

Colonel Thomas Baker and Founding of Bakersfield

(By NAOMI E. BAIN)

The Bakers had been foresighted enough to bring with them a roll of four-foot matting which they tacked around the walls of the structure after all other repairing and cleaning was finished. This done and a brush shed built to serve as a kitchen and dining room, the furniture and baggage was moved in. The most comfortable and best furnished shack in the community, then, became home to the Bakers until a more substantial one could be built. As long as the provisions they had brought with them held out, they had a variety of food to go with the abundance of wild game. Antelope, deer, and elk ran in great bands over the plains; and there were quail, doves, wild geese and ducks in great flocks. About a week after they had come to the new home, Captain Stephens, an early pathfinder who had come to Sutter's Fort nearly a decade before, came to Baker's new home. In Stephan's two-horse wagon, he had brought the family two hogs, six hens and a rooster. "I have brought you a start in life," he said; and the Baker family never forgot this man for his neighborly deed.

When the family finally became settled in its new home, Mrs. Baker perceived that the few other women of the community looked upon her as a prospective social snob; so she immediately set about remedying this feeling by finding some grounds upon which to become acquainted with them. Finally she discovered that most of the women were beginning to make the winter "flannels" by hand as usual. She was the only woman in the community with a sewing machine which, she figured, would be quite handy in sewing the extra long seams necessary for the effectiveness of the scarlet undies and other garments which were especially difficult to sew by hand because of the extra thickness of the heavy cloth used. She invited the ladies to bring their sewing and a potluck luncheon and come to her home each week to sew. This plan succeeded, and it was not long before the plucky girl was one of the most popular and respected matrons of the community.

Before she had been in her new

home three months, she had seen the necessity of a school that her own children and her neighbors' might have the opportunities of an education. She opened this school in her own home, and took part of her time each day to teach the children of the community their three Rs for no compensation save that which was hers through the success of the progress of her pupils. In the absence of books she cut letters from paper and resorted to other ingenious and laborious devices in order that her community might have educated young people. After two years a regular teacher was hired on salary.

By her marriage to Colonel Baker, Mrs. Baker had three children, Ellen, called Nellie (Mrs. C. C. Cowgill), Thomas Alverson, and Charlotte Esther (Mrs. J. M. Jameson).

At the time of the death of Colonel Baker on November 24, 1872, he asked his friend, Ferdinand August Tracy, another leading pioneer of Kern county, to look after Mrs. Baker and to take good care of her and her family. He performed this duty faithfully by assisting Mrs. Baker in her business affairs. About two years after the colonel's death, the Widow Baker became Mrs. Tracy, and the two lived happily together until Mr. Tracy died on January 10, 1908.

Mrs. Tracy then went to live with her daughter, Mrs. Charlotte E. Jameson, until the death of the former on September 6, 1924.

Although her sight failed her in her later years, she kept an active interest in the affairs of the city and the world about her. One of her latest and most outstanding gifts to the youth of the city was her donation of 16 lots to the Kern County Children's Shelter at 920 Nineteenth street in the city of Bakersfield. This gift she dedicated to the memory of her late husband and her daughter, Nellie Cowgill.

Mrs. Tracy spent much of her time knitting, making exquisite thread delicacies which all her friends and relatives prized. She was kind and gracious to all and showed a warm-hearted interest in all with whom she came in contact.

(Continued Tomorrow)