



**ARTIST:** unidentified

**SITTER:** **DORCAS HALEY CLARK** (1815-1902)

**DATE:** 1867

**PASTEL ON CANVAS**

**PETALUMA HISTORICAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM**

This pastel portrait of the Petaluma educator, Dorcas Haley Clark, was painted in 1867, very probably when she was living in Petaluma and teaching as the head preceptress of Petaluma's Baptist College. Mrs. Clark died in 1902, and her obituary published in the *Petaluma Argus-Courier* on October 13th summarized her life's work:

**Pioneer Local Teacher, Mrs. Dorcas Clark Dies at San Francisco**

Mrs. Dorcas Clark, one of the most noted educators of California, passed away in San Francisco on Tuesday last at the advanced age of 87 years. More than half a century ago she took the Lord Elgin medal in Toronto for chemistry, mathematics and agriculture, a noted achievement when educational opportunities for women were limited. Mrs. Clark was appointed first head mistress of the girls' department of the Provincial Model school, Toronto, which position she resigned to come to California in 1865. Her first appointment in California was that of associate principal of the Baptist College, Petaluma.

The news of the death of the pioneer will be received with regret in this city by the older settlers who remember her well.

Let it be noted that Dorcas' work as a professional educator was not without its challenges. The *Petaluma Evening Argus* flippantly mentioned on May 29, 1873, the cronyism to which Dorcas was victim: "Mrs. Dorcas Clark, who was assistant teacher in the Normal School for five years, was summarily removed at the last meeting of the Board of Trustees. Probable cause: Some of the Board had a "friend" who wanted the place. Patronage is a big thing."

Dorcas' daughter, Helen Clark Boyle, was also an educator and actually preceded her mother to California, traveling around Cape Horn at age 22 to teach in San Francisco. Dorcas and Helen are depicted in the two carte de visite portraits illustrated here. They were the gift of Dorcas' great-great granddaughter to the Petaluma Historical Library & Museum. The photographers are unidentified.

