

## **Tamar Stone**

*“A Very Safe Place”* (kids bed/kids POV doll bed) © 2008-09

### **Specs**

*Hand and machine sewed bed coverings. Machine embroidered text.*

**Vintage yellow tin doll bed:** 11” (W) x 19” (L) x 9” (H)

**Pillowcase** (*vintage cotton bed sheet with Alice in Wonderland pattern/images*): 6 1/2” (W) x 4” (L)

**Pillow** (*vintage cotton, dye sublimation image, stuffed with cotton batting*): 5 1/2” (W) x 3 1/2” (L)

**Quilt** (*Front side: vintage cotton feed sack with antique hand sewn child sampler,  
Back side: vintage cotton sack cloth, machine quilted*): 16” (W) x 21 1/2” (L)

**Blanket** (*pink cashmere wool with satin blanket trim*): 20” (W) x 23 1/2” (L)

**Top Sheet** (*vintage cotton bed sheet with Alice in Wonderland pattern/image*): 20” (W) x 24 1/4” (L)

**Bottom sheet** (*vintage cotton bed sheet with Alice in Wonderland pattern/image, vintage pink cotton flannel*):  
19 1/2” (W) x 24” (L)

**Mattress:** (*vintage stripped cotton flannel, stuffed with cotton batting, hand tied*):  
11 1/2” (W) x 19” (L) x 1 1/2” (H)

### **Bibliography**

*Autobiography*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 1935.

*Let Them Speak for Themselves – Women in the American West 1849-1900*, Christiane Fischer 1977

*Modern History Sourcebook: Emmeline Pankhurst: My Own Story*, 1914  
[www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1914pankhurst.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1914pankhurst.html)

*Mothers of the South; portraiture of the white tenant farm woman*, Margaret Jarman Hagood, 1907-1963  
(interviews down south c 1935- 36 for 16 months– Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, visited 254 homes)

*The Oven Birds: American Women on Womanhood, 1820-1920*, Gail Parker, 1972.

*Voices in the Night: Women Speaking About Incest*, edited by Toni McNaron and Yarrow Morgan, 1982

Also: artist’s personal correspondence with women

## **“A Very Safe Place”**

### **Pillowcase front**

*[embroidered text on patterned sheet]*

When I was around 6-7 years old,  
I kept having the same dream, over and over...

### **Pillowcase back**

I felt a bird pecking at my back.  
*Charla P., 2002*

### **Pillow front**

*[embroidered text over girl/doll image on plain cotton sheet]*

### **Pillow back**

*[embroidered text over faded girl/doll image on plain cotton sheet]*

## **A Very Safe Place**

Tamar Stone

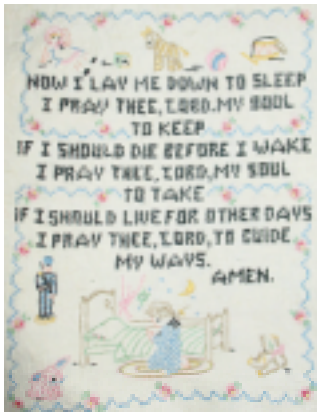
© 2008

### **Quilt top side**

*[flowered flour sack with child sampler sewn in middle]*

### **Quilt back side**

My mother would not let me caress her,  
and would not caress me, unless I was  
asleep. This I discovered at last, and then  
did my best to keep awake till she came  
to bed, even using pins to prevent dropping  
off, and sometimes succeeding.



Then how carefully I pretended to be  
sound asleep, and how rapturously I  
enjoyed being gathered into her arms,  
held close and kissed.

*Charlotte, G., c. 1930*

(Charlotte Perkins Gillman)

At night when I was safely put in  
my bed I heard through the open door,  
Mamma, at the parlor piano,  
singing to me:

“I want to be an angel,  
And with the angels stand,  
A crown upon my head,  
A harp within my hand.”

I suppose that neither she nor I were really  
in immediate haste for the fulfillment  
of that wish, but it made  
a good bed-time song...

My bed was a very safe place,  
for did not angels guard it,  
“two at the foot, and two at the head?”  
I knew who my angels were,  
my very own grandmother, who had died  
when my mother was a baby,  
the aunt for whom I had been named,  
little Cousin Mary who really should  
have been guarding her brother Harry,  
and a fourth whom I  
have now forgotten.

*Sarah S., c 1870*

(Sarah Bixby-Smith, c 1870's as told in 1925)

## **“A Very Safe Place”**

### **Blanket top side**

From the ages 10 –12,  
I had my own bedroom for the first time.  
The center of this wonderful new universe  
was an old fashioned bed my father  
got at one of his many forays  
to the secondhand store.  
I had a chenille bedspread that I adored.  
I would pick out the little tufts,  
much to my mother’s annoyance.  
I loved to cuddle up in that bed with  
my dolls and stuffed animals.  
I would fluff and mold the bedding  
into caves and “houses” for my playthings,  
creating little settings to act out my stories.  
I would spend many contented hours  
playing on that bed.  
I can recall the softness and peace I felt.  
It was all very comforting,  
this bed-space...all my own.

*Anon., c. 2000*

### **Blanket back side**

Until I was in my last year of high-school  
I was always a very awkward kid,  
so bedtime seemed to be my  
most peaceful time, for the moment,  
until I started thinking of the next day  
and became anxious all over again.  
So especially as a young kid,  
I would fantasize about escaping  
to another place through a  
secret tunnel below my bed.  
The place I would fantasize about  
escaping to would get more and more  
elaborate, and finally each night that  
would lull me into sleep,  
and sometimes into dreamland,  
extending the fantasy into a place  
I could get lost in...  
until waking up to reality.

*Julie W, 2003*

### **Top sheet top side**

One stormy winter night, three months before  
Mollie was twelve, she was put to bed early.  
Her father moved the trundle bed from the  
main room and all the children went to sleep  
in the kitchen — all but Mollie.  
She had a terrible feeling of impending disaster  
to her mother and herself, when she had  
asked her mother about babies not long before,  
her mother had told her she was going to have  
another and that something would happen to  
Mollie soon, too.  
From the front room Mollie heard groans and knew  
her mother was suffering. Her own body began  
to ache. Her mother’s sounds grew louder. Each time  
an anguished scream reached Mollie’s ears,  
a shooting pain went through her.  
Hardly daring, Mollie reached down under  
the cover and felt that her legs were wet...  
she drew back the cover and in the moonlight  
saw black stains which had come from her body.  
Suddenly she thought she was having a baby.  
She tried to scream like her mother, but the terror  
of the realization paralyzed her. Fright overwhelmed  
her until she was no longer conscious of pain...

### **Top sheet back side**

She remained motionless for a long time,  
knowing and feeling nothing but a horrible  
fear of disgrace and dread. Then she became  
aware that the moaning in the next room  
had stopped and that someone had  
unlatched the kitchen door. Trembling, she eased  
out of bed and crept into her mother’s room.  
There was a new baby lying on one side,  
but she slipped into the other side of the bed  
and nestled against her mother.  
The relaxing warmth and comfort of another’s body  
released the inner tensions and  
Mollie melted into tears and weak, low sobs.  
Her mother stroked her but said nothing.  
Early in the morning she hid the soiled  
bedclothes in a corner until she could wash them  
secretly in the creek and found some cloths  
in her mother’s drawer which she asked for  
without giving any reason.  
Not for two years, when a girlfriend told her,  
did she have any instruction about  
how to fix and wear sanitary pads.

*Mollie, 1910*

(Mollie’s story, 3 months before she was 12 years old, 1910)

**"A Very Safe Place"**

**Bottom sheet top side**

Later, after my folks had gone to bed, I'd  
lay there alone and listen to my mother  
crying and my father yelling at her to  
shut up so he could get some sleep. She'd  
keep crying and always sooner or later come  
into my room and lay down in my bed  
with her back to me.  
She'd say nothing but continue crying.  
I'd put my arm around her and comfort  
her and then start to caress her arms and  
breasts and stomach.  
She'd stop crying and I couldn't tell  
if she was asleep or not.  
I don't believe she was.  
As I got older I remember being sexually excited  
and then I'd push myself against her.  
Later I'd turn over and want to  
disappear into the wall.  
I still can feel its rough, bumpy coldness.  
I wanted her to respond,  
I wanted to be held too.

**Bottom sheet flannel back side**

I felt like I was going to die.  
I wanted to die.  
I felt lonely beyond imagination.  
I'd masturbate in my despair.  
To feel good.  
In order to feel something. Anything.  
I'm sure she was still awake.  
Neither of us spoke a word.  
She never touched me in response.  
I wanted to make love to her.  
I wanted her to be affectionate.  
It ended one night when I was fourteen.  
I shoved a wooden wedge under the door  
to my bedroom. She came crying to  
my door. It wouldn't open.  
She slept on the couch.  
She never slept with me again.  
She never said a word.

*T.*

(no date, story told in 1980's)

**Mattress top side**

The answer to these puzzling  
questions came to unexpectedly  
one night when I lay in my  
little bed waiting for sleep to  
overtake me.  
It was a custom of  
my father and mother to make the  
round of our bedrooms every night  
before going themselves to bed.  
When they entered my room that  
night I was still awake,  
but for some reason  
I chose to feign slumber.  
My father bent over me,  
shielding the candle flame  
with his big hand.  
I cannot know exactly what  
thought was in his mind as  
he gazed down at me,  
but I heard him say,  
somewhat sadly,  
"What a pity she  
wasn't born a lad."

**Mattress back side**

My first impulse was to  
sit up in bed and protest  
that I didn't want to be a boy,  
but I lay still  
and  
heard my parents' footsteps pass on  
toward the next child's bed.  
I thought about my father's remark  
for many days afterwards,  
but I think I never decided  
that I regretted my sex.  
However, it was made quite clear  
that men considered themselves  
superior to women,  
and that women apparently  
acquiesced in that belief.

*Emmeline P., c. 1914*

(Emmeline Pankhurst)