



HISTORY OF BILL'S RANCH CABIN

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April 13, 2021

The Thomas family moved to Frisco from Georgetown in 1887. They purchased the Leyner Hotel on Main Street that same year, and would operate the hotel and its stable for the next forty years. In 1910, Jane Thomas acquired a 145-acre plot of land south of town through the Homestead Act. Jane and her three children- William "Bill", Walter, and Nellie- opened a dairy farm on the property while continuing to run the Leyner Hotel.

By the 1930 census, the small population of Frisco had dwindled to 18 residents. Bill and Walter looked to revive Frisco's population with the "Mr. Man Letter." Bill wrote to 100 select Denverites, claiming he was "long on land but short on good neighbors," offering a one-acre plot of land to anybody that would build a cabin within a year of moving here. Five families, all members of Denver pastor Reverend Dexheimer's congregation, took Bill up on this offer. The first known families of Bill's Ranch were the Ninnemon's, the Niemoth's, the Maddy's, the McKee's, and the Reverend himself. The community Bill created on his ranch continues to this day with the Bill's Ranch Neighborhood and the preservation of the Niemoth Cabin and the Bill's Ranch House at the Historic Park.

The cabin is located at 72 Goldfinch Lane (CR 1028), also known as Lot 153, close to the original location of Bill Thomas' ranch house. Neighboring lots contain other historic outbuildings from the Bill Thomas Ranch including an icehouse and milk house. These can be seen from the 7th Avenue right of way. These buildings are now residential units and preserved by private residents for their contribution to the built landscape and connection to Bill Thomas.

The cabin's recorded construction date of 1932 closely aligns with the construction of the initial wave of summer homes on the Bill Thomas Ranch by part-time residents invited to the area by Bill and Walter Thomas with the "Mr. Man Letter." The architecture of this cabin also mirrors the summer homes with solo room layouts, unpeeled logs, and gabled roofs. This style of architecture is similar to the Midland log style from the pre-railroad folk traditions in the late 1800s. The log-cabin style appeared in the Rocky Mountains into the 1930s because of the availability of materials and skill set of the local builders. As a result, the cabin is grounded in the natural and built landscape through its design and materials.

Former Bill's Ranch resident Kinon Durham wrote a letter to the Frisco Historical Society, dated October 21, 1997. In this letter, Durham writes about his childhood at Bill's Ranch watching Bill Thomas "milk his cows, putting ice in his ice storage shed, and working on the cabins that he had for rent". Given the proximity of the cabin to these known outbuildings, it is likely this cabin is the one referred to by Durham in this letter.

In 1941, Bill Thomas entered into an agreement with Mr. and Mrs. Mike Hatzis for use of the cabin. The Hatzis resided primarily in Pleasant View just outside of Golden, Colorado. They were active members of the community through memberships in social groups and veteran associations. The Hatzis Hall in Pleasant View is named after the family for their contributions in founding the Pleasant View District and their donation of the land to be used as a community hall. Mike also established a restaurant just outside the Coors factory called the Columbine Café that remains in the family today, four generations later. Nellie Thomas Mogee and Daniel Mogee officially sold the lot to Mike Hatzis in 1955.

Upon the death of Mike Hatzis, local resident Steven Novotny purchased the property and proceeded to repair and install basic amenities in the cabin. He then sold the cabin in 1981 to Robert and Susan Kay who added a small addition to the rear of the cabin. The current owner Craig Mansfield purchased the property in 1982 and has maintained the cabin ever since.

Research on the history of the cabin and its owners is ongoing.

The available records on file at the Summit County Clerk & Recorder's Office are as follows:

- 08/29/1941: An agreement is recorded between Bill Thomas and Mr. & Mrs. Mike Hatzis for the property that would become Lot 153.
- 12/12/1955: Nellie Thomas Mogee and Daniel Mogee sell Lot 153 to Mike Hatzis.
- 11/01/1979: Steven Novotny purchases the property after the death of Mike Hatzis.
- 10/05/1981: Steven Novotny sells Lot 153 to Robert and Susan Kay.
- 1982: The property is sold to current owner, Craig Mansfield.

Working conclusion:

Bill Thomas rented or sold the cabin on Lot 153 to the Hatzis' in 1941. Prior to 1941, it is likely the cabin was used as a summer rental, temporary living quarters for newcomers, or as a home for a member of the Thomas' family. From 1941 to present, a series of Frisco residents has called the cabin home, each leaving their unique touch to the small log cabin. As the most recent owners still reside in the area, there is a visible connection between the cabin and the community.

Historic Significance:

The cabin demonstrates the Thomas family continued efforts to expand the summer cabin community established on the dairy ranch in 1930. This community drew people from all over the Front Range, many of whom fell in love with Frisco and became full time residents while others saw Summit County as their favorite seasonal destination or even an escape from city life. Only a few of the original Bill's Ranch summer cabins remain as their simplicity did not translate well into modern year-round homes. Like many other historic homes in Frisco, the cabin has gone through various changes as owners added their own touch. Those individual choices are seen in the design and construction in the 1930s to the addition added in the 1980s. Character defining features, like the unpeeled logs, were kept because the owners placed value on the pieces which best reflected its history.