

MAR. 5, 1964

**Mrs. Vista Baker  
Was Poweshiek  
County Pioneer**

(JOHN)

Mrs. Vista Baker, the daughter of James Fudge and Ann Highland Fudge, was born Apr. 2, 1868, in Madison county, and died Feb. 28, at her home in Searsboro, at the age of 95.

Her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. William Highland, were the first white settlers of Jasper county. When she was two years old, her parents moved to a farm south of Searsboro. With her brothers, John and Tom, and sister Lulu, she attended Hickory Grove school, walking 1 3/4 miles each way in all kinds of weather, while taking care of the farm chores both morning and evening. Each Saturday, the Montezuma Republican arrived at the house and the entire family gathered around while the father read it aloud from beginning to end.

When she completed the country school she attended Normal School for two summers to receive her teacher's certificate. She taught six years in rural schools, riding a horse sidesaddle to her school. She received \$25 per month and from that managed to save enough to attend the Academy at Grinnell College, and became a junior there.

The chief form of entertainment was "Literaries", "Spelling Bees", and "Singing Schools." John Baker was the champion speller from his district, and he and Vista often met at these occasions.

They were married at the Fudge home Mar. 1, 1893, and established their home in the south part of Searsboro. They acquired a grain, lumber, and coal business, as well as a grocery and dry goods store, where Vista was the milliner and hat maker. In 1907 they built the house which was their home through the years.

She was a lifelong member of the Methodist church and was active in the community, as well as helping operate their business during her husband's illness. With Mrs. Beall, Mrs. Darland, Mrs. Johnson, she formed what they called "The Big Four". This group sponsored a Lyceum series, bringing in much talent to perform in Searsboro. She was a perennial Sunday school teacher and often superintendent. She became active in the county W.C.T.U., was a newspaper correspondent for many years, and was active as a Republican committee woman. She was a charter member of the Mother's Club and Searsboro Garden Club.

She often recalled the building of the railroad through Searsboro and of watching in open-mouthed wonder at the age of four as the first "big black monster" came thundering around the corner near their farm with whistle blowing, flags waving, and smoke billowing. During her lifetime she saw the development of most of the inventions of our modern civilization. She saw the beginning of the telephone, the automobile, electric lights, the airplane, radio, television, and even the space vehicles.

Three children were born into the Baker home: Clifford Baker, of Searsboro; Veta Richards of Ottumwa; Adelaide Sneed of Whittier, Calif. There are six grandchildren: Donna McMullin of Newton, Ronald Baker of Searsboro, Dr. John Richards of Seattle, Beverly Weeber of Salem, Oregon, Mrs. Carol Hinds of Pasadena, California, and Barbara Sneed of Whittier, Calif.

Services were held at the Methodist Church in New Sharon, Monday afternoon, Mar. 2, with burial in the New Sharon cemetery.