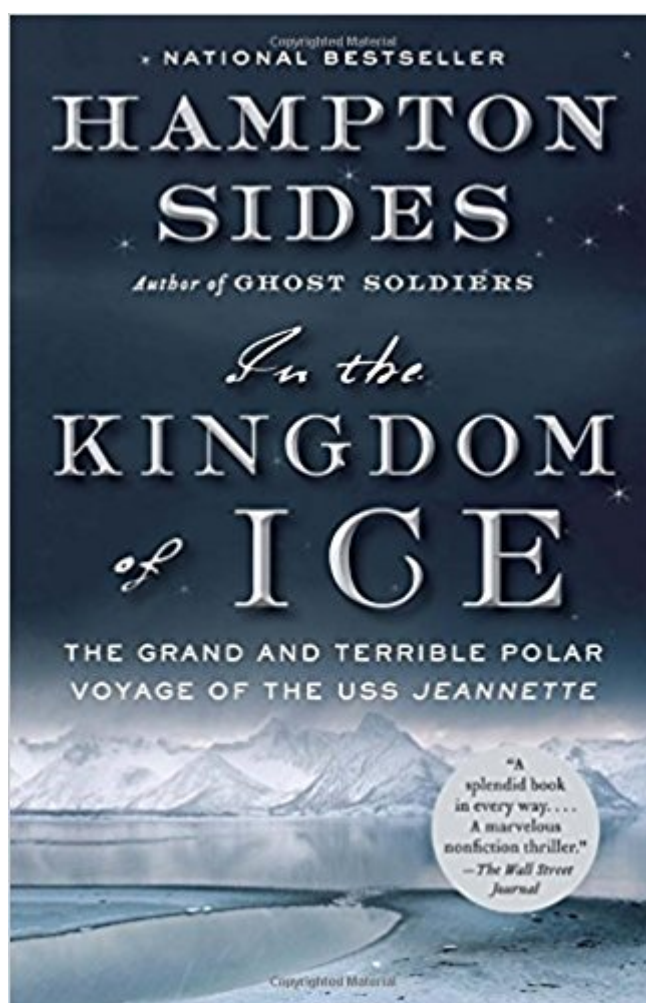


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In The Kingdom Of Ice: The Grand And Terrible Polar Voyage Of The USS Jeannette



Synopsis

A Best Book of the Year USA Today * Time Magazine * Washington Post * Miami Herald * Richmond Times Dispatch * Christian Science Monitor * Daily Beast * Minneapolis Star Tribune On July 8, 1879, Captain George Washington De Long and his team of thirty-two men set sail from San Francisco on the USS Jeannette. Heading deep into uncharted Arctic waters, they carried the aspirations of a young country burning to be the first nation to reach the North Pole. Two years into the harrowing voyage, the Jeannette's hull was breached by an impassable stretch of pack ice, forcing the crew to abandon ship amid torrents of rushing water. Hours later, the ship had sunk below the surface, marooning the men a thousand miles north of Siberia, where they faced a terrifying march with minimal supplies across the endless ice pack. Enduring everything from snow blindness and polar bears to ferocious storms and labyrinths of ice, the crew battled madness and starvation as they struggled desperately to survive. With thrilling twists and turns, *In The Kingdom of Ice* is a spellbinding tale of heroism and determination in the most brutal place on Earth.

Book Information

Paperback: 480 pages

Publisher: Anchor; Reprint edition (May 26, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0307946916

ISBN-13: 978-0307946911

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.9 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 1,668 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #27,233 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #2 in [Books > Travel > Polar Regions > Antarctica](#) #2 in [Books > Travel > Polar Regions > Arctic](#) #7 in [Books > History > Arctic & Antarctica](#)

Customer Reviews

An Best Book of the Month, August 2014: In the last few decades of the 19th century, the world looked very different from the way it does now. Parts of the map were unfilled--chief among those spaces was the North Pole, which many believed contained warm currents that might provide safe passage. Enter James Gordon Bennett, the wealthy and eccentric owner of the New York Herald. Bennett--who was responsible for sending Stanley in search of Livingstone--wanted to produce another thrill for his readers, so he funded a naval expedition to reach the pole. Captained by

George Washington De Long, the U.S.S. Jeannette shipped out in 1879 toward glory and parts unknown. The Jeannette became encased in ice, but the adventure was only just beginning. Author Hampton Sides does a masterful job of setting up the voyage against the backdrop of the Gilded Age, developing fascinating characters along the way, and delivering a true triumph of narrative nonfiction. Drawing on journal entries, letters, and eventually his own visit to the region, Sides paints a vivid, moving, and breathless portrait of the crew of the Jeannette. How could a book about this much snow and ice be this good? --Chris Schlupe --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

"Enthralling" In the Kingdom of Ice is a brilliant explosion of narrative non-fiction: detailed, moving, harrowing, as gripping as any well-paced thriller but a lot more interesting because it is also true. Too often American heroism is presented as one-dimensional success against the odds. This is a much more subtle and rewarding book, an account of magnificent disaster, of courage devoted to attempting something that could not be done."--The Times of London

"As our knowledge of the world increases, it must be difficult for audacious explorers to find terra incognita to match their passion. Surely the same frustration holds true for writers in that worthy genre, exploration literature: Haven't all great stories been told? Never underestimate the ingenuity of a first-rate author. Hampton Sides' In the Kingdom of Ice: The Grand and Terrible Polar Voyage of the USS Jeannette, which recounts the astonishing tribulations of a group of seafarers determined to be the first men to reach and reconnoiter the North Pole, is a splendid book in every way. It would be malicious to ruin the suspense about the fate of the Jeannette's crew. The book is a marvelous nonfiction thriller."--The Wall Street Journal

"Compelling....Sides spins a propulsive narrative from obscure documents, journals and his own firsthand visits to the Arctic regions visited by the Jeannette and its crew. In the Kingdom of Ice makes for harrowing reading as it recounts the grim aspects of the explorers' battle for survival: illness, crippling frostbite, snow-blindness and the prospect of starvation. As grisly as the details are, you keep turning pages to find out how DeLong and his men pull themselves past each setback • even though there's always another one looming ahead."--USA Today

"[Sides] brings vividness to In the Kingdom of Ice, and in the tragedy of the Jeannette he found a story that epitomizes both the heroism and the ghastly expense of life that characterized the entire Arctic enterprise. With an eye for the telling detail, he sketches the crew members as individuals. The bare facts of what happened to the Jeannette's crew are easily Googleable, but if you don't already know the

story, *In the Kingdom of Ice* reads like a first-class epic thriller. De Long and his companions became explorers of not only unknown geographical territory but also extremes of suffering and despair. In his stoic endurance of disappointment and pain, De Long rivals Louis Zamperini, the hero of Laura Hillenbrand's *Unbroken*. --Lev Grossman, *Time Magazine* "First-rate polar history and adventure narrative...wonderfully evocative.... Sides vividly recounts the horrors [of the voyage]. *In the Kingdom of Ice* is a harrowing story, well told.--The *New York Times Book Review* "Unforgettable" a pulse-racing epic of endurance set against an exceedingly bizarre Arctic backdrop [Sides'] descriptions of the physical challenges the men face and the eerie landscape that surrounds them are masterful. As De Long and his crew attempt to save themselves, the story grows in suspense and psychological complexity | More strange and fantastic turns follow, involving uncharted and uninhabited lands, and it pains me that I cannot describe them without spoiling the pleasure of those who have not yet read *In the Kingdom of Ice*. Sides' book is a masterful work of history and storytelling. --The *Los Angeles Times* "America's own brush with epic polar tragedy, the subject of Hampton Sides' phenomenally gripping new book, is a less well-known affair | What ensued a struggle to survive and a nearly 1,000-mile trek across the Arctic Ocean and into the vastness of Siberia stands as one of the most perilous journeys ever. Sides works story-telling magic as he evokes the pathos and suffering of what unfolded: De Long and his crew endured hardships that boggle the mind. But there is also beauty here | [Sides] writes superbly on the geography of Siberia and the Arctic, and the abundant bird and animal life the explorers encountered on their travels, which took them across ice, storm-tossed seas, treacherous tundra, rocky seacoasts, and volcanic islands. --The *Boston Globe* "harrowing and impeccably paced." "A dazzling page-turner....." --Nathaniel Philbrick, *New York Times* bestselling author of *In the Heart of the Sea*, *Bunker Hill* and *Sea of Glory* "[A] stunningly vivid account...." --Mark Bowden, *New York Times* Bestselling author of *Black Hawk Down* "An astonishingly good story...." --Candice Millard, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Destiny of the Republic* and *The River of Doubt* "Hampton Sides conjures the doomed USS *Jeannette* and her courageous crew with haunting power...." --Caroline Alexander, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Endurance* and *The Bounty* "A spellbinding tale...." --David Grann, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Lost City of Z* "Hampton Sides is one of America's most expansive and engaging storytellers, and he proves it again with the incredible saga of the

USS *Jeannette*...." --Scott Anderson, New York Times bestselling author of *Lawrence in Arabia*" A vivid tale of exploration set in a howling, deadly wilderness." --T.J. Stiles, Pulitzer Prize winning author of *The First Tycoon: The Epic Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt*

You can read the synopsis up top, so I won't bore you with that. I will, however, recommend that you read this. If you are here, I will assume you have an interest in either the author's work or, more likely, the history of polar exploration. I have not previously read any of Side's other books, but with a fairly strong interest in the history of the exploration of the poles, I can heartily recommend this. This is first-rate narrative history, well-written and paced to create a gripping account. "Novelistic" can be used as an insult to history writing, but I use it here as a compliment. This is a page-turner. Unfortunately, having read this in galleys, there is no index, nor are photos provided, but the end notes are thorough and this seems to be very well researched. The letters written by Lt. DeLong's wife during the time he and the ship and crew were out of contact are hear-warming and -rending and provide an excellent counter-point and commentary on the main narrative, and the author's access to the surviving journals and letters of the other crew members allow him to paint full-bodied portraits of the men on the ice. You come very quickly to care about these men and their fates. The story of the *Jeannette* is, like many explorations before and after it, one of extreme heroism, a good deal of heartbreak, and high adventure for those of us in armchairs. This is a fine addition to the literature.

I could not put this book down. This is a detailed historical account of a tragic polar expedition that reads like a psychological thriller novel. Adding to the novelistic flavor are poignant quotes from the journals and letters of the expedition's men and stories about their loved ones waiting for their return. When George Washington De Long, a young naval officer, left the San Francisco harbor on July 8, 1879, commanding the ship "*Jeanette*," he was already a national hero. Earnest and methodical, he was leading a handpicked, competent, disciplined crew, bound for the North Pole. De Long and many other explorers and scientists in that era believed that the Arctic ice pack formed only an outer ring, and beyond it was an "Open Polar Sea." This "Open Polar Sea" was thought to be a large, warm water basin, that a ship might sail through right to the North Pole, possibly finding land and inhabitants at the North Pole. De Long's expedition was in search of a pathway through this ice to the "Open Polar Sea." De Long did not know, as he set sail, that data from a U.S. Bering Sea survey disproving the "Open Polar Sea" theory would reach Washington, DC after he

sailed. Even after he began to suspect that the theory might be wrong, he continued pursuing his goal of reaching the North Pole and making additional discoveries in the Arctic. This was not a totally unreasonable idea -- the ship was heavily reinforced to resist the ice packs, and carried huge amounts of coal to keep the crew warm, plentiful food, dogs for hauling and an excellent navigator, an innovative engineer and a brilliant doctor. But as the book shows, the Arctic is treacherous, and just a few pieces of bad luck and some missing or erroneous information can destroy the bravest, strongest and best-trained men. The book also provides an overview of Gilded Age American and European society in this era, and how Victorian concepts of exploration, manhood, and science affected the expedition's planning and outcome. Especially striking are the portraits -- almost mini-novellas -- of the two primary intellectual sponsors of the voyage and their impact on its goals and design -- the expedition's financially generous, but dangerously eccentric and unrealistic financial sponsor, James Gordon Bennett, Jr., the autocratic owner of the New York Herald Tribune, and Professor Augustus Petermann, a brilliant German cartographer, suffering from severe bipolar disorder (untreatable in his day) and an unwillingness to consider alternative polar geography theories. A third sponsor -- the U.S. Navy -- truly did its best for the expedition, fitting out the ship in the California Mare Island naval shipyard with the expert advice of naval engineers. The book is a classic illustration of the fact that even careful planning by experts cannot foresee all possible outcomes and cannot save projects based on erroneous theories.

Hampton Sides is an American historian and journalist. He recounts the astonishing trials of a group of 33 dedicated seamen determined to be the first men to reach the North Pole. The story is fraught with the perils of nature and how it diminished even the heartiest explorer's determination to survive. The time was circa 1880; when the genius of Thomas Edison and Alexander Bell was still evolving, and when James Gordon Bennett Jr. was the owner, publisher and editor of the "New York Herald"; he was also the benefactor of the voyage of the USS Jeannette even though the vessel was inducted into the US Navy. The story is distilled from the private writings and journal of the Commander, George De Long, various crew members including Melville the engineer and Ambler the ship's medical officer. It is a captivating historical account that reveals the sorrow of separation of loved ones, the severe conditions under which the crew's survival pivoted and the tragic end to the Jeannette and its commander, De Long, as well as a number of other crew members. Although the expedition was a failure in its quest, reaching the North Pole, it did provide scientific data that was preserved and returned with the survivors of the mission. If nothing less, the data dispelled the theory of the open

polar sea as supported by Heinrich Petermann widely regarded as the world's leading theoretical cartographer of the time and whose maps commander De Long depended on. While steeped in historical detail, Hampton Sides makes the recitation of the facts incredibly readable and the resulting story a page-turner that cannot be put down. I highly recommend that you add this book to your reading list; you shouldn't be disappointed.

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