it were sumpthin’ else, like some pot licker, or a mint julep.

All I know is that by time we got to Richmond, Missy Tinley was lovin’ everybody and sayin’ crazy things like “Negras should be Free” and “Negras are equal to whites”.
Boy, she sho’ acted crazy when she drank those mint juleps’ at home, that’s why I knew that was what she was drinkin’ on our way to Richmond.

Whilst ridin’ to Richmond, me and Ms. Loddie would talk and she would teach me many things.

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
Ms. Loddie often told me that I’d grow up to be somebody someday.

I could already count money, and buy the rations for the Tinsley’s, so I think that they was teachin’ me to take Ms. Loddies place as she got older with rheumatism and became senile.
She said that I might be a purser one day.

How can someone who is nothing in the eyes of both white and the Negras be somebody someday?

“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”
“Faith is Stepping Out of Nothing……but Knowing the Ground Will Come Up to Meet Your Feet”

GOD don’t make no mistakes though – he let me be the best I can be, if’n I keeps the faith and goes on livin’.

My upbringing in my pre-teen years was not that great or easy, but I’m here!
That’s what’s important….I know’d at that time that I could make my life into what I wanted it to be if I trust in GOD and have faith.

I know’d that I wouldn’t be a slave forever. I know’d that! I believed that! That’s why, I am here now! I made it!
GRANDMOTHER JANE
An American Love Story in 19th Century Richmond, Virginia - 1848-1938

NEXT EPISODE

Episode 2 - He Ain’t Gonna Break Me! - 1855
GRANDMOTHER JANE
An American Love Story in 19TH Century Richmond, Virginia- 1848-1938

Purchase “PEARL and the Buffalo Soldier” Video CD Series at:
http://www.staffdevelopmenttrainer.com/DVD-Retreats.html