



**Dolly Bryant Bates Hyde
(1826 -1908)**

Born in 1826, Dolly Bryant Bates Hyde was the daughter of Peleg and Dorothy Bradford Bryant. Hyde was best known for writing the monograph *Four Years on the Pacific Coast*, a reflection of her exciting experiences with her husband at sea. Hyde, a smallish woman, known for her sense of humor and wit, grew up and lived at home on Grove Street for her first eighteen years, when she met and married William Bates in 1844.

About 1850, with her husband in command of the *Nonantum*, the couple sailed from Baltimore with a load of coal for California. According to reports, the journey had a very favorable

start and provided much pleasure for its passenger and crew. However when the ship was in the South Atlantic and 600 miles from land, it was discovered to be on fire! For twelve days they sailed, doing everything they could do to stop the fire and save themselves. At the end of the twelve days, they spotted land – the Falkland Islands. There they put ashore to repair the ship and as a result experienced the various cultures the islands offered until they set sail again a considerable time later. As the ship set out for the passage around Cape Horn, South America, and into the Pacific another fire erupted that delayed their voyage. Eventually the ship set sail and though fires continued to plague them, the ship eventually reached San Francisco, just in time to bear witness to the great fire of 1851. Bates spent four years in San Francisco before moving to Marysville, California. It was in Marysville where she tried ‘real living’: running a hotel in a canvas shack. She lived in California during the years when the West was still very new, and her experiences there were varied and interesting. After being the victim of another fire, she left California and returned to Kingston via the Isthmus of Panama, which she crossed by riding astride a mule.

Dolly Bates was not long for her hometown, as the travel bug had gained a hold on her. Soon off for New York, Bates met James F. Hyde, rumored to be a saloon cook (Bates never mentioned what happened to her first husband William Bates.) After a time she and Hyde returned to Kingston, to live at what is now known as the Kitty Russell House (at the Point) only to discover that neither had the money the other had expected. Not only was money lacking, but also food was short according to her niece. James Hyde died in 1888 and Dolly in 1908 at the age of 82. Her legacy included not only her monograph *Four Years on the Pacific Coast*, but her recognition as an expert dressmaker for many Kingston and Plymouth women.