



# Patty Reed's Doll: The Story of the Donner Party

*Rachel K. Laurgaard , Elizabeth Michaels (Illustrator)*

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In the winter of 1846, the Donner Party was stranded by heavy snows in the Sierra Nevada mountains. The pioneers endured bitter hardships and many of them died. But some survived, including eight-year-old Patty Reed, a girl filled with dignity and determination in the face of mortal danger. This is her story, as told by Dolly, the wooden doll she kept hidden in her dress.

## Patty Reed's Doll: The Story of the Donner Party Details

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Author : Rachel K. Laurgaard , Elizabeth Michaels (Illustrator)

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# **From Reader Review Patty Reed's Doll: The Story of the Donner Party for online ebook**

## **Jay DeVine says**

Somehow, I just never got around to reading this book. Our fourth graders are reading it, so I figured it's about time. It's a good, little book. A nice intro to the story of the Donner/Reed party. All of these names are so familiar. I've read other books on the subject, and even acted out some of the characters at Sutter's Fort, as part of the Sutter's Fort ELP.

This is a nice "stepping off" point, if students want to know more about that history.

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## **Mary Carol says**

This book is part of my daughter's 4th grade reading assignment as part of CA history...as I grew up in LA I have not heard of this. It is a really well written and interesting book told from the view of the doll...I am really enjoying this QUICK read. I started last nite and will be done this morning.

Read if you have never....

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## **Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says**

A surprisingly well-told story of the tragic Donner Party told from the point of view of the little doll belonging to Patty Reed, who survived. I could have done without the somewhat amateurish illustrations, though I did appreciate the photo in the front of the actual doll and a map of the route the party took. Because the Reed family never participated in the cannibalism that others in the party resorted to, the doll's narrative entirely avoided mention of that, which is fine for a children's story. I wish I could have seen the Reeds' huge, two-story wagon. I'll bet that was fun to ride in, at first, anyway, until the heat made it a sauna inside, and the monotony and hardships made it seem more like a prison. Those people certainly had courage. I can't imagine walking all the way from New York to the West. Recommended for upper elementary to middle school kids.

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## **Gretchen says**

Patty Reed's Doll was a book my 4th grader was reading, and she thought I might enjoy it too. Having grown up in Texas, I knew a very little bit about the Donner Party. More specifically, I only knew the horrific parts, but nothing else. I was a little worried how this book might handle that part, but thankfully, the book does not mention it, nor does it really need to in order to tell the story.

The book was good and a really easy read. This book reminds me a little bit of the Little House Books, but not as well written in my opinion. The story is told from the point of view of a little girl's doll. I had high hopes for this treatment but felt like the idea fell a little flat. I wish the author had pushed the idea of the doll telling the story a little more. All and all, I was glad to read this book and learn a little more about the Reed family and Donner family and how they ended up in their infamous predicament.

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## Roberta says

This book tells about the Reed family in one of the wagon trains taking pioneers to California. The story is told from the point of view of Dolly, a doll that traveled in Patty Reed's pocket. The Reed family wasn't actually with the Donner family when the infamous cannibalism took place so Dolly did not observe that and, had the Reed family known about it at the time, the information wouldn't have been shared with their children in any case. As I was feeding my cats this morning, I wondered how much Mrs. Reed would have paid for that can of *Fancy Feast* chicken in gravy.

What was interesting to me was how ill-prepared the pioneers were (and the Reed's probably weren't anywhere near the worst) and how slow the wagon trains traveled. They really didn't have any reliable information about their route, certainly no maps. No weather forecasts either.

I recently finished reading Judith Kerr's *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* and was disgusted by reviewers who were disappointed that Judith Kerr's family was not murdered by the Nazis like Ann Frank's family. I am pretty much equally disgusted by reviewers who only read this book because they were looking forward to the cannibalism. I assume that the publisher of recent editions of the book added the subtitle mentioning the name Donner to boost sales of the book. Those looking for gory stories about pioneers eating each other, should look elsewhere, perhaps *The Hunger* by Alma Katsu would be more satisfying.

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## Emily M says

Well, this was a pleasant surprise! I confess that when I saw our Beautiful Feet California State History curriculum had is reading a story about the Donner Party, I was skeptical. It's such a horrific story, and I doubted that it could be done well for grade schoolers. I was also leery of a book written as a master's thesis. But I was wrong!

By telling the story through a doll's eyes and spending much of the book describing the rest of the trek out to California, the actual horrors in the Sierra Nevada are set in the context of the whole pioneer experience. Fortunately, all the Reeds did survive the journey, so for their family, at least, there's what my little girls considered a happy ending.

The prose is quite lovely, actually. I read the whole book aloud over our two nights in Sacramento, and it so well-written that it was a pleasure to read aloud. The story flowed along so that the kids kept begging me for one more chapter. And of course it was super cool for us to be able to go to Sutter's Fort today and actually see the doll! I wish there were more charming works of historical fiction written like this, around an artifact that kids can go see in person! It's just such an engaging way to learn history.

An unexpected treat - - great for little girls who love *Little House on the Prairie* and other pioneer stories or those who fell in love with Hitty: *Her First Hundred Years* and want to read more American history from the POV of a doll. =)

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## **Robin Zolotoff says**

I chose this book because it was one of my favorites from childhood. I wanted to re-read it as an adult and gain insight as to why I enjoyed it so much. It's a young adult book that doesn't get into some of the worst things that the Donner party suffered, but enough hardship to get the full grasp of their incredible journey. It's told from the perspective of the little wooden doll that Patty Reed carried in her pocket, which is now at Sutter Fort museum in Sacramento.

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## **Christiane says**

An interesting version of the story, focusing on one child and her family. It is remarkable that anyone survived the horrible ordeals they had to endure trapped in the snow.

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## **Braxton Yung says**

I am 9 years old and I read this with my class. It was interesting with the Donner party.

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## **Gale says**

### **A WOODEN FACE CAN ENDURE A GREAST DEAL**

The story of the Donner Party of 1846 as told by a pocket-sized doll who survived the entire ordeal--a silent witness! These 19 short chapters describe the hope, simple pleasures and ultimate grim saga of starvation of the ill-fated Donner party. This pre-Gold rush wagon train took a bogus cutoff and fell into the pitiless trap of early an winter with record blizzards. Many of the emigrants who had dreamed of a new life in California endured the bitterness of prolonged starvation; many died (adults and children) in the snowbound cabins by Donner Lake and Summit Pass, but many others survived, including a plucky 8-year-old girl named Patty Reed.

She has a special friend who helps her endure this Ordeal by Hunger--a tiny wooden doll which she keeps hidden in her clothing. This doll (now on display at the Donner Museum near Truckee, CA) bravely shares the fate of her young mistress without complaint, and Patty keeps no secrets from Dolly. "I could not tell her, but I think she knew I lived on Love, not mortal food."

A tender story of incredible deprivation and the will to live. Young readers will be so caught up in the Reed family's struggle (shared by many other Irish families), that they will hardly notice how much they are learning about the Westward movement, wagon trains and the towering Sierra Nevadas. This is gentle dose of gritty American history--much easier to digestw than ORDEAL BY HUNGER.

(April 23, 2020. I welcome dialogue with teachers.)

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## **Farrah says**

Smooth read and super well-researched...I waited and waited for the doll to dish on the Donner diet of uncle fingers, but she totally skipped it...and then I learned that the Reeds (the second family) didn't resort to cannibalism as the Donners did. So I ended up reading a work of pioneer historical fiction with NOBODY getting eaten by someone else...which I guess is fine. Learned a lot.

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## **Karrel Buck says**

I grew up a few hours from Donner Pass. I read this in 4th grade and this story has held onto my heart ever since then. All American children should read it, especially now when they have no sense of what life was like for people like the Reeds and the Donners. The doll is at Sutter's Fort and it is so powerful to see. If you haven't read this and even if you are a grown up - you must.

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## **Tom says**

What I learned:

"I have not wrote to you half the trouble we have had but I have wrote enough to let you know that you don't know what trouble is. But thank God we have all got through and the only family that did not eat human flesh. We have everything but I don't care for that. We have got through with our lives but Don't let this letter dishearten anybody.

**Never take no cutoffs and hurry along as fast as you can. "**

Virginia Reed to cousin Mary Keyes, May 16, 1847

or

"I will now give you some good and friendly advice. Stay at home,—you are in a good place, where, if sick, you are not in danger of starving to death."

Mary Graves to Levi Fosdick (her sister Sarah Fosdick's father-in-law), 1847

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## **Michelle says**

This book is gentle recount of the Reed/Donner journey to Sutter's Fort told from the point of view of Patty Reed's pocket-sized doll. I think the book does a great job depicting the reality of the challenges while also sparing younger readers the worst details. My daughter and I enjoyed sharing this story together.

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## **Jeanette says**

We picked this book up the last time we visited Donner Memorial State Park in California.

The story is told from the perspective of Patty Reed's doll (which is on display at Sutters Fort in Sacramento).

One of my kids, knowing some of the history of the Donner Party, was not eager to read this but the author did a good job of describing the harrowing ordeal the Reeds experienced without going into gruesome detail. In fact, the Reeds were camped some miles from the Donners and never engaged in cannibalism. So this story does not even mention it, as the story is told from Patty Reeds doll's perspective.

If you want a kids book that tells more of the Donners story and does not skirt all the gruesome issues as much, my son recommends Donner Dinner Party by Nathan Hale. I've not read it but he assures me it is good.

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