



A Florida Fiddler: The Life and Times of Richard Seaman

Dr. Gregory Hansen

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A musical life as glorious metaphor for Florida's cultural landscape.

This biography of 97-year-old Richard Seaman, who grew up in Kissimmee Park, Florida, relies on oral history and folklore research to define the place of musicianship and storytelling in the state's history from one artist's perspective. Gregory Hansen presents Seaman's assessment of Florida's changing cultural landscape through his tall tales, personal experience narratives, legends, fiddle tune repertory, and descriptions of daily life.

Seaman's childhood memories of fiddling performances and rural dances explain the role such gatherings played in building and maintaining social order within the community. As an adult, Seaman moved to Jacksonville, Florida, where he worked as a machinist and performed with his family band. The evolution of his musical repertory from the early 1920s through the 1950s provides a resource for reconstructing social life in the rural south and for understanding how changes in musical style reflect the state's increasingly urban social structure. Hansen includes a set of Seaman's fiddle tunes, transcribed for the benefit of performer and researcher alike. The thirty tall tales included in the volume constitute a representative sample of Florida's oral tradition in the early years of the 20th century.

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