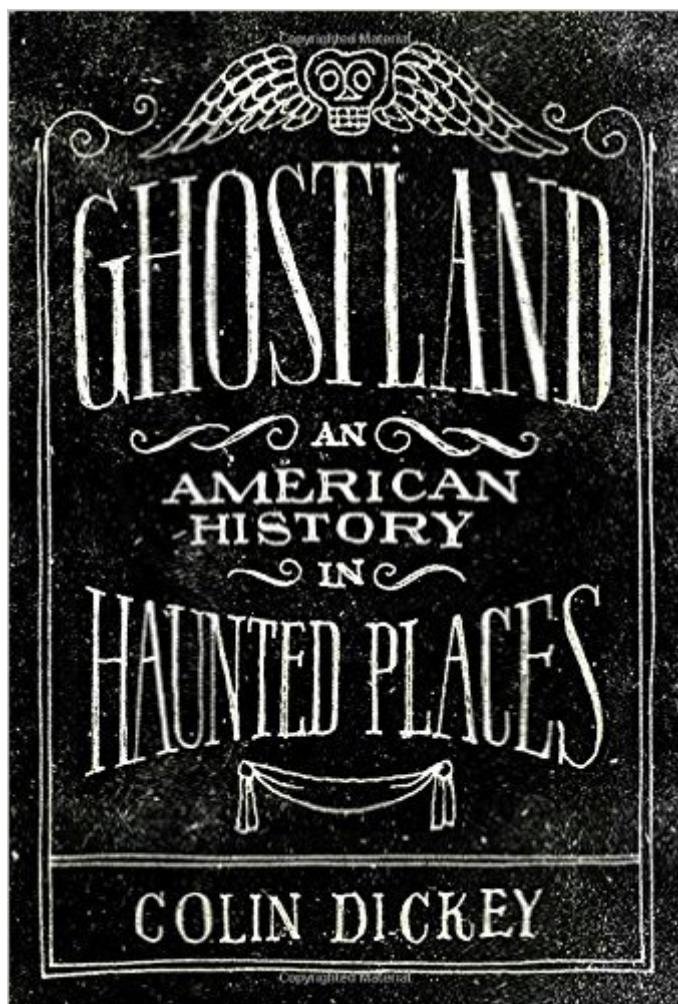


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Ghostland: An American History In Haunted Places



Synopsis

An intellectual feast for fans of offbeat history, *Ghostland* takes readers on a road trip through some of the country's most infamously haunted places--and deep into the dark side of our history. Colin Dickey is on the trail of America's ghosts. Crammed into old houses and hotels, abandoned prisons and empty hospitals, the spirits that linger continue to capture our collective imagination, but why? His own fascination piqued by a house hunt in Los Angeles that revealed derelict foreclosures and "zombie homes," Dickey embarks on a journey across the continental United States to decode and unpack the American history repressed in our most famous haunted places. Some have established reputations as "the most haunted mansion in America," or "the most haunted prison"; others, like the haunted Indian burial grounds in West Virginia, evoke memories from the past our collective nation tries to forget. With boundless curiosity, Dickey conjures the dead by focusing on questions of the living--how do we, the living, deal with stories about ghosts, and how do we inhabit and move through spaces that have been deemed, for whatever reason, haunted? Paying attention not only to the true facts behind a ghost story, but also to the ways in which changes to those facts are made--and why those changes are made--Dickey paints a version of American history left out of the textbooks, one of things left undone, crimes left unsolved. Spellbinding, scary, and wickedly insightful, *Ghostland* discovers the past we're most afraid to speak of aloud in the bright light of day is the same past that tends to linger in the ghost stories we whisper in the dark.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Ghostland" is a collection of essays by Colin Dickey that are part-travelogue and part-history. In each chapter of the book, Dickey visits someplace that has the reputation of being haunted, provides some local color, and then digs into the historical facts related to the circumstances of the alleged haunting. The historical records usually don't coincide closely with the verbal history of the haunting, so Dickey then speculates on why the haunting in question has captured the imaginations of locals, storytellers, and true believers. At no point did I get the sense that Dickey was trying to scare the reader, which sets this book apart from many others in the field. What I liked best about "Ghostland" is what will probably annoy those looking for a more linear narrative. In many ways, "Ghostland" resembles the type of book that Colin Wilson used to write about supernatural phenomena. Much like Colin Wilson, Colin Dickey comes across as a knowledgeable, opinionated, witty polyglot who would be a lot of fun to have a conversation with at a dinner party but who flits from idea to idea. I don't find this intrusive; I find it enjoyable. But if you are put off by an author who does not try to make himself invisible during his recollections, you may not enjoy the book as much as I. There's a lot of good and interesting material in this book. Having visited a few of these places myself, I was consistently impressed with Dickey's skill in setting the local scene without falling into the trap of overly elaborated descriptions. I also liked that Dickey doesn't attempt to act like a professional debunker, which would have made this book both tiresome and tedious.

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