

The Visit to Bridgeport and French Corral by the Bates Party in 1851

In July, 1850, Mrs. Dorothy (Dolly) Barton Bates and her husband, Capt. William Henry Bates, left Baltimore via a cargo ship, under Bates' command, bound for San Francisco. They arrived April, 1851 after a harrowing voyage around Cape Horn. Mrs. Bates kept a diary which was self-published in 1857 as *Incidents on Land and Water: Four Years on the Pacific Coast*. They took a steamer from San Francisco toward Marysville in mid-June 1851, visited Sutter's Ranch and proceeded up the Feather River to Marysville. Later that year, the couple took a trip in a one-horse cart to French Corral, passing Bridgeport on the way. Following is Mrs. Bates' account of their trip to Bridgeport and French Corral.

"Finally we came to a little mountain town called Bridgeport. It consisted of three little shanties and a toll-bridge, which spanned the Yuba River. The setting sun was just gilding the tops of the surrounding mountains, as we halted in front of one of the dwellings to inquire the distance to French Corral. They informed us it was about five miles. They told us there was a pretty high mountain just beyond, and advised us to discontinue our journey for that night. They seemed so particularly solicitous for us to remain all night, their shanty was so filthy dirty, and they themselves were such savage, hirsute-looking objects, that I entreated my husband to go on. I thought, out of two evils, we were choosing the least by proceeding. I came to a different conclusion, however, before we reached our destination. My husband paid one dollar and a half toll, and we crossed a high bridge, under which rolled the Yuba. At this place, it was a rapidly rushing stream. It went foaming and dashing over innumerable rocks which intercepted its progress, overleaping every barrier, acknowledging no superior power. Unceasingly it rolled on its course, its waters mingling with those of her sister rivers, and *all* tending to one point, viz., the broad Pacific. Directly after crossing the Yuba, we commenced the toilsome ascent of the highest mountain we had yet encountered. At the commencement of the ascent, my husband alighted to walk up the mountain, and I was to drive up. The poor horse started with all the energy he possessed, in the hope, I suppose, of speedily gaining the top. I quickly lost sight of my husband, who was trudging on in the vain hope of overtaking me. Soon I began to perceive evident signs of exhaustion in the horse. I tried to stop him, but could not. The buggy drew back so, that, if he attempted to stop, it drew him back too. And oh, what an awful road it was! Deep gullies worn by streams of water, which had flowed down when the snow had melted, deep enough to hide myself in! I tried several times to get the carriage crosswise the road, but could not, on account of those gullies and huge rocks."

On the return trip "When we reached Bridgeport, we were accosted by the toll-gatherer with "Well, I reckon as how you had a, right smart heap of trouble that night, afore you reached the top of the mountain. I allowed you would be for turning back; but I have always heard say, 'them Yankee women never would give up beat.'" (Mrs. Bates and her husband returned to the east by ship in 1855.)

Biographical Sketch

William Henry Bates (son of Thomas and Olive Bates) was born 10 Sep 1820 in Kingston, Plymouth County, MA. Dorothy (Dolly) Bradford Bryant (daughter of Peleg and Dorothy (Dolly) Bryant) was born 5 Nov 1826 in Kingston. They married in Kingston 12 Sep 1844. William became a ship captain, and the couple sailed 27 Jul 1850 from Baltimore on the steamer *Nonantum* bound with a cargo of coal for San Francisco. Capt. Bates was the ship's master. The *Nonantum* cargo caught fire, and the ship was abandoned near the Falkland Islands. The couple then boarded the *Humayoon*, which burned off Cape Horn, were picked up by the *Symmetry* and transferred to their next ship, the *Fandon*, which was lost due to another coal cargo fire off Peru. They then boarded the Bark *Carbago* for voyage to Panama, and the Steamer *Republic* which arrived in San Francisco 19 April 1851. The trip consumed almost nine months. The couple visited several parts of California including Bridgeport & French Corral in 1851. The Bateses operated a hotel in Marysville before they returned to the Boston area in 1855.

During the voyage west and for the next years in California, Dolly kept a journal of events and commentary which she published as *Incidents on Land and Water* under the name D.B. Bates in 1857.

In 1860, the US Census shows Dolly Bates as 'Authoress' and living with her parents and siblings in Kingston. According to her niece, Dolly never mentioned what happened to her first husband, William. About 1862 she married James Forbes Hyde in Washington, DC, they lived with her parents for a while and then moved to Plymouth by 1870. James died in 1888. She died 13 Feb 1908 in Kingston at age 82 and is buried in the Kingston Evergreen Cemetery. William served as a seaman and quartermaster during the Civil War in the US Navy and was living in 1900 at the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, Togus (Augusta), ME. He had listed his sister, Amanda Waterman of Kingston, as his next of kin.



Dolly B. Bates (1826-1908)