

TRAIL JOURNAL

1846

VOL. I.

ONE WARM LINE

A Frontier Musical Film





INTRODUCTION

One Warm Line is a frontier musical film inspired by the Donner Party.

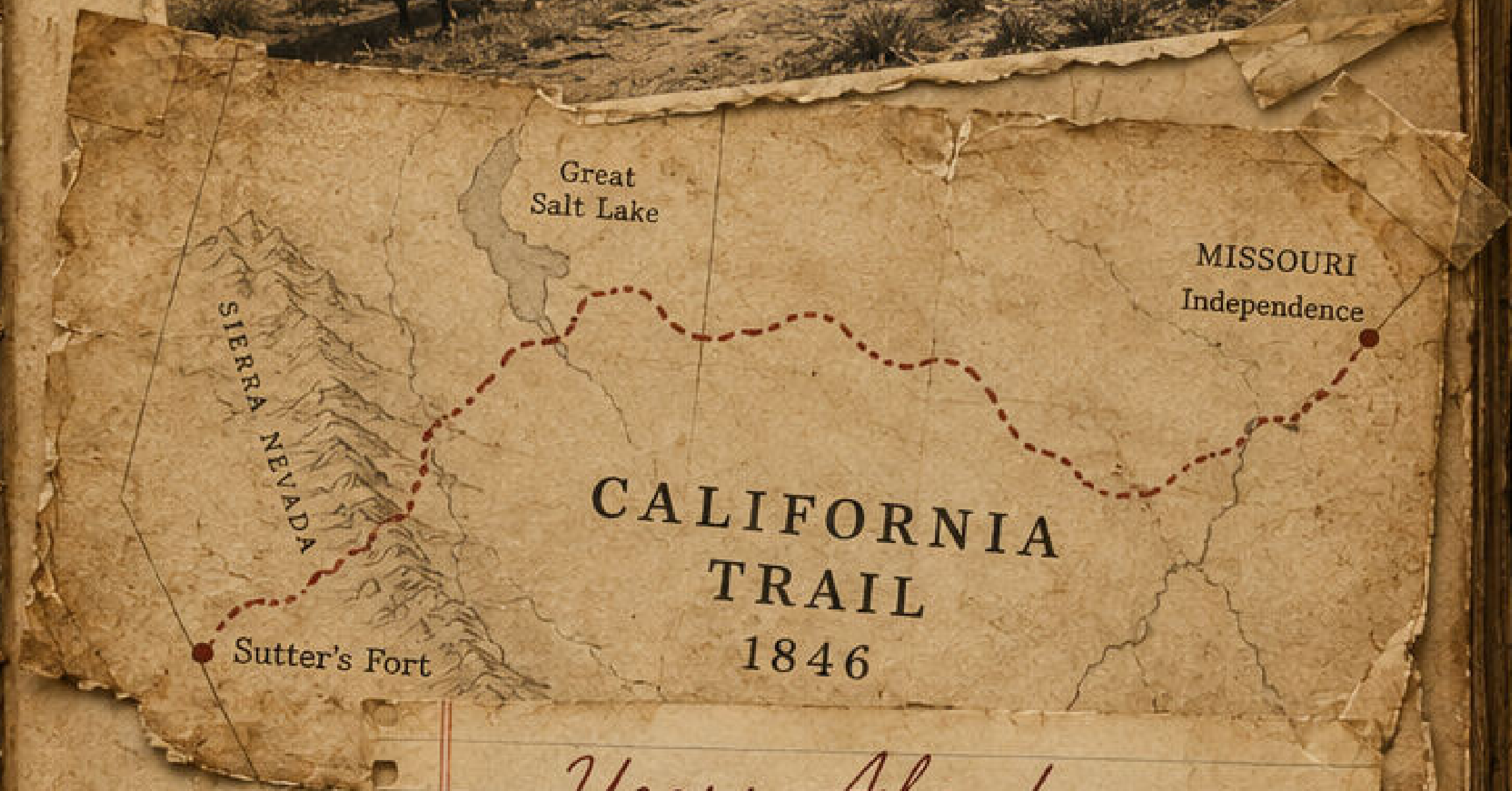
In 1846, families leave Missouri for California, chasing land, freedom, and a better life.

Their road narrows through ambition, delay, bad information, and brutal weather until they are trapped in the Sierra Nevada.

Through it all, music carries what ordinary history cannot: memory, grief, hope, and the will to survive.

*A promise
worth everything.*

*The road
takes more
than it gives.*



Years Ahead

*Deep was the springtime,
stubble beards and years ahead.
We rounded the wagons,
dreams and scenes danced
around our heads.*

3.

THE TRUE STORY

The Donner Party is remembered for the horror of the winter, but the real story begins long before the snow.

It begins with families, maps, letters, ambition, migration, and trust placed in the wrong promise.



WAGON TRAIN LEDGER

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Oxen	108	Teams
Wagons	87	Prairie Schooners
Mules	23	Extra
Horses	42	Saddle
Covers	87	Canvas
Flour (lbs.)	12,000	Eat.
Bacon (lbs.)	4,500	Salted
Coffee (lbs.)	300	Green
Sugar (lbs.)	500	Crushed
Tools	—	Axes, shovels, etc.

FAMILIES

Reeds, Donners,
Breens, Murphys,
Graves

The nearer we got,
the thinner the
maps became.

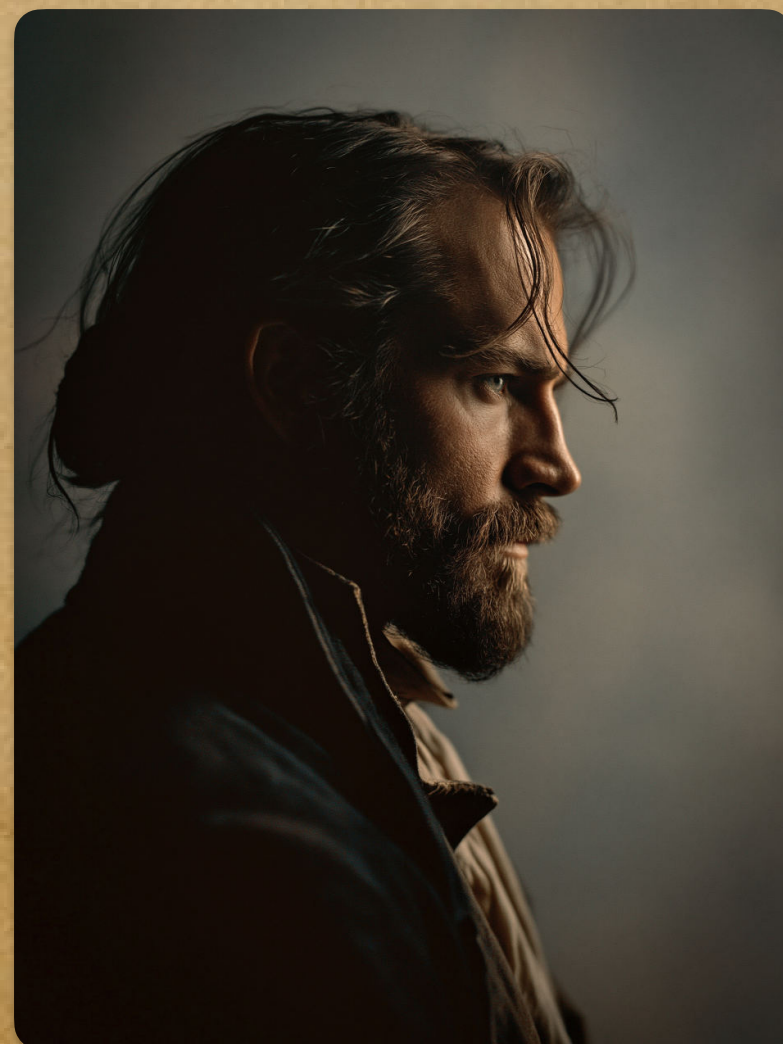


The Leads



James Frazier Reed

The self made man



Levinah Murphy

The widowed Matriach



The Antagonists

*Some are born
of flesh and will.
Others are older.
Far older.*



*A man
without law
or limit.
He takes
what he wants,
and leaves
what's left
for the rest
of us.*



Lewis Keseberg

The Man Eater

Nature

The Wagon Breaker

*Wind. Rain.
Ice. Flood.
She does
not forgive.*



Time

The Sanity Taker

*It doesn't
kill you all
at once.
That's what
makes it worse.*



the Music

55
original numbers,
more than
4
hours of music.

Playlists by Act



One Warm Line Part 1 (Demo)
on.soundcloud.com



One Warm Line Part 2
on.soundcloud.com



One Warm Line Part 3
on.soundcloud.com



One Warm Line Part 4 - Demo
on.soundcloud.com



One Warm Line - Part 5 - Demo
on.soundcloud.com

the decision

James Reed and his family leave Independence, Missouri, as part of a wagon train bound for California. Alongside the Donner, Breen, Graves, Murphy, and other families, they follow the dream of a new beginning.

When Reed and others are drawn toward Hastings' untested cutoff, the journey becomes slower, harsher, and more divided.

After violence fractures the party and Reed is exiled, the remaining families push toward the Sierra too late. Snow traps them in the mountains. Reed must confront his failure and fight his way back to help rescue the people he left behind.

Sutter's Fort ★
Donner Pass
Truckee

WAGON TRAIN LEDGER

NAME	FAMILY
Reed.	Family
Donners	Family
Breens	Family
Murphys	Family
Graves	Family
and other families	

CALIFORNIA

Two roads diverge
across a hard land—
one long and known,
one short and untried.
Both promise hope.
Only one may bring us home.
— J.R.

IDAHO

UTAH

RUBY MOUNTAINS
GREAT SALT LAKE DESERT

NEVADA

WYOMING

Fort Bridger

Independence,
MISSOURI ★

Great
Salt
Lake

WASATCH
MOUNTAINS

..... CALIFORNIA TRAIL
(main route)

..... HASTINGS CUTOFF
(untested route)

Snow waits in the high country.
Every mile can change everything.

Deserts

The Great Salt Desert—
a waste of alkali and sun.

Humboldt Wash—
dry river, wide and lost.

The Paiutes watch.
We are the ones
who cross their land.

*White earth.
No trees. No shade.
Only the wind
and the glare.*



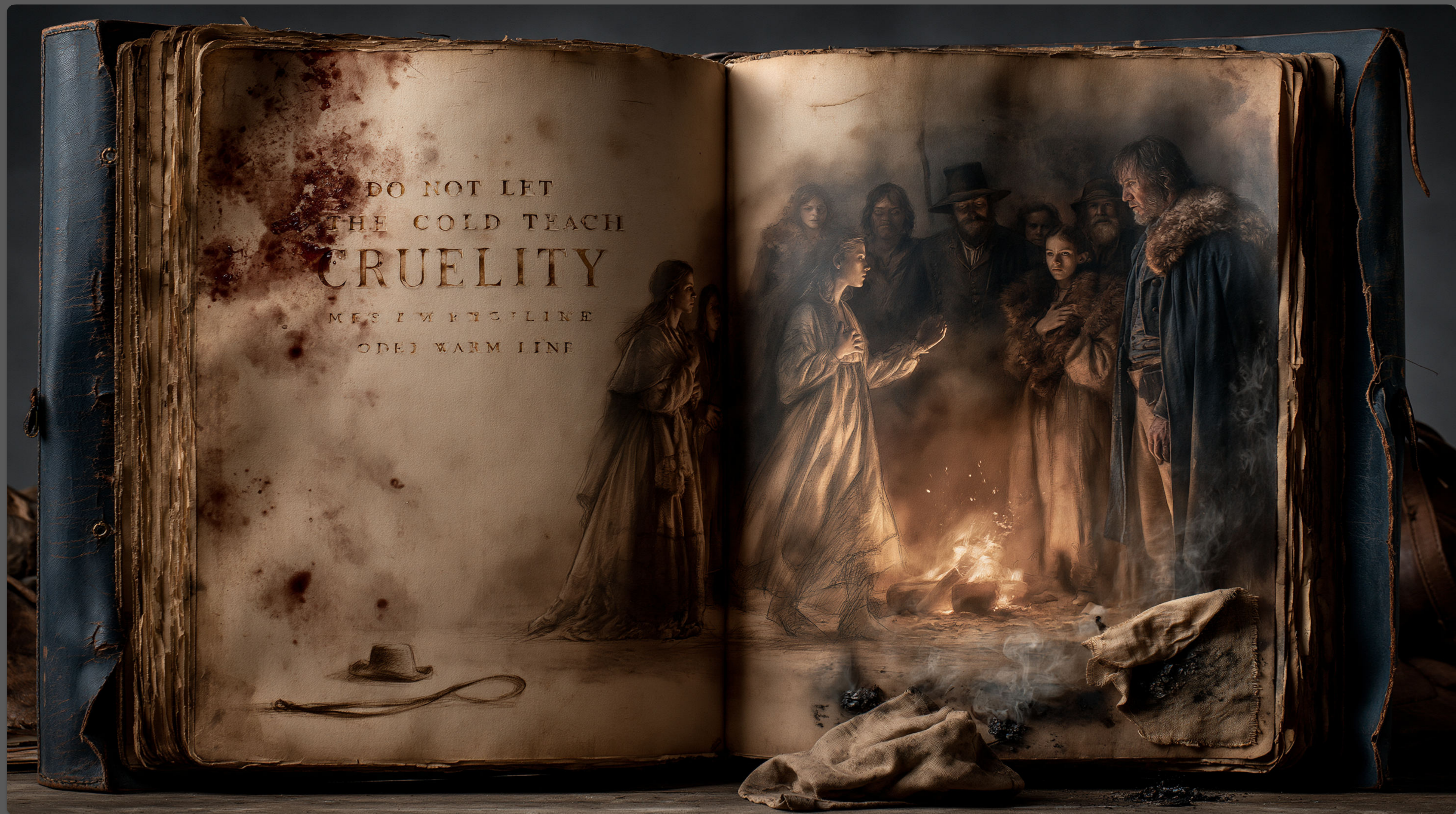
*We saw smoke on the
horizon at sundown.
They saw us long
before we saw them.*

*No water.
Lost two yoke today.
The desert keeps
what it takes.
It gives
nothing.*





Mary Anne Graves reacts to the killing of her family's teamster, John Snyder in Episode 3.



A frontier trial is held to determine James Reed's fate.



Virginia consoles her father in the dark midnight hours before his morning exile.



James Reed saddles Glaucus without a pistol, a rifle, or a map.

SIERRA NEVADA



The Trap

*Cabins and Corners,
Smoke and boards,
No one lives like
we lived before.*

Truckee Lake

Alder Creek

The War



January 6th, 1847



Battle of Santa Clara

The Forlorn Hope

17 people left.

*Only 8 made it
to California.*

*We don't say
who became
the miles.*

the
HORROR



The Relief



Relief	Date	Survivors	Deaths
1st	February	18	4
2nd	Early March	13	5
3rd	Mid March	5	0
4th	Late March	1	0





After 132 days in the wilderness, Lewis Keseberg was the last member of the Donner party to be rescued.

.CHARACTERS

The storyworld of One Warm Line invites the rich tapestry of humanity to re-tell this timeless tale of hope, greed, and loss.

The following section of this journal is an introduction to some of the personages that actually lived during the perilous emigration of 1846.



WIYOT'



Wiyot is our Native American observer, they offer an important indigenous voice.



Vaqueros from California, they were the only two humans murdered for their meat.

Salvadore

Luís



Hastings & Co.

Lansford W. Hastings

James Clyman

Notes on the Route

Leave the Oregon route about two hundred miles East from Fort Hall... thence bearing W.S.W. to the Salt Lake Valley.



"The most direct route would be to leave the Oregon route, about two hundred miles east from Fort Hall; thence bearing west southwest, to the Salt Lake."

THE EMIGRANTS' GUIDE TO OREGON AND CALIFORNIA.

CONTAINING A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROUTES, RIVERS, MOUNTAINS, &c. &c.



BY LANSFORD W. HASTINGS, COUNSELLOR AT LAW.

NEW-YORK: PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR. 1846.

Lansford W. Hastings, Counsellor at Law.

Hastings, Norton & Co. New York

ROUTE FROM THE OREGON TRAIL TO SALT LAKE VALLEY.



- Guided Hastings east in 1846
- Warned Reed and the Donners
- Black Hawk War veteran, alongside James Reed and Abraham Lincoln

June 1846

Left the Valley, crossed the Desert found water at Soda Springs bad road for wheels. mountains rough

Wasatch Range

Great Salt Lake

Salt Flats



"The Land tells the truth. Men do not."

steep grade
no water
bad for wagons



The Californios

Johann Sutter

Andreas Pico



Sutter's Fort
est. 1839.

Sacramento
River



New
Helvetia



Rio
del
Sacramento



Journal of Effects Fort Sutter

Aug 10	100 lbs Flour	12.50
	200 lbs Beans	8.00
	50 lbs Sugar	4.00
	25 lbs Coffee	7.75
	1 bbl Salt	2.50
	3 bbl Pork	9.00
Aug 07	12 yds Calico	6.25
Aug 18	5 kegs Powder	10.00
		38.00



"Por la Patria"
y el Honor.



The Loners

Charles Stanton

Short of stature
But not of spirit.
A quiet man,
A careful heart.

He came with
nothing but
courage and
kindness.



The Sierra
is a stern teacher.

Not all travel in
company. Some
walk apart by
necessity or fate.

Hardkoop

A man from across
the sea. Words
hard to find.
Left to himself.

He carries
his past like
a stone in
his pack.



the Breens

Among the many families who made the terrible journey to California in 1846, the Breens left behind something priceless—a record of courage, doubt, faith, and the daily fight to survive.

They kept the journal.

Patrick Breen kept a careful journal through the storm, the hunger, and the camps. It is the most important surviving first-hand account of the Donner Party.

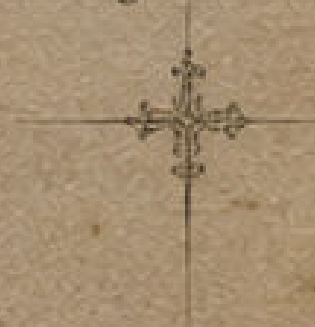
*"Peggy very uneasy for fear
we shall all perish with hunger."*

— Patrick Breen's Journal



They kept the faith.

Through hunger, snow, fear, and uncertainty, the Breens held fast to their Catholic faith. Prayer and devotion were a strength that carried them through the darkest days.



*"snowd. faster last night & to
day than it has done this winter
& still continues without an
intermission."*

— Patrick Breen's Journal

They helped the Reeds.

When other families were at their weakest, the Breens shared what they had and sheltered members of the Reed family. In a time of scarcity, they chose compassion.



They survived intact.

Against overwhelming odds, the Breen family remained together. Their survival was not easy, not simple, and not without cost—but they endured.

The Breens were not perfect. They were human. Their journal is their witness. Their survival is their testament.



They endured the moral horror.

The Breens lived through the unimaginable—witnessing things no human should see, and facing choices that left lasting wounds.



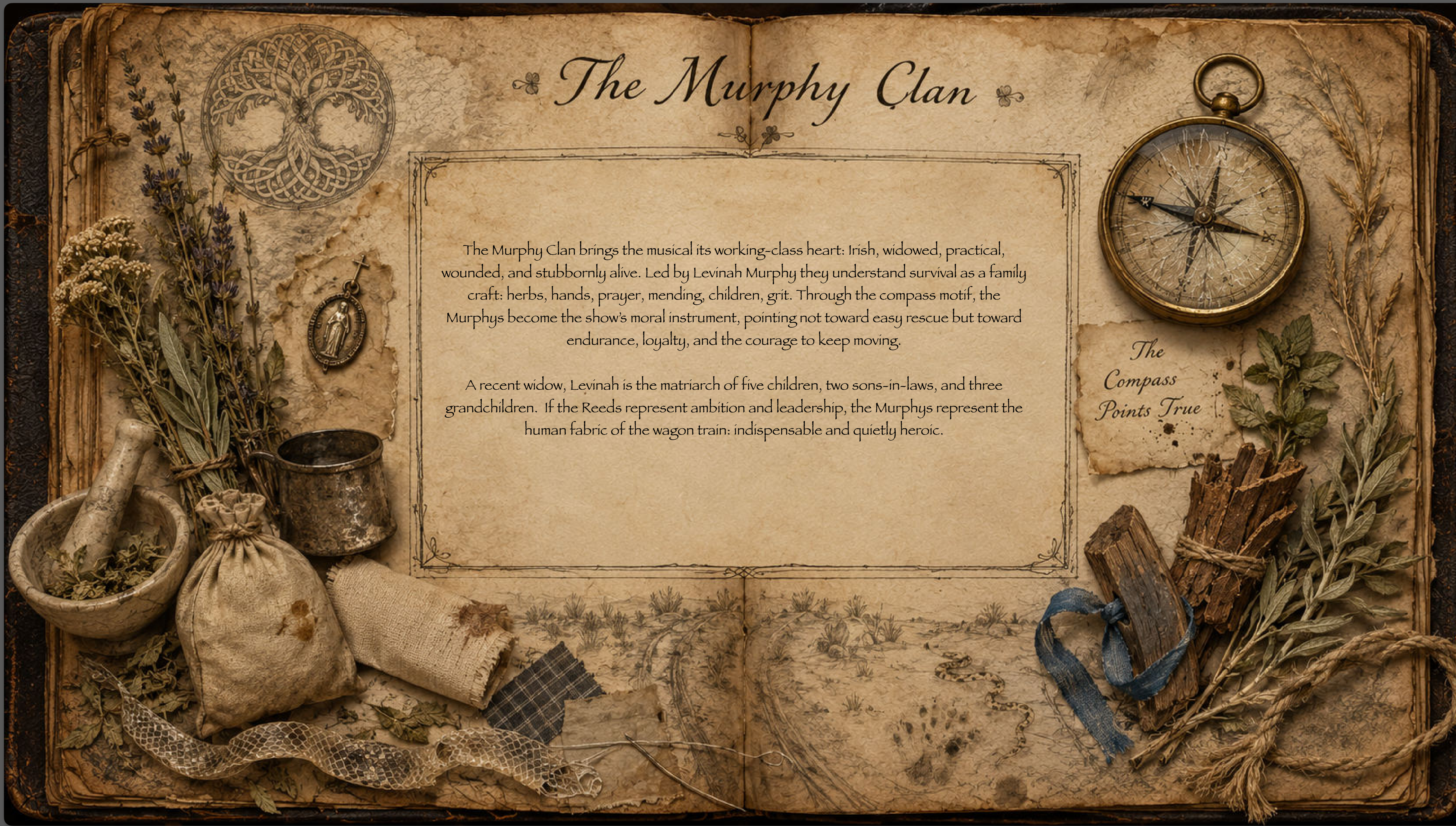
The Murphy Clan

The Murphy Clan brings the musical its working-class heart: Irish, widowed, practical, wounded, and stubbornly alive. Led by Levinah Murphy they understand survival as a family craft: herbs, hands, prayer, mending, children, grit. Through the compass motif, the Murphys become the show's moral instrument, pointing not toward easy rescue but toward endurance, loyalty, and the courage to keep moving.

A recent widow, Levinah is the matriarch of five children, two sons-in-laws, and three grandchildren. If the Reeds represent ambition and leadership, the Murphys represent the human fabric of the wagon train: indispensable and quietly heroic.



*The
Compass
Points True*



The Murphys'



Landrum (16)*



Levinah (36)*



Meriam (14)



Lemuel (12)*



Harriet Murphy (21)^



Sarah Murphy (19)^



William Pike (30)*

William Foster (25)



Naomi (3) &
Catherine (1)*



Jeremiah (4)*

Vermont

The Graves Family

The Graves family arrives late to the journey, meeting the Donners in Wyoming in August after traveling west from Vermont. Franklin Graves' practical snowshoe expertise becomes essential once the party is trapped in the Sierra, making him one of the few people with the knowledge needed to launch the Forlorn Hope. But the Graves also carry one of the musical's most combustible emotional threads: Mary Anne Graves' love story with John Snyder. Their tenderness gives the trail a rare spark of youth and possibility, which makes Snyder's killing all the more devastating. That act becomes the spine of Act 3, breaking the fragile social order of the wagon train, leading to Reed's exile, and helping tilt the Donner Party toward its final fate.

The Forlorn Hope

Fort Laramie

met the
Donners in
Wyoming

Wyoming,
August 1846

HOLY BIBLE



Mary Anne (19) ^



William (17) ~



Eleanor (14) ~

Elizabeth (1) **



Nancy (9) ~~



Lovina (11) ~



Jonathon
(7) ~~



Franklin
Jr. (5) *



The Graves'

Franklin
(57) ^*



Elizabeth
(45) ~~~





Sarah Graves
Fosdick (21) ^



Jay Fosdick (23) *



John Snyder (25)*
Teamster

The Graves'

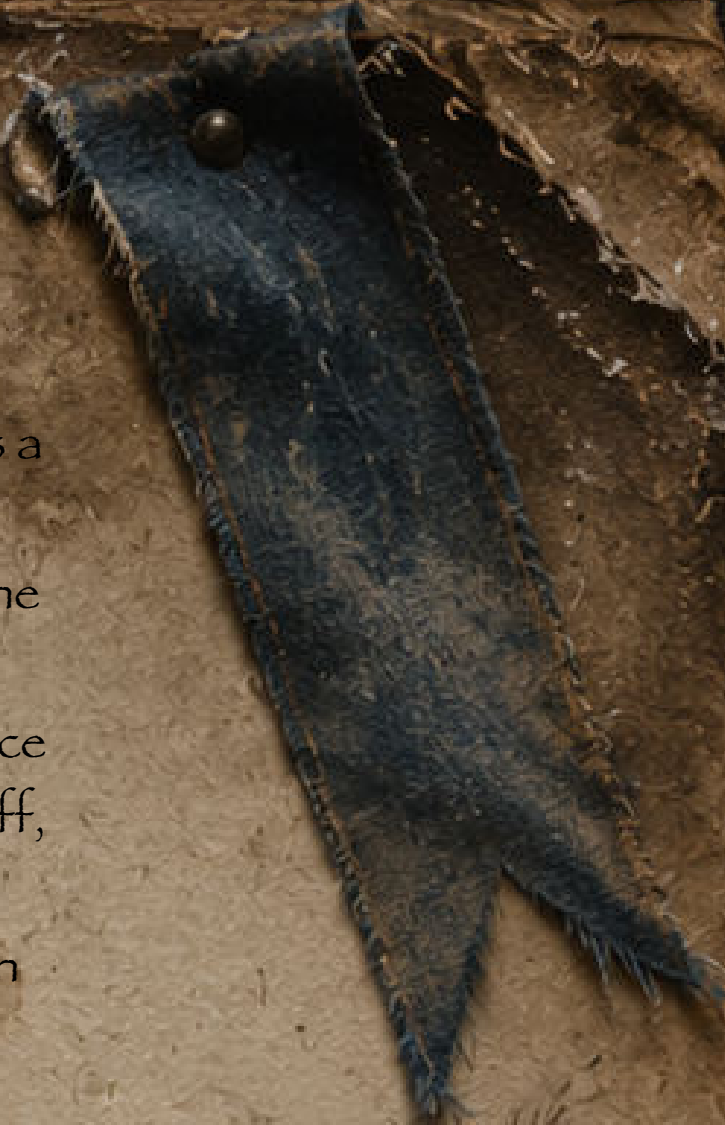


Mary Anne (21) ^

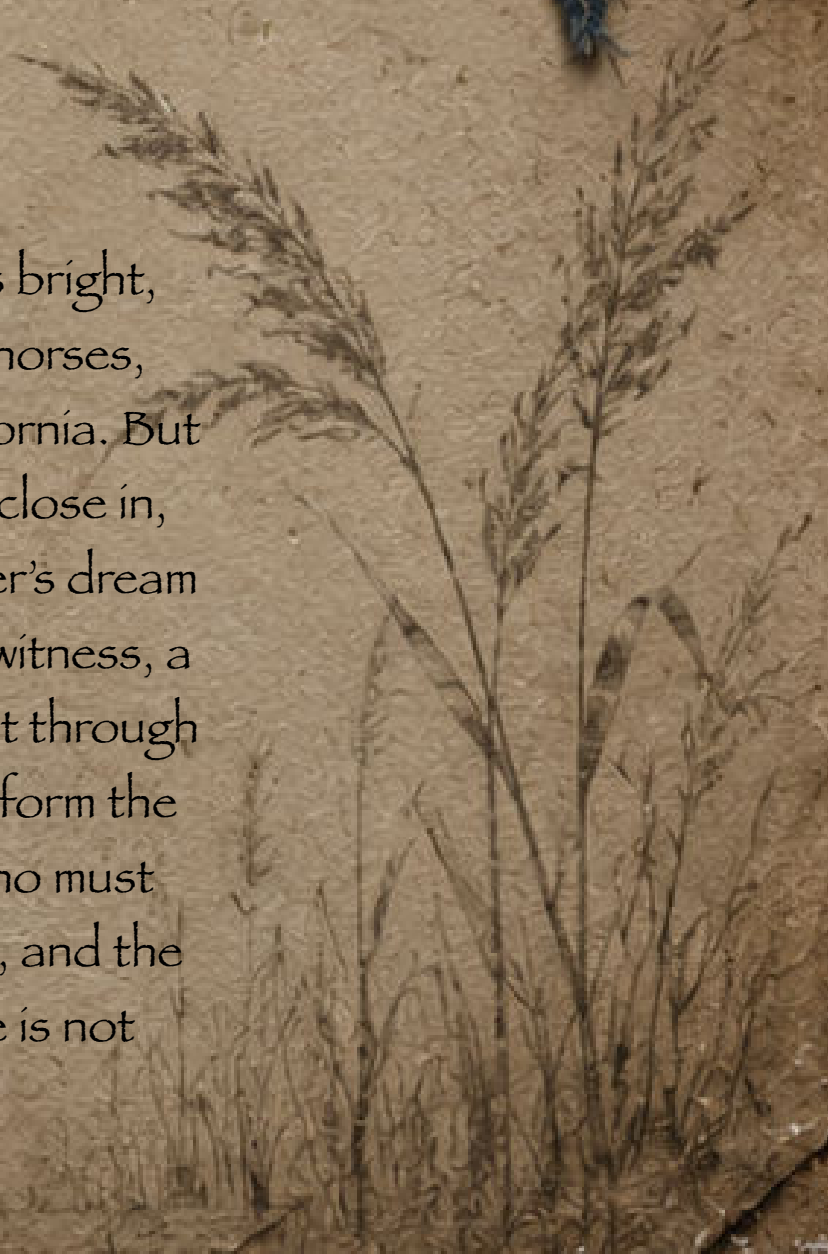




The Reeds



The Reed family gives the musical its central emotional engine. James Frazier Reed begins as a man of polished ambition, convinced that intelligence, money, and willpower can master the West, but the trail steadily strips him down to something rawer and more human. His confidence helps drive the party toward the Hastings Cutoff, his killing of John Snyder shatters the wagon train's fragile order, and his exile becomes both punishment and transformation.



Beside him, Virginia Reed begins as his bright, innocent sidekick, a child dazzled by horses, ribbons, maps, and the promise of California. But as hunger, snow, fear, and separation close in, Virginia stops merely reflecting her father's dream and becomes a hero in her own right: a witness, a survivor, and a young voice carrying light through the dark. Together, James and Virginia form the heart of *One Warm Line*: the father who must reckon with what his ambition has done, and the daughter who discovers that courage is not inherited, but chosen.

- Years Ahead
- Some May Say
- Stretching My Days
- Clayman's Warning
- Decision Time



The Reeds

James Frazier Reed

Virginia Reed



- Years Ahead
- Doin' Just Fine
- Many a Mirage
- Road We Didn't Take
- Listen to the Wind Out of Control

Murder on the Train
Exiled

My dearest Mother,

Billy

CALIFORNIA
ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS
100

THE EMIGRANT'S GUIDE
TO OREGON AND CALIFORNIA.
1846.



Murder on the Train
Exiled
5 Bean Chili
Welcome Sight
Pass the Hat



Best of Life
(Reprise)
One Warm Line



the Reeds



Margaret "Peggy" Reed

- Wife of James Frazier Reed
- Mother of Virginia, Patty, Jimmy, and Tommy
- Frequent migraines



Virginia Reed, 13

Patty Reed, 8

Jimmy Reed, 6

Tommy Reed, 4



Patty Reed's doll survived the journey and is on display in Sacramento, CA. Sutter's Fort.



ONE WARM LINE

GUIDE
TO
EMIGRANTS
TO
CALIFORNIA.
1846.



*Raise our voices....
to the sky.*

