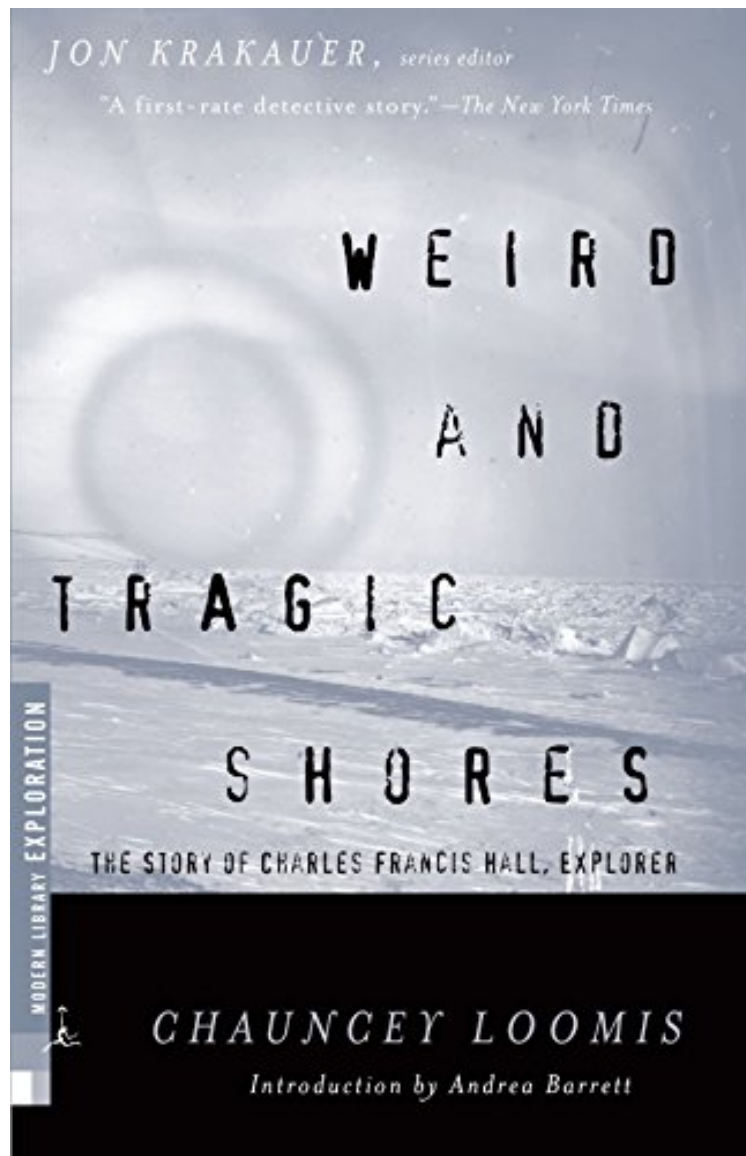


(Free and download) *Weird and Tragic Shores: The Story of Charles Francis Hall, Explorer* (Modern Library Exploration)

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Chauncey Loomis, Andrea Barrett
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Chauncey Loomis, Andrea Barrett : *Weird and Tragic Shores: The Story of Charles Francis Hall, Explorer* (Modern Library Exploration) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and

all praised *Weird and Tragic Shores: The Story of Charles Francis Hall, Explorer* (Modern Library Exploration):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A story of courage and murder. C.F. Hall's quest for the North Pole By TigVIC.F. Hall deserves a higher place in the pantheon of 19th century Arctic explorers. Hall had no experience as a sailor, navigator or explorer yet he made 3 excursions into the treacherous waters above the Arctic Circle. The last resulting in his mysterious death and the ordeal of the survivors of his ship, *The Polaris*. I'd rate this book much higher if Loomis had written more about Hall's voyages and less about his efforts to raise the money for them. These were struggles that would have destroyed the hopes of someone less dedicated than Hall. They give the reader an appreciation for Hall's devotion to his dreams of Arctic exploration. But fund raising is not nearly as interesting as exploration. Loomis does devote a great deal to Hall's life among the Inuit. He was the 1st white man to fully adapt to the Inuit life. He overcame typical 19th century prejudices and understood that the Inuits had survived in the Arctic for centuries and that to ignore their culture would mean failure. But Loomis was very cautious about drawing any conclusions regarding Hall's tragic death. It could have been murder. It might not have been murder. The psychological stress of an Arctic Winter adversely affected crew members who, according to Loomis, weren't fit for the rigors on this journey to begin with. Who knows if one or more could have been driven to murder Hall just to end his dangerous journey? Given the fascinating subject matter, Loomis could have written a more engaging story. There's a lot of good stuff in the book but the pace is erratic.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. *Farthest North?* By Bill King What causes a merely modestly successful, married middle class businessman during the American civil war era to suddenly decide to head up an arctic rescue mission (and then return yet again for another try). And then later still, successfully campaign to be chosen by Congress to lead the then most ambitious ever official U.S. expedition to the North Pole itself? His character. Hall took his Christianity very seriously. All of the crew of Franklin's famous expedition of a decade past were lost and Hall decided to dedicate himself to help, even though his limited means meant that he must hitchhike a ride out on a whaling ship, then set himself ashore alone, and live cheaply on the polar wasteland among the Eskimos from whom he meant to learn Franklin's fate. Indeed Hall, way way out there in icy nowhere land, after learning the Inuit language, did find out valuable clues from conversations from native elders while spending a few winters sharing this people's dangerous way of life, their igloos, their hunger in bad times, and their raw meat diet in better times. Because he kept a daily diary we get whole amazing story. Hall managed to learn enough of the truth to allow him to lead a dangerous trek for to collect valuable Franklin expedition artifacts. Upon returning the second time to civilization, his book and lectures were enough for him to win commandship of an official American expedition to hopefully attain the Pole itself, President Grant in enthusiastic support!

Farthest North? Well the tale of Hall's third trip is a very good one and a final mystery is produced for our consideration thanks to the author's own modern day travel up the High North where he takes samples whose later medical analysis yields astonishing results.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good, moves along nicely, but does have some deficiencies. By Kelly Howard I had a hard time deciding between 3 4 stars on this one, but once I thought more about what I consider deficits, I decided to go with 3. It may be an indication that I've spent too much time reading Polar Exploration books, but Loomis leaves out some things that not only came out in other books about Hall's expedition (esp. the third), but came out in his chapter on the investigation after the survivors came home. As an example, Budington's drinking. Other books have gone into considerably more detail about that, and Loomis describes how it came out in the investigation, but as he writes about the expedition as it happens, it rates barely a mention. It's almost as if Loomis didn't know about it until it came out in the queries, which is ridiculous. Whatever the conclusion of what really killed Hall, the fact that the 2nd in command was a drunken sot surely should be mentioned, especially in the incredibly confined, madness-inducing "world" of a people locked into the Arctic ice. Other glaring gaps come in the form of statements he makes but does nothing to explain or back up. One example; when, on the last expedition, the ship is anchored to a berg, a storm comes up yanks it off, setting it adrift. Now, the ship was carefully anchored to the berg when they realized they were stuck for the winter; the captain crew put it there with care forethought. When it comes off, however, Loomis states that "[the ship] could not be steered" talks about them being frantic, drifting helplessly amongst the menacing ice. Why?? He never mentions anything being broken except the anchoring ropes. Why all of a sudden was the ship helpless, when everything was fine when they settled down? Is this some sort of literary license to make it more exciting? Whatever the excuse, I found it deeply irritating when he would make these bald, dramatic statements that had zero basis. Loomis barely misses another, WAY too frequent complaint I have against Polar authors, in that he actually included two maps. They are barely maps, mere pencil outlines of most of the relevant areas with a few identifiers, but for some reason many of these authors don't even do that, and it is maddening. Andrea Barrett, who wrote the intro to this edition (btw is an incredible writer person) had a better map in her fictional account "*The Voyage of the Narwhal**." but Loomis had something, at least. Loomis does a good job of putting together what is known about Hall and his life for the most part (except for those big holes), and the book moves along nicely, for the most part. On a side note, having grown up in Cincinnati, it was also interesting to me to read about the events people there. One gripe I have with Hall himself (pointless tho that may be) is how much he trumpeted his 'ability to live in the North like the Esquimaux.' Granted, he was more willing to deal with treat the

Inuit as actual human beings than many of the insular folks of his age, which is admirable, but from what I've read of him (not just this book), his "ability" lay primarily in letting the 'Esquimeaux' do all the work keep him alive. He did live with them for long periods of time, but there is no indication that he actually learned to do what they did to survive in that unforgiving habitat; he basically sat in the igloos they made ate what they brought him. Contrast him with Matthew Hensen, who lived with the Inuit truly learned to do what they did, without whom Peary would never have made it. Hensen was far, far more able to live support himself in the Arctic, and his (sadly brief but wonderfully written) "A Negro Explorer at the North Pole" is a must-read for anyone interested in polar living or exploration. That book reveals a wit not unlike Mark Twain, and one can only speculate what an amazing book Hensen could've written without the strictures of the times; as a black person, every word of his had to be carefully weighed and limited. I don't have a problem, as some reviewers did, with Loomis being unwilling to draw a final conclusion about Hall's cause of death. It's difficult enough at times to figure that out with contemporary deaths, and the evidence simply does not point to a definitive answer. Had he declared it a murder (or accident, or whatever), it would merely have been Loomis putting his own spin on the ambiguous evidence, anyway. He simply presented what evidence there was, and left it at that, which to me seems appropriate. Perhaps if the investigators had asked more intelligent questions and determined the exact movements of, say, Dr Bessels the cook when Hall got back, drank the suspect coffee, got sick, or indeed the movements of all the principals during the crucial periods, a more certain conclusion could be drawn now. But as it is, the incident is obscured by the fog of many decades and the uncertainty of actions all those years ago. It has to remain inconclusive, because no real conclusion can legitimately be drawn. *which is a 5 star all the way, even aside from the fact that I've met Ms Barrett on several occasions think she's one of the greatest writers, nicest people, who ever lived. Several incidents in her book are drawn from actual events in Arctic exploration, and "The Narwhal" should be read by anyone interested in Polar Exploration, or in really good books.

In 1860, fifteen years after Sir John Franklin's ill-fated expedition disappeared in the Arctic, a Cincinnati businessman named Charles Francis Hall set out to locate and rescue the expedition's survivors. He was an amateur explorer, without any scientific training or experience, but he was driven by a sense of personal destiny and of religious and patriotic mission. Despite the odds against him, he made three forays into the far North, the final--and fatal--one taking him farther north than any westerner had ever gone before. But Hall was suddenly taken ill on that voyage and died under mysterious circumstances. Ninety-seven years later, Chauncey Loomis headed an expedition to Hall's grave in northwestern Greenland. He exhumed Hall's frozen body and performed an autopsy. His findings suggest that the investigators of Hall's death nervously sidestepped the damning evidence. Loomis has written a masterful biography-cum-mystery that brilliantly evokes the lure of the Arctic and the brutal contest between man and nature. With a new Introduction by Andrea Barrett, author of *The Voyage of the Narwhal*

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