

Amy Baker

Amy Baker was the youngest girl in the Hansen family. She may have been the last child to be born at Hohi, in 1832, and was baptised by Rev Yate on 14th October, 1832. Her father was described in the baptismal register as a carpenter from Rangihoua.

Amy was born in the same year as the CMS mission station transferred along the coast to Te Puna. Amy would have spent her childhood at the Te Koutu property that her father had purchased alongside the mission station. Like her brothers and sisters, Amy was not allowed to attend the mission school, and grew up illiterate.

Amy married William Baker on 9th August 1852. Amy was 20 when she married the 40 year old William who had come to New Zealand as a ship's cooper.

The Baker's first two children were most likely born at Te Puna, with the first child, John, dying soon after birth. There is a John Grey Baker, aged 3 months, who was buried at Hohi on 5th November 1855. A second son, Phillip, was born on 16th December 1856. Possible evidence supporting the Bakers living at Te Puna came from the 1857 application made by Amy's father, Thomas Hansen, to the Land Claims Commission. In the claim, Thomas stated that he had 25 children and grandchildren living with him at Te Puna.

The Bakers moved across to Russell where they lived for the rest of their lives. This was where their other 6 children were born. The house that the Bakers lived in was known as Te Wharema. Surprisingly, this house still stands on Church Street. Te Wharema was thought to have been built in about 1860. It had first been built for a mining enterprise before being dismantled and shipped in parts to Russell where it was re-erected on its present site.

The Bakers' garden at the rear of their house (Te Wharema) in Church Street was said to hold many unusual plants from all around the world which thrived in the sub-tropical climate of the Bay of Islands. Their front verandah was glassed in at one end and held many pot plants.

Amy Baker used to provide meals for the sailors who came to the Bay. She was kept so busy that to keep up with her chores she worked with the youngest child strapped to her back with a shawl as did the Māori women in those days. Amy made by hand all her clothes and those of her children. Some of the clothing was later given to Kemp House in Kerikeri. Amy had marvellous eyesight and used to do all the mending and darning for her extended family.

Amy was 42 years old when she nursed her father through his final illness at Te Wharema, before he died on 8th March 1874.

William Baker died on 5th March 1904, aged 93. Amy continued to live at Te Wharema, where she was joined by her daughter Ann and her husband George Bullen. Ann continued to look after her mother for 16 years until Amy died on 9th September 1920, just two years short of her 90th birthday. She was buried alongside William in the Russell cemetery just in front of her brother Thomas, and sister Hannah.

Amy was the last of Thomas and Elizabeth Hansen's children to die, almost 106 years after the *Active* had brought the first settlers, including her father, to New Zealand.

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