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The Seekers: Pioneer Families of Nokomis and Laurel by Paul H. Turner and Joan Berry Turner

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The Seekers: Pioneer Families of Nokomis and Laurel By Paul H. Turner and Joan Berry Turner. (Published by authors, 1979. 97 pp., Preface, illustrations, bibliography.)

A problem symptomatic of numerous amateur oral historians is the less than effective use of the oral tradition. An example of this might be found in Paul H. Turner and Joan Berry Turner's book, *The Seekers: Pioneer Families of Nokomis and Laurel*. In presenting their research, the Turners failed to do some simple homework. Had this been accomplished, the end results of *The Seekers* might have added to the rich cultural heritage of Florida.

According to the authors, the purpose of writing their book was to preserve the history of the families that settled in Laurel and Nokomis, Florida from 1868 to 1917. Although the purpose was well intended, the epilogue of *The Seekers* seemingly sums up the less than penetrating effect of the book. The authors argue that "Many people came to this area around the turn of the century but did not stay and we feel certain this is what hapened [sic] to some of the families we tried to track down." "Feeling certain" generally reflects the problems echoed throughout *The Seekers*. The Turners researched a period of nearly fifty years and reported the history of fourteen families living in Laurel and Nokomis and immediate surroundings. It is difficult to accept the contentions of the Turners that fourteen families are truly representative of a fifty year period. In Chapters 9, 10 and 11 the author's limited their discussion of three families to half a page each. More importantly, in Chapter 14 the authors decided to extend the 1917 cutoff and discussed the McKeithen family who "did not come to Laurel until 1920 or 1921." This family was cited only because of numerous references to a turpentine still operated by the McKeithens.

Fifty years and only fourteen families is only the beginning of other problems encountered by the reviewer. While reading the contents of the book, considerable difficulties continued to surface. Documentation, in the main, was often confusing and out of order. In addition, the authors repeatedly used the names of families as fillers rather than meaningful research to report the history of Laurel and Nokomis. Further research of other families might have been more productive and, indeed, would have strengthened *The Seekers*.

Basically, *The Seekers* represents the work of two amateurs in their attempt to shed light on local history. Unfortunately, the Turners were not prepared to perform the above mentioned role. A lack of cohesion and continuity by the authors will prevent *The Seekers* from adding to the local history of Laurel and Nokomis. The failure to do the simple homework, of scouring research and effective editing, will quietly and permanently place *The Seekers* on a book shelf.

Gregory L. Ferris