



The Beast of Chicago: The Murderous Career of H. H. Holmes (A Treasury of Victorian Murder) (v. 6)

By Rick Geary

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He was the world's first serial killer and he existed in the late 19th century, operating around the Chicago World's Fair, building a literal house of horrors, replete with chutes for dead bodies, gas chambers, surgical rooms. He methodically murdered up to 200 people, mostly young women. The infamous H.H. Holmes is the next subject of Geary's award-winning and increasingly popular series.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this graphic novel series, Geary covers some of history's most famous murders in meticulously researched, beautifully drawn volumes. This one takes on H.H. Holmes, one of America's first serial killers, whose "murder castle" shocked and stunned the era. It's 1886, and Holmes arrives in Chicago, a seemingly clean and enterprising young man but actually a murderous con artist with a spectacular ability to talk people into trusting him. Over the next five years, he spins an insanely complicated web of cons and evasions, as acquaintance after acquaintance disappears. He acquires three wives and numerous children--all unaware of each other--and his "boarding house" (aka the "murder castle") becomes a place where tourists check in but don't check out. This boarding house houses everything from a gas chamber to an abattoir for victims. Holmes's murder spree ends with an increasingly desperate flight from the law covering several states and involving the murders of three children. Geary renders all of this in a bouncy pen and ink style, the cheerfulness of which belies the horrid events, complete with maps, diagrams and charts to help readers follow the complex story. Despite its charming outward appearance, Geary's art has a chilling subtext that makes the story even more creepy. He's able to make everyday conversation as unsettling as the gruesome violence that figures prominently in every story. Geary is an underrated master of comics, and this book will equally interest history buffs, true crime enthusiasts and fans of good comics.

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School--Geary chronicles the man thought by some to be the world's first-known serial killer. Estimates on the number of men, women, and children murdered by the ghastly H. H. Holmes are as high as 200. In fin de siècle Chicago, he ran the cruelly efficient "Castle," a twisting maze of secret doors, airtight rooms, gas chambers, and ovens where he secretly dispatched his victims. He was also a con man and fraud, keeping several wives and families, and using any means of deception to further his many nefarious schemes. In a matter-of-fact style, Geary places the unequivocally evil Holmes against the promise then held by the city of Chicago, where the glow of electric lights from the World Exposition turned night into day. In the recounting of Holmes's ever-changing aliases, schemes, coconspirators, families, and victims, the inherent complexity of the tale reduces many of the episodes and characterizations to a blur. The black-and-white artwork is confident and compelling, and comparisons to Edward Gorey (in theme and style) are inevitable. Although it lacks Gorey's dark drollery, Geary's work is certainly stylish in its own right. This macabre tale is certainly not for the squeamish, but older readers who are fans of Gorey, murder mysteries, or true crime may enjoy it.

Douglas P. Davey, Guelph Public Library, Ontario, Canada

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From [Booklist](#)

Already well limned in prose by historic true-crime wiz Harold Schechter (*Depraved*, 1994) and horror novelist Robert Bloch ("Dr. Holmes' Murder Castle" in *Crimes and Punishments* [BKL Ja 1 & 15 03]), the criminal career of H. H. Holmes (1861-95) is now actually limned by premier true-crime graphic novelist Geary. Physician and pharmacist Holmes took advantage of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair to indulge his taste for unauthorized autopsies in a three-story monstrosity of his own design--part retail space, part hotel, part "laboratories"--a short ride away from the fair. Although it burned to the ground before his execution, Holmes' "castle" became his icon. As he did with the cramped Borden house in *The Borden Tragedy* (1997) and the railroad-station scene of President Garfield's assassination in *The Fatal Bullet* (1999), Geary offers a

plan of its second floor (the "labs") as the book's icon, and relies not on gore but on the scrupulously drawn, strictly sidereal detail and the droll, telling expression to advance Holmes' story. *Ray Olson*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Trevor Wright:

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Rhonda Lanham:

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