

To Stay Alive: Mary Ann Graves and the Tragic Journey of the Donner Party

Skila Brown



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Told in riveting, keenly observed poetry, a moving first-person narrative as experienced by a young survivor of the tragic Donner Party of 1846.

The journey west by wagon train promises to be long and arduous for nineteen-year-old Mary Ann Graves and her parents and eight siblings. Yet she is hopeful about their new life in California: freedom from the demands of family, maybe some romance, better opportunities for all. But when winter comes early to the Sierra Nevada and their group gets a late start, the Graves family, traveling alongside the Donner and Reed parties, must endure one of the most harrowing and storied journeys in American history. Amid the pain of loss and the constant threat of death from starvation or cold, Mary Ann's is a narrative, told beautifully in verse, of a girl learning what it means to be part of a family, to make sacrifices for those we love, and above all to persevere.

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