

THE STORY OF THE TOM'S PLACE PHOTO AND DOCUMENT COLLECTION

It all begins in Helena Montana in the early 1900's (probably mid-teens) where a young man named Thomas Jefferson Yerby lived and worked as a tailor. Tom met a woman there named Hazel, who was a stage actress and went by the stage name "Jane Grey." She had roles in many plays in the western US. Tom and Hazel married and around the year 1917 they adopted a baby infant girl and named her Barbara. For reasons unknown, they moved to Bishop California in 1918 and bought a home at the intersection of Clark and Sneden Streets. This home still stands today. As Tom was a tailor by trade, he opened a business in downtown Bishop where Brock's Sporting Goods building stands. Tom, Hazel, and little Barbara would often go up to Mono County fishing, hiking, camping and just enjoying the beauty of the Eastern Sierra. Sometimes Tom would just take Barbara up that way. Little Barbara had quite the life growing up in Bishop and spending most of her time outdoors.

Tom would often stop at Rock Creek Station, a small resort just up and over Sherwin Grade on Rock Creek. This resort was built in 1917 by a German man named Hans Lof. Hans built the resort because of growing popularity of the area. People would come up seeking outdoor recreational activities to get away from mostly Southern California. The main attraction at the time was fishing, and people would come up sometimes for a month at a time and camp at French Camp. French Camp was located just northwest of present-day Tom's Place Resort. Mammoth Camp was another popular area in those days.

The Rock Creek resort had a gas station, cookhouse, store, corrals, and offered pack trips into the mountains. Hans also built a hand-hewn log cabin right behind the cookhouse and store, which still stands today right behind present day Tom's Place Café. This is where Hans lived. Over the years, from 1917 until 1923, Hans sold the resort several times. He was a shrewd businessman and would arrange a business deal involving a small down payment with high monthly payments for the buyers. It seems he did this knowing that the new owners would not be able to make the payments. The business was always struggling to survive, and Hans over hyped the potential and income! One of the main problems was that it was not located on the old dirt highway the ran just to the north of the resort (on the north side of present-day highway 395). The business would eventually foreclose, and he could get it back only to sell it again!

In his many visits to the area and to the resort, Tom saw potential in it. He knew that with an uplift and new business plan, plus adding a lodge across the street, it had great potential. Tom also knew that in late 1923 construction would be underway to build a road up Rock Creek Canyon going due south from the resort (present day Rock Creek Canyon road a few hundred yards east of Tom's Place). This meant a new area that

would really be an attraction to visitors and to get there they would go right by the resort! Tom then purchased the business in 1923 from Hans at a price of \$5000. Only this time he was able to make the payments and that infuriated Hans! Tom immediately set out to build the two-story lodge across the road in the following year. With these new additions and Tom at its ownership and management, Tom's Place was set for success! By the late 1920's many cabins had been added to the north of the resort, first as tent structures, then permanent ones, and many still in use today. This was not part of the resort nor Tom's business, but cabins built of leased USFS land by various people as either permanent or seasonal homes.

In 1931, the paved highway running right in front of the resort was widened and the original resort buildings on the north side had to be demolished. The lodge that Tom built in 1923 on the south side of the highway did not have to be demolished. The new Tom's Place Café, Store, and gas station were then built. They still stand and are in operation today. Just about the time the new Tom's Place was built in 1931, Tom and Hazel decided to send daughter Barbara to high school in Glendale. At the time, Bishop Academy School was somewhat deficient at the high school level. Many families sent their kids to high school elsewhere to get a better education. While in high school in Glendale, Barbara met a young man named Harold Parker, who was also attending Glendale high school. After graduation Barbara went on to college and Harold on to pilot flight training school. He went on to become an airline pilot. They married in 1939 and settled in Burbank, California. They had four children.

Tom and Hazel successfully operated the resort until 1935 when Tom had a stroke. Due to his health and continuing to have more strokes, Tom was in and out of hospitals in southern California for the next five years. Hazel had to operate the resort for the most part. His health deteriorated and knew he would not live much longer. Concerned for Hazel's future, and just prior to his death in 1940, he wanted Hazel to marry "Kime", who was a frequent visitor to Tom's Place and who had owned one of the cabins there. Kime was a Salmon Fisherman by trade and travelled all over the Pacific Northwest. He was a close friend of the Yerby's and held in high regard by them. With Tom's blessing and right after his death in 1940, she married Kime. They operated the resort until 1945 at which time they sold it. After selling they traveled around and lived in many different places, mostly in California. Many photos in the collection show Kime and his cabin, etc.

After marriage, Barbara never returned to live in Eastern California as her husband had a great career and she liked living in the city and raising her children there. In 1971 husband Harold passed away and she stayed alone at their Burbank home until 1988. Her four children who had all moved away would still come up and visit Eastern California and the Tom's Place area, but it was her two sons that came up the most often. By 1985 both moved back up to the area and got jobs at the Rock Creek Lakes Resort.

Hazel died in 1975 while living in Calimesa California. When she died, she had possession of the collection. Her daughter Barbara, who was still living in Burbank, took possession of it. By 1988 she wanted to be close to family and sold her Burbank home. Her sons moved her up to the Bay area to be around her daughters and their grandchildren. One of her sons that had moved up to the Tom's Place area was keenly interested in the history of Tom's Place and took it upon himself to research the history of the area and resort. He showed more interest in the collection than his other brother and two sisters did. He eventually talked them into letting him take the collection after considerable pleas to them. It was not an easy fight! Barbara lived the rest of her life in the SF bay area and died in 2000.

In 2019 I was fortunate enough to purchase the entire collection from the son who needed money and was willing to part with it. He did so because I knew so much history of the area and I was also a lifelong local. And the deal included the condition that I scan the entire collection and make DVD copies for him as well as museums for donation. I maintain a close friendship with the son to this day, and he has taken me on "field trips" around Tom's Place showing me where the original roads were and how they changed over the years.

Many people are identified by name via captions on photos. These names include Kime, Bert Snyder, Tom Whelan, Leo & Marion Hill, Ed DeRiemer, Bob Brown, Rollo Meeks, Doc Booty, Mr. Curley, Burton Frasher Jr., and Pat & Tex Cushion. Kime was a very close friend of the Yerby's, and owned a cabin at Tom's Place. He is the man who married Tom's wife Hazel when he passed away. Doc Booty, who is shown in a number of photos with Barbara, is actually Joe Booty. Joe was Doc Booty's son. Doc Booty was a doctor in Bishop that was allegedly a poor doctor as were most doctors in Bishop in the teens through the 1930's. People would often go out of town to get better medical care. Pat and Tex Cushion were from Mammoth Camp and owned and operated a sledding dog team freight and passenger service. Burton Frasher Jr. was the son of Burton Frasher, commercial photographer. The Yerby's were good friends with Burton Frasher who often frequented Tom's Place. Others were just some of the many friends/acquaintances of the Yerby's which included cabin owners. It should be noted that the Yerby's were not connected with the cabins. These were built by various people on leased USFS lands. It should also be noted that Hazel and Jane are one in the same. Jane was just her stage name and people who knew her as a friend usually called her Jane, while others would call her Hazel.

Chronology of events:

- 1917 Hans Lof built the Rock Creek Resort including log cabin behind it as his home
- 1917 Tom Yerby married Hazel aka "Jane" in Helena, MT
- 1917 Tom & Hazel adopted baby Barbara
- 1918 The Yerby's moved to Bishop California from Helena Montana
- 1923 Tom Yerby purchased resort from Hans Lof and renamed it Tom's Place
- 1924 The two-story lodge was added across the street from Café, Store & Gas Station
- 1925 -1926 Tom moved into original hand hewn log cabin just behind resort
- 1925 – 1928 Cabins were built by various people on USFS leased land across highway
- 1930 Highway in front of resort widened and original buildings on north side demolished
- 1931 New Tom's Place Café, Store, and Gas Station construction completed
- 1935 - 1939 Tom Yerby's health deteriorated
- 1940 Tom Yerby passes away
- 1945 Hazel and Kime sold Tom's Place
- 1947 Tom's Place Lodge burned down
- 1947 – 1948 New lodge built which still stand today across street
- 1971 Barbara's husband Harold Parker died
- 1975 Hazel (aka Jane) Kime (formerly Yerby) died
- 2000 Barbara died

People really started getting into the fishing here in the mid 20's, and there was a lot of traffic to Yosemite. People would come and camp for a month at a time at what is now called French Camp.