

# Donner Party tragedy becomes a stage musical



“The Donner Party” opens this weekend. Photo/Charr Crail/Sacramento Theatre Company

**By Marcus Crowder, Sacramento Bee**

If you heard that Sacramento Theatre Company will produce a world premiere musical based on the story of the legendary Donner Party, you might have thought, “Hmm, that’s a nervy choice.”

The creators of “The Donner Party,” which opens this weekend on the STC Main Stage, just want you to keep an open mind and give them a chance. After all, a few years ago an enterprising young man turned the dense literary biography of American Founding Father Alexander Hamilton into an unlikely multiracial hip-hop musical. That turned out OK.

To refresh your memory of local history, the Donner party was a group of pioneers led by George Donner and James F. Reed who in May 1846 set out for Sutter’s Fort from Springfield, Ill. The trip by wagon train typically took between four and six months. The Donner-Reed party left a larger body of wagons to

take an untried “shortcut” across the Great Basin, which had been described by writer-adventurer Lansford Hastings.

**Read the whole story**