



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

James B. Twitchell

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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 in Florida 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 Coshatta, 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.

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