



Hazel Virginia Hoyt
Outstanding Tulare Woman

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In honor of “Women’s National History Month”, I have decided to write about one of Tulare’s outstanding women, Hazel Virginia Hoyt, who was born on August 21, 1900, in her parents’ home in Grescham, Neb.

Her parents, George and Etta Hoyt, moved Hazel and their three sons, Harold, Donald and Robert; to Oregon, and then to Tulare, when Hazel was 15 years old. Her father had accepted a bookkeeping job with a local businessman, and the family made their home at 237 North L St.

Hazel finished her last two years of high school at Tulare High School, graduating in 1918. She was very outgoing and always had many friends, among who was Mabel Way who had been born in Tulare just four days before Hazel’s birth in Nebraska. The two young women became best friends and, living only about a block apart, and walked to school together.

Hazel spoke warmly of her family. Music was a mutual family interest, and she took piano lessons as a child. She enjoyed listening to all kinds of music, except rock and roll.

Although the family home was in town, it was on a large lot with room for a barn with one cow and many chickens. Money was scarce so the Hoyt’s grew their own vegetables and her mother made all of the family’s clothes.

During high school, Hazel taught herself to type, and her first job was a typing position with local attorneys Pat Nowell and Glenn Moran. In 1935, she went to work as assistant city clerk and auditor under C. A. Paulden.

Upon Mr. Paulden’s retirement in August 1945, Hazel became city clerk and auditor. She was the first woman to hold these or any other public offices in Tulare city government. Hazel was the city clerk for 35 years, retiring in 1965.

Beula Oldham, a co-worker, recalls that she and Hazel worked countless hours figuring out the city bookkeeping system. In the early years, when the city was small, there were no computers, calculators, or the high tech equipment we enjoy today. Everything was written long hand, a very tedious labor of love.

Beula says, "Hazel and I were very close friends. I have many fond memories of our time working together."

Hazel liked animals as a child, especially horses, and one of the joys of her adult life was owning and riding her own horse, which she kept at George Bell's Stable on the corner of Cherry Avenue and Cross Streets, now the location of the Tulare First Baptist Church.

After the death of Hazel's father in 1933, Hazel's mother, offered newly widowed George Bell a place to stay and he became a mainstay in the Hoyt family. Hoyt spent her teen years and adult life on North L Street, in her family's two-story house. After her parents' death, she continued to live in the family home until 1989. Hoyt never married.

The home was purchased by Don LeBaron in 1995 and named Hoyt House. He and Gloria McCaslin opened a restaurant there, which they named "Hazel's Kitchen" in her honor. Hazel was 95 at the time and was brought to the restaurant's opening.

She was "thrilled" to know that her old home and her name would become a permanent part of Tulare's history and would live on in this way in her beloved town of Tulare. Daniel Enriquez, a current board member of the Tulare City Historical Society Board of Trustees, now operates the business at Hazel's Kitchen.

Hazel Virginia Hoyt died of natural causes in a Tulare hospital in 1997.