



Answer Creek

A Novel

by Ashley E. Sweeney



Fiction - Historical - Event/Era

350 Pages

Reviewed on 04/25/2020

Book Review

Reviewed by Heather Osborne for Readers' Favorite

Answer Creek by Ashley E. Sweeney is the fictional account of Ada Weeks, who joins with the historical Donner-Reed Party during their journey west to California in the mid-1800s. Ada accompanies the Breen family after her adoptive parents are killed by being swept downstream while fording a river. The Breen family opts to follow Donner and Reed on a shortcut, leading them to suffer unspeakably in the Sierra Nevada mountains during the winter. Ada watches helplessly as people she has grown to care for succumb to the harsh weather conditions. When, finally, the party is rescued, Ada must come to terms with all she has experienced and lost and attempt to create a new life for herself in California.

I have always been a fan of historical novels that trace immigration to the West, and the Donner-Reed Party is no stranger to me, having learned about it while in school. The stories surrounding their experiences are grim and sometimes exaggerated. In Answer Creek, Ashley E. Sweeney uses Ada as an observer of what has happened, as she wasn't really a member of the ill-fated party. However, the Donners, Reeds, and Breens were. There is a huge amount of research that goes into writing a historical novel like this, and I appreciated the author's efforts to stick to the historical facts as much as possible, while still making Ada an interesting character to follow. I found myself quickly drawn into her plight, feeling her anger at her circumstances, and hopeful when she was eventually rescued. Answer Creek by Ashley E. Sweeney is a fascinating historical novel, aimed at anyone interested in the struggles of pioneers, especially the Donner-Reed Party. I will certainly look for more novels by this author.