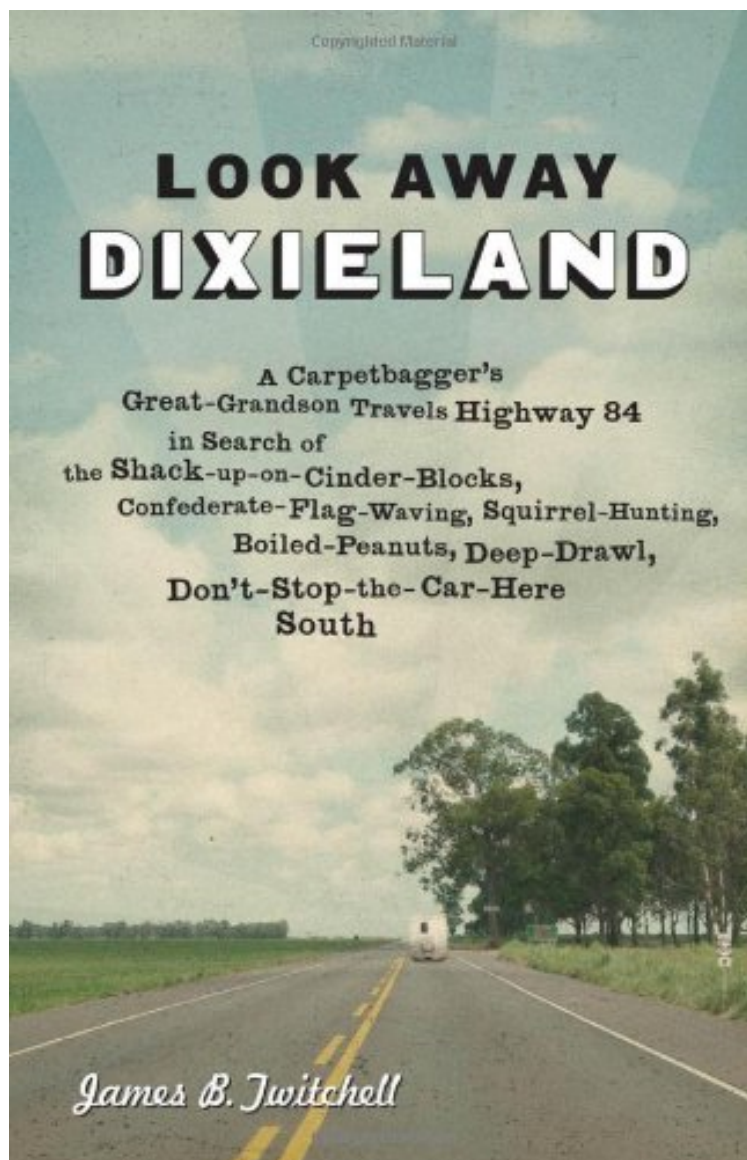


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Look Away Dixieland: A Carpetbagger's Great-Grandson Travels Highway 84 in Search of the Shack-up-on-Cinder-Blocks, Confederate-Flag-Waving, ... Deep-Drawl, Don't-Stop-the-Car-Here South

James B. Twitchell

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James B. Twitchell : Look Away Dixieland: A Carpetbagger's Great-Grandson Travels Highway 84 in Search of the Shack-up-on-Cinder-Blocks, Confederate-Flag-Waving, ... Deep-Drawl, Don't-Stop-the-Car-Here South

before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Look Away Dixieland: A Carpetbagger's Great-Grandson Travels Highway 84 in Search of the Shack-up-on-Cinder-Blocks, Confederate-Flag-Waving, ... Deep-Drawl, Don't-Stop-the-Car-Here South*:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Makes me want to rent my own RV and take to the road
By Bluestalking
The fact it seems to have taken me forever to read this book has absolutely nothing to do with how I felt about it. Rather, it is a book to be read slowly, to digest all the facts and deeply thought out opinions about the modern South and how that is or isn't a reflection on its current state. As a native Southerner raised in the North, I share a lot of opinions with Twitchell - though admittedly he's spent much of his life in Florida (technically the South, though not the Deep South), and I'm in Illinois. Not having grown up there I've been able to take a step back and really see it, something I'm not sure those raised Southern have been able to do. Had I been preparing to undertake such a trip as he did, I have no doubt I'd have the same sort of misgivings and feelings of excitement, he felt. Unlike Twitchell, I have no historically significant family story to research, no well-known ancestor distinguished for having played a pivotal role. I had some relatives in the Civil War - and the Revolutionary, as well - but no family story aside from one relative having possibly received a medal of valor, and even that's unsubstantiated, since no one seems to be in possession of any proof. But to have a story like his in the family: a great-grandfather who began as a carpetbagger, became a state senator who advocated separate but equal schools for blacks and whites so early in history, ultimately ending the victim of a hate crime so vile he lost both arms, retreating to his home in Vermont in frustration and defeat. That's a different situation than mine, altogether. If his family story were a novel it would be a riveting one, though all that happened in actual history would seem unrealistically over the top. And to know it's all true... It's amazing and exciting. To know your family had been so instrumental, so determined to change a part of the country so resistant, is a feeling I can only imagine. Twitchell took a journey through the South to help answer questions like: is there anything left of the hatred that led to horrifying violence such as lynchings and murder of black sympathizers; are the stereotypes about the South true, that they're a bunch of lazy, Yankee-hating backwoodsmen; and, basically, who are these people today, and how does their history affect who they are? Or does it? He and his wife travelled in an RV, taking historic Rte. 84, a journey roughly equivalent to driving Rte. 66, if it was still intact and the towns along the way still in existence. The intent was to see the countryside, not to whiz past on an interstate, and fortunately for them Rte. 84 has not yet been replaced - though it may be in the process. Their itinerary led them through the mid-section of the Deep South, through Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and, ultimately, into the land of his ancestor Marshall Harvey Twitchell: Louisiana. What they found along the way was mixed, but nowhere did native southerners treat them with anything less than graciousness, never did they feel threatened, and despite the fact they were complete strangers in a strange land, every town featured at least one person anxious to show him whatever he wanted to see. Several places they stopped to visit sounded so fascinating I've gone on to research them further, namely Gee's Bend, a formerly isolated island on which freed Blacks settled, cutting themselves off from the rest of society. On the island the most beautiful quilts were created, using every scrap of unneeded fabric. So stunning are they, they're now hanging in museums, taking trips around to various cities as travelling exhibits. And back in Gee's Bend itself, the people now sell quilts for outrageous sums of money, taking full advantage of their interesting history, losing what once made them so singular: their isolated culture. Finally, Twitchell and his wife reached Louisiana and the Red River area surrounding Coshatta, where his great-grandfather had lived and distinguished himself as a man who built a fortune while working to improve the lives of the black citizens. He found local historians, who told versions of the massacre of dozens of black men, and also those of members of his own family, Twitchell could barely recognize. As for his great-grandfather, opinions on him and his reputation were likewise mixed. The legend he was shot by a man wearing green goggles, fascinatingly enough, was made more plausible when one of the historians placed them in Twitchell's own hands. He put them on, feeling a strange, creepy feeling the same man who'd cost his great-grandfather his arms had looked through these same glasses, handing them back with some haste, history having become almost too realistic. In the end, Twitchell left with the name of the person who had killed his great-grandfather. Though he first thought he'd pass that name along, when all was said and done he changed his mind. Better to bury the dead, forgive the past, and move on with life. Now that he'd made the journey, answered some questions but opened up others, there could be a sense of closure. This sense of closure is one of the major themes of the book. In the beginning there was curiosity, a need to answer questions about his family's history, but after having conducted such thorough research everything boiled down to whether he wanted to carry this newfound knowledge on his shoulders, to let it blossom into a grudge, or if it was best left in the past, stored with his great-grandfather's artifacts. It would have been so easy to let anger rule, but he chose not to do that, learning the lessons of history and consciously not repeating those things resentment can produce. As such the book he wrote is a wise one, filled with one man's journey to the past by way of the present, learning what truth he could in the time he had. The result is a fascinating book introducing all new aspects of the South I personally had no idea existed, making me realize how multi-faceted the history of this area truly is. Very highly recommended to all with an interest in all things southern, and also to those who'd like to know more about the Reconstruction Period.
Lisa Guidarini- NBCC5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Not your ordinary

travel guideBy BLehnerAs much as I love to travel, I also love reading about other people's wanderlust. I'm not one to go for the same old travel guides though, so when I had the chance to read James B. Twitchell's *Look Away, Dixieland* I knew I'd be in for a real treat. And I really was!Presenting a different kind of journey through the Deep South of the US, what the author calls a historical-quest-travelogue, this is as much a historical guide book as it is an entertaining road trip. Fun to read and also highly informative the reader follows Twitchell along Route 84 to uncover facts about his great-grandfather, a carpetbagger from the North, whose fate is deeply mingled with this region's past. Though this book isn't just about traveling the road, but even more so, it's an introspective journey, furnished with wonderful witty and smart humor.While the first part of the book is mainly about his great-grandfather's past, it is at the same time a compelling history lesson. The second part is more along the lines of travel experiences on his tour through the small-town South, and unique ones at that. Having been on a bus tour through the region myself many years ago, I certainly didn't get this in depth view of Dixieland. From swamps to quilt-making, from squirrel hunting dogs to Baptist churches, I thoroughly enjoyed the trip and even learned a thing or two on the way.In short: Not your ordinary travel guide!Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher through the NetGalley.com book review program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 : "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Interesting Visit To The SouthBy PoCoKatI've always been fascinated by the American South so I read this book with great interest. It is a history book in that it recounts the story of "carpetbagger" Marshall Harvey Twitchell, the great-grandfather of the author. And it is a travelogue in that it describes the RV journey undertaken by the author and his wife along Highway 84 through the Deep South. It was a really interesting read. Like most people I had never heard of the massacre at Colfax or Coushatta, both in Louisiana. The knowledge of these events and how they fit into the decline of reconstruction of the US South was very enlightening. I also found the description of the area along Highway 84 to be quite fascinating. I appreciate that the author was curious about his family's history and that he needed to know the whole story. If you are interested in the history, geography and sociology of the US South then this is a must read.

As a boy, James Twitchell heard stories about his ancestors in Louisiana and even played with his great-grandfather's Civil War sword, but he never appreciated the state and the events that influenced a pivotal chapter in his family history. His great-grandfather, Marshall Harvey Twitchell, a carpetbagger from Vermont, had settled in upstate Louisiana during Reconstruction, married a local girl, and encountered much success until a fateful day in August 1874. The dramatic story of the elder Twitchell's life and near assassination fuels the author's pursuit of his family's history and a true understanding of the South.In *Look Away, Dixieland*, Vermont-native Twitchell sets out from his current home inFlorida on the inauguration day of America's first black president to find the "real" South and to try to understand the truth about his illustrious ancestor. He travels in an RV from Georgia's Okefenokee Swamp across Alabama and Mississippi to Coushatta, Louisiana. As he drives through the heart of Dixie, Twitchell sorts through the prejudices he learned from his northern rearing. In searching for the culture he had held at arm's length for so long, he tours small-town southern life -- in campgrounds, cotton gins, churches, country fairs, and squirrel dog kennels -- and uncovers some fundamental truths along the way. Notably, he discovers that prejudices of race, class, and ideology are not limited by geography. As one man from Georgia mockingly summed up North versus South stereotypes, "Y'all are rude and we're stupid."Unexpectedly, Twitchell also uncovers facts about his great-grandfather and sheds new light on his family's past. An enlightening, humorous, and refreshingly honest search, *Look Away, Dixieland* reveals some of the differences and similarities that ultimately define us as a nation.

"A learned, funny, and quirky but at the same time meditative, sad, and disturbing journey through an American heart of darkness. A combination of history and travel account that connects a family's story to a horrible though long-observed Reconstruction-era massacre. Here are delightful descriptions of swamps, snakes, squirrel dogs, and Frankie Jean Lewis, but here also is a lethal stew of land, honor, race, violence, and politics." --George C. Rable, author of *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War*About the AuthorJames B. Twitchell lives in Gainesville, Florida, and Charlotte, Vermont, with his wife, Mary. He was a professor of English at the University of Florida for many years and is the author of, among others, *Twenty Ads That Shook the World*; *Living It Up: Our Love Affair with Luxury*; *Branded Nation: The Marketing of Megachurch, College, Inc., and Museumworld*; and *Where Men Hide*.