PDF | Here Is Where: Discovering America's Great Forgotten History

by Andrew Carroll
Here Is Where chronicles Andrew Carroll’s eye-opening – and at times hilarious -- journey across America to find and explore unmarked historic sites where extraordinary moments occurred and remarkable individuals once lived. Sparking the idea for this book was Carroll’s visit to the spot where Abraham Lincoln’s son was saved by the brother of Lincoln’s assassin. Carroll wondered, How many other unmarked places are there where intriguing events have unfolded and that we walk past every day, not realizing their significance? To answer that question, Carroll ultimately trekked to every region of the country -- by car, train, plane, helicopter, bus, bike, and kayak and on foot. Among the things he learned:

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* Where America’s deadliest maritime disaster took place, a calamity worse than the fate of the Titanic

* Which virtually unknown American scientist saved hundreds of millions of lives

* Which famous Prohibition agent was the brother of a notorious gangster

* How a 14-year-old farm boy’s brainstorm led to the creation of television

Featured prominently in Here Is Where are an abundance of firsts(from the first use of modern anesthesia to the first cremation to the first murder conviction based on forensic evidence); outrages (from riots to massacres to
forced sterilizations); and breakthroughs (from the invention, inside a prison, of a revolutionary weapon; to the recovery, deep in the Alaskan tundra, of a super-virus; to the building of the rocket that made possible space travel). *Here Is Where* is thoroughly entertaining, but it’s also a profound reminder that the places we pass by often harbor amazing secrets and that there are countless other astonishing stories still out there, waiting to be found.


**Amazon.com Review**

**Q&A with Andrew Carroll**

Brad Meltzer, author of eleven *New York Times* bestsellers (including *The Inner Circle*, published January 2013) and host of the critically acclaimed History Channel series *Brad Meltzer’s Decoded*, talks to Andrew Carroll about his new book *Here Is Where: Discovering America’s Great Forgotten History*.

**BRAD:** To start, the whole premise of your book is about finding places that are historically significant yet somehow overlooked. Love that. So let me ask: If they’re forgotten and unmarked, how did you locate them?

**ANDREW:** I’m constantly reading a ton of books and newspapers, and I subscribe to about thirty magazines—

**BM:** Thirty?

**AC:** Maybe more, and on a wide range of topics—travel, archaeology, current events, science, history, you name it—and I’m always on the lookout for great, little-known stories. When I stumble onto one, I trace it back to a relevant physical spot to see if it’s unmarked. For example, when I read that television was essentially invented by a fourteen-year-old farm boy named Philo Farnsworth in Rigby, Idaho, I immediately began searching for the farm where he had his epiphany. Sure enough, there was no plaque or marker there, and it became one of the locations I wrote about.

**BM:** You mention in *Here Is Where* that you hated history growing up. Shame, shame. And what changed your mind?

**AC:** I know, it’s terrible. But I was very intimidated by history at first. I’m horrible at memorizing things, and I just couldn’t remember all those names and dates in my high school textbooks. Then, during my sophomore year of college, our family’s house burned down, and almost everything we had was destroyed. Losing all our memorabilia inspired my passion for preserving letters, and eventually, a general love for history. Whether it’s the war letters books I edited [*War Letters and Behind the Lines*], which featured previously unpublished correspondence, or *Here Is Where*, I try to write for both history buffs who want to learn something new and surprising, and for those who are a bit daunted by the subject, as I once was. It’s been especially gratifying to hear from teachers who’ve used the idea behind *Here Is Where* to encourage their students to seek out unmarked sites in their communities—and, sometimes, literally in their own backyards.

**BM:** I know you also went to almost every state in the U.S. Do you consider *Here Is Where* more of a history book or a travel book?

**AC:** I think both. It’s definitely about exploring this country as if for the first time, and I wanted to convey the sense of exhilaration and discovery that I experienced. Writing about the journey enabled me to reveal how I found the various sites, and I met so many fascinating people that I wanted to relate some of the more memorable encounters I had along the way. Also, because I spent so much time walking around these different towns and cities, I dropped, like, ten pounds. So I guess we could market *Here Is Where* as a weight-loss book, too.
BM: Speaking of “memorable encounters,” you had several brushes with law enforcement.

AC: I did, and I’m shocked I wasn’t arrested. But one of my run-ins did lead to a good story. I was speeding through a rural area of Missouri and got pulled over by a state trooper. I had sort of zoned out and wasn’t paying attention to how fast I was going, which is pretty much what I told the officer, and he, understandably, was furious. After giving me a ticket, he sternly instructed me to use my cruise control, and, honest to God, this prompted me to scribble on the ticket: “Cruise control inventor?” I did some research and discovered that, incredibly, the guy who invented cruise control, Ralph Teetor, was totally blind. Thanks to his daughter, I was able to locate their old house in Hagerstown, Indiana, where Teetor created the prototype in the late 1950s.

BM: You write in the book’s introduction that your cross-country trip had to be more than a “grand sightseeing adventure” and that you hoped to explore “why any of this”—meaning, history—“matters.” What are some of the lessons you want readers to take away from the book?

AC: That’s a hard question to answer succinctly. There’s no question that history shows us patterns of human behavior over time and can serve as both a warning, cautioning us to beware of our capacity for violence and destruction, and an inspiration, reminding us our more admirable qualities like courage, resilience, and selflessness. But most of all I wanted to express how a love for history can influence the way we live our lives on a more day-to-day basis. At its best, history shows how interconnected we are and, ideally, can nurture within us a sense of humility and gratitude. It helps us remember the sacrifices made by those who’ve come before us and how much we’ve benefited from them—whether they’re medical pioneers, inventors, veterans, or activists—in ways we often take for granted. There’s a quote I keep in my wallet by the author Lewis Thomas that reads: “Statistically, the probability of any one of us being here is so small that you’d think the mere fact of existing would keep us all in a contented dazzlement of surprise.” Dr. Thomas was a scientist, not a historian, but I think his quote perfectly captures what Here Is Where, ultimately, is all about.

Product Description

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Look for Andrew’s new book, My Fellow Soldiers