

1: Margaret Reed | History of American Women

The Donner Party soon reached the junction with the California Trail, about seven miles west of present-day Elko, Nevada and spent the next two weeks traveling along the Humboldt River. As the disillusionment of the party increased, tempers began to flare in the group.

Eliza and her older sisters were rescued by relief parties that made their way to the stranded travellers at Donner Lake, but their parents perished, and the girls were left to make their way alone in the West. The expedition of the Donner party and its tragic fate begins with Mrs. Reed. She continues with her life as an orphan, first at Fort Sutter, and then with a family in Sonoma and with her older half-sister in Sacramento. About that time, however, the spirit of inquiry was awakening. The powerful voice of Senator Thomas H. Benton was heard, both in public address and in the halls of Congress, calling attention to Oregon and California. The commercial world was not slow to appreciate the value of those distant and hitherto unfrequented harbors. Tales of the equable climate and the marvellous fertility of the soil spread rapidly, and it followed that before the close of 1845, pioneers on the western frontier of our ever expanding republic were preparing to open a wagon route to the Pacific coast. After careful investigation and consideration, my father, George Donner, and his elder brother, Jacob, decided to join the westward migration, selecting California as their destination. At this time he was sixty-two years of age, large, fine-looking, and in perfect health. He was of German parentage, born of Revolutionary stock just after the close of the war. There he built a home, acquired wealth, and took an active part in the development of the country round about. Twice had he been married, and twice bereft by death when he met my mother, Tamsen Eustis Dozier, then a widow, whom he married May 24, 1828. She was a native of Newburyport, Massachusetts. She was cultured, and had been a successful teacher and writer. Their home became the local literary center after she was installed as its mistress. My father had two sons and eight daughters when she became his wife; but their immediate family circle consisted only of his aged parents, and Elitha and Leanna, young daughters of his second marriage, until July 8, 1829, when blue-eyed Frances Eustis was born to them. On the fourth of December, 1829, brown-eyed Georgia Ann was added to the number; and on the eighth of March, 1830, I came into this world. I grew to be a healthy, self-reliant child, a staff to my sister Georgia, who, on account of a painful accident and long illness during her first year, did not learn to walk steadily until after I was strong enough to help her to rise, and lead her to a sand pile near the orchard, where we played away the bright days of two uneventful years. With the approaching Winter of popular interest in the great territory to the west of us spread to our community. Maps and reports were eagerly studied. The few old letters which had been received from traders and trappers along the Pacific coast were brought forth for general perusal. The course of the reading society which met weekly at our home was changed, in order that my mother might read to those assembled the publications which had kindled in my father and uncle the desire to migrate to the land so alluringly described. The Springfield Journal, published by Mr. Reed, a well-known resident of Springfield, was among those who urged the formation of a company to go directly from Sangamon County to California. Intense interest was manifested; and had it not been for the widespread financial depression of that year, a large number would have gone from that vicinity. The great cost of equipment, however, kept back many who desired to make the long journey. As it was, James F. Reed, his wife and four children, and Mrs. Keyes, the mother of Mrs. Reed; Jacob Donner, his wife, and seven children; and George Donner, his wife, and five children; also their teamsters and camp assistants, --thirty-two persons all told, --constituted the first emigrant party from Illinois to California. The preparations made for the journey by my parents were practical. Strong, commodious emigrant wagons were constructed especially for the purpose. The oxen to draw them were hardy, well trained, and rapid walkers. Three extra yoke were provided for emergencies. Cows were selected to furnish milk on the way. A few young beef cattle, five saddle-horses, and a good watch-dog completed the list of live stock. After carefully calculating the requisite amount of provisions, father stored in his wagons a quantity that was deemed more than sufficient to last until we should reach California. Seed and implements for use on the prospective farms in the new country also constituted an important part of our outfit. Nor was that all. There were bolts of cheap cotton prints, red and yellow flannels,

bright-bordered handkerchiefs, glass beads, necklaces, chains, brass finger rings, earrings, pocket looking-glasses and divers other knickknacks dear to the hearts of aborigines. These were intended for distribution as peace offerings among the Indians. Lastly, there were rich stores of laces, muslins, silks, satins, velvets and like cherished fabrics, destined to be used in exchange for Mexican land-grants in that far land to which we were bound. My mother was energetic in all these preparations, but her special province was to make and otherwise get in readiness a bountiful supply of clothing. A liberal sum of money for meeting incidental expenses and replenishing supplies on the journey, if need be, was stored in the compartments of two wide buckskin girdles, to be worn in concealment about the person. An additional sum of ten thousand dollars, cash, was stitched between the folds of a quilt for safe transportation. This was a large amount for those days, and few knew that my parents were carrying it with them. I gained my information concerning it in later years from Mr. Francis, to whom they showed it. To each of his grown children my father deeded a fair share of his landed estate, reserving one hundred and ten acres near the homestead for us five younger children, who in course of time might choose to return to our native State. As time went on, our preparations were frequently interrupted by social obligations, farewell visits, dinners, and other merrymakings with friends and kindred far and near. Thursday, April 15, , was the day fixed for our departure, and the members of our household were at work before the rosy dawn. We children were dressed early in our new linsey travelling suits; and as the final packing progressed, we often peeped out of the window at the three big white covered wagons that stood in our yard. In the first were stored the merchandise and articles not to be handled until they should reach their destination; in the second, provisions, clothing, camp tools, and other necessaries of camp life. The third was our family home on wheels, with feed boxes attached to the back of the wagon-bed for Fanny and Margaret, the favorite saddle-horses, which were to be kept ever close at hand for emergencies. Early in the day, the first two wagons started, each drawn by three yoke of powerful oxen, whose great moist eyes looked as though they too had parting tears to shed. The loose cattle quickly followed, but it was well on toward noon before the family wagon was ready. Then came a pause fraught with anguish to the dear ones gathered about the homestead to say farewell. I sat beside my mother with my hand clasped in hers, as we slowly moved away from that quaint old house on its grassy knoll, from the orchard, the corn land, and the meadow; as we passed through the last pair of bars, her clasp tightened, and I, glancing up, saw tears in her eyes and sorrow in her face. I was grieved at her pain, and in sympathy nestled closer to her side and sat so quiet that I soon fell asleep. When I awoke, the sun still shone, but we had encamped for the night on the ground where the State House of Illinois now stands. Reed and family, and my uncle Jacob and family, with their travelling equipments and cattle, were already settled there. By nightfall, the duties of the day were ended, and the members of our party gathered around one fire to spend a social hour. Presently, the clatter of galloping horses was heard, and shortly thereafter eight horsemen alighted, and with merry greetings joined our circle. They were part of the reading society, and had come to hold its last reunion beside our first camp-fire. They piled more wood on the blazing fire, making it a beacon light to those who were watching from afar; they sang songs, told tales, and for the time being drove homesickness from our hearts. Then they rode away in the moonlight, and our past was a sweet memory, our future a beautiful dream. William Donner, my half-brother, came to camp early next morning to help us to get the cattle started, and to accompany us as far as the outskirts of civilization. We reached Independence, Missouri, on the eleventh of May, with our wagons and cattle in prime condition, and our people in the best of spirits. Our party encamped near that bustling frontier town, and were soon a part of the busy crowds, making ready for the great prairie on the morrow. Teams thronged the highways; troops of men, women, and children hurried nervously about seeking information and replenishing supplies. Brawny blacksmiths, with breasts bared and sleeves rolled high, hammered and twisted red hot metal into the divers forms necessary to repair yokes and wagons. Good fellowship prevailed as strangers met, each anxious to learn something of those who might by chance become his neighbors in line. Among the pleasant acquaintances made that day, was Mr. Thornton, a young attorney from Quincy, Illinois, who, with his invalid wife, was emigrating to Oregon. It was then believed that at least seven thousand emigrant wagons would go West, through Independence, that season. Obviously the journey should be made while pasturage and water continued plentiful along the route. Our little party at once

determined to overtake Colonel Russell and apply for admission to his train, and for that purpose we resumed travel early on the morning of May twelfth. As we drove up Main Street, delayed emigrants waved us a light-hearted good-bye, and as we approached the building of the American Tract Society, its agent came to our wagons and put into the hand of each child a New Testament, and gave to each adult a Bible, and also tracts to distribute among the heathen in the benighted land to which we were going. Near the outskirts of town we parted from William Donner, took a last look at Independence, turned our backs to the morning sun, and became pioneers indeed to the Far West. DURING our first few days in the Territory of Kansas we passed over good roads, and through fields of May blossoms musical with the hum of bees and the songs of birds. Some of the party rode horseback; others walked in advance of the train; but each father drove his own family team. We could hear them from afar, for the great wagons were drawn by four or five span of travel-worn horses or mules, and above the hames of each poor beast was an arch hung with from three to five clear-toned bells, that jingled merrily as their carriers moved along, guided by a happy-go-lucky driver, usually singing or whistling a gleeful tune. Both man and beast looked longingly toward the town, which promised companionship and revelry to the one, and rest and fodder to the other. Most of the drivers were shrewd; all of them civil. They were of various nationalities; some comfortably clad, others in tatters, and a few in picturesque threadbare costumes of Spanish finery. Those hardy wayfarers gave us much valuable information regarding the route before us, and the Indian tribes we should encounter. We were now averaging a distance of about two and a half miles an hour, and encamping nights where fuel and water could be obtained. The following account of the meeting held by the company after our arrival is from the journal of Mr. A new census of our party was taken this morning; and it was found to consist of 98 fighting men, 50 women, 46 wagons, and cattle. Two divisions were made for convenience in travelling. We were joined to-day by nine wagons from Illinois belonging to Mr. Donner, highly respectable and intelligent gentlemen with interesting families. They were received into the company by a unanimous vote. Our cattle were allowed to rest that day; and while the men were hunting and fishing, the women spread the family washings on the boughs and bushes of that well-wooded stream. We children, who had been confined to the wagon so many hours each day, stretched our limbs, and scampered off on Mayday frolics. We waded the creek, made mud pies, and gathered posies in the narrow glades between the cottonwood, beech, and alder trees. Colonel Russell was courteous to all; visited the new members, and secured their cheerful indorsement of his carefully prepared plan of travel. The government of these emigrant trains was essentially democratic and characteristically American.

2: Donner Party Diary

As the Donner Party approached the summit of the Sierra Mountains near what is now Donner Lake (known as Truckee Lake at the time) they found the pass clogged with new-fallen snow up to six feet deep.

Donner Pass Elevation [Courtesy of steheap - Fotolia. The pass has been used for many different roads and routes over the years, including the California Trail, Lincoln Highway, Victory Highway, and First Transcontinental Railroad. The area has a fascinating history, bearing witness to the tragic Donner Party incident for which it was named, and is now regarded as a thriving recreational area with lots of local ski resorts and lakes to enjoy all around. In , one scouting party decided to follow the Truckee River through the mountains and discovered what would become known as Donner Pass, identifying it as one of the few relatively simple ways to make it through the mountains. The mountain pass would get its name after a tragic event in when the Donner Party, originally known as the Donner-Reed Party, traveled to California from Missouri. Their trip was plagued with misfortune and they ended up stuck among the Sierra Nevada mountains, eventually having to resort to cannibalism to stay alive. Almost half of the 87 members of the original party died en route. In honor of this terrible ordeal, Donner Pass and Donner Lake were named in memory of those who died. In the modern era, despite being the site of such a terrible tragedy, Donner Pass is now a joyful area for people to enjoy recreational activities of all kinds with friends and family members.

Elevation of Donner Pass The elevation of a town, city, or other key location is an indicator of how high or low it is when compared to sea level and is a very important geographical statistic, used for architecture, town planning, weather forecasts, and more. The elevation of Donner Pass is very high due to its location among the Sierra Nevada. Most major cities and towns around the United States are situated at elevations of feet m or less, but the nearest city to Donner Pass, Truckee, has a high elevation of 5, feet 1, m. The highest peak in the Sierra Nevada is Mount Whitney, which has an elevation of 14, feet 4, m and is also the highest mountain in all of California and the rest of the contiguous United States. Badwater Basin has an elevation of feet 85 m below sea level and is the lowest elevation point in all of North America. Major cities in California tend to be situated at elevations much lower than Donner Pass as many of them were built along or near the Pacific coast. Los Angeles, for example, has an average elevation of just feet 87 m , while San Francisco has an average elevation of only 52 feet 16 m. Other big cities in the state include San Jose, which has an elevation of 82 feet 25 m , San Diego, which has an elevation of 62 feet 19 m , and the capital of Sacramento, which has an elevation of 30 feet 9 m , and.

Climate and Things to Do in Donner Pass The high elevation of Donner Pass, as well as its location among the Sierra Nevada mountains, contributes to its climate, which is very different from the typically sunny image that many people associate with the state of California and cities like San Francisco or Los Angeles. Donner Pass has over 50 inches of precipitation per year, with more than inches of snow in total. Despite the harsh weather conditions, Donner Pass is a popular tourist spot due to the wide array of activities that can be enjoyed nearby. Various ski resorts are located just short drives from Donner Pass, and other activities like camping, hiking, cross-country skiing, climbing, snowboarding, and more are all popular in this California location. Several stunning alpine lakes are also located around Donner Pass, offering breathtaking views in every direction. Best Ideas in Your Inbox Done!

3: The Tragic Story of the Donner Party – Page 2 – Legends of America

By late more than , people had come to California in search of gold near the streams and canyons where the Donner Party had suffered. Donner Lake, named for the party, is today a popular mountain resort near Truckee, California and the Donner Camp has been designated as a National Historic Landmark.

Mama was overcome with grief. The drivers cracked their whips. The originator of this group was a man named James Frasier Reed, an Illinois business man, eager to build a greater fortune in the rich land of California. Reed also hoped that his wife, Margaret, who suffered from terrible headaches, might improve in the coastal climate. Hastings, who advertised a new shortcut across the Great Basin. This new route enticed travelers by advertising that it would save the pioneers miles on easy terrain. It was this falsified information that would lead to the doom of the Donner Party. The initial group included 32 men, women and children. Though Sarah Keyes was so sick with consumption that she could barely walk, she was unwilling to be separated from her only daughter. However, the successful Reed was determined his family would not suffer on the long journey as his wagon was an extravagant two-story affair with a built-in iron stove, spring-cushioned seats and bunks for sleeping. Also in the group were the families of George and Jacob Donner. The wagon train reached Independence, Missouri about three weeks later, where they re-supplied. The next day, on May 12, , they headed west again in the middle of a thunderstorm. A week later they joined a large wagon train captained by Colonel William H. Along the entire journey, others would join the group until its size numbered . It was here that the train would experience its first death, when Sarah Keyes died and was buried next to the river. After building ferries to cross the water, the party was on their way again, following the Platte River for the next month. Clyman advised Reed not to take the Hastings Route, stating that the road was barely passable on foot and would be impossible with wagons; also warning him of the great desert and the Sierra Nevadas. Though he strongly suggested that the party take the regular wagon trail rather than this new false route, Reed would later ignore his warning in an attempt to reach their destination more quickly. Joined by other wagons in Fort Laramie, the pioneers were met by a man carrying a letter from Lansford W. Hastings at the Continental Divide on July 11th. The letter successfully allayed any fears that the party might have had regarding the Hastings cutoff. Here, the train split, with the majority of the large caravan taking the safer route. The group preferring the Hastings route elected George Donner as their captain and soon began the southerly route, reaching Fort Bridger on July 28th. However, upon their arrival at Fort Bridger, of Lansford Hastings, there was no sign, only a note left with other emigrants resting at the fort. The note indicated that Hastings had left with another group and that later travelers should follow and catch up. Satisfied, the emigrants rested for a few days at the fort, making repairs to their wagons and preparing for the rest of what they thought would be a seven week journey. The group now numbered 74 people in twenty wagons and for the first week made good progress at miles per day. Here they came to a halt when they found a note from Hastings advising them not to follow him down Weber Canyon as it was virtually impassible, but rather to take another trail through the Salt Basin. Finding the party at the south shore of the Great Salt Lake, Hastings accompanied Reed part way back to point out the new route, which he said would take them about one week to travel. Taking a vote among the party members, the group decided to try the new trail rather than backtracking to Fort Bridger. On August 11th, the wagon train began the arduous journey through the Wasatch Mountains, clearing trees and other obstructions along the new path of their journey. In the beginning, the wagon train was lucky to make even two miles per day, taking them six days just to travel eight miles. Along the way, they discovered that some of their wagons would have to be abandoned and before long, morale began to sink and the pioneers began to adamantly blame Lansford Hastings. By the time they reached the shore, they also blamed James Reed. About this time, fear began to set in as provisions were running low and time was against them. In the twenty-one days since reaching the Weber River they had moved just 36 miles. Five days later, on August 30th, the group began to cross the Great Salt Lake Desert, believing the trek would take only two days, according to Hastings. When they finally reached the end of the grueling desert five days later on September 4th, the emigrants rested near the base of Pilot Peak for several days. On their eighty mile

journey through the Salt Lake Desert, they had lost a total of thirty-two oxen; Reed was forced to abandon two of his wagons, and the Donners, as well as man named Louis Keseberg, lost one wagon each. On the far side of the desert, an inventory of food was taken and found to be less than adequate for the mile trek still ahead. Ominously, snow powdered the mountain peaks that very night. They reached the Humboldt River on September 26th. As the disillusionment of the party increased, tempers began to flare in the group.

4: Why did the Donner Party move or travel to California? | Yahoo Answers

The tragic story of the Donner party: in the spring of , hopeful pioneers headed west to California. Along the way, their adventure turned into a deadly nightmare. Link/Page Citation.

In what was to become the most sensational episode of the Westward movement, nearly half the party succumbed to starvation. The 48 survivors resorted to cannibalism and even to killing. When help finally arrived more than three months later, rescuers found dismembered human limbs and broken skulls strewn around the snow, bodies with flesh stripped from the bone and a carcass with the heart and liver cut out. But time has a way of unearthing even the most entrenched taboos. Now, years after the Donner party erected their makeshift shelters at Donner Lake, descendants of the party members are finally getting together to share their family legends. More than descendants of George and Tamsen Donner are expected at the first of two Donner party events this summer, on Saturday and Sunday. Organizers expect some descendants representing all of the 11 families on the ill-fated wagon train. Was it as bad as it was made out to be? And who actually took part? Many of them say: Did Lewis Keseberg kill Tamsen Donner? The public, also, has an appetite for the constant stream of new books, papers, plays, novels, TV movies and documentaries on the subject. Historians speculate that if the Donner party had pulled together, members might have made it over the Sierra before the snow fell. As the party lost time on the tortuous desert crossing, tempers snapped and human decency crumbled. James Frazier Reed was attacked by an overtaxed wagon driver. Reed stabbed the man to death with his hunting knife. Everyone began looking for someone else to blame for their troubles. The survivors packed the bickering and blame-casting out of the mountains with them. Over the following generations, some of the incidents were forgotten, but the generic grudges were passed on leading to one of the most stubborn intra-family spats in California history. The three orphaned Donner girls, Frances, Georgia and Eliza, all younger than 7, were adopted.

5: Donner Party: Frequently Asked Questions | ONE

The Tragic Story Of The Donner Party. that led to the tragic event. The Donner Party was unable to successfully migrate to California due to some major reasons.

The Donner Party wasted no time in administering their own justice. Though member, Lewis Keseberg, favored hanging for James Reed, the group, instead, voted to banish him. Leaving his family, Reed was last seen riding off to the west with a man named Walter Herron. To spare the animals, everyone who could, walked. Two days after the Snyder killing, on October 7th, Lewis Keseberg turned out a Belgian man named Harcoop, who had been traveling with him. The old man, who could not keep up with the rest of the party with his severely swollen feet, began to knock on other wagon doors, but no one would let him in. He was last seen sitting under a large sage brush, completely exhausted, unable to walk, worn out, and was left there to die. The caravan camped for five days 50 miles from the summit, resting their oxen for the final push. This decision to delay their departure was yet one more of many that would lead to their tragedy. Twenty two people, consisting of the Donner family and their hired men, stayed behind while the wagon was repaired. Unfortunately, while cutting timber for a new axle, a chisel slipped and Donner cut his hand badly, causing the group to fall further behind. Stanton and the two Indians who were traveling ahead made it as far as the summit, but could go no further. Hopeless, they retraced their steps where five feet of new snow had already fallen. With the Sierra pass just 12 miles beyond, the wagon train, after attempting to make the pass through the heavy snow, finally retreated to the eastern end of the lake, where level ground and timber was abundant. At the lake stood one existing cabin and realizing they were stranded, the group built two more cabins, sheltering 59 people in hopes that the early snow would melt, allowing them to continue their travels. The 22 people with the Donners were about six miles behind at Alder Creek. Hastily, as the snow continued, the party built three shelters from tents, quilts, buffalo robes and brush to protect themselves from the harsh conditions. At Donner Lake, two more attempts were made to get over the pass in twenty feet of snow, until they finally realized they were snowbound for the winter. More small cabins were constructed, many of which were shared by more than one family. The weather and their hopes were not to improve. Over the next four months, the remaining men, women, and children would huddle together in cabins, make shift lean-tos, and tents. Meanwhile, Reed and McCutchen had headed back up into the mountains attempting to rescue their stranded companions. Two days after they started out it began to rain. As the elevation increased, the rain turned to snow and twelve miles from the summit the pair could go no further. However, the Mexican War had drawn away the able-bodied men, forcing any further rescue attempts to wait. Not knowing how many cattle the emigrants had lost, the men believed the party would have enough meat to last them several months. On Thanksgiving, it began to snow again, and the pioneers at Donner Lake killed the last of their oxen for food on November 29th. The very next day, five more feet of snow fell, and they knew that any plans for a departure were dashed. A few days later their last few cattle were slaughtered for food and party began eating boiled hides, twigs, bones and bark. Some of the men tried to hunt with little success. On December 15, Balis Williams died of malnutrition and the group realized that something had to be done before they all died. However, with only meager rations and already weak from hunger the group faced a challenging ordeal. On the sixth day, their food ran out and for the next three days no one ate while they traveled through grueling high winds and freezing weather. One member of the party, Charles Stanton, snow-blind and exhausted was unable to keep up with the rest of the party and told them to go on. He never rejoined the group. A few days later, the party was caught in a blizzard and had great difficulty getting and keeping a fire lit. Antonio, Patrick Dolan, Franklin Graves, and Lemuel Murphy soon died and in desperation, the others resorted to cannibalism. Only two of the ten men survived, including William Eddy and William Foster, but all five women lived through the journey. Of the eight dead, seven had been cannibalized. On February 19th, the first party reached the lake finding what appeared to be a deserted camp until the ghostly figure of a woman appeared. Twelve of the emigrants were dead and of the forty-eight remaining, many had gone crazy or were barely clinging to life. However, the nightmare was by no means over. Not everyone could be taken out at one time and since no

pack animals could be brought in, few food supplies were brought in. En route down the mountains the first relief party met the second relief party coming the opposite way and the Reed family was reunited after five months. The next day, they arrived at Alder Creek to find that the Donners had also resorted to cannibalism. On March 3rd, Reed left the camp with 17 of the starving emigrants but just two days later they are caught in another blizzard. When it cleared, Isaac Donner had died and most of the refugees were too weak to travel. Reed and another rescuer, Hiram Miller, took three of the refugees with them hoping to find food they had stored on the way up. Graves and her son Franklin had also died. The three bodies, including that of Isaac Donner, had been cannibalized. The next day, they arrived at the lake camp to find that both of their sons had died. His wife Tamzene, though in comparatively good health, refused to leave him; sending her three little girls on without her. The relief party soon departed with four more members of the party, leaving those who are too weak to travel. Two rescuers, Jean-Baptiste Trudeau and Nicholas Clark, are left behind to care for the Donners, but soon abandon them to catch up with the relief party. A fourth rescue party set out in late March but were soon stranded in a blinding snow storm for several days. On April 17th, the relief party reached the camps to find only Louis Keseberg alive among the mutilated remains of his former companions. It took two months and four relief parties to rescue the entire surviving Donner Party. In the Donner Party tragedy, two-thirds of the men in the party perished, while two-thirds of the women and children lived. Forty-one individuals died, and forty-six survived. In the end, five had died before reaching the mountains, thirty-five perished either at the mountain camps or trying to cross the mountains, and one died just after reaching the valley. Many of those who survived lost toes to frostbite. The story of the Donner tragedy quickly spread across the country. Newspapers printed letters and diaries, and accused the travelers of bad conduct, cannibalism, and even murder. The surviving members had differing viewpoints, biases and recollections so what actually happened was never extremely clear. Some blamed the power hungry Lansford W. The Donner Camp has been the site of recent archeological excavations.

6: Donner Party - Wikipedia

The Donner Party (sometimes called the Donner-Reed Party) was a group of westbound emigrants who became trapped in the Sierra Nevada Mountains during one of the most brutal winters on record. The pioneers were forced to spend five months hunkered down in makeshift tents and cabins with almost no.

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this website do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is odd to watch with what feverish ardor Americans pursue prosperity. Ever tormented by the shadowy suspicion that they may not have chosen the shortest route to get it. They cleave to the things of this world as if assured that they will never die, and yet rush to snatch any that comes within their reach as if they expected to stop living before they had relished them. Death steps in, in the end, and stops them before they have grown tired of this futile pursuit of that complete felicity which always escapes them. It began in the s, spurred on by financial panic in the East, by outbreaks of cholera and malaria and by the ceaseless American hankering to move west. When the pioneer movement began, fewer than 20, white Americans lived west of the Mississippi River. Ten years later, the immigration had swelled to a flood and before it was over, more than half a million men, women and children had stepped off into the wilderness at places like Independence, Missouri, and headed out over the long road to Oregon and California. In places, their wagon wheels carved ruts shoulder deep in the rocky road. The settlers themselves knew they were making history. Human endeavor and failure, blunders, mistakes, ambition, greed: It can tell us something, I think, about ourselves, about the limits of human experience. The tide of emigration is unparalleled in the annals of history. The eyes of the American people are now turned westward and thousands are gazing with the most intense interest and anxiety upon the Pacific shores with the full determination to make one more, one last move more, to the far West. As began, thousands of Americans were on the move west, eager to bring Oregon, Texas, New Mexico and California into the American sphere. No one was keener to possess California than Lansford W. In , he wandered west to California. What he saw there amazed him. He dreamed of taking California from Mexico and of establishing an independent republic with himself at its head. It painted California as a second Eden and advertised a new and faster route across the Great Basin, a shortcut no one had ever seen -- including Hastings himself. Lansford Hastings was probably ambitious, probably very sure of himself. It was good enough for him, but it killed people. It was a siren call and bad news. The American dream has some nightmares attached to it and this is one of the ways the American dream could go. The American dream probably resulted in for most of the people who followed it like a marsh light in disaster. On April 16th, , nine brand-new covered wagons rattled slowly out of Springfield, Illinois, and headed west. George Donner was a year-old farmer who had migrated five times before settling in Springfield, where he and his older brother Jacob had made enough money never to have to move again. Then land fever swept Illinois and kindled the urge to move one last time. His wife, Margaret, suffered from terrible sick headaches they hoped would improve in a better climate. With them were their four children: Virginia, Patty, James and little Thomas. Virginia Reed Actress, voice-over: My father, with tears in his eyes, tried to smile as one friend after another grasped his hand in a last farewell. Mama was overcome with grief. At last we were all in the wagons. The drivers cracked their whips. The oxen moved slowly forward and the long journey had begun. Their immediate destination was Independence, Missouri, the main jumping-off point for the Oregon and California trails. Once beyond Independence, however, they were stepping off into the unknown. All they knew was that the long and dangerous journey would take them 2, miles across a huge, windswept plain, three great mountain ranges and half a dozen scorching deserts. That spring, talk was everywhere of a new and faster way. The same day the Donners and the Reeds rolled west out of Springfield, Lansford Hastings prepared to head east from California, to see what the shortcut he was promoting was really like. The idea was to depart just before you got to Fort Bridger, going through the Wasatch, south of the lake, across the salt desert, through the Rubies into California. The problem was, he had never really done it, had never done it with a wagon, and yet it was his ambition to lead what people thought to be 7, wagons heading west that year. And Lansford Hastings was going to try to lead his share back. James Clyman Actor, voice-over: Hastings,

our pilot, is looking for some force from the states with which it is designed to revolutionize California. Tamsen Donner Actress, voice-over: My dearest only sister: I can give you no idea of the hurry of this place at this time. It is supposed there be 7, wagons this season. We go to California to the Bay of San Francisco, a four months trip. I am willing to go and have no doubt it will be an advantage to our children and to us. You shall hear from me as soon as I have an opportunity. Heavy spring rains had turned the unpaved streets to mud. Wagons bogged to the hubs, drivers cursed and whipped the straining oxen. Emigrants hurried from store to store, purchasing supplies and anxiously inquiring after the latest news. Edwin Bryant Actor, voice-over: Singular as it may appear, there is as much electioneering here for the captaincy of this expedition as there is for the presidency of the United States. We have some of the best people in our company and some, too, that are not so good. Day by day, week after week, wagons rolled out of Independence. The Donners and the Reeds got started on May 12th. Not a living or a moving object of any kind appears upon the face of the vast expanse. The white-topped wagons and the men and animals belonging to them are the only relief to the tomb-like stillness of the landscape. A lovelier scene was never gazed upon, nor one of more profound solitude. A few days out, two riders overtook them. They brought mail from Independence and news that hostilities had broken out between the United States and Mexico on the Rio Grande. Each night violent thunderstorms broke over the wagon trains, scattering cattle and drenching the encampments. Each morning the skies cleared, but the trail had turned to mud. On May 27th, the wagon train came to a standstill on the east bank of the Big Blue River, too swollen by rain to be forded. The company went into camp to build a makeshift ferry. Grandma became speechless the day before she died. We made a neat coffin and buried her under a tree. We miss her very much. Every time we come into the wagon, we look at the bed for her. On May 31st, two days after the burial of Sarah Keyes, the last of the wagons was ferried safely over the Big Blue. We are now on the Platte, miles from Fort Laramie. I never could have believed we could have traveled so far with so little difficulty. Indeed, if I do not experience something far worse than I have yet done, I shall say the trouble is all in getting started. On June 27th, just one week behind schedule, the Donners and the Reeds reached Fort Laramie, an isolated trading post in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. I told him about the great desert and the roughness of the Sierras and that a straight route might turn out to be impracticable. I told him to take the regular wagon track and never leave it. Go the old route. He was an intelligent man, decisive. The next day, Clyman bid Reed good-bye and continued east, moving fast down the Platte. For a long time he stood looking down at the inscription, wondering what drove his countrymen west. This stone shows us that all ages and all sects are found to undertake this long, tedious and even dangerous journey for some unknown object never to be realized, even by those the most fortunate. Because the human mind can never be satisfied, never at rest, always on the stretch for something new, some strange novelty. Sarah Keyes had been a member of what would soon be called the Donner Party. She was the first to die. On July 18th, they crossed the Continental Divide. They moved on, spellbound by the altitude and the landscape and the endless sea of sage. Once you got beyond Fort Laramie, there was no turning back. Even though you might like to be able to, there was hardly a chance or opportunity. On July 20th, the wagon train reached the Little Sandy River. It was the parting of the ways. The next day, the new party met to elect a captain. James Reed was the obvious choice, but his aristocratic manner and his wealth had rubbed too many families the wrong way. They chose George Donner instead.

7: Donner Memorial State Park and Emigrant Trail Museum, Truckee - TripAdvisor

The Donner Party, or Donner-Reed Party, was a group of American pioneers that set out for California in a wagon train in May. Departing from Independence, Missouri, they were delayed by a series of mishaps and mistakes, and spent the winter of snowbound in the Sierra Nevada.

Numbering about thirty-two members that ranged in age from infants to the elderly, the expedition pointed their nine brand-new wagons west on a journey that would lead them into history. James Reed and his wife Margaret Reed was expelled from the wagon train for murder. Click image to learn more. The trek had been organized by James Reed, a businessman who hoped to prosper in California. They estimated it would take four months to accomplish their objective. As they traveled to the Mississippi River they joined other adventurers with the same goal until their caravan stretched for two miles while under way. Although tedious, their journey was uneventful until reaching the small trading post at Fort Bridger in modern-day Wyoming in mid-July. Here a fateful decision was made. Before leaving Illinois, James Reed had heard of a newly discovered route through the Sierra Nevada Mountains that promised to cut as many as miles off their journey. It was at Fort Bridger that some eighty-seven members of the wagon train, including the Donner brothers and their families, decided to separate from the main body and travel this new route west. All of those who traveled the old route ended their journey safely. This was not the case with those who took the alternative path. The culprit was snow. As the Donner Party approached the summit of the Sierra Mountains near what is now Donner Lake known as Truckee Lake at the time they found the pass clogged with new-fallen snow up to six feet deep. It was October 28, and the Sierra snows had started a month earlier than usual. They retreated to the lake twelve miles below where the hapless pioneers were trapped, unable to move forward or back. Shortly before, the Donner family had suffered a broken axle on one of their wagons and fallen behind. Also trapped by the snow, they set up camp at Alder Creek six miles from the main group. Each camp erected make-shift cabins and hoarded their limited supply of food. The snow continued to fall, reaching a depth of as much as twenty feet. Hunting and foraging were impossible and soon they slaughtered the oxen that had brought them from the East. But it was not enough. Starvation began to take its toll. With no other remedy at hand, the survivors resorted to cannibalism. A series of four rescue parties were launched with the first arriving at the Donner camp in late February. Between them, the rescuers were able to lead forty-eight of the original eighty-seven members of the party to safety in California. His description was first published as an article in a Nashville, TN newspaper in the spring of and later in a book published in . We join his story about three weeks after the Donner Party arrived at the blocked pass: We now have killed most part of our cattle, having to remain here until next spring, and live on lean beef, without bread or salt. It snowed during the space of eight days, with little intermission, after our arrival, though now clear and pleasant, freezing at night; the snow nearly gone from the valleys. Donner Pass November Fine morning; wind northwest; twenty-two of our company about starting to cross the mountains this day, including Stanton and his Indians. Same weather; wind west; the expedition cross the mountains returned after an unsuccessful attempt. Cloudy; looks like the eve of a snow-storm; our mountaineers are to make another trial to-morrow, if fair; froze hard last night. Still snowing; now about three feet deep; wind west; killed my last oxen to-day; gave another yoke to Foster; wood hard to begot. Snowing fast; looks as likely to continue as when it commenced; no living thing without wings can get about. Beautiful sunshine; thawing a little; looks delightful after the long storm; snow seven or eight feet deep. The morning fine and clear; Stanton and Graves manufacturing snow-shoes for another mountain scramble; no account of mules. Fine weather; froze hard last night; wind south-west; hard work to find wood sufficient to keep us warm or cook our beef. Some have scanty supply of beef; Stanton trying to get some for himself and Indians; not likely to get much. Snowed fast all night, with heavy squalls of wind; continues to snow; now about seven feet in depth. Fair and pleasant; froze hard last night; the company started on snow-shoes to cross the mountains; wind southeast. The Donner Party caught in the snow Dec. Clear and pleasant; Mrs. Reed here; no account from Milton yet. Our hope is in God. Sad news; Jacob Donner, Samuel Shoemaker, Rhinehart, and Smith are dead; the rest of them in a low situation; snowed all night, with a strong

southwest wind. Rained all night, and still continues; poor prospect for any kind of comfort, spiritual or temporal. Began to snow yesterday, snowed all night, and snows yet rapidly; extremely difficult to find wood; uttered our prayers to God this Christmas morning; the prospect is appalling, but we trust in Him. Cleared off yesterday, and continues clear; snow nine feet deep; wood growing scarce; a tree, when felled, sinks into the snow and is hard to be got at. Last of the year. May we, with the help of God, spend the coming year better than we have the past, which we propose to do if it is the will of the Almighty to deliver us from our present dreadful situation. Snow-storms are dreadful to us. The snow at present is very deep. We pray the God of mercy to deliver us from our present calamity, if it be His holy will. Commenced snowing last night, and snows a little yet. Provisions getting very scanty; dug up a hide from under the snow yesterday; have not commenced on it yet. Fair during the day, freezing at night. Reed talks of crossing the mountains with her children. Fine morning; looks like spring. Reed and Virginia, Milton Elliott, and Eliza Williams started a short time ago with the hope of crossing the mountains; left the children here. It was difficult for Mrs. Reed to part with them. Eliza came back yesterday evening from the mountains, unable to proceed; the others kept ahead. Reed and the others came back; could not find their way on the other side of the mountains. They have nothing but hides to live on. This eyewitness account appears in: [How To Cite This Article](#):

8: No More Secrets - latimes

The Donner Party monument at the Donner Memorial State Park. This park was created by the state of California in to honor the pioneering spirit of the Donner Party, as well as to commemorate the tragic events that occurred in this Sierra Nevada valley during the winter of

Member of the Tragic Donner Party James and Margaret Reed In , Margaret Reed and husband James left Illinois on their way to the promised land of California, where they hoped to begin a new life, but their migration did not go smoothly. An early snowstorm trapped the travelers in the treacherous passes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. This is more the story of the Reeds than the Donners because the Reeds left diaries and letters about that tragic journey. California Fever James Frazier Reed was one of the organizers of the wagon train that would become known as the Donner Party. Born in Ireland, he came to the United States as a young boy with his widowed mother. Reed had made a fine life for himself and his family in Illinois as a farmer and businessman, but in James and Margaret Reed caught California Fever. To make the trip as easy as possible for Margaret, who suffered from terrible headaches, James Reed built a two-story wagon. He outfitted their main wagon with an iron stove, spring-cushioned seats and bunks for sleeping. Dubbed the Palace Car by their fellow travelers, it was by all accounts the largest and fanciest vehicle anyone had built for westward migration. Eight oxen were required to pull the luxurious wagon, and its sheer size was a hindrance when the trail got rough. Reed also stocked two support wagons with fine food and liquor. Although the Reeds were anxious to begin a new life in California, the departure from Illinois, leaving friends they had made there, was difficult. James and Margaret Reed were very sad to leave their friends behind. Their twelve-year-old daughter Virginia wrote in her diary: My father, with tears in his eyes, tried to smile as one friend after another grasped his hand in a last farewell. Mama was overcome with grief. At last we were all in the wagons. The drivers cracked their whips. The oxen moved slowly forward and the long journey had begun. On the Trail On April 16, , 32 men, women and children in nine brand new covered wagons left Springfield, Illinois on the mile journey to California, which should take four months. In his forties, James Reed was traveling with his wife Margaret and their four children – Virginia, Patty, James and Thomas – as well as two hired servants. Margaret suffered from terrible headaches, and Reed hoped her condition would improve in the new climate. California Trail More than , people followed the California Trail to the gold fields and rich farmlands during the s and s – the greatest mass migration in American history. The trail then meandered through the corner of Utah, then along the Humboldt River in Nevada. Hastings stated that by bearing south rather than north around the Great Salt Lake, the pioneers would shorten their journey by miles and reduce their travel time by three weeks. However, James Clyman told Reed that the Hastings Cut-Off saved very little time and the road, barely passable on foot, would be impossible with wagons. But James Reed wholeheartedly believed in the shortcut. On July 31, they left Fort Bridger. The group now included 74 people in twenty wagons and for the first week they made good progress, traveling ten or twelve miles per day. On August 11, the wagon train began the arduous journey through the Wasatch Mountains, where they had to clear trees and other obstructions so the wagons could pass. They lost valuable time and energy, traveling only eight miles in six days. Before long, morale began to sink. According to Hastings, it should take two days to cross the Desert, but it took five days. Several wagons mired down in the salt-crusted mud and had to be left behind. Thirty-two of the oxen that pulled the wagons died, as well as some cattle. The pioneers had made a communal decision to attempt the cut-off, but when it cost them five weeks instead of saving three, they began to blame Hastings and Reed. On October 12, their oxen were attacked by Paiute Indians, killing 21 one of them with poison tipped arrows, further depleting their draft animals. Due to the trials they had endured, the Party split into splintered groups, each looking out for themselves and distrustful of the others. As they became more disillusioned by the journey, tempers flared. Reed Banished In early October, supplies were low, animals were dying, and days were hot as they traveled through central Nevada. A young teamster named John Snyder lost his temper while attempting to drive his wagon up a steep slope, and out of frustration he began beating his oxen with a whip. When James Reed tried to intervene, the young man turned the whip on him. Possibly in

self defense, Reed stabbed him in the chest with a knife, and Snyder died soon after. That evening the pioneers gathered to discuss what was to be done. Witnesses had seen Snyder hit James Reed "some claimed that he had also hit Margaret Reed, but Snyder had been popular and Reed was not. Some wanted to hang Reed for his actions, but others defended him. They eventually reached a compromise and banished Reed from the Donner Party. Reed was allowed to leave the camp without his family, who were to be taken care of by the others. He departed the next morning, alone and unarmed, but his stepdaughter Virginia rode ahead on horseback and secretly provided him with a rifle and food. Reed rode on alone, crossing the Sierra Nevada just ahead of the early snows. Snowbound The Donner Party had chosen multiple times to take shortcuts to save distance instead of following the traditional Oregon and California Trails, which caused many delays. Infighting and a disastrous crossing of the Utah salt flats had also lengthened their journey. When they reached the Sierra Nevada Mountains at the end of October, an early snowstorm brought the settlers to a halt about 1, feet below the summit of the Sierra Nevada. The pioneers attempted to force their few remaining wagons, oxen, and supplies over what is now known as Donner Pass, but due to freezing conditions and the lack of any pre-existing trail, they failed. Demoralized and low on supplies, about three quarters of the emigrants camped at the east end of Truckee Lake, where level ground and timber were abundant. They built rude shelters, hoping to resume their journey, but they were forced to slaughter their oxen for food. As the winter wore on, many of the emigrants starved to death. Donner Party member Patrick Breen wrote in his diary November 20, Came to this place on the thirty-first of last month; went into the pass; the snow so deep we were unable to find the road, and when within three miles from the summit, turned back to this shanty on Truckee Lake; [Charles] Stanton came up one day after we arrived here; we again took our teams and wagons, and made another unsuccessful attempt to cross in company with Stanton; we returned to this shanty; it continued to snow all the time. We now have killed most part of our cattle, having to remain here until next spring, and live on lean beef, without bread or salt. It snowed during the space of eight days, with little intermission, after our arrival, though now clear and pleasant, freezing at night; the snow nearly gone from the valleys. On Thanksgiving, snow began falling again, eventually accumulating 30 feet, and the pioneers killed the last of their oxen for food on November The very next day, five more feet of snow fell, and any hopes they had of continuing their journey were dashed. They had come 2, miles in seven months only to lose their race with the weather by one day. On January 4, , Breen wrote in his diary: Reed and Virginia, Milton Elliott, and Eliza Williams started a short time ago with the hope of crossing the mountains; left the children here. It was difficult for Mrs. Reed to part with them. Breen diary, January 15, Reed and the others came back; could not find their way on the other side of the mountains. They have nothing but hides to live on. In early February the citizens and naval officers of San Francisco funded a rescue party. James Reed rounded up men and supplies in the Sonoma and Napa Valleys, then headed up into the mountains. On February 19, , the first team of rescuers trudged through the still snow-filled passes and reached Truckee Lake, finding what appeared to be a deserted camp until the ghostly figure of a woman appeared. Four relief parties rescued forty-seven people who had survived the ordeal, Margaret Reed and her four children among them. However, the nightmare was still not over for many survivors of the Donner Party. Not everyone could be taken out at one time, and since pack animals could not navigate the fields of deep snow, few food supplies arrived. Several more relief parties arrived in March and April. In the meantime, the situation at the Truckee Lake camp was just as difficult as ever. Patrick Breen wrote in his diary in late February , shortly after the first rescue team had departed: Thursday 25th, froze hard last night fine and sunshiny today wind W. Mrs Murphy says the wolves are about to dig up the dead bodies at her shanty; the nights are too cold to watch them, we hear them howl. Friday 26th, froze hard last night today clear and warm Wind SE: Thanks be to Almighty God. Murphy said here yesterday that she thought she would Commence on Milt [one of the dead] and eat him. I do not think she has done so yet; it is distressing. The Donners told the California folks that they commenced to eat the dead people 4 days ago, if they did not succeed that day or next in finding their cattle, then under ten or twelve feet of snow and did not know the spot or near it, I suppose they have done so ere this time. The extent of the Donner Party tragedy would not be known for several weeks. The final tally revealed that two-thirds of the men had perished, while two-thirds of the women and children lived. A total of forty-one individuals died, while

forty-six survived. Many survivors were insane or barely clinging to life. Newspapers printed letters and diaries and accused the travelers of bad conduct. The surviving members had differing viewpoints and recollections so what really happened to the Donner Party has never been completely clear. The reunited Reed family recuperated in the Napa Valley for many weeks. All of the Reed children survived the ordeal in the mountains. During the time he had spent around San Jose while waiting to assemble a search party, James Reed had recognized the value of the rich, well-watered bottomland in the long fertile valley nearby. Once the Reeds were well enough to travel, James leased orchards at Mission San Jose and moved his family there. In the summer of , the Reeds gathered and dried pears, apples, figs and quince; they shipped the fruit to Hawaii, trading it for sugar, cocoa, coffee and rice. Reed was elected to a new council at San Jose and moved his family into the Pueblo, renting the only space available – a one-room adobe abode with a dirt floor.

9: Watch The Donner Party | American Experience | Official Site | PBS

If it had worked out differently, the group of settlers that came to be known as the Donner Party would have slipped over the Sierra Nevada into California and obscurity.

Background[edit] An encampment of tents and covered wagons on the Humboldt River in Nevada, During the s, the United States saw a dramatic increase in pioneers, people who left their homes in the east to settle in the Oregon Territory and California. Some, such as Patrick Breen, saw California as a place where they would be free to live in a fully Catholic culture, [3] but many were inspired by the idea of Manifest Destiny , a philosophy which asserted that the land between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans belonged to European Americans and they should settle it. Hastings , an early immigrant from Ohio to the West, went to California in and saw the promise of the undeveloped country. Hastings stayed at the fort to persuade travelers to turn south on his route. The eastern side of the range is also extremely steep. Elitha 14 and Leanna George 9 , Mary 7 , Isaac 6 , Lewis 4 , and Samuel 1. Reed , a year-old native of present-day Northern Ireland, had settled in Illinois in They had been delayed by rain and a rising river, but Tamsen Donner wrote to a friend in Springfield, "indeed, if I do not experience something far worse than I have yet done, I shall say the trouble is all in getting started. Levinah Murphy 37 , a widow from Tennessee, headed a family of thirteen. Sarah Murphy Foster 19 , her husband William M. William Eddy 28 , a carriage maker from Illinois, brought his wife Eleanor 25 and their two children James 3 and Margaret 1. The Breen family consisted of Patrick Breen 51 , a farmer from Iowa, his wife Margaret "Peggy", 40 and seven children: John 14 , Edward 13 , Patrick, Jr. Their neighbor traveled with them, year-old bachelor Patrick Dolan. An older man named Hardkoop rode with them. Luke Halloran, a young man who seemed to get sicker with tuberculosis every day, was passed from family to family as none could spare the time or resources to care for him. Hastings sent riders to deliver letters to traveling emigrants. On July 12, the Reeds and Donners were given one of these letters. He also claimed to have "worked out a new and better road to California", and said that he would be waiting at Fort Bridger to guide the emigrants along the new cutoff. A smaller group opted to head for Fort Bridger and needed a leader. Most of the younger males in the group were European immigrants and not considered to be ideal leaders. Reed had been living in the U. He saw the first part of the trail, and was concerned that it would be difficult for the wagons in the Donner group, especially with so many women and children. He returned to Blacks Fork to leave letters warning several members of the group not to take the shortcut. Reed was very impressed with this information, and advocated for the Hastings Cutoff. Donner hired a replacement driver, and the company was joined by the McCutcheon family, consisting of year-old William, his year-old wife Amanda, two-year-old daughter Harriet, and a year-old named Jean Baptiste Trudeau from New Mexico, who claimed to have knowledge of the Native Americans and terrain on the way to California. Within days, they found the terrain to be much more difficult than described, and the drivers were forced to lock the wheels of their wagons to prevent them from rolling down steep inclines. Several years of traffic on the main Oregon Trail had left an easy and obvious path, whereas the Cutoff was more difficult to find. Hastings wrote directions and left letters stuck to trees. On August 6, the party found a letter from Hastings advising them to stop until he could show them an alternative route to that taken by the Harlan-Young Party. They encountered exceedingly difficult canyons where boulders had to be moved and walls cut off precariously to a river below, a route likely to break wagons. Hastings had offered in his letter to guide the Donner Party around the more difficult areas, but he rode back only part way, indicating the general direction to follow. Without the guide they had been promised, the group had to decide whether to turn back and rejoin the traditional trail, follow the tracks left by the Harlan-Young Party through the difficult terrain of Weber Canyon , or forge their own trail in the direction that Hastings had recommended. Their arrival brought the Donner Party to 87 members in 60-80 wagons. It took almost another two weeks to travel out of the Wasatch Mountains. The men began to argue, and doubts were expressed about the wisdom of those who had chosen this route, in particular James Reed. Food and supplies began to run out for some of the less affluent families. Stanton and Pike had ridden out with Reed but had become lost on their way back; by the time that the party found them, they were a day

away from eating their horses. A few days later, the party came across a torn and tattered letter from Hastings. The pieces indicated that there were two days and nights of difficult travel ahead without grass or water. The party rested their oxen and prepared for the trip. From its peak, they saw ahead of them a dry, barren plain, perfectly flat and covered with white salt, larger than the one which they had just crossed, [45] and "one of the most inhospitable places on earth" according to Rarick. In the heat of the day, the moisture underneath the salt crust rose to the surface and turned the soil to a gummy mass. The wheels of their wagons sank into it, in some cases up to the hubs. The days were blisteringly hot and the nights frigid. Several of the group saw visions of lakes and wagon trains, and believed that they had finally overtaken Hastings. After three days, the water was gone, and some of the party removed their oxen from the wagons to press ahead to find more. Some of the animals were so weakened they were left yoked to the wagons and abandoned. The rigors of the journey resulted in irreparable damage to some of the wagons, but no human lives had been lost. Instead of the promised two days journey over 40 miles, the journey across the 80 miles of Great Salt Lake Desert had taken six. Charles Stanton and William McCutchen volunteered to undertake the dangerous trip. Despite their near hatred of Hastings, they had no choice but to follow his tracks, which were weeks old. On September 26, two months after embarking on the cutoff, the Donner Party rejoined the traditional trail along a stream that became known as the Humboldt River. The shortcut had probably delayed them by a month. By now, it was well into October, and the Donner families split off to make better time. When Reed intervened, Snyder turned the whip on him. United States laws were not applicable west of the Continental Divide in what was then Mexican territory and wagon trains often dispensed their own justice. Keseberg suggested that Reed should be hanged, but an eventual compromise allowed Reed to leave the camp without his family, who were to be taken care of by the others. Reed departed alone the next morning, unarmed, [55] [56] [57] [I] but his daughter Virginia rode ahead and secretly provided him with a rifle and food. To relieve the load of the animals, everyone was expected to walk. A few days later, Hardkoop sat next to a stream, his feet so swollen that they split open, and he was not seen again. William Eddy pleaded with the others to find Hardkoop, but they all refused, swearing that they would waste no more resources on a man who was almost 70 years old. With grass in short supply, the cattle spread out more, which allowed the Paiutes to steal 18 more during one evening; and several mornings later, the Paiutes shot another. One more stretch of desert lay ahead. The family had eaten all their stores, but the other families refused to assist their children. The Eddys were forced to walk, carrying their children and miserable with thirst. Margret Reed and her children were also now without a wagon. Stanton found the company one of the two-man party who had left a month earlier to seek assistance in California, and he brought mules, food, and two Miwok Native Americans named Luis and Salvador. They had already endured more than many emigrants ever did. Both the pass and the lake are now called Donner. Faced with one last push over mountains that were described as much worse than the Wasatch, the ragtag company had to decide whether to forge ahead or rest their cattle. It was October 20 and they had been told that the pass would not be snowed in until the middle of November. William Pike was killed when a gun being loaded by William Foster was discharged negligently, [71] an event that seemed to make the decision for them; family by family, they resumed their journey, first the Breens, then Kesebergs, Stanton with the Reeds, Graves, and Murphys. The Donners waited and traveled last. Jacob and George went into the woods to fashion a replacement. George Donner sliced his hand open while chiseling the wood, but it seemed a superficial wound. They turned back for Truckee Lake and, within a day, all the families were camped there except for the Donners, who were 5 miles 8. Over the next few days, several more attempts were made to breach the pass with their wagons and animals, but all efforts failed. Three widely separated cabins of pine logs served as their homes, with dirt floors and poorly constructed flat roofs that leaked when it rained. Keseberg built a lean-to for his family against the side of the Breen cabin. The families used canvas or oxhide to patch the faulty roofs. The cabins had no windows or doors, only large holes to allow entry. Of the 60 at Truckee Lake, 19 were men over 18, 12 were women, and 29 were children, 6 of whom were toddlers or younger. Farther down the trail, close to Alder Creek, the Donner families hastily constructed tents to house 21 people, including Mrs. The oxen began to die and their carcasses were frozen and stacked. Truckee Lake was not yet frozen, but the pioneers were unfamiliar with catching lake trout. Eddy, the most experienced hunter, killed a bear, but had

little luck after that. The Reed and Eddy families had lost almost everything and Margret Reed promised to pay double when they got to California for the use of three oxen from the Graves and Breen families. On November 12, the storm abated and a small party tried to reach the summit on foot, but found the trek through the soft, deep powder too difficult, and returned that same evening. Over the next week, two more attempts were made by other small parties, but both quickly failed. On November 21, a large party of about 22 persons made an attempt and successfully reached the peak. The party traveled about 1. He primarily concerned himself with the weather, marking the storms and how much snow had fallen, but gradually began to include references to God and religion in his entries. The cabins were cramped and filthy, and it snowed so much that people were unable to go outdoors for days. Diets soon consisted of oxhide, strips of which were boiled to make a "disagreeable" glue-like jelly. Ox and horse bones were boiled repeatedly to make soup, and they became so brittle that they would crumble upon chewing. Sometimes they were softened by being charred and eaten. Bit by bit, the Murphy children picked apart the oxhide rug that lay in front of their fireplace, roasted it in the fire, and ate it.

III/tBilly Bumps Banquet/t27 The registers of the parish church of Calverley, in the West Riding of the County of York Overpopulation of Cats and Dogs Animation Magic with I. B. M. Personal Computer and Personal Computer Junior JU 87 Stuka Cmbt Leg A fateful conference Pulmonary Vascular Physiology and Pathophysiology (Lung Biology in Health and Disease) Electrons in metals and alloys High Pressure Elk Hunting Talking about death and bereavement in school Sbi annual report 2005-06 Computability: Computable Functions, Logic, and the Foundations of Mathematics, with Computability I play in my room El moasser biology 2nd secondary Baby boomers and hearing loss Everybody for president The Louisiana Purchase (Making a New Nation) Creating a website the missing manual Botany books in telugu The Ignorance Of The Rich Cash crop liberalization and poverty alleviation in Africa V. 5. Index of personal names. Cthulhu mythos encyclopedia V. 2. Everyday chemistry Setup And Repair of the Double Bass for Optimum Sound Classification of ceramic materials Spanish for health professionals Britains Modernised Civil Service (Contemporary Political Studies) It is well with my soul satb Seeing and remembering Cleo and the coyote by Elizabeth Levy ; pictures by Diana Bryer. Reliquary (Bookcassette(r Edition) Engineering economy by blank and tarquin 8th ed Geography of india by majid husain 6th edition In Stevensons Samoa (Kegan Paul Travellers Series) Pt.10. Vocabulary and concept review Twentieth-century American nature poets The ultimate reference book II. Plates, with explanations. Archaic Gravestones of Attica