



PHOTOGRAPHER: BRYAN R. JOHNSON (b. 1834)
SITTER: CYNTHIA ADELINE ROBERTS PARKER
(1821-1867)
DATE: 1863 - 1867
FORMAT: enlarged reprint of original carte de visite
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This portrait by Bryan R. Johnson depicts the pioneer woman, Cynthia Adeline Roberts Parker. She was born in Vermont in 1821, married Freeman Parker in 1847 and journeyed to Petaluma with him and their first son, Pitman, in 1853. This portrait was taken approximately ten years later when Mrs. Parker would have been between 42 and 46 years old. She sits demurely with her hands folded gracefully in her lap, but she gazes directly and intently at the viewer. Her beautiful, brocaded, wide-hooped dress drapes luxuriously around her, and a flower-edged daycap crowns her head.

Unfortunately, there is little information available about Cynthia Parker, but we do know she and her husband raised exceptional children on their Petaluma ranch near Haystack Landing. Sometime between 1877 and 1880, the family had their individual photos taken by Petaluman photographer, Lewis Dowe, and printed together on a carte de visite with the title, "The Household." The members of the Parker household were educated and progressive. The family owned a printing press and established a family newspaper to which all the members of the family contributed. Pitman Parker became a superintendent of schools in Nevada and a proprietor of the *Astoria* in Oregon. Gelo left to posterity a meticulously organized and beautifully scripted seven volume journal detailing his life in Petaluma, and Alma Parker was sufficiently assertive to dress in the relatively loose tunic and narrow trousers which were preferred by the liberated woman of her day.

