

## Bakersville Becomes Mitchell County Seat

The first settler on the site of what is now Bakersville was David Baker. Baker, living in Morganton in 1790, most likely was employed by Waightstill Avery and possibly William Sharpe to move across the Blue Ridge and look after the lands which they had entered. Both Avery and Sharpe had secured grants from the State for hundreds of acres of land lying at the "forks of Cane Creek, and between the Blue Ridge and the Iron Mountain.

By 1797, however, Baker struck out for himself. He acquired a State's grant for 100 acres of land, which boundary adjoined the Sharpe tract, and included the lands on which the business section of Bakersville now stands.

Since 1868, Bakersville has been the seat of government for Mitchell County. Important as a trading center and village at the outset, during the Civil War and afterward it became the center of politics in Mitchell County and it remains so to this day. The movement for the establishment of a new County in 1861 originated in Bakersville, as did the movement to establish the town as the county seat.

Bakersville was incorporated in 1870 and secured a post

office in 1874. In the 1880's citizens of the town led in the movement to induce the Chicago, Cincinnati and Charleston Railroad to come through the county by way of Bakersville. Bonds in the amount of \$100,000 were voted for stock subscriptions in the company. The railroad did not materialize, but in the early 1900's, another campaign was waged to induce the Southwestern Railroad, later the Clinchfield, to build by the town. Failing in this, they endeavored to have roads built.

Finally, in the early 1920's good roads came, largely through the leadership of John C. McBee, a political leader and resident of Bakersville.

Bakersville is now easily accessible over good roads from all points of the compass.



Courthouse In Bakersville, County Seat Of Historic Mitchell County

## Early Pioneers Found Mountain Living Hard

Living in the Bakersville area was tough for the early settlers, especially so when it was shut off from markets of the southeast during and after the Civil War.

However, in the 1870's the uses for mica were discovered, and Bakersville lay midway be-

tween the Hawk, Clarissa and Stagger Weed deposits and the Sink Hole deposits at Bandana. So for quite a long while, extending beyond 1900, business in this small Appalachian town varied with the prices mica would bring. When the price was good there were many jobs, good business, prosperity. If

the price for mica fell, the reverse was true. Fortunes were made and lost during these years.

Then a natural disaster occurred. Nearly half of the town's dwellings and business establishments were swept away in 1901 when a flood known thereafter as the "May

Flood" ravaged the area. Bakersville's population after that time decreased and the outlook was bad.

The Clinchfield Railroad, then, extended its line from Hunt Dale across the Blue Ridge, and jobs became plentiful again. Bakersville had survived.

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