

“Radio Reader” Book Description

BOOK: *Desperate Passage*

AUTHOR: Ethan Rarick

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In late October 1846, the last wagon train of that year’s westward migration stopped overnight before resuming its arduous climb over the Sierra Nevada Mountains, unaware that a fearsome storm was gathering force. After months of grueling travel, the 81 men, women, and children would be trapped for a brutal winter with little food and only primitive shelter. The conclusion is known: by spring of the next year, the Donner Party was synonymous with the most harrowing extremes of human survival. But until now, the full story of what happened---and what it tells us about human nature and about America’s westward expansion---remained shrouded in myth.

Simon Winchester, author of *Krakatoa* states “this sober, unflinching look at one of the great tragedies of America’s pioneering past tells us a great deal that is new about the Donner Party’s trials.”