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# Ordeal by Hunger: The Classic Story of the Donner Party

*George Stewart*

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**George Stewart : Ordeal by Hunger: The Classic Story of the Donner Party** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ordeal by Hunger: The Classic Story of the Donner Party:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. AMERICAN ANTHROPOPHAGY...By lawyeraauThis book presents an account of the Donner Party, a wagon train of about eighty-seven people who in July 1846 started off for California via a new, untried route through the Sierras. Unfortunately, this particular wagon train of pioneers would go down in history due to the horror and tragedy that it was to meet along its way. Stranded in the Sierras amidst its harshest winter in years, with unparalleled snowfall and frigid temperatures, only little more than half, mostly women and children, were to survive their unbelievable deprivation and suffering.This wagon train was a loose confederation of strangers who originally were part of another wagon train, but who collectively branched off by consensus to try a new, though untried and unproven, overland route through the Sierras that was alleged to be shorter. Their decision to take this new route was one that would haunt them for the rest of their journey, as it was not what it was purported to be. The inexperience of these travelers, the poor decisions that were sometimes made, and their seeming inability to truly unify as one entity contributed to their ultimate debacle. They were, after all, representative of humanity at large. Some of them were good, brave, and unselfish. Some were people with whom one would not wish to shake hands.Beleaguered by thirst as they trekked across a desert, marauded by Indians along the way, plagued by the loss of necessary oxen and cattle, beset by accidents and personal squabbles that would sometimes turn deadly, they would finally reach the Sierras and begin their perilous crossing, only to find themselves snowbound at the summit while within sight of the pass that they needed to cross to be home free. Trapped by the weather in early November, they

would set up a make-shift camp, never thinking about just how long their encampment would last. With minimal food supplies at their disposal, these intrepid, westward-ho emigrants would find themselves trapped for months, facing incredible hardships that would tax them beyond human endurance. Some would resort to cannibalism in order to survive. This is a riveting story about survival of the fittest, about personal sacrifice, and human foibles. It is a story not only of those ill-fated pioneers but of those who would attempt to rescue them, often at great personal cost. It is a story that reflects the human spirit, both good and bad, in time of crisis. It is a story of often selfless heroism. It is also a story of greed and craven opportunism. While some of the book is politically incorrect, it is reflective of the times in which these pioneers lived, as well as that of when this book was first written. It is, however, remiss that the maps included in this book do little to illustrate the deadly journey undertaken by these pioneers. Still, the lack of comprehensive maps does not unduly detract from the powerful impact that this story has on the reader. Moreover, although the book was published in 1936, the author, a trained historian, added a supplement in 1960, which is included in this edition of his book. This supplement serves to correct errors, as well as incorporate additional relevant material not available at the time of original publication. Those who enjoy tales of survival will, undoubtedly, find this gripping tale well worth reading.

Nice used paperback, bright, clean, from 1971 so constructed differently than modern slicks, tight binding.