

Colonel Thomas Baker and Founding of Bakersfield

(By NAOMI E. BAIN)

He states that in regard to her mining resources, Kern county has territorially the largest gold fields and twice as many recorded claims as any other county in the state. Vast expectations were expressed for the development of these mines.

In this first issue was also published a report on the proceedings of the first meeting of the Board of Supervisors on Wednesday, August 1, 1866. The board was organized, Supervisor H. Hammel was elected chairman of the board, the county was townshipped and a state tax of \$2.61 was levied on every \$100 worth of property.

The next and first regular meeting of the board took place on the following Monday, August 6, when Supervisor S. A. Bishop appeared and took his seat.

Perhaps it was at a later date that a special meeting was held at which the clerk was instructed to advertise for proposals to build a county jail. Four bidders submitted estimates, but the contract was awarded to Thomas B. Stuart for the sum of \$1600. The jail was to be completed in 60 days. It was to be built of 1-foot square timber, 20x16 feet and to contain three cells. The partitions of these cells were to be 6 inches thick, the doors of ½-inch iron grating. Atop the jail was to be built an office for the sheriff. This building was to be erected on a two-acre lot purchased at the same meeting of the board at which the contract was awarded.

But despite the need for a county jail, the newspaper account states that "the most important" business transacted at this meeting was the entering into a contract with Thomas Baker and his associates to make or construct irrigating ditches on lower Kern river, "by which thousands of acres of land now entirely valueless, belonging to the state and county, will be made valuable and productive and be a source of revenue to the county." In full payment for this work Baker and his associates were to receive "a portion of said funds."

In the same article the editor of the paper appealed to the taxpayers

that the minutes of each meeting of the board be published in that newspaper and paid for out of the county funds as was done in other counties.

Henceforth Colonel Baker became a prominent figure in the county for his plan which would "make waste places to bloom and blossom with grass and grain, and cheerful homes." His name began to appear frequently in news items in the Personal Column of the local paper as his plan progressed; his visits to various parts of the county were always recorded in the weekly paper.

Meanwhile these new residents who came were from a widely varied group. In Havilah a minister with "broad views" was finally secured and the September 22 issue of the "Havilah Weekly Courier" records the following:

"Divine Services: We listened to a very interesting discourse at the courtroom of Justice Colby, on Sabbath last, delivered by Reverend Mr. Mills, of this place. Mr. Mills is very liberal in his views and opinions, believing that all mortals should enjoy themselves, while living, in an intelligent and rational manner. His ideas in reference to the fall of man, by partaking of the forbidden fruit were not those usually put forth by theologians. His opinion was that if our parents fell, they fell upwards, by having their eyes opened "knowing good from evil."

"The idea suggested itself to our minds that it would be a good investment to procure some of these apples, if possible, and induce our Republican friends to eat them, that they may become as one of us 'knowing good from evil.' There will be divine service at the same place every Sabbath, at the usual hour. The society appears to be in a flourishing condition under the efficient guidance of those bright and shining lights on the Hill of Zion—Brothers Colby, Freeman and Bigler."

On October 11, the county jail was completed, and two days later there was one occupant in the sheriff's new hotel.

(Continued Tomorrow)