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(Inside front cover)

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COVER:

"Characterized by bold, graphic patterns, Amish quilts [pp. 106-110] are made in the strong, solid colors used for Amish clothing. Except for an occasional 'made-up' pattern, Amish patterns—even those most closely associated with the culture—are borrowed from mainstream society. The women of the various settlements adopted separate styles and then refined those styles still further. And, because each church group has its own colors, determined by the Ordnung (the unwritten rules which govern all Amish life) and by usage, each forms a separate branch of Amish quilting tradition and practice. Moreover, it is their use of color which sets Amish quiltmakers apart: Their solid colors emphasize, rather than obscure, the pattern." (Photograph by James Roach)

THE OLD ORDER AMISH¹

by Thomas E. Gallagher



Mattheus Mair's Steadfastness: *The peaceful Anabaptists, forebears of the Mennonites and Amish, often suffered greatly for their beliefs. Asked repeatedly whether he would recant, Mair "always said 'No' as long as he was able*

to speak; hence he was drowned on the twenty-ninth day of July [1592], through the power of God steadfastly persevering in the faith." (Martyrs Mirror)

Nineteen ninety-three was declared the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Amish faith. Actually, choosing 1993 as the anniversary date borders on historical fiction, since the Amish Division, the point at which the Amish became a separate group from the Mennonites, did not occur in an instant or even in a single year. The discussions, debates, and accusations that ultimately ended in the Amish Division lasted at least four years, beginning in 1693 and ending in 1697.² Have we altered history in order to identify a date for celebration? Whatever the reason for the choice, this anniversary was celebrated by scholars who study the Amish,³ although it was largely ignored by the Amish themselves. This is not to say that none of the Amish are interested in their own history, but the vast majority of them place more importance on living their lives in accordance with their principles, than in analyzing the derivation of those principles.

HISTORY

Scholars usually trace Amish history back to the Reformation, specifically to the German Reform movement spearheaded by Ulrich Zwingli.⁴ This is because many of the theological concerns raised by Martin Luther and Zwingli were the source of the more radical positions held by the peaceful Anabaptists, the forebears of the Mennonites and the Amish. In 1516, Erasmus published the New Testament

in Greek, making it widely available in Europe for the first time. In 1517, Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses onto the church door in Wittenberg, and, in the same year, Zwingli began to read Erasmus's New Testament. As a result of his reading, Zwingli decided that his preaching should be based only on the Gospels.⁵ By 1522, Zwingli concluded that many of the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church were not Biblical in origin and should be rejected. Reading the New Testament convinced him, for example, that neither the custom of infant baptism nor the celebration of the mass were practiced in the Apostolic church, so he decided that both should be abolished. He did not want to act alone, however, so he sought legal support from the Zurich city council.

When the council refused to act on these matters, Zwingli acquiesced and refused to put his reforms into effect. Some of his followers were horrified by this turn of events, because Zwingli had agreed with them earlier that when the Word of God was clear—as they believed it was in these two matters—it must be followed.⁶ On January 21, 1525, in response to Zwingli's refusal to move, several of his followers—including Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock, and Felix Manz—decided that they must follow the Word of God even if they acted alone. That night, Conrad Grebel baptized George Blaurock, and he in turn baptized Grebel and the rest.⁷ These men, who had been baptized as infants as was traditional in the Roman Catholic Church, now

THE SCHLEITHEIM CONFESSION

1. **Baptism:** Baptism is for believers only. Infant baptism is forbidden.
2. **Ban:** The ban is to be applied to all who have accepted the teachings of the Lord, have been baptized, and have subsequently fallen into error or sinned. The ban must be applied before there can be a breaking of bread.
3. **The Breaking of Bread:** Only baptized members may partake in the breaking of bread and the sharing of wine in remembrance of the broken body and shed blood of Christ.
4. **Separation from Abomination:** Members must remove themselves from the evil of the world.
5. **Shepherds in the Congregation:** The shepherd (minister) shall be chosen from among the congregation, and should be a moral person rather than an educated person.
6. **The Sword:** While the sword is used by the secular world to protect the good against the wicked, within the church only the ban may be used. A member of the congregation should not be involved in civil government because he must preside over evil. And while the sword is used by the world against the flesh, Christians are armed with the armor of God, with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and with the Word of God.
7. **The Oath:** Swearing is forbidden because we are unable to follow through with what we promise in swearing either because of our own failings or because others may make it impossible. One can, however, give testimony.

received baptism for the second time and so became known as Anabaptists ("rebaptizers"). This term was applied broadly to a variety of groups, some peaceful and some revolutionary, which shared in common a rejection of infant baptism, although not all practiced adult baptism. The Swiss Brethren were one of the peaceful groups and they believed firmly that baptism was merely a sign of membership in the Christian church and of their personal commitment to live a Christian life;⁸ they did not believe that baptism had the ability to wash away sins. The Catholic Church and most of the Protestant groups of the time, however, agreed that baptism could only be received once, and that knowingly to administer it twice was abominable.

The goal of the Anabaptist movement was to reestablish the church of Jesus Christ as it had developed immediately after His death. As an ideal this was clear, but there were disagreements over just what constituted returning to the early Church. Hoping to resolve these conflicts peacefully, several Anabaptist leaders came together in the town of Schleithem, Switzerland, in 1527, to resolve their differences. After considerable discussion they arrived consensually with seven key points of faith. (These were not

intended to catalogue all of their beliefs, but rather to identify those beliefs which they felt demonstrated their commitment to reestablishing the New Testament Church, and which separated them from other Christians.) Since in the Apostolic church only adults who voluntarily chose to become members were baptized, they agreed that this was a practice to which they would have to return. Moreover, they believed that only members in good standing in the church should be permitted to break bread in reenactment of the Last Supper of Jesus Christ; that those members who had broken their baptismal vow and fallen into error must be banned from the church; that they should separate themselves from the sinful world; and that their leaders should be chosen by lot, just as Matthias had been chosen to replace Judas. They also believed that they should be peace loving, that they should avoid conflict, and that they should never swear on oath. These beliefs were written down and are known today as the Schleithem Confession.⁹

At this time, in the Netherlands, another peaceful Anabaptist group which influenced the emergence of the Amish was springing to life. Although this group was contemporaneous with the Swiss Brethren, it received its strongest voice in 1536 when Menno Simons, a Dutch priest, decided he had more in common with the Anabaptists than with the church he served. He began to question the basic doctrines he had been taught, and wondered whether he should follow the authority of the Church or the authority of the Scriptures. Impressed with the Anabaptists who suffered and died for their beliefs, he decided he should join them. He quickly became their leading spokesman, and soon the Dutch Anabaptists were so identified with him that many outsiders began referring to them as Mennonites.¹⁰

By the early 1600s the Dutch Mennonites had split into several factions. Some of the leaders, concerned about the discord, were determined to reestablish unity. After a number of inconclusive sessions in a variety of towns, the groups finally met in the Dutch town of Dort where, in 1632, they were able to arrive at an agreement since known as the Dordrecht Confession of Faith. Unlike the Schleithem Confession, this new Confession—which included eighteen articles of faith—gave a brief overview of all Mennonite beliefs, not only those which differentiated them from other Christians. The articles dealt with issues ranging from the creation of all things to the resurrection of the dead at the end of the world, but the most important, with regard to the establishment of the Amish as a separate group, were numbers eleven and seventeen. Article 11 required the "The Washing of the Saints' Feet" in reenactment of Christ's washing of the feet of the Apostles, and Article 17 compelled "The Shunning of Those Who Are Expelled." The Dutch Mennonites encouraged the Swiss Brethren to sign the Dordrecht Confession, even though neither of these practices had been observed by the Swiss. But the Swiss never did sign the document,¹¹ although, in 1660, thirteen Swiss Brethren ministers and elders from the Alsatian region of France did.

THE DORDRECHT CONFESSION

1. Concerning God and the Creation of All Things.
2. The Fall of Man.
3. The Restoration of Man Through the Promise of the Coming of Christ.
4. The Advent of Christ into This World, and the Reason of His Coming.
5. The Law of Christ, Which is the Holy Gospel, or the New Testament.
6. Repentance and Amendment of Life.
7. Holy Baptism.*
8. The Church of Christ.
9. The Office of Teachers and Ministers—Male and Female—in the Church.*
10. The Lord's Supper.*
11. The Washing of the Saints' Feet.**
12. Matrimony.
13. Offices of Civil Government.*
14. Defense by Force.*
15. The Swearing of Oaths.*
16. Excommunication or Expulsion from the Church.*
17. The Shunning of Those Who Are Expelled.**
18. The Resurrection of the Dead and the Last Judgment.

* Articles related to those found in the Schleithem Confession.

** Articles responsible in part for the Amish Division.

The founder of the Amish was a Mennonite bishop, Jacob Ammann, who was born in Switzerland and moved to Alsace. Although there is very little recorded about Ammann's life, John A. Hostetler speculates that he may have been a convert to Anabaptism from the state church.¹² (If Hostetler is correct, it might explain Ammann's incredible zeal for Anabaptist beliefs.¹³) In 1693, Ammann advocated that Communion be observed twice each year rather than once as had been customary. This change was not rejected outright by the senior Swiss elders Hans Reist and Benedict Schneider, but they did deem the practice unnecessary. Then Ammann argued that when a member is subject to excommunication, he or she must also be subject to social avoidance (*Meidung*) which followed from Article 17 of the Dordrecht Confession. Finally, he urged the practice of foot washing, a practice not observed in Switzerland but which was also advocated in the Dordrecht Confession (Article 11). If these issues were agreed upon, then there were two more tests. Ammann wanted to know whether the other bishops agreed with him that true-hearted people (sympathizers of the Anabaptists who had not become Anabaptists) could not be saved, and that a person who had told a lie should be excommunicated. Ammann asked the elders of the various churches in Switzerland, Germany, and Alsace to explain their views on these topics. Approximately a third of the elders—mostly from Alsace—sup-

ported Ammann, who excommunicated the two-thirds who did not agree completely with him. By 1700, Ammann realized and admitted that he had acted rashly, but the division was irreversible.¹⁴

While the Amish Division was occurring, the War of the Palatinate Succession was raging in both Alsace and the Palatinate where many of the Amish and Swiss Mennonites, earlier forced out of Switzerland, were living. By the late 1600s the Dutch Mennonites, in concert with their government, pressured the Bern government to permit the Amish and Swiss Mennonites to relocate to the Netherlands from where they could migrate either to some other country in Europe or to America. The Dutch hired ships to transport the Amish and the Mennonites to the Netherlands, but they refused to travel together on the same vessels. On the way north, the Mennonites began abandoning ship at every stop, so that by the time the ships reached their destination very few of them remained.¹⁵

Early in the 1700s, William Penn traveled to the Rhine Valley to invite oppressed peoples to emigrate to his land grant in the New World, Pennsylvania. We do not know when the first Amish sailed to America, although there are a number of Amish surnames on passenger lists prior to the first documented arrival of Amish in Pennsylvania in 1737. In that year enough families to form a congregation arrived in Philadelphia aboard the *Charming Nancy*. The first Amish settlement was in Berks County, Pennsylvania, but in the same year several families moved into Lancaster County. During this first wave of migration approximately 500 individuals emigrated, the foundation for the present-day Lancaster County community. In the 1800s another migration occurred, and these immigrants formed communities in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, New York, and Maryland in the United States, and in Ontario, Canada.¹⁶

AMISH BELIEFS

The Amish are a deeply religious community whose faith affects every aspect of their lives. If we wish to discover just who the Amish are, we must begin by trying to understand their beliefs. This is not an easy task, since the Amish are reluctant to discuss their religious views with outsiders for two reasons: First, because they and their Anabaptist forebears were persecuted for their beliefs in the past and these painful memories have not been forgotten; and second, because they believe their way of life speaks louder than theology and arguments.

A unique community with their own religious views, the Amish reject many of the commonly held beliefs of other churches. Whereas some conservative Christian groups believe people can know that they are saved, the Amish reject this professed knowledge as prideful. Other churches emphasize the notion of grace through faith alone, believing that salvation comes from the grace earned by Jesus Christ through his death on the cross, rather than by the good works of individuals. The Amish prefer to practice obedience to the Word of God and self-denial which they believe they owe to God. As long as they live their life

to the best of their ability, they trust God to treat them fairly after they die. The Amish are literalists when reading the Bible, but they are not Fundamentalists. They are literalists in that they believe that what is written in the Bible must be followed precisely and not changed. For example, since Paul writes to the Corinthians that a woman must cover her head "when praying or prophesying" (I Cor. 11:5), the Amish believe that women must cover their heads today. (Many Christians, of course, would argue that because of cultural changes over the last two thousand years these rules do not apply today.)

They also believe that they are the members of the true church of God on earth today, being spiritually connected to the Apostolic church whose practices they follow as closely as possible. Although they would argue that the vast majority of contemporary Christian churches have strayed from the teachings of Jesus Christ as contained in the New Testament, they also feel very strongly that they should not judge others, but should leave the judging to God. The history of the church of God, according to Amish belief, does not begin with the Apostolic church which their Anabaptist forebears had sought to emulate, but can be traced back to heaven prior to the creation of the world when the angels were its members.¹⁷ After the creation, the true church was established in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve until the fall.¹⁸ After the fall and the expulsion from Paradise, but prior to the formation of a covenant between God and Abraham and the descendants of Abraham, the true church was represented by Enoch, Noah, and all of those who believed in and honored God.¹⁹ With the sin of Cain against Abel, the world was divided into good and evil, and ever since the people of the earth have been divided between members of the church of God and the children of the Devil.²⁰

When God established His covenant with Abraham, the Hebrews became His chosen people, and they alone were members of the true church until Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was born. He was sent to establish a new and more perfect covenant which was to include not only the house of Israel, but the Gentiles as well. This final period, which will last until the end of the world, saw the church of God established with the Apostles.²¹ The Christian Church grew rapidly, and the Anabaptists believed that along with this physical growth came spiritual decline as the early church diverged more and more from the model of the Apostolic church.²² It was the desire of the early Anabaptists to return to the apostolic model and to revive the true church of God; this, the Amish believe, is what they are participating in today. And, because they believe that the world is basically evil, they follow St. Paul's command to be separated from it.²³ This means even separation from the misguided churches that consider themselves to be Christian.

The Amish are a conspicuous yet little understood group. They are highly visible because of their Plain dress and overtly simple lifestyle, and well known in part because they have been promoted—without their consent and to the exclusion of other Plain religious groups—by the tourist

industry of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Outsiders tend to travel to Lancaster County not to meet the Amish, but to meet their idea of the Amish. In part because their clothing style is uniform and unvarying (with the obvious exception of colors which are from the blue end of the spectrum, or are shades of brown and gray), the popular view is that the Amish are a homogeneous group. The popular wisdom is wrong, however, for while there is an overarching similarity, there is also a tremendous diversity among the Amish.

Indeed, the pressure for diversity is built into the very fabric of Amish society. (The opposite pressure, to remain similar, is not, but is important enough that it is encouraged.) The propensity for variation is rooted in the very nature of the Amish Church, which is a congregational church in two senses: Each church is independent of every other church; and, while the bishop and ministers lead their congregation and recommend action, final authority for each church rests with all the baptized adults, rather than with the ordained members alone. The Amish believe—as was stated earlier—that they (and in fact everyone) should obey Biblical commands. These regulations are unchanging although they may be unclear. (For example, the Bible requires modesty, but it does not describe how to dress.) In order to promote consistency and harmony within the community, each church has its own set of *Regel und Ordnung* (rules and order) which explain what the leaders maintain and the members agree would be worldly or sinful. Because an *Ordnung* is specific to a single district it regulates only its own members. And since the *Ordnung* can be changed only by consensus, the rules which regulate a single church district will be followed by the membership. It is true that some members may push against the rules, but since any member who breaks the rules must be excommunicated, it can be argued that members do, in fact, follow not only Biblical commands, but the *Ordnung* as well. Since each church district has its own *Ordnung*, rules may well vary between nearby church districts, but churches will remain in fellowship if the differences between them are thought to be reasonable; that is, if they are not considered too liberal.

Since the Old Order Amish meet in the homes of members for preaching service, the size of the group is limited to the number of people who can fit into their houses or shops. Any such group constitutes a church district, the social unit of Amish society. Amish church districts are set up with clear boundary lines, and, since there is virtually no crossing of these lines, the only choice most people have in determining church district membership is where they buy their farm or home. When the membership becomes too large the district will divide in two. At this time a new boundary is drawn, determined by what is best for the church, rather than for individuals or families. Church membership is an all-consuming part of life, with the needs of the group taking precedence and neither family relationships, nor friendships within the district, are given much consideration. The rare exception

would be for never-married women or widows who would like to stay with a certain group, or for a minister, bishop, or deacon who is unable to buy a farm in the district in which he was ordained, and so would be allowed to purchase a farm close by and remain in his district.

The approximately 150,000 Old Order Amish (spread over twenty-three states and one Canadian province) are divided into some 800 church districts. While each church is an independent unit it would be a mistake to assume that what exists are hundreds of isolated communities. Rather, these church districts are intertwined and multi-layered, forming a complex pattern of integration and separation. Of course, some church districts are insular, being dozens or even hundreds of miles from their nearest Amish neighbor. Others, though, are clustered side by side, some in small groups of under ten; others in large groups of a hundred or more; and still others in groups of varying sizes. Then too, some of the churches that are geographically contiguous are nonetheless isolated because of their unique beliefs. Others are similar enough in discipline that they are in fellowship, which means that they are in sufficient agreement as far as beliefs and practices are concerned that they will permit their ministers to preach in each other's services and will maintain each other's discipline so that a member excommunicated in one will be avoided by the other as well. Districts which are in fellowship with each other are part of the same affiliation.²⁴

When one or more church districts are located in a geographically defined area, they are classified as a settlement.²⁵ Settlements are founded for a variety of reasons, but the major ones are a lack of good or affordable land in the parent community; disagreement over church discipline; or, often, both. When a settlement has divided into a number of churches there are pressures to maintain disciplines that are close enough so that the different districts can remain in fellowship. This is important not only in terms of beliefs, but also because an isolated district might not have enough ministers to conduct the Communion service, and a district who lost a bishop would not be able to ordain a new one.

THE AMISH FAMILY

The Amish population has increased dramatically during the past century, from approximately 5,300 in 1900 to roughly 150,000 today.²⁶ During the 18th and 19th centuries, when Amish membership grew very slowly, there were significant differences in beliefs between the Amish and non-Amish, but the visible differences were not as obvious. Clothing styles, farming practices, and other aspects of their life then were similar to those of their "English" (non-Amish) neighbors, whereas today there are dramatic differences. Outsiders may join the community if they want to, but the Amish believe that it is very difficult for someone not raised in the faith to renounce the comforts and conveniences of the world and embrace their austere lifestyle. Conversely, it is also much more difficult for an Amish person to leave the community today than it was

in the past.

The impressive 20th-century growth of the Amish, then, is mostly the result of their keeping members in the community, rather than in their persuading outsiders to join. The Amish have always placed a great emphasis on family values and on raising children properly. Ever a moral imperative, this is now a social and cultural imperative as well, for the Amish realize that they will grow in numbers and be a strong community only as long as they are able to encourage their children to join and marry within the church. Such a marriage is an indication that another couple, committed to having children and raising them Amish, has joined the community. Marriage is so important, in fact, that church growth is counted in the number of marriages performed, rather than in the number of children born or the number of young people who have been baptized, as was previously the case.²⁷ This change in view is reflected symbolically in the time when men begin growing their beard. In 1880, a young man was expected to begin growing his beard immediately after he was baptized. By the 1920s, he was expected to begin growing his beard after he applied for marriage (usually a few months after he had been baptized), and he was expected to have the beginnings of a beard at his wedding. Today, the man is married clean-shaven, but is expected not to shave again.²⁸

Young married couples expect to have children and barring reproductive problems, they will. The average Amish couple has seven children, and, assuming their primary responsibility to be the raising of these children in the Amish faith, that is precisely what they try to do. As a community, the Amish have expectations about children and how to raise them, and these expectations influence child-rearing practices.²⁹ The Amish believe, for example, that babies are innocent and therefore can do no wrong; they might be difficult to handle or they might cry a lot, but they cannot be bad. And, because they are not responsible for their actions, babies are not punished. When children become toddlers, their parents begin to teach them to respect and obey authority, and to share with and help others. They also consider it important to teach their children the value of work and to prepare them to be part of a group, rather than to be independent.

When children are old enough, the parents will usually send them to an Amish school, although a few Amish children still attend public schools. The Amish believe that schools should teach children the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and perhaps history and geography. They are also expected to reinforce the values of the community, which means children are to be motivated primarily by concern for others, rather than by fear of punishment. The Amish also believe that it is the parent's right and duty to teach their children about their religious beliefs. So, even though the schools are church run the teachers are expected to leave the teaching of religion to the parents. The Amish have established parochial schools because they believe that while the public schools do not

teach about religion, they still convey a value system that conflicts in many ways with their own.

For the Amish, adolescence is the transition period between parental and community control; the time of life when church control, whether in the form of parental discipline or community pressure, is weakest. Young people who have been carefully nurtured and taught the Amish way with exacting discipline are now free to make their own decision about whether or not to join the church. This period between childhood and adulthood is a time of relative freedom, when community control shifts from overt to covert. There is freedom to explore the limits of acceptable behavior and such adolescent experimentation has been called "rowdyism" by both Hostetler³⁰ and Huntington.³¹ It is a time of rebellion against the strict rules of the community; a time for exploring activities such as driving automobiles, listening to the radio, going to movies, and excessive drinking, gambling, and dancing—all activities which will have to be rejected if the young people are to become baptized members of the community.

While it is true that the Amish do permit time for unsupervised activities, this does not mean they are not concerned about the choices their young people make. Some of the behavior is wrong, and the parents do not approve of it. Why would the Amish allow behavior that violates Amish values? Huntington suggests that "many of the tensions within the community are exaggerated in this group. The Amish youth provide healthy criticism of the Amish community. They act as a safety valve for the community; ... express[ing] smoldering aggressions that their parents must repress. They sin sufficiently to remind themselves and others that natural man is very bad... The 'wild' behavior of Amish youth is essential to community existence."³²

Hostetler argues that when a young person is about to join the church and to marry some independence is needed. Both of these decisions require a lifelong commitment, and the consequence of violating this commitment is excommunication and shunning. Parental control from birth until the child is ready to begin the process of deciding to join the Amish church is virtually absolute. Community control after a member has been baptized is virtually absolute as well. Between these two periods is a liminal period when youth are permitted to explore the limits of acceptable behavior and even to go beyond them. It is the transition between compulsion and compliance: A child must follow the rules while an adult is committed to following them. Adolescence is the period when the young people are given the opportunity to become voluntary believers, rather than being coerced by their parents. It is also the time when they can decide whether they are willing to sacrifice the conveniences of the world in order to commit themselves to God.

Young people are permitted to select their own mate and are given opportunities to meet and date. This process begins at age sixteen for boys, and between the ages of fourteen and sixteen for girls. The young people begin by

attending Sunday evening singings, usually held at the home of the family who had the morning church service so that benches are already available. At the singing the boys sit on one side of a long table and the girls on the other. When a boy makes eye contact with a young woman and she does not immediately turn her eyes away, he assumes that she is interested in him and may ask if she will allow him to take her home. If she agrees, the couple will probably begin dating. The assumption is that a dating couple are seriously considering the possibility of marriage, although they may decide after a while that they are not right for each other and begin to go out with someone else. Eventually the dating couple will probably see each other not only on Sunday evenings, but every other Saturday night as well. These Saturday night meetings usually take place at the young woman's house after her parents have retired to bed for the night; the Amish believe the young people need time to get to know one another. The young man will announce his arrival by shining a light through her window, and she will quietly come downstairs and let him in. Every Sunday evening and every other Saturday night is the extent of dating right up until the time the couple are married. They will not see each other the rest of the week because they are too busy, and even when they have been out very late over the weekend, they are expected to get up bright and early on Monday morning and do their work.

The average age at marriage for the Amish is just under twenty-two for women and just over twenty-three for men.³³ The Amish do not approve of divorce, and will not permit a member of their community to remarry—except in cases of widowhood—even if their spouse has left the community and officially received a divorce. The Amish are also committed to a patriarchal family structure, but while this is the ideal, there are variations from family to family as to how rigidly it is implemented. More and more frequently the Amish seem to believe that the best way for them to be successful is through a cooperative effort between husband and wife. This means that while the husband may make the final decision, he will generally seek input from his wife before he does so.

After their children have been raised, the couple will generally allow one of them to move into the larger part of the house, and they will move into the *Grossdaadi Haus* (grandparents house); it contains complete facilities and so allows them to be independent, yet still a part of the family. (In Lancaster County, the *Grossdaadi* generally is attached to the main portion of the house. In other settlements it may be a completely separate dwelling.) As long as the older couple are able to care for themselves, they will be permitted to do so. When they do need care, help will be close by. The elderly are treated with great respect, and remain a vital part of the family until their death.¹⁹

AGRICULTURE AND OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Caring for the land has a long and rich tradition among

the Amish. Farming, historically the preferred occupation and the hallmark of their identity, is a legacy that evolved: The forebears of the Swiss Brethren were educated townspeople who did not choose farming voluntarily. Because their religious beliefs were contrary to the prevailing Protestant and Catholic views, they were outcasts all over Europe, and when they were allowed to settle in a country it was only on condition they cultivate the land—land that previously had been exploited and left unproductive. They accepted this fate initially as another act of persecution, but soon began to look at their plight differently, for they found Biblical justifications for viewing farming as an ideal occupation for a people of God. In Genesis, they read that man was given a mandate to cultivate and care for the land; in Psalms they read that “the earth is the Lord’s...” which they interpreted as meaning that we are merely caretakers of the land and are expected to tend it. In the New Testament, they found evidence that we should be stewards of the earth caring for the land for God’s sake.³⁴ Farming, therefore, became a calling, and transforming worn-out land into some of the most productive soil in Europe became the Anabaptist trademark. Believing that human ownership was meaningless since all ultimately belongs to God, the fact that they did not own the land did not keep them from working hard: Whether tenant farmers, renters, or owners, their obligation to the soil was the same—to be caretakers for God.

Accepting farming not simply as a burden but as a religious obligation encouraged the 17th-century Swiss Brethren to become not just good farmers but the best, seeking ways not only to produce crops but to improve the soil. They began to rotate crops, to feed cattle in stables, to add natural fertilizers to the soil, and to grow clover and alfalfa to restore soil fertility.³⁵ Their Amish descendants became the most progressive farmers in Europe, and then, later, in America. When hard work was all that was necessary to be progressive, the Amish were. Now that technologically advanced machinery is needed in order for a farmer to be recognized as progressive, the Amish no longer fit the mold. But they still see farming as the ideal livelihood, and they still have the reputation of being excellent farmers. With the growing interest in sustainable agriculture, people are gaining more respect for Amish practices.

Believing that people should be hard working, the Amish view physical labor as an ideal, and to avoid laziness they have rejected much of 20th-century technology. They have rejected tractors, for example, choosing to continue using horses and mules (although some communities still do not allow mules because of the Biblical injunction against the mixing of unlike species³⁶). In order to compete economically with their non-Amish neighbors they have allowed some hybrid crops, chemical fertilizers and insecticides, and contour plowing. And they have slowly accepted some mechanization—more in Lancaster County, less in other communities—but only within strict guidelines, with new items accepted if they permit them to maintain separation

from the outside world. External pressures such as increases in prices to a point where it is impossible to pay for land through farming alone, and more rigorous sanitation testing for milk requiring the acceptance of refrigeration, have forced the Amish to embrace some changes they might have rejected under other circumstances. Of course, there are other issues that affect what is accepted and what is rejected. Some changes are accepted simply because a number of farmers would like to use some new things, but whatever is accepted must permit them to maintain a clear separation from the outside world.

The farm is seen as the ideal place to raise children (both the father and mother will be able to participate), and when they are grown the parents retire from full-time farming. This does not mean they stop working, for many will begin another job, such as operating a small furniture or cabinet shop. The Amish have always been involved in some non-farming occupations, but the types and the reasons for involvement have changed through time. Thirty years ago, a few began to become involved in the conversion of tractor-drawn equipment to horse-drawn, while still others began making and repairing harnesses. At that time, too, increasing numbers of young married couples were unable to begin farming and had to find another line of work. Commonly limited to jobs which help the Amish community, they would manufacture and repair carriages, build silos, or repair farm equipment. Others became carpenters and some took jobs in local factories. Today, some Amish businesses are large and have large work forces.

CHANGE

What attracts many of us to the Amish is not who they are, but who we want them to be: a people who preserve our heritage while we move on. The Amish are a traditional people who resist change, but they are not the guardians of our past. And, while they maintain many traditions, they do not renounce everything modern. Instead, they pick and choose carefully what they accept and reject. For instance, their horse-and-buggy transportation and their farming with horses and mules are legacies of our past, but these legacies are juxtaposed with a multiplicity of contemporary elements. If you visit a Lancaster County Amish farm today, you will find many nontraditional features such as milking machines, diesel engines, hydraulic pumps, vitamin-and-mineral-supplemented livestock feed, bulk milk tanks with refrigeration units, porcelain sinks, Formica countertops, gas stoves, gas-powered refrigerators, permanent-shine vinyl floors, spray starch, electronic calculators, and disposable diapers. While not every house will have every item, these—and many other apparent anachronisms—will be found throughout the community.

Even in those areas where the Amish have resisted change the most, their resistance has not been complete. For example, even though the Amish have continued to maintain a traditional pattern for their women’s dresses and men’s trousers, they are making them from a variety of

modern fabrics (including polyester). Buggies, too, have been modernized, with windshields added to formerly open-fronted carriages; some even use Thermopane glass to keep the windshield from fogging on cold days. The Amish continue to depend on horses for farming, but they have attached internal-combustion engines to a wide variety of equipment to help speed up the work. They still reject the use of high-line electricity, although they do not have similar qualms about other sources of energy such as hydraulic or diesel power.

While many outsiders, especially those who perceive the Amish as a living historical society, are upset by what they see as contradictions, these apparent contradictions are often the result of internal or external changes which cannot be ignored. Most Amish would probably prefer to maintain their society as it was a hundred years ago, but it is impossible for them to do so. Changes in farming, for example, are the result of increases in the price of farmland and a variety of other pressures. As the cost of farmland increased beyond the income farmers received for their products, the Amish found themselves in a situation where they had to decide whether to continue to resist mechanization, which would mean having to give up their farms, or to mechanize and preserve as much of their traditional way of life as possible. Some communities chose not to modernize and many families did lose their farms. The Lancaster County Amish decided to mechanize in a limited way, and they have been able to preserve their farms. This situation is an example of two goods competing against each other: the good of resisting modernization, and the good of preserving the farm which is believed to be the best place to raise children. (In Lancaster County the choice was not very difficult.) Another example concerns the automobile, which the Amish reject; they do not allow members either to own or drive one (some settlements, it should be noted, do allow members to drive automobiles or trucks if they are required to by a non-Amish employer). Observers are sometimes horrified then, when they learn that members are allowed to ride in automobiles. But this is an adjustment the Amish made in part because their society has grown geometrically over the past century. Once again, there were competing goods: The Amish believe they should maintain not only their church district (which is a well defined geographic area), but also their family ties, and family members may be spread throughout a community or may even live in other communities. The Amish, then, are always struggling to adjust to pressures that result from internal or external changes. Changes are happening, but it is unclear just where these changes are taking the Amish community.

ENDNOTES

¹This article is the first in a series planned for *Pennsylvania Folklife* highlighting the life and history of various Pennsylvania ethnic and racial communities. We intend to emphasize a different group each issue. Along with an overview we expect to include a few articles exploring some aspects of the folklore/folklife of the highlighted community. We hope that these articles will be accessible sources for those interested in exploring the cultural diversity of Pennsylvania. This first article focuses

on the Old Order Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. If you are interested in additional information, we recommend the following: for a thorough overview of contemporary Amish society, read John A. Hostetler's, *Amish Society*, fourth edition (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); for a well-written and carefully researched work see Steven M. Nolt's, *A History of The Amish* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1992); and for an excellent explanation and analysis of the mysteries of Amish life, get Donald B. Kraybill's, *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

²Milton Gascho, "The Amish Division of 1693-1697 in Switzerland and Alsace," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 11 (October 1937); and John B. Mast, ed., *The Letters of the Amish Division* (Oregon City, Oregon: C. J. Schlabbach, 1950); and John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society*, fourth edition, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press) pp. 31-41.

³From July 22 to 25, 1993, a conference—Three Hundred Years Of Persistence and Change: Amish Society 1693-1993—was held at Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. Most of the papers in this issue of *Folklife* were first presented as papers at that conference.

⁴William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975) pp. 8-14; Steven M. Nolt, *A History of The Amish* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1992) pp. 8-9; and John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society*, fourth edition (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) p. 27.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 8-14.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 11-13.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁸John Christian Wenger, *Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1959) p. 174.

⁹John H. Yoder, translator and editor, *The Schleithem Confession* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1973) p. 3.

¹⁰John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society*, fourth edition (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) p. 27-28.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

¹³Steven M. Nolt, *A History of The Amish* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1992) p. 34.

¹⁴Hostetler, *Amish Society*, pp. 31-41; Nolt, *A History of The Amish*, pp. 26-37.

¹⁵Hostetler, *Amish Society*, pp. 50-57; Nolt, *A History of The Amish*, pp. 38-46.

¹⁶Hostetler, *Amish Society*, pp. 56-66; Nolt, *A History of The Amish*, pp. 56.

¹⁷Dietrich Philip, *Enchiridion or Hand Book* (Alymer, Ontario: Pathway Publishing Corporation, 1910) p. 423.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Thieleman J. van Braht, *The Bloody Theatre; or, Martyrs Mirror* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1972) p. 392.

²⁰Gertrude Enders Huntington, "Dove at the Window: A Study of an Old Order Amish Community in Ohio," Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1956) p. 31.

²¹van Braht, *The Bloody Theatre; or, Martyrs Mirror*, p. 392.

²²John Christian Wenger, *Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1959) p. 2.

²³II Cor. 6:17.

²⁴This a common term used in discussions of the Old Order Amish. It can be found in Hostetler's, *Amish Society*, p. 93.

²⁵Another common term used in discussions of the Old Order Amish. It can be found in Hostetler's, *Amish Society*, p. 91.

²⁶Hostetler, *Amish Society*, p. 97.

²⁷Calvin G. Bachman, *The Old Order Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania* (Norristown, PA: German Society, 1942) p. 169.

²⁸Donald B. Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) p. 57.

²⁹The material on child-rearing practices from birth until adolescence is taken from Hostetler's, *Amish Society*, pp. 172-177; and John A. Hostetler and Gertrude Enders Huntington, *Amish Children: Their Education in Family, School, and Community* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1992).

³⁰Hostetler, *Amish Society*, p. 355.

³¹Huntington, Dove at the Window, p. 762.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 744.

³³Hostetler, *Amish Society*, p. 99.

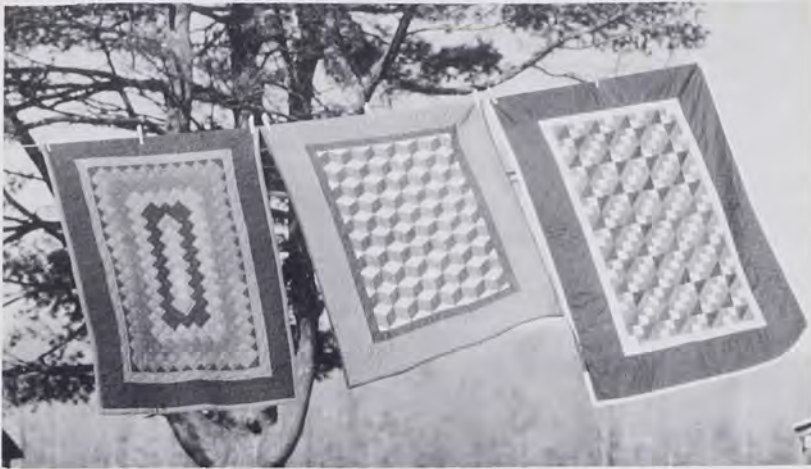
³⁴These sources come from Hostetler's, *Amish Society*, p. 114.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 115.

³⁶Lev. 19:19

AMISH QUILTS: Creativity Supported by Rules and Traditions

by Elaine Mercer



The Troyer Amish came from the Holmes County, Ohio settlement, and these three little crib quilts—Trip Around the World, Tumbling Blocks, and Jacob's Ladder—show their Ohio heritage. Rectangular rather than square, they have important borders that frame them and they are intricately pieced; two are optical illusions. (All photographs by James Roach)

For six years during the 1970s, I lived in an Amish settlement in New York State, and it was there I learned that the women of this Plain sect make a distinctive kind of quilt. When I first saw one of these at the home of an Amish acquaintance, I merely thought it interesting that she was able to make use of the scraps from her sewing. As time went on and I saw more such quilts in the homes (and on the clotheslines) of my Amish friends and neighbors, I realized and was impressed by the fact that all the female members of the community were able—and willing—to do this.

My former New York neighbors were Troyer Amish, an ultra-orthodox group that divided from the main body of Amish in Holmes County, Ohio, in the first third of this century. Today there are very few Troyer Amish remaining in Ohio, but there are Troyer Amish settlements in New York, Pennsylvania, and Michigan in the United States, and in Canada as well. In all of these communities the women continue to make an Ohio-style quilt for the same reason members continue to drive an Ohio-style buggy: When the Amish establish daughter settlements they take their history and culture—including its material aspects—with them.

Because of the diversity of Amish groups, this discussion focuses on the quilts of the Troyer Amish, rather than on those of my present-day Amish neighbors in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, where there is a wide range of orthodoxy and, consequently, an equally wide range of quiltmaking practices.

* * *

Quilting is simply the technique of stitching together two layers of fabric with a layer of padding between them. A pieced quilt is one made of geometric shapes sewn together, usually into a block, the quilt's basic unit of construction. Then the blocks—sometimes separated by

strips of fabric called "sashing" because they resemble window sash—are joined together, after which inner and outer borders may be added to complete the top. The finished top, the padding, and the back are then stretched onto a frame and quilted together with many tiny stitches. After the quilt is removed from the frame a border is added to finish the edges.

Although immigrants from the British Isles probably introduced the craft into the American colonies during the Colonial Period, it is an ancient art, generally thought to have "reached Britain during the period of the Crusades. It is not an unreasonable assumption: the first evidence of quilting in Britain appears in the Middle Ages but, at this time decorative needlecrafts, including quilting, were widely used in Middle and Far Eastern countries. Quilting already had a long history dating back probably 5000 years: carved figures from ancient Mediterranean civilizations show sophisticated embroidery patterns on elements of dress, some of which suggest quilting."¹

Just as American quiltmaking practices were borrowed from British tradition, Amish quiltmaking techniques were borrowed, in turn, from the larger society, probably during the 1800s. Thus, Amish quiltmaking is a branch of American quiltmaking tradition, or, more exactly, it is several branches of that tradition, for by the time 19th-century Amish women took up the craft there were several well-established Amish settlements. Among them were communities in Lancaster and Mifflin Counties in Pennsylvania, and Holmes County in Ohio.

The earliest known listings of Amish quilts are included in the 1831 estate inventory of Abraham Kurtz of Wayne County, Ohio² (a location listed in *The Amish in America: Settlements that Failed, 1840–1960*³), and the 1836 inventory of John Hartzler of Mifflin County, Pennsylvania.⁴ (Interestingly, Kurtz had emigrated from Mifflin County,



The Troyer Amish make an Ohio-style quilt for the same reason they drive an Ohio-style buggy: When the Amish establish daughter settlements they take their history and culture with them.



All Amish quilt patterns, even those most closely associated with the culture as is this Bars design, are borrowed from the larger society; it is their use of color which sets Amish quiltmakers apart.

so it is probably not surprising that his effects included a quilt.) There is no information concerning when these two bedcoverings were actually made, but it was almost certainly well before the estate inventories were drawn up.

Characterized by bold, graphic patterns, Amish quilts are made in the strong, solid colors used for Amish clothing. Except for an occasional "made-up" pattern, Amish patterns—even those most closely associated with the culture—are borrowed from mainstream society. The women of the various settlements adopted separate styles and then refined those styles still further. And, because each church group has its own colors, determined by the *Ordnung* (the unwritten rules which govern all of Amish life) and by usage, each forms a separate branch of Amish quilting tradition and practice. Moreover, it is their use of color which sets Amish quiltmakers apart: Their solid colors emphasize, rather than obscure, the pattern.

* * *

As already noted, the Troyer Amish, whose quilts are under consideration here, emigrated from Holmes County, Ohio. In a catalog for the exhibition, *Treasures from Trunks—Early Quilts from Wayne and Holmes Counties*, author Virginia Gunn says: "Quilts studied to date indicate a preference for strong design and for bold, but pleasing, color contrasts. Blocks are often set on point and separated by plain squares. There is relatively little use of sashing to separate blocks. Wayne and Holmes County quiltmakers prefer important borders that frame the center of the quilt on all four sides. Their quilting is well done, but often of secondary interest to the pieced or applique designs."⁵

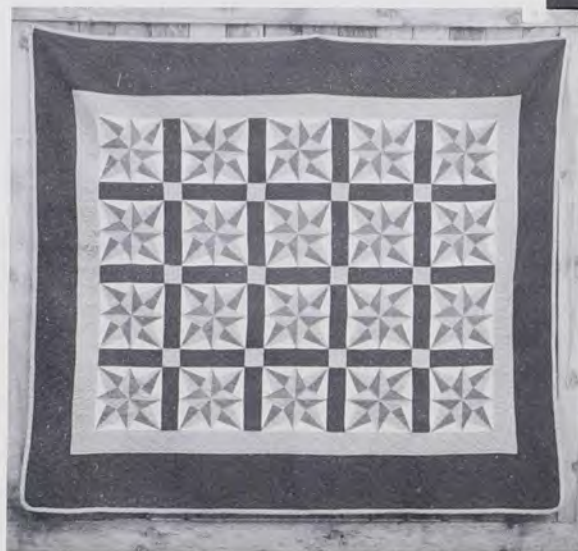
Except for the reference to applique, a technique few Amish use for their own quilts, this is also an apt description of Ohio Amish quilts. Amish women with an Ohio quilting heritage typically use a repeated-block style in their quilts. Usually rectangular rather than square, their quilts also are characterized by intricate piecing and are often optical illusions.

As with other conservative Amish groups, Troyer quilt colors are closely related to clothing colors. The women

of the New York community use the same colors for both with two exceptions: they do not wear pink but do use it as a contrast color in quilts; and they do wear some white, but do not use it in their quilts. Not just any, but particular shades of blue are Troyer favorites, while scarlet, orange, and yellow are never used. The colors used for Troyer outerwear are relatively dark, but their quilts can be fairly bright since they include scraps from their brighter and lighter-colored underclothes.

The photograph on the cover shows very clearly the relationship between clothing and quilt colors. Most of the clothes on the line are the favorite color, blue. The sleeveless dress in the center, lighter and brighter than the rest of the articles, is an undergarment. In the center, below, is a typical plain quilt; to its left is a typical pieced quilt, mostly blue with black, purple, plum, and a touch of pink; the pattern is Dutch Rose. The same women who made that quilt also made the Brick Work quilt on the right, and its colors are not Troyer colors at all. The two quilts show how an Amish woman's quilting choices change when she moves from one group to another: The Brick Work quilt was made when she belonged to a less orthodox group in Ohio, many years before she joined the Troyer group. As a member of the Troyer Amish, she could no longer use yellow (just visible in the center of the Brick Work design) or white; she could use pink, but not as an outer border. As her old and new group both had an identical Ohio Amish heritage, the proportions, patterns, and borders of her quilts could remain the same; only the palette of colors changed.

And, speaking of that palette, all members of the community know the allowed colors well—they see them everyday in the clothing worn by friends and neighbors and hanging on community clotheslines. Not only are they familiar with the colors, they also know how those colors are used. Indeed, only a member of the group can say definitely what hues can or cannot be used, and in what combinations. I saw proof of this intuitive recognition while visiting a Troyer Amish family and showing them



Tumbling Blocks, Pyramid Variation: A version of this quilt was made for all five of this quiltmaker's daughters.

Blazing Star: The light background color is beige, not white; the material is from an undergarment.

photographs of quilts from several other Troyer settlements. The family's three teenage daughters were puzzled by one of the quilts, saying it looked "strange." When I told them who it belonged to, they replied: "Oh, his mother is from Punxsautawney [Pa]. That's a Punxsy quilt." I looked through my pictures of Punxsautawney quilts and found they were right. Although the quilt in question was in typical Troyer colors, these were used in a slightly different way that the New York teenagers noticed immediately. Like the Troyer Amish, Punxsautawney Amish quiltmakers have an Ohio quilting heritage (first in Holmes, then in Geauga, County), but their group identity has reinforced a degree of divergence between them.

Amish quilts are noted for their sophisticated color combinations, and after seeing hundreds of quilts—including those made by different generations of the same families—and talking to many, many, quiltmakers, I am convinced these combinations are the result of individual taste. Whenever I ask Amish women about their choices, they usually say they "just thought they would look nice." Within their rules and traditions, Amish quiltmakers can use the color combinations they prefer (I know one who likes plum and green together, and this makes her quilts quite distinctive), and their preferences are not necessarily those of other family members. For example, I knew one woman who used every different color allowed, and just as much pink as she dared. All her daughters, on the other hand, prefer much more subdued color combinations.

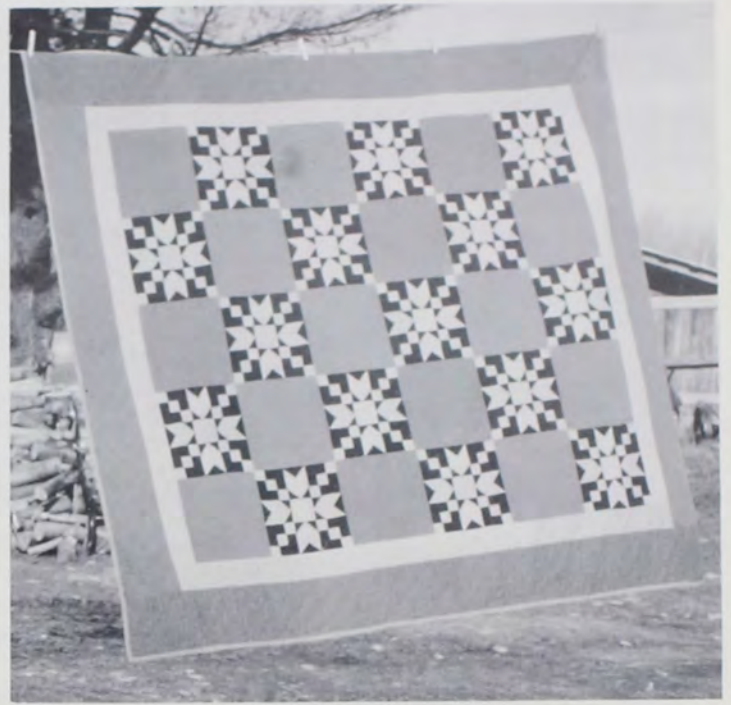
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Among the Amish, quilting is a group activity. Because they will make almost all of their family's clothing after they marry, Amish girls are taught to sew by their mothers, some of whom piece the tops and then allow their teenage daughters to do the quilting. In other families, daughters piece their own tops so they will learn how it is done. Among the Troyer Amish, every woman gives a specific number of quilts to each of her children. Typically, each child receives three quilts (sometimes two are pieced and one is plain), although each mother has her own policy. One woman I knew who did not enjoy quilting gave each of her thirteen children one identical quilt. Regardless of whether they marry or not, children receive the quilts—always referred to as "from home"—in their early adulthood. Those leaving the faith, however, will not get quilts, and, as one Amish woman said, "They don't expect to."

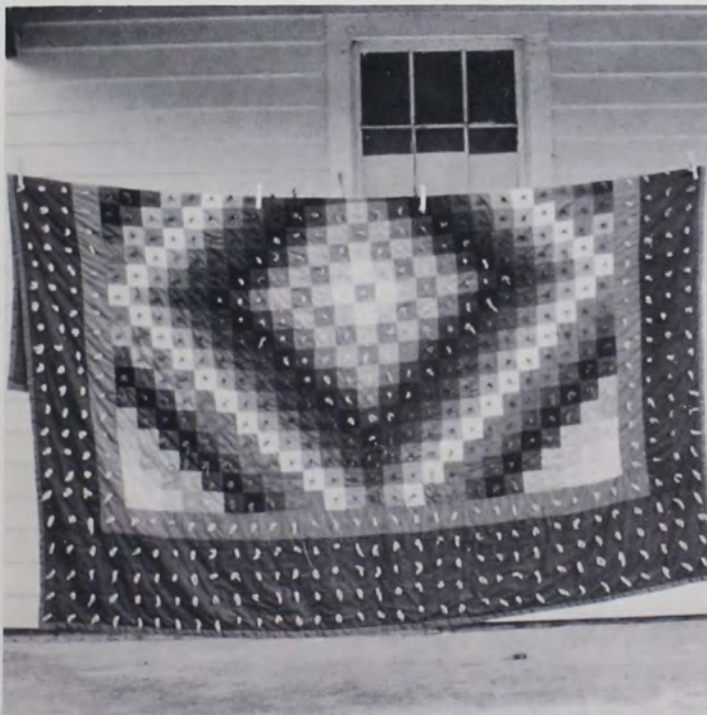
Another example of the craft as a group enterprise, quilting bees are a way to raise money for mutual aid. Festive and productive since ten women can complete a top in a single day, they are a way to help pay the bills when medical or other extraordinary emergencies arise. And, since fluctuations in milk prices and high land prices have put Troyer Amish families under more economic pressure than ever before in their recent past, quilting has become an important way for individual families to supplement farm income. It is work which is in accordance



Both the Star of Bluegrass pattern, these quilts show the difference made by color placement.



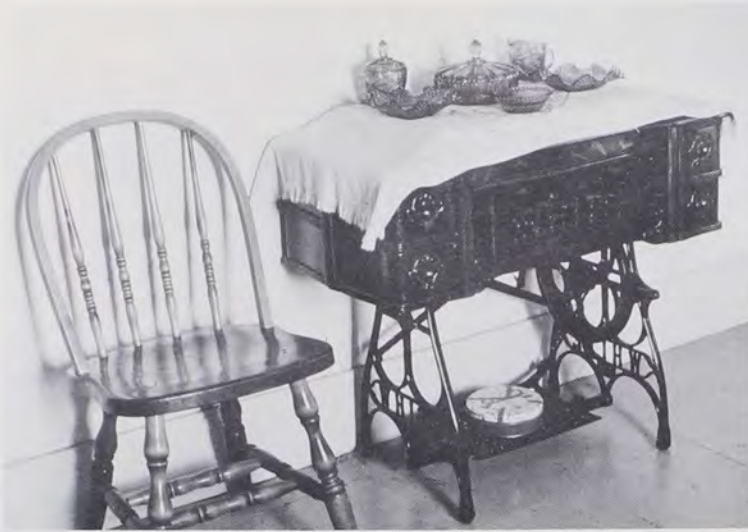
When shown this picture, three teenage girls from a Troyer Amish family decided immediately that the quilt (Stepping Stones) looked "strange." They soon identified it—correctly—as a "Punxsy" quilt.



Sunshine and Shadow: Tied quilts are pieced and then knotted with yarn.



The back of this quilt (Ohio Star) shows the stitches sewn as a joke by an Amish husband whose wife thought it so amusing she let them remain.



The bedroom of a teenage Troyer Amish girl; she already has the sewing machine she will use when she marries.



Among the Amish, quilts are often made as a form of mutual aid. This Log Cabin design was quilted in a single August day by ten women who worked outside in order to take advantage of beautiful weather.

with Amish beliefs and values, since women can remain at home, where they are available to their family and their community. While on the subject, it is worthwhile to note that quilts made for sale do not conform to Amish rules and traditions, but rather cater to the current "country look" market.

* * *

The Amish quiltmaker has inherited a craft developed over thousands of years by individuals from many diverse cultures, a craft further refined by generations of her own people. By the time she starts making quilts in earnest in her teenage years, she has seen hundreds of them on the beds and clotheslines of her friends and neighbors. Thoroughly familiar with the colors—chosen by consensus—of her group, and knowing the correct proportions, border

styles, and pattern types, she does not have to contend with ever-changing fashions. If, then, she maintains traditions handed down to her while at the same time exercising her own tastes within them, it will be hard for her to fail, for those traditions, rather than limiting her creativity, provide the inspiration and support she needs to make beautiful quilts.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Osler, Dorothy, *Traditional British Quilts* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1987), p. 82.
- ²Granick, Eva W., *The Amish Quilt* (Intercourse, Pa.: Good Books, 1989), p. 25.
- ³Luthy, David, *The Amish in America: Settlements that Failed, 1840–1960* (1986), p. 339.
- ⁴Granick, p. 25.
- ⁵Gunn, Virginia, *Treasures from Trunks—Early Quilts from Wayne and Holmes Counties* (Wooster, Ohio: The College of Wooster Art Museum, 1987), p. 5.



Amish barn, western New York. Most Amish still farm, at least part time. (All photographs by James Roach)

Considered a peace-loving people, the Amish are thought of as living harmoniously in a seemingly idyllic, 19th-century setting. Nevertheless, although conflict is the antithesis of the lifestyle they prefer, it will be argued here that conflict is not only present, but is a force that surrounds and penetrates Amish society, serving to bind it together. While making it clear here, at the outset, that the following discussion excludes any type of conflict that is associated with violence, this paper will examine the ways in which conflict—both internal and external—has shaped and influenced Amish society from the days of the Reformation until the present time.

MAINTAINING ORDER IN THE AMISH COMMUNITY

In *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, Donald B. Kraybill lists five tactics used to promote order and survival in Amish society; tactics which also serve to maintain the group's isolation. These are the symbolization of core values (of which Plain dress is an example); centralized leadership; social sanctions; comprehensive socialization; and controlled interaction with outsiders.¹ Amish society is guided by the *Ordnung*, which regulates public, private, and ritual life.² Roughly translated as "ordinance," or "discipline," the *Ordnung* is not written, but rather is internalized; is understood. The code of conduct which orders every aspect of life, and by which the Amish are expected to live, the *Ordnung* is made up of two kinds of regulations: historical rules that originated in 16th-century special conferences, and modern rules that govern each individual church district.³ In some respects, the *Ordnung* is synonymous with socialization.

Members who threaten the solidarity of the Amish community are subject to five levels of confessional-type

sanctions,⁴ each more severe than the last, and all designed to get the "sinner" to repent and ask forgiveness. The first of these sanctions is "private": church district authorities visit violators, and in the privacy of their own homes ask them to mend their ways and return to the *Ordnung*. The second, used for minor offenses such as wearing make-up or using some prohibited object, is called "sitting"; it means that at a church meeting offenders will be asked to cease such worldly behavior. The third level, "kneeling," is used for more serious offenses such as violating a religious taboo like riding in a car on Sunday; offenders will be asked to kneel before the congregation and confess their transgression.

Sanction number four is the small *bann*. This is a temporary or six-week-long period of excommunication for "a weakness that can be corrected between brothers."⁵ It is a form of the *Meidung*, or shunning—a time of isolation from the community. Such isolation can have a very sobering effect on those who know only the peripheral community. The fifth, and culminating, sanction is excommunication, most incidences of which occur because of material desires, not because of disputes over religious doctrine. In fact, much of the conflict that leads to these confessional-type sanctions is the result of disputes that involve some change in the lifestyle of the Amish that challenges the status quo.

INTERNAL CONFLICT IN THE AMISH COMMUNITY

To fully comprehend the issues of order and conflict in Amish society, it is necessary to discuss at some length the concept of *Gelassenheit*; a concept, it has been claimed, which orders the entire Amish social system.⁶ Translated, the word literally means submission, or yielding to a higher authority—God. Although generally they are not familiar with the term, the Amish are very familiar with the concept,⁷



Milk cans on an Amish farm in western New York; the issues that cause the most dissent in Amish communities are those related to modernity; the desire to advance beyond the traditional agricultural community.

which, embedded in their culture, indeed makes it a counterculture to the bold, aggressive, modern American way of life, with its focus on individual achievement and fulfillment.

Gelassenheit, as practiced by the Amish, is a way of thinking about the individual's relationship with God and with others in the community; it means being willing to sacrifice personal goals for the good of the community. Concerned with serving, respecting, and obeying those in the community, *Gelassenheit* entails modesty in talk, action, and dress; it implies that the community should be small, compact, and simple. Believing they have been called by Christ to abandon self-interest and to follow the example He set during His life on earth—a life characterized by suffering, meekness, humility, and service—the Amish are warned not to take revenge on their enemies, but rather to love them, and to turn the other cheek and pray for their persecutors.

The entire idea of *Gelassenheit*, then, must be incorporated into any serious examination of the Amish for, etched into their consciousness, it “regulates the entire spectrum of life from body language to social organization, from personal speech to symbolism. Submission to God's will, meekness, and small-scale organizations merge in Amish culture. Life takes on religious meaning as people place themselves on the altar of community, a sacrifice that brings homage to God.”⁸ Lacking some understanding of these religious values, it is difficult to assign reasons to Amish behavior. John A. Hostetler, author of the groundbreaking study, *Amish Society*, said it best: “Without taking into account how the Amish view themselves, all else in their culture is virtually incomprehensible.”⁹

* * *

In any study of agricultural communities, an issue of great importance is the introduction and diffusion of innovations. In Amish communities, *Gelassenheit* plays an important role in the diffusion process. As already noted, innovations have the potential for creating problems which subsequently can lead to community conflict.¹⁰ One of the few scholars to argue that the Amish “community is by

no means conflict free,”¹¹ also describes one such incident that took place in northern Indiana. The issue concerned the adoption or non-adoption of kerosene refrigerators, and the conflict created so much stress that in the end, in order to keep peace and maintain solidarity in the community, a bishop was dismissed and one church district broke apart.¹²

Other internal conflicts also occur. As Amish youths make the transition through adolescence to adulthood, they go through a stage of “sowing the oats,” an almost open rebellion against their parents and the church.¹³ Although this process gives young people the impression of free choice in deciding whether or not to join the church, Kraybill points out several reasons why they show great reluctance to leave the community. These include the socialization experience; the presence of friends and family; economic incentives; and limited education and occupational skills.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the social and psychological aspects of perceiving the choice to be free and open has the effect of making individuals even more compliant and committed members of the community after baptism: believing that the choice was theirs and theirs alone, they feel they must make the best of their situation.

This kind of rebellion also serves another purpose, for it saves the integrity of those who chose to leave the faith. The twenty percent of those young people who are never baptized can leave the Amish community with no sanctions or ill will. These are youths who, either because of temperament or curiosity, would probably not have made compliant members as adults. By leaving before they are baptized, it is likely they keep conflict from occurring in the community sometime in the future.

EXTERNAL CONFLICT AND THE STATE

Although they are law-abiding citizens and are actively encouraged by the church to support the civil authorities, the Amish have generally stayed at arm's length from any form of government activity. And when, as sometimes happens, Amish teachings, beliefs, values, and the *Ordnung* come in conflict with civil law, there is no question about their priorities: they obey the laws of God before the laws of man. Thus, if pushed to this kind of confrontation the Amish will take a stand, even going to prison for the sake of their consciences.

The Amish have a history of conflict with the United States Government, especially since the Federal Government increased its presence in rural areas at the time of the end of the Depression and the beginning of World War II. With that conflict came selective service and the draft, which forced the Amish to register, even though they have moral objections to any form of violence. During the Vietnam Era, when opposition to the war was widespread and many individuals sought conscientious objector status, that designation was harder to obtain than in previous times, so Amish leaders cooperated with Selective Service authorities to work out a system which allowed draft-age



Amish school in western New York; the conflict over education was eventually settled by the United States Supreme Court.

choosing. These changes brought on a series of confrontations that culminated with the Supreme Court case (*Wisconsin v. Yoder*), and resulted in a judgment favorable to the Amish community. This has basically settled the education question for them, for although problems still do arise, the mechanism is now in place to resolve potential conflicts with a suitable compromise.

EXTERNAL CONFLICT OVER LAND AND DEVELOPMENT

Land-use conflicts, occurring primarily in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, are particularly detrimental to a society whose second-level core values and beliefs are centered on agriculture. (Their primary values and beliefs are, of course, focused on their duty and service to God.) If Amish lands are converted to non-agricultural uses and they can no longer farm, the economic and social underpinnings of the community will be in jeopardy. Admittedly, there are many Amish who are no longer full-time farmers, but most, if not all, still farm at least part-time. Gradually, however, the Amish are being pushed off their land, sometimes because the state condemns some of it for a future highway, and other times because of encroaching development which makes farming increasingly difficult. This mixture of urban and rural land use has also created conditions (such as increased traffic congestion) that threaten the immediate environment and imperil Amish residents, who, being a peaceful people, have been socialized not to fight back.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the Amish are not alone in their struggle to retain their traditional way of life. Conflict sometimes breeds strange bedfellows, and in this case it has brought into existence an interesting phenomenon, called by some "the Amish Cocoon."²⁰ Made up of several somewhat related groups, each with its own reasons for wanting to serve and protect the Amish, this cocoon—with one possible exception—has no formal organization, but is simply a coming together of interests.

The exception is the National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom, a quasi-organization "run" by William Ball (who argued and won *Wisconsin v. Yoder* before the Supreme Court) and Elizabeth Place, attorneys from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Assisted by some very adept Amish lay lawyers,²¹ the committee raises funds, hires lawyers, and apparently has been quite successful in defending and standing up for the Amish, who have never paid any legal fees.

Making up the many different layers of the Amish cocoon in addition to the National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom, are many other groups, some informally organized, others organized and well-established. Of these groups, the closest to the Amish are those Mennonites with an Amish heritage: raised and socialized in the faith, they opted not to be baptized Amish when they reached adulthood. Yet having chosen to stay in the same community as their close family and kin, they are very pro-

Amish men to work as conscientious objectors on Amish-supervised farms.¹⁵ This confrontation resulted in the formation of the Amish National Steering Committee.

The formation of this committee was something very new for the Amish, who detest anything bureaucratic. But, although antithetical to their beliefs, a recent study implies that the Amish felt compelled to create this organization in response to the conflict with the Government over the draft.¹⁶ Donald Kraybill points out that while other Amish organizations have emerged under appropriate circumstances, the Amish National Steering Committee reflects the greatest imprint of bureaucracy on these Plain People to date: he refers to it as "the Shadow of Bureaucracy."¹⁷ Among Amish leaders there is mixed support for the committee, which maintains that it "is only the voice of the churches combined." Individual bishops fear the committee has gained too much power and is trying to control the church.

Another source of conflict with the outside world has been the Old Age and Survivors Insurance Act of 1935, better known as the social security program. Although most individuals have been able to avoid payment of the employee share of the tax, the Amish still pay large sums into the system without ever expecting to receive benefits. This is so because Amish businesses that cannot find a way to become exempt must pay the employer share of the tax. Therefore, in order to make the broadest and most effective use of social security exemptions, the Amish have been creative in the ways in which they organize their businesses, and in the special relationships they develop among the workers in their industries.

Yet another government intrusion into Amish affairs—the conflict over education—was finally settled by the United States Supreme Court. The problem began with government attempts to increase educational efficiency in rural areas by consolidating one-room schools; modifying the curriculum; enforcing compulsory attendance to a certain age; and demanding increased requirements and certification for teachers.¹⁸ These changes had a catastrophic effect on the Amish, for children who once went to one-room schools controlled by an Amish school board in an Amish settlement, now had to attend a consolidated school with "English" children, and be taught by teachers not of Amish

tective of the Amish (and especially of their own families), and are not hesitant to take direct action if the need arises.

A second group working on behalf of the Amish are outsiders who derive some kind of philosophical satisfaction from seeing them survive as a society. And support also comes from a third, and more distant group, a group also concerned with preserving traditional lifestyles, but which is trying to achieve goals that have nothing to do with rural values. The last group making up the cocoon is far distant from the Amish philosophically, but much too close physically. It is, of course, the tourist industry, which brings about \$400 million to Lancaster County annually. When this group weighs the benefits of highways and development against the appeal of the Amish, the Amish carry much clout: without them, Lancaster County would be like any other agricultural area; with them, it is a gold mine.

CONCLUSION

Even if the Amish disavow its presence or try to define it away by calling it by another name, there can be no doubt that conflict does occur within their communities; nor can there be any doubt that this conflict serves a constructive function by promoting integration (the coordination and maintenance of viable interrelationships within the social system) and the cohesion which keeps the community stable. This is so because, as already discussed, the issues that cause conflict have nothing to do with religious values or beliefs. On the contrary, they are usually associated with the maintenance of the boundaries; that is, they are usually issues such as technology, dress, and education—the adaptive characteristics that have kept the Amish separate from the “English” community. (Indeed, it has been shown by many authors²² that most of those who leave the community, either before baptism or by excommunication, do not drift far from the conservative Mennonite churches.)

It is probably safe to say, then, that the issues that cause the most dissent are those related to modernity; the desire to advance beyond the traditional agricultural community. Conflicts such as these “that do not contradict the basic and core values [of the community] are functional by eliminating dissociating elements.”²³ In other words, these conflicts ultimately mean that individuals with differing values are no longer a part of the community, which is cleansed and purified by the elimination of these kinds of material want.

The Amish reaction to external conflicts—insofar as there has been any—results from the same desire to maintain the boundaries that separate them from the outside world, as well as a desire to protect the values of the community. Internally, such conflicts have facilitated the formation of leadership groups that did not exist before the school, social security, and selective service dilemmas. Whether the Amish like it or not, for rather pragmatic reasons, these groups have resulted in a somewhat dispersed church organization coming closer together.

Still, alone, the Amish would likely suffer in their contacts with the larger society. But with the coalitions that form around them, it is not likely they will be overrun by the government or by developers. This coalition depends upon the Amish being there; of their being the recipients of the pressure put on their land and on their lifestyle, and on their wanting to remain in Lancaster County. The Amish do have a choice when it comes to highways and developers: they can pack up and move, as they have done many times in the past, and can always do in the future.

Conflicts with the state over laws and regulations create situations that do not have simple remedies. Fortunately, with the National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom at the point, it is always possible to turn to the legal system for protection. Hopefully, the courts will continue to support the desire of the Amish to be a separate society, and will continue to aid in the development of remedies that are satisfactory to all the parties involved.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Kraybill, D., *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 18.
- ²*Ibid.*, p. 95.
- ³Hostetler, J. A., *Amish Society* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 3rd. ed., 1980), p. 84.
- ⁴Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, p. 111.
- ⁵*Ibid.*
- ⁶Cronk, S., “Gelassenheit: The Rites of the Redemptive Process in Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonite Communities.” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 55 (1981) 5–44. The following discussion, drawing on the work of Cronk, is my condensation of *Gelassenheit* as conceptualized and used by Kraybill in *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, p. 25.
- ⁷Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, p. 268.
- ⁸*Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ⁹Hostetler, J. A., *A New Look at the Old Order Amish* (Penna. State University: Dept. Agri. Econ. & Rural Soc.), p. 7.
- ¹⁰Hostetler, *Amish Society*, p. 270; and Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, p. 22.
- ¹¹Cong, D., “Amish Factionalism and Technology Change: A Case Study of Kerosene Refrigeration and Conservatism.” *Ethnology*, 31 (1992), 217.
- ¹²*Ibid.*, 205.
- ¹³Kraybill, D., *The Puzzles of Amish Life* (Intercourse, Pa.: Good Books, 1990), p. 94.
- ¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 97.
- ¹⁵Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, p. 218.
- ¹⁶Olshan, M. A., “The Old Order Amish Steering Committee: A Case Study in Organization Evolution.” *Social Forces* 69 (2), p. 601.
- ¹⁷Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, p. 86.
- ¹⁸See Danbom, D. B., *The Resisted Revolution: Urban America and the Industrialization of Agriculture, 1900–1930*. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1979.)
- ¹⁹See Hostetler, *Amish Society* and *A New Look at the Old Order Amish*; Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture*; and Testa, R–M., *After the Fire: The Destruction of the Lancaster County Amish* (Hanover, N.H.: Univ. Press of New England, 1992).
- ²⁰Kidder, R. L. and J. A. Hostetler, “Managing Ideologies: Harmony as Ideology in Amish and Japanese Societies.” *Law and Society Review* 24 (4, 1990), 913; and Kidder, R. L., “The Role of Outsiders” in *The Amish and the State*, ed. D. Kraybill (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993), p. 9. The following discussion refers specifically to Lancaster County, but there is no reason why such groups could not be found in other Amish communities.
- ²¹Kidder and Hostetler, 914.
- ²²Especially by Hostetler in *Amish Society* and Kraybill in *The Riddle of Amish Culture*.
- ²³Himes, J. S. *Conflict and Conflict Management* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1980), p. 130.

OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLD ORDER AMISH WOMEN¹

by Gertrude E. Huntington



Anneken van den Hove buried alive in 1597 "because she belonged to the Anabaptists." (Martyrs Mirror)

During the last two-and-a-half decades the variety of economic roles open to Old Order Amish women has increased. This has not proved to be a threat to their society, nor has it altered the basic family structure, family roles, or male-female relationships. Instead, the growing economic opportunities for women have served to maintain the Amish family's independence from the dominant culture and contributed to the cohesiveness of the nuclear family. Women's employment is structured to support the family as an economic unit. Like farming, it enables the family to maintain a pre-industrial lifestyle in the midst of a super-national, international market economy. Many of the new occupations enable individuals who do not like farming or domestic work to find socially acceptable employment within the Amish community.

The position and role of Amish women has been shaped by historical events that have differentially affected the Amish and the rest of society. Victorian mores never penetrated the boundaries of the Old Order Amish culture—neither the flirtatious prudery, nor the rampant individualism. Old Order Amish women have never been perceived as playthings, possessions, or status symbols for

men. Rather, they have been recognized as making an essential, unique economic and cultural contribution. More than four hundred and fifty years ago, Anabaptist women defended their faith at inquisitions by learned church officials, suffered long years of imprisonment and, receiving equal treatment with their brothers and husbands, were burned alive at the stake for remaining obstinate and steadfast.

The Amish family developed from the patriarchal, Germanic family and is modeled on Christian Biblical principles, especially the teaching of Paul that man is to be the head of the wife, and the wife is to submit herself to her husband. This submission, however, has always been limited. Amish marriage must be "in the Lord"; that is, with a co-religionist. Individuals do not formally enter the Amish community until they are adults and voluntarily confess their faith, promising to support the Amish belief system with their own actions, and promising also to help other members to follow the *Ordnung*, or church rules. Each individual makes a public declaration of lifelong responsibility—and personal submission—to the will of the group (not just to the will of a father, or a husband, or

any male). Within this group, although women do not have an equal voice, they do have an equal vote. Therefore, women as well as men are recognized as having the ability to make responsible judgments, and as being responsible for their ultimate destiny.

Marriage "in the Lord" means that an individual's first duty is to God (as represented by the church community), and one's second responsibility is to one's spouse. In the sixteenth century this radical belief was seen as undermining society because it relieved a wife of the obligation to obey an ungodly husband (and she could participate in the decision that he was ungodly). In addition, these teachings militated against arranged marriages, marriages for economic advancement or for pleasure, and against personal desire or ostentation. Anabaptist marriage was to be a partnership in the Lord, and the basis of a family whose function was to produce willing, responsible members of the believing community. This remains the primary function of the Amish family. Therefore a very high value is placed on children and in turn the women, who produce and nurture the children, are valued. The average Amish woman raises six or seven children to adulthood, and of these more than three-fourths will choose to join the faith of their parents. Children are crucial to a society that does not recruit or convert.

Amish farms are jointly owned by husband and wife, with the husband being responsible for the field crops and the large livestock, and the wife processing much of the food and making most of the clothing. One study showed that Amish wives can more than five hundred quarts of

produce a year, supply more than half of the produce consumed by their families, and make over three-fifths of their family's clothing.² Although these subsistence activities do not contribute to the cash flow of the family, they are of recognized economic value. The Amish woman's sense of worth and economic importance was demonstrated when women were asked how much money they earned during the preceding year and they not infrequently responded, "How much did my husband say the farm brought in? Half of that is mine."³

Husbands and wives are to be as individuals to one another, and of one mind to all others. Thus the public stance of the Amish family is one of wifely submission and obedience; in private and in practice, the family functions relatively democratically with important decisions (such as "should we move to a new location?") generally being made jointly (often with additional input from the extended family), and minor decisions being allocated—the husband making those pertaining to his economic pursuits, the wife making those related to running the household.

Unlike much of contemporary society that lauds androgyny, the Amish emphasize complementary roles, likening the church or the family to the human body in which the hand and the foot have different functions but are dependent on one another. In many ways the *Ordnung* functions to preserve this differentiation. The prohibition against modern conveniences increases the importance of women who have the training and skill needed for household tasks such as "doing the washing." Oblivious to political correctness, a conservative Mennonite high school



Washday (among the Amish often a family affair) in western New York. (All photographs by James Roach)



boy once put it succinctly (and chauvinistically) when he pinned to his bedroom wall a hand-lettered sign that read, "The best household appliance was made from Adam's rib." Any individual can go to a laundromat, read three paragraphs and successfully wash and dry clothes. In contrast, an Amish washday is often a family affair—perhaps beginning with the manufacturing, drying, and grating of the homemade laundry soap—involving the labor of both husband and wife. The husband frequently is the one to start up the gasoline, diesel, or air compressor engine to run the washing machine, while the wife is heating and carrying the water. Then she washes progressively dirty, carefully sorted piles of bedding and clothing, hanging the wash in proper order on the line, taking down the dry washing, folding it, sprinkling those items that need sprinkling and, finally, heating the sadiron or lighting the gasoline iron to press the shirts and dresses before carefully putting them on hangers to be carried to the bedrooms. Amish couples share work by contributing complementary activity to the same task, rather than by delegating domestic tasks alternately to one spouse or the other. Thus the need for one another is emphasized, rather than the fact that each can substitute for the other, which implies independence rather than mutual support.

In spite of the emphasis on learning housekeeping tasks there is no taboo against a woman earning cash, and Amish women are expected to be frugal and able to manage money. (An Amish mother writes that she wants her daughter to know how to keep house without going to the store. Let dad bring home the few things needed when he must go to town on an errand. Let her learn to save, to bake bread, to make cheese, to grow food in the garden, to grow teas, to make cereal, to help butcher, to make soap, to clean without expensive cleaners from the grocery store, to make butter, to sew, to can, and never to frown at certain jobs: "Our attitude toward work can determine whether our children enjoy their tasks or not.")⁴ All Amish wives have had experience earning money before they married, and many have the expertise to establish small businesses geared to a money economy. The businesses they choose tend to be outgrowths of activities traditionally performed by Amish women; activities in which they are already skilled and for which they have community support. These businesses can be carried out at home, providing work for the children and enabling mother to be the primary caretaker for the youngest children.

A typical entrepreneurial situation for an Amish wife is described by a writer from Pennsylvania:

The mailbox says Reuben S. Stoltzfus. But it is Reuben's wife, Rebecca who operates the bakery. For several years before her marriage she worked at Smucker's Bakery and had experience in the art of baking and marketing. Being the mother of nine children between the ages of 2 years and 17 years, she reasoned her own bakery would give the children

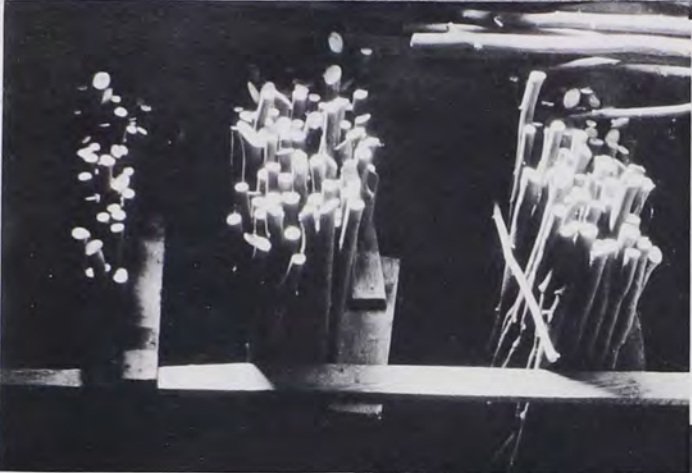
something to do and also provide additional income so necessary for a large family in today's economy. Her husband Reuben, who operates a welding shop and repairs dumpsters, has his sons helping him while Rebecca and her three daughters, Salome 15, Mary 14 and Rebecca 8 are busy manning a place in the bake shop. The baby is only 2 years old so she's usually watching and keeping outdoors. In addition there are several cousins helping for it is a family affair.⁵

This Amish woman is utilizing typical, gender-appropriate skills—virtually all Amish women can bake bread. She has expanded on these skills by having learned about marketing when she "worked out" as a young unmarried adult. Her husband runs his own shop—often Amish women have their own businesses running parallel to their husbands', with both profiting from the customers attracted to the other's business.

Both Rebecca's and her husband's work is typical of pre-industrial cottage industry: It is done in the home, it utilizes the resources of the children's labors, and it functions to teach the children skills, attitudes, and character traits necessary for survival in contemporary Amish society. The clearly defined gender roles are illustrated by the fact that the girls work in the bakery and the boys work in the welding shop. Also the women sell only from the house. Some of Rebecca's baked goods are sold in Philadelphia, but this is handled by a non-horse-and-buggy male neighbor. Rebecca and the girls retain all the decision making, gauging the demand, determining what and how much to bake, and figuring the profits. Typical of Amish culture, the individual has great freedom within clear boundaries. The management of the bake shop is totally Rebecca's responsibility, but it is run in such a way that Amish values are reinforced, gender roles are not disrupted, the nuclear family continues to be the primary institution, and the economic needs of the family are met with a minimum of personal interaction with the outside culture. When properly structured, these small industries can have the same sociological place in the culture as does farming. The pressures for increased interaction with the dominant society are greater than they have been with farming however, and thus in the long run these entrepreneurial activities may blur the boundaries between Amish and non-Amish, and could pose a threat to Amish culture.

* * *

When the Amish first settled in America they engaged in a variety of trades in addition to farming, but during the nineteenth century non-farming occupations were looked on with suspicion and often were forbidden. The earliest shops were closely related to agriculture—blacksmithing, milling, buggy and harness shops. The oldest Amish shop in continual existence is a bookshop established in 1915 to supply suitable German books and German calendars for a growing Amish community, at a time when the use of German was fading in the dominant society. None of these early shops were managed by women or even listed



Amish chair shop in western New York; daughters, and occasionally wives, help with furniture finishing. Amish women often have their own businesses running parallel to their husbands'.



as jointly owned by women. As the differences increased between the lifestyle of the Amish and that of their non-Amish rural neighbors, specific items needed by the Amish became harder to obtain and small shops sprang up to meet this need.⁶ The last thirty years have seen a rapid rise in the price (and a decrease in the availability) of farmland so that not all Amish now “have the privilege of farming,” and a growing number must find other means of economic livelihood that are acceptable to their community.⁷

During the 1950s furniture shops were opened. They made items needed by the community such as coffins and church benches, but also large extension tables and hickory rockers. The owners of these shops might also repair furniture, and sometimes bought and sold used furniture.

Daughters, and occasionally wives, did the sanding and varnishing, painting and refinishing. During the 1960s and 1970s, many Amish hardware stores and dry goods stores opened to supply non-electric Amish household equipment and cloth suitable for coverings, bonnets, dresses, and shawls. Amish women quickly moved into this arena. Many started small stores in their basements or in the corner of a downstairs room—ordering extra material they found to be especially serviceable. They sold needed items that were no longer available in the general country store or from major mail-order catalogs. Of the eleven retail stores listed in the 1980 Illinois Amish Directory, just over half (six) are listed as being owned by women. Bulk grocery stores, salvage stores, health food stores, bakeries,

craft shops, quilting stores, and fabric stores are generally run, if not owned, by women. (Many of the health food stores and most of the dry goods stores are owned by Amish women.) Greenhouses, too, may be started and run by Amish women, for the wife is responsible for the yard and for the vegetable and flower gardens. As it grows, the husband may become more involved in the wife's business, which may furnish the primary income for the family, replacing farming, which can be turned over to a married child, or replacing day laboring, which is generally discouraged, is of low status, and is seen as detrimental to the family.

An article in the Ohio *Gemeinde Register* written by the wife of a day laborer claims that working away from home "can be your spiritual downfall, the downfall of your family, and of your church."⁸ Within the Amish community wives of day laborers are in a difficult position because they have limited support from their husbands in child rearing, and cannot work in close partnership with their husbands, helping with production or complementing his economic activities. Amish women whose husbands do not farm produce a smaller percentage of the family food, can less food, and make fewer items of their family's clothing than those who do farm.⁹ Wives of day laborers make a smaller contribution to the subsistence and to the economic survival of their family. This has an effect on the woman's self-esteem and on her status within the community. In addition, the children she bears are of no economic advantage to a day laborer, and it is a problem to train them in Amish ways if the father does not work at home in an occupation in which he can bring his sons along.

* * *

Before parenthood Amish women in many communities are employed on a regular basis by non-Amish individuals or work in small factories. An Indiana Amish paper carried a brief article about a new industry that spray paints automotive parts and wanted to employ "mostly Amish."¹⁰ The non-union plant planned to hire about seventy-five people and pay about four dollars an hour; most of the employees would be women and the company would supply a bus to transport them to and from work. In Ohio many small factories have been built in Amish areas to take advantage of cheap, conscientious labor. An Amish woman may work in such a factory, sometimes until the birth of her first baby. Uncharacteristically, the usually discreet Amishwoman informs the foreman of her pregnancy and is given light work. In these Ohio factories Amish and non-Amish work together. Any employment outside the community constitutes some risk, but factory work, for either men or women, offers a greater threat to the community than almost any other occupation. The hours are rigid, days off are inflexible, interfering with participation in community events such as weddings and barn raisings, and required participation in social security and workman's compensation may reduce an individual's dependence on the community. In these factories the actual work is

untraditional, gender roles are frequently blurred, and daily interaction with non-Amish, often on a fairly intimate level, is inevitable. The percentage of Amish doing factory work varies greatly from one community to another, and from one church district to another. Some churches forbid any work in towns, or in any type of factory.

* * *

The health of their families has always been part of the Amish woman's domain. Amish women have started health food stores, supplied teas and supplements, and worked in areas of health care that do not require advanced education or degrees. Some Amish women practice the traditional art of *brauche*, others give treatments in reflexology (foot massage), patterning, and various health diagnoses and treatments that are learned in short, intensive courses taught by traveling instructors who charge participants, and give those who complete the course a rather meaningless certificate. Some Amish practice midwifery, and a few have birthing centers in their homes or on their farms.¹¹ These women have had varying amounts of training, usually informal (but often intensive and extensive), under the direction of respected and experienced midwives. Where the medical establishment is sympathetic they work in collaboration with a local doctor. Because they do not attend high school or college, Amish midwives are not certified. A few unmarried Amish women have taken practical-nurse training, and one adopted daughter works as a laboratory technician.

Although unmarried Amish women may comprise a significant element in Amish culture they still have a somewhat ambiguous position, as signified by the designation, "older girl." "All the Maiden Ladies of Lancaster County" numbered 296 in 1984.¹² These were never-married women thirty years old, or older. (One church district of approximately seventy-five adult members had twenty-one maiden ladies; six of the sixty-one districts had only one "older girl" in the congregation.) Unmarried Amish women travel together and have circle letters; Old Order Mennonite unmarried women publish their own periodical, and it has some readership among the Amish. Until about thirty years ago the only occupations open to these women were domestic situations in which they worked for, or cared for, elderly or very young family members, or helped in families with newborn babies or in families experiencing illness or some special stress. Many did some cleaning or house-keeping for non-Amish members of the community. Few were able to have a home of their own. Today there are many more job opportunities open to them, and more are establishing homes of their own or shared with another unmarried Amish woman.

The rise of Amish parochial (actually community) schools has led to the development of a new profession for (generally unmarried) Amish women, that of schoolteacher.¹³ Approximately eighty-six percent of the 1155 teachers in Amish schools are women,¹⁴ and in addition there are assistant teachers, part-time teachers, and many former

teachers. Teachers often take correspondence courses, and sometimes go on to work as accountants, help prepare tax returns, and do custom typing and secretarial work. Amish women write textbooks and workbooks for Amish schools, and have published cookbooks, coloring books, stories, family histories and genealogies, poetry, and biographies. Several have worked for various Amish publishers, editing books and periodicals. Amish women work as office managers for doctors and in small businesses, skillfully utilizing the most modern office technology. They have also worked with scholars, assisting in research on Amish populations.

The tourist industry too has spawned considerable economic activity for Amish women. The interest in quilts has meant that in some smaller Amish communities the women can more easily bring in relatively quick cash than can the men who are engaged in traditional farming. In all Amish communities quilts are made and sold to help with medical bills and other unanticipated expenses. In the 1988 Lancaster County Family Register more women listed their occupation as related to some aspect of quilting than to any other category except "domestic." Farmers markets and roadside stands on the edge of the farm sell almost exclusively to tourists and other non-Amish, providing a market outlet for the Amish woman's garden products, baked goods, condiments (chow-chow, pickles, horseradish, church peanut butter, apple butter, jams and preserves), noodles, fudge and other candy, ice cream, vanilla extract, beverage concentrates, root beer, and maple syrup; and for her crafts: crocheted booties, bibs, pot holders, pillow trims, embroidered quilt squares, pillow cases, pillows, hooked rugs, woven rugs, braided pads, hats, mittens, stuffed toys, dolls, pocketbooks, cloth bags, painted glass and painted china. Some women paint toys and knick-knacks made by the men. (So far woodworking has remained an exclusively male occupation with women helping with the finishing.) A few women work in restaurants, more often as cooks than as waitresses, and some clerk in delicatessens or soda fountains. In many Amish communities one or more Amish families will host tourist dinners (with advance registration only, so there is flexibility and the tourists do not become too intrusive.) Usually these women are in an atypical situation, generally with

a husband who is somewhat deviant due to health, emotional, or economic problems, and this is a way for the family to maintain its integrity. One Amish woman cares for non-Amish elderly in her home, and many continue to work as baby-sitters or as domestic help in non-Amish homes.

Some Amish crafts have persisted that are used primarily within the community and are not offered for sale to tourists. In Lancaster County the women still carry handwoven diaper baskets to church; in other communities black, stiff diaper bags are used for church. Straw is still plaited for men's Sunday summer hats and some black felt Amish hats are made within the community. Amish women make bonnets, sew and pleat caps, and tailor suits for the men. Most of the rag rugs, found under every Amish rocker, are produced for consumption within the community. Much of the painted and grained furniture is used within the community, especially for "nice" pieces used to furnish "the room."

Changing technology, rising land prices, increased government regulation, and tourism have contributed to a growing acceptance of occupational diversity by the Amish. Although occupational opportunities have increased for Amish women they are still limited when compared with those theoretically open to all women in the larger society. The Amish value system, which also curtails formal education, severely limits career possibilities outside the community for both men and women. This limitation of individual choice is consistent with Amish culture and is protective of Amish society.

To summarize: Although the opportunities for Amish women to realize a cash income have increased, almost all the economic work performed, both subsistence and cash, is gender related and functions to strengthen the family and the community rather than to enhance the status of the individual. Individual participation in the cash economy by either men or women that takes them outside the community is viewed with suspicion. Work that is performed on Amish-owned land, involves two generations of the nuclear family, respects gender roles, and is of sufficiently small scale to employ no more than a few Amish relatives or neighbors is accepted and encouraged, and helps to maintain Amish cultural integrity.

ENDNOTES

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THE AMISH TABOO ON PHOTOGRAPHY: Its Historical and Social Significance

by Marilyn E. Lehman



Amish spring wagon and kerosene lamp, western New York. Among the Amish the restriction of progress and individual freedom indicates a preference for tradition and community. (Photographs by James Roach)

Several years ago, I went to Kansas to visit the old family farm where my great-grandparents had lived and to see my mother's birthplace. My cousin Eli, the farm's current owner, showed me around, pointing out the room where my grandmother used to sleep, the desk where my great-grandfather used to sit. I remarked that I could no longer picture my great-grandparents even though I had known them well before they died during my teen years. Cousin Eli suggested that I should look at his father, my mother's Uncle Willie, in order to remember how great-grandfather looked. And, he added, if I wanted to remember what my great-grandmother looked like, my mother's Aunt Lisbet would remind me. Several weeks later I had occasion to visit both of these relatives whom I had not seen in years. Then, as Eli predicted, my mental picture of my great-grandparents was restored!

In a society in which picture taking is not practiced, this is how one's ancestors are remembered—through the living images of their descendants. In my own family, the practice of taking pictures began when I was thirteen years old, when my parents left the Amish and joined the more progressive Conservative Mennonite Church. As a member of this more modern Anabaptist group, I soon learned to regret those thirteen years of missing pictures, not to mention the generations of grandmothers and great-grandmothers whose physical features had not been photographically recorded for me. It seemed to me that the Amish restriction against picture taking represented an excessive emphasis on the suppression of pride. Indeed, it has been

my experience that it is the general consensus of most non-Amish people that the forbidding of photographs represents an unsophisticated, outdated, and naively literal interpretation of the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4, King James Version): "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

I would like to suggest another perspective on the Amish taboo against picture taking. My intention is not to question the inherent value of images per se, or to suggest that photography, either as an art form or simply as a way of recording the people and moments of our lives, is somehow wrong or implicitly destructive. Nor do I believe that the Amish hold such a view. Rather, I would like to look at some of the connotations of our society's fascination with picture taking in order to gain a better understanding of Amish society's restriction against it. I will argue that this restriction must be placed in the context of a cultural world view which differs markedly from that of mainstream society. In *Peace, Faith, Nation: Mennonites in Nineteenth-Century America*, Theron F. Schlabach notes that the Amish world view does not embrace many ingrained Western assumptions; he argues that these assumptions must be suspended in order to understand the Amish.¹ A look at some of the cultural values or tendencies reflected in our own society's practice of taking pictures, then, may shed some light on its absence in a community which does not share the same world view.

As a result of the influence of the ideas of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, Western society puts a high premium on progress and individual freedom. The Amish, on the other hand, have not inherited and do not accept the Enlightenment ideals of discrete individuals and progressive history. Rather, the virtues of community and tradition are given priority. In *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, Donald B. Kraybill addresses the issue of community versus individual autonomy in the context of Amish society, concluding that the achievement of community is esteemed above the individual's right to pursue his own course. Kraybill also suggests that progress is checked by tradition: It is not that technology, or progress, is evil in itself, and it is not always shunned; but it is not accepted as inherently good either.² The restriction of progress and individual freedom, then, indicates a preference for tradition and community.

The historical roots of the Amish taboo against picture taking can be traced to the beginning of the Anabaptist movement during the Reformation. The abolishment of images from churches was an element of the Protestant polemic against the Catholic Church. Luther, in Germany, and Zwingli, in Switzerland, held different views regarding the issue of the removal of images from churches, and Luther quarreled heatedly with Carlstadt and the radical reformers about the unauthorized destruction of religious icons. Nevertheless, all were in agreement in their condemnation of religious art.

Today most Protestant groups remain iconoclastic, but few have extended the prohibition against religious imagery into the secular domain of everyday practice. (But other religious groups, such as native Americans and Muslims, also have taboos against photography.) The Amish respect for tradition and their conviction that religious faith should permeate the entire spectrum of the human experience, however, make such an extension defensible. Indeed, it is characteristic of a society which does not distinguish between sacred and secular realms of practice. For example, the Old Orders have no church buildings. Rather, religious services are held in homes or barns. In this way the experience of worship in effect transforms everyday space into sacred space, while sacred space is hallowed by the toil of everyday living. The everyday ritual of life is made sacred in the extension of religion into all aspects of the human experience.

Beyond the historical and traditional basis for the prohibition against picture taking, then, the question concerning the social significance of such a restriction for Amish society today, remains. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin has written about how the technology of mechanical reproduction, particularly photography and film, alters the human perception of reality. One can, for example, see things in a picture that cannot be discerned with the naked eye. As a moment of action frozen in time, the photograph makes

visible aspects of movement not otherwise detectable. Distant objects can be brought closer by using various types of lenses. Indeed, the great advantage of photography is that it allows us to look at things that ordinarily escape our view, at closer ranges than the limits of our vision normally allow.

On the other hand, there are aspects of reality that are not technologically reproducible. Benjamin speaks of the "aura" which surrounds natural objects. Since it cannot be captured by the lens, this aura is, in effect, destroyed by the photograph or film. Thus the uniqueness and transient quality of the natural object is suppressed in the permanence and reproducibility of the photograph.³ As the lyrics of a contemporary song (echoing the Native-American taboo on photography) succinctly declare, "Every time he clicks/ his Kodak pix/ he steals a little bit of soul."⁴

Benjamin contends that the human mode of existence is intricately related to sense perception.⁵ The way we see things, in other words, affects our concept of reality and influences the way we organize our lives to fit that reality. Because photographs depict natural objects stripped of authenticity and transience and imbued with permanence and reproducibility, accepting them as portrayals of those objects, or as records of experiences, effects a suppression of the distinction between original and reproduction. The elusive boundaries between reproduced likeness and original ("aura" defies definition as well as reproduction) make the substitution of the replication for the real thing effortless and usually unconscious. From this vantage, having effaced the missing elements of reality, the reproduction can alter the human perception of that reality. This phenomenon, while more readily recognized in film, is also characteristic of photography. The employment of mechanical reproduction, then, in photography and film, reflects and affects a culture's concept of reality, its values, and its way of life.

The desire to "bring things closer," to get "hold of" objects by means of a reproduced replication, as Benjamin observes, tends to universalize objects as it diminishes their authenticity and individuality. The uniqueness of every reality is negated in the acceptance of its likeness; thus the particular is generalized into the common, the specific into the typical. Benjamin compares this tendency in the field of perception to the importance of statistics in the theoretical realm. It involves, for him, an "adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality."⁶

Furthermore, this attempt to get "hold of" and "bring things closer" reflects a desire to overcome the limitations of the human condition, and is characteristic of our Western faith in the ability of science and technology to overcome or subjugate nature. It reveals itself in our discomfort with, or distrust of, wilderness; our urge to civilize and control the natural elements. Stephen Greenblatt speaks of visiting Yosemite National Park and encountering, at the point from which the view of Nevada Falls is most compelling, a photographic reproduction of the very scene he is viewing.

He observes that the pleasure of the experience, beyond the direct encounter with nature, is derived from the effacement of the difference between nature and artifice which the image effects.⁷

Photography may also provide a way for Western culture to resist or overcome the increasing sense of alienation and fragmentation which our fast-paced technological lifestyle, with its veneration of individualism, has brought about. In a 1974 film, *Alice in den Staden*, the young German protagonist, wandering across America in search of his identity and a story he is unable to write, takes pictures of everything he sees. He experiences anxiety as he waits for the Polaroid film to develop into concrete proof of what he is experiencing. In a desperate effort to reconnect, he visits his former girlfriend, who defines his problem for him: He needs to take pictures in order to prove that he exists, because he doesn't know who he is.⁸ Similarly, an art critic, commenting recently on the anniversary commemoration of one of the earliest American photography exhibits, attributed the fascination of Americans with photography to our lack of history and our need to prove that we exist.⁹

The penchant for picture taking, then, seems to be intricately interwoven with the cultural values of mainstream American society. Since these values are not shared by the Amish, the absence of photography from that community might suggest alternative values. Despite their de-emphasis of individual autonomy, it appears that this community does esteem individual uniqueness, more so in fact than it esteems the advantages of technology. Certainly, the constraint against mechanically reproduced representation protects the originality and authenticity of objects—particularly persons. And, it neither denies nor diminishes the transitory nature of experiences. Without pictures to capture those privileged Kodak “moments,” might it not be that the Amish are less likely to fool themselves about the brevity of life? About the never recurring, ever elusive, nature of the present? Those “moments” cannot, after all, be captured! Perhaps, as the search for perfect moments becomes less enticing, the possibility of living in the moment, of appreciating and accepting life as it comes, becomes more appealing. Undoubtedly, a taboo on imagery reduces the likelihood that the community will be seduced by the ideas of mainstream society—especially from television and film.

A restriction on photography also reveals a different view among the Amish of the relationship between human beings and nature. Nature is not to be conquered or civilized as much as it is to be got along with. Kraybill refers to the importance of *Gelassenheit*, or submission, in Amish society.¹⁰ This attitude of yieldedness to a higher authority expresses itself in the relationship of the individual to nature as well as to the community. Nature is an extension of God; as God's handiwork, it is to be respected. Although the Amish subjugate the earth as they till the soil, they are quite comfortable with the wilderness and find no need to bring it within their control, or to negate the distinction

between civilization and the natural world.

Nor is the sense of alienation and fragmentation, so characteristic of mainstream society, common in a close-knit community deeply rooted in tradition. Within Amish society the individual is defined in relation to others, as opposed to seeking an autonomous self-identity. A sense of belonging within the family and the community, and of having one's role well-defined by tradition generates a solid self-identity. The individual is grounded in the strength of a strong community and in enduring tradition.

In the Old Order experience, memories of the past are captured and preserved in stories. While the story cannot compete with the objectivity of a photograph or video—it has a way of changing through the years and is dependent on the subjectivity of the individual narrator—it does have advantages. A picture is impersonal and flat; it cannot tell a story. An orally transmitted story, on the other hand, is personal and multi-dimensional. Furthermore, in a culture which maintains close family and community connections, a culture in which the pace of living is slower, and which is not subject to the outside interferences of television, this way of recording the stages of life and the history of a people is still possible. The telling of a story does, after all, take time—and can scarcely compete with a ball game on television!

It is, finally, the telling of the story which transforms Amish iconoclasm from an inherited tradition into a modern adaptive response specific to the twentieth century. The photograph is canonical. It cannot portray reality, and is, therefore, a false authority on reality. The telling and retelling of stories, on the other hand, gives an account of reality that is based on human experience within a tradition of community. Thus, authority in Amish society is located in community. Consequently, it, the community, controls human destiny, rather than entrusting it to the blind progression of science and technology. Storytelling, then, constitutes a non-Western but nevertheless modern way of coping with the world as it is today. In a sense the Amish taboo against photography could serve as a metaphor of deviation from the scientific, de-personal, and universal ideals of the Enlightenment.

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OUR CHANGING AMISH CHURCH DISTRICT

by Samuel S. Stoltzfus

Editor's Note: In the 18th century there were three separate Amish settlements in Lancaster County—the West Conestoga, Chester Valley, and Lower Pequea; each comprised a single church district. Over time, the first two settlements disappeared, but the Lower Pequea settlement thrived, and today has become over one hundred church districts in fellowship with one another. (Generally, Amish church districts split when the membership becomes too large to meet in individual homes. Separations have also occurred over religious differences, but since these mean a change in fellowship the resulting new districts are not included in the total mentioned above.)

The Lower Pequea settlement was a single church district until 1843 when a line was drawn just off the Old Philadelphia Pike and it was divided into the Millcreek and Lower Pequea Districts. (The latter was also referred to as the Upper Pequea, or simply as the Pequea, District; multiple names for church districts were not uncommon.) By 1852 the Lower Pequea community had grown to the point where division was again necessary, with the resulting districts being known as the Lower Pequea and the Upper Pequea. In 1865, as the result of continued growth, the Upper Pequea divided again, into the Upper Pequea and Middle Pequea District.

In 1905 the Middle Pequea was too large and was divided into the West Middle Pequea and the East Middle Pequea. In 1913 it was time for the Upper Pequea District to divide, and it became the East Upper Pequea and Greenland Districts. In 1954, the Upper Pequea District was bounded on all four sides for the first time when a dividing line was drawn along Route 896. The area to the north became the Northeast Upper Pequea Church District, and the area to the south the Mt. Pleasant District. The following essay describes the Northeast Upper Pequea District as it was in 1963, and the Soudersburg District created (along with the Fairview District) when the Northeast Upper Pequea District was divided in 1981.

Let's take a detailed look at this 300-year-old worshipping group called the Old Order Amish, who have church services in their homes. Why so? Isn't this the way all churches began? Jesus often preached in homes and on the hillsides. But slowly, because generation after generation wanted changes, simple little meetinghouses became vast, sprawling cathedrals with large staffs and budgets. Not so among the Old Order Amish, whose services are held in the house (sometimes in the basement), and at times in shops or barns. When church services are at your place, it gets a good cleaning; even some repairs and painting are done. Thus, the blessing is twofold: first, all is cleaned;

and next, it seems the family enjoys a special blessing by having services in their home, and at times on Sunday eve, by having a young-folks gathering there also.

For the worship services the church benches, table trestles, chairs, books, and dishes travel in a special wagon. My dad, grandad, and other church folks built this wagon back in 1963. Let's follow this wagon as it made one rotation around the Northeast Upper Pequea District in that year. (Here in the Pequea Valley districts the wagon travels clockwise; in some other church districts counterclockwise; no one seems to know why.)

In 1963 the first church place (CP1 on the map) was Amos and Christ M. Stoltzfus's farm along the Irishtown Road. Amos was our presiding minister and Christ served as deacon. Christ operated the fifty-acre tobacco and dairy farm, and Amos, his wife Fanny, and their daughter Sarah lived in the *Daadi* house. [A separate dwelling—sometimes attached to the main house—where the grandparents live after retiring from farming.] Maiden lady Sarah did housecleaning. This farm has an old stone farmhouse built in 1769 by the Reverend John Woodhull, who was then pastor of the Leacock Presbyterian Church on Route 340.

Church place number two (CP2) was my home place—a seventy-two acre dairy and tobacco farm operated by my dad, Gideon B. Stoltzfus. My grandparents, the Samuel Stoltzfuses, lived in the *Daadi* house with my Aunt Liz, a maiden lady who worked at the Victor Weaver chicken processing plant. *Daadi* Samuel worked as a carpenter and barn framer and had a small shop. Then came Elam Lapp's place (CP3), a ninety-acre dairy and tobacco farm. Elam's widowed mother, Emma Lapp, lived in the *Daadi* house. The main house was built in 1815 by John Lapp, one of this area's first settlers.

Next came home number one (H1), a little place [too small for church services] in Gordonville owned by Gideon Fisher, whose nephew David King lived there. He worked for Gid in his wagon shop. Church place number four (CP4) was the old Elam Fisher farm. An eighty-five-acre dairy and tobacco farm, it was operated by Elam's son Stephen. Elam, who lived in the *Daadi* house, worked as a carpenter; he had previously operated a custom threshing rig. Across Route 30 was Daniel L. Stoltzfus's 130-acre dairy, tobacco, and potato farm (CP5). Daniel's mother-in-law, Mary, lived in the farm's *Daadi* house, and there was also a small house where Daniel's aunt, maiden lady Linnie Fisher, lived, and a tenant house. Daniel's nephew lived in the tenant house and worked for Daniel on the farm. When not needed there he worked as a carpenter.

Going east on Route 30 one-half mile, we come to my Uncle Sylvan Stoltzfus's sixty-five-acre dairy and tobacco place (CP6). Sylvan was one of the church ministers. The old stone house and barn on this property were built by



Fig. 1: The Lower Pequea Amish settlement was a single church district until 1843 when it was divided into the Millcreek and Lower Pequea Districts. The latter was next divided into the Lower (1), Middle (2), and Upper (3) Pequea Church Districts.

the Mary Ferre family about 1730. Moving across the Pequea Creek, the church wagon arrives at the 140-acre dairy and tobacco farm owned and operated by preacher Ephraim King, who worked for his two sons on their farms, and also part-time as a carpenter. He and his wife lived on the tenant farm (CP7). Ephraim's son David King operated a fifty-acre dairy and tobacco place (CP8) owned by Ervin Denlinger. Ephraim King's home farm (CP9) was the 140-acre spread operated by his son Samuel.

Now we proceed south on Cherry Hill Road to a fifty-acre dairy and tobacco farm (CP10) operated by Levi King and owned by his uncle, John Beiler. The next church place (CP11), a bit south and west on Esbenshade Road, is an eighty-acre dairy, tobacco, and chicken farm owned and



The church wagon used to transport the furnishings necessary for Amish church services.

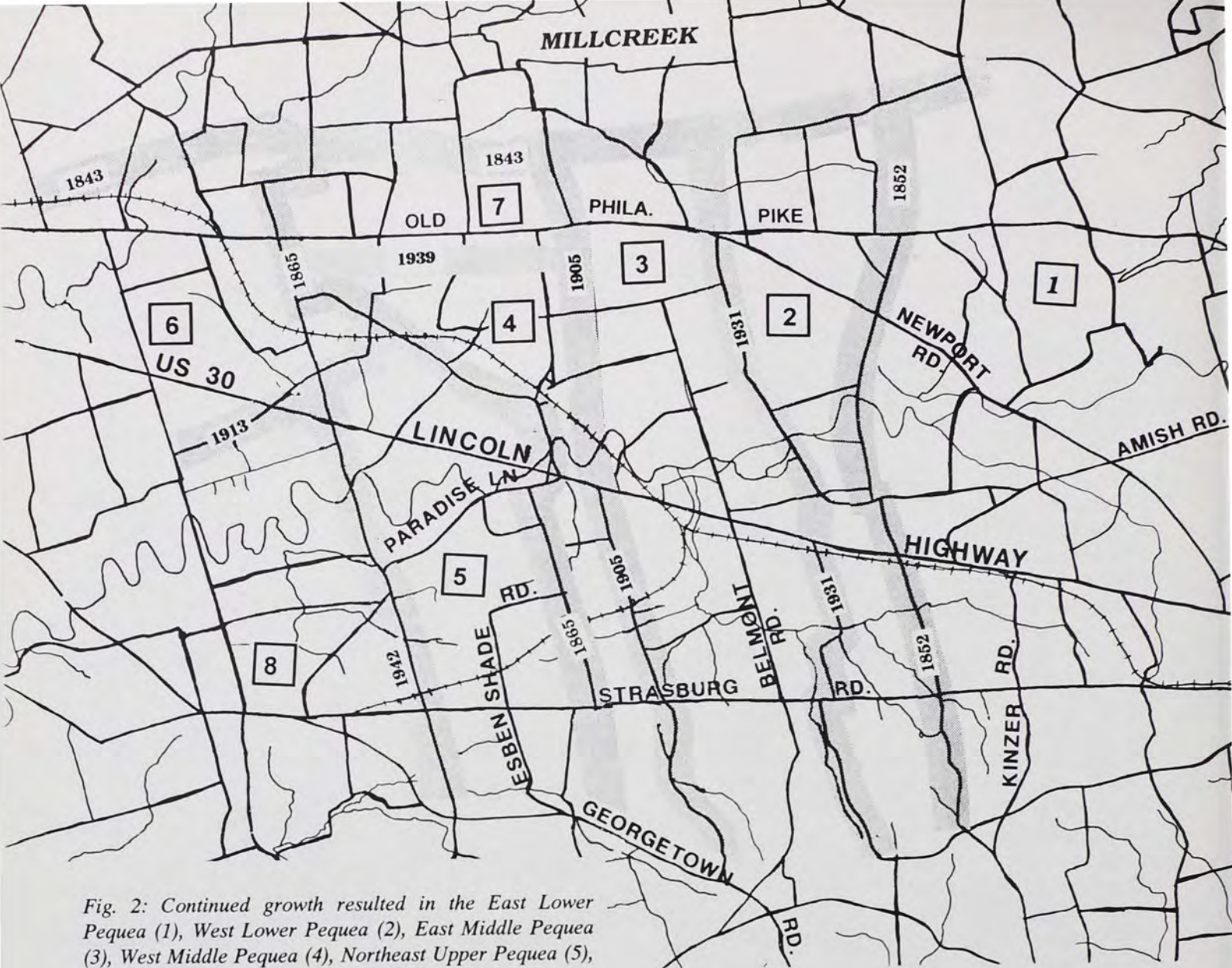


Fig. 2: Continued growth resulted in the East Lower Pequea (1), West Lower Pequea (2), East Middle Pequea (3), West Middle Pequea (4), Northeast Upper Pequea (5), Greenland (6), Belmont (7), and Bachmantown Districts.

operated by Jonas Fisher. Now the bench wagon has a little way to go, crossing Route 741 to the farthest south church place (CP12), Joel King's eighty-six-acre farm, again a dairy, tobacco, and poultry operation. Leaving here we travel west one mile to a 120-acre dairy and tobacco farm (CP13) operated by Isaac Beiler and owned by the Denlingers.

(Perhaps you wonder why all this tobacco farming among the Plain folk. Remember, farming was more diversified in 1963, with farmers having some cows, some chickens, and some steers, along with three-to-six-acres of tobacco. Then too, the draft board called all young men not on the farm, and the draft-board questionnaire wanted to know what was farmed; labor-intensive crops like tobacco kept a hired man busy. And, also, local banks and lending institutions would insist tobacco be raised as loan collateral, so the tobacco check could be counted on for loan repayment. But then, as now, cows were Lancaster County's



Amish Daadi house (right foreground) next to the main dwelling.



Fig. 3: In 1954 a dividing line was drawn along Rt. 896. The area to the north was the Northeast Upper Pequea District, the area to the south the Mt. Pleasant District.

biggest business. In 1963 there were three thousand dairy farms in the county, each with an average of twenty cows. The milk was shipped to Philadelphia, Lancaster, and Baltimore. Then, as today, dairy farming was considered the farmer's steadiest source of income, and of course cows made the nitrogen-rich manure so vital to soil building.)

* * *

Now, as we move towards home, we come to Gideon Lapp's seventy-five-acre dairy and tobacco farm (CP14) along Paradise Lane. After this came home number two (H2), the Dan Zook residence, only a one-half acre property with a house too small for church. Dan, semi-retired, worked as a carpenter. Next was a nice, ninety-acre hilltop farm (CP15)—Joel Fisher's dairy, tobacco, and chicken operation. It had a *Daadi* house, and Joe's widower father, Amos Fisher, lived there. Moving on, we reach the Ben K. Fisher farm, a forty-five acre dairy and tobacco operation along the Pequea Creek (CP16). A part of the Christian Herr tract deeded from the Penn Family in the mid-1700s,



Today there are eleven farms in the Soudersburg Church District.

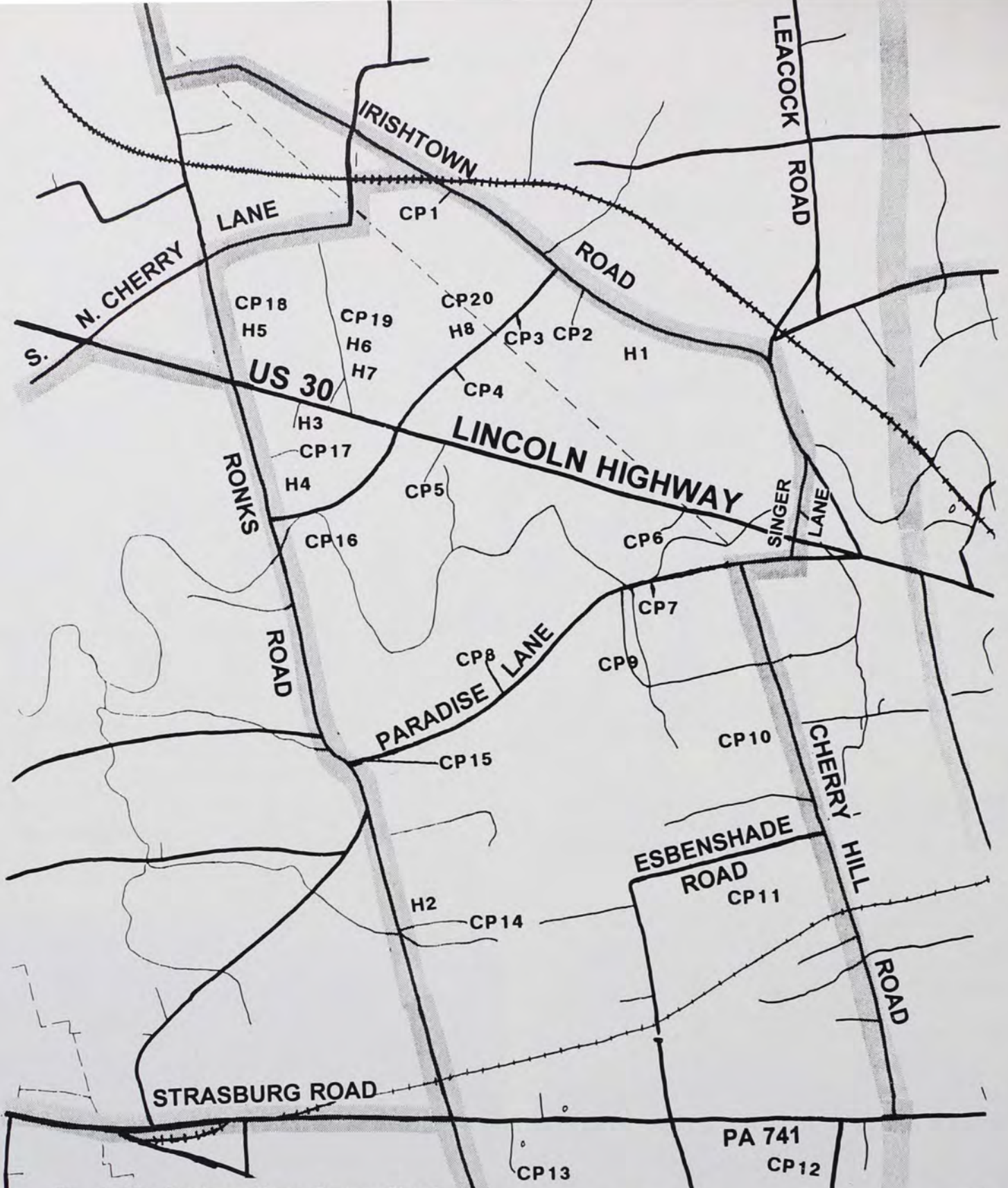


Fig. 4: The Northeast Upper Pequea Church District in 1963.

it is just beside Herr's mill and covered bridge. Here was the only shop in the district: Ben wired buggies and manufactured Pequea six- and twelve-volt batteries.

Just a bit north, along South Ronks Road, was the Elam Stoltzfuses' fifty-acre dairy and tobacco farm (CP17); Elam's father-in-law, Amos Kauffman, lived with them. The house here was a double unit, and Elam's brother Yonie lived in the second part (H3); he worked as a carpenter. Another small place on the property (H4) was occupied by Aaron Fisher, who was a carpenter foreman. Across Route 30, along North Ronks Road, was the Dave B. King home (H5), also too small for regular services. The Kings were retired folks. Maiden lady Sara Fisher, a typist, lived with her non-Amish sister in a house on Route 30 in Soudersburg.

Just in a short farm lane was the nice and level eighty-five-acre dairy and tobacco farm (CP18) owned and operated by Samuel Fisher. (One of the Ben Fisher farms, it was settled about 1822.) Only a short distance north was Joe Fisher's farm (CP19), a seventy-acre dairy and tobacco operation owned by Joe's father, Sam Fisher. Here also was a small *Daadi* house (H6) where Levi Stoltzfus lived. House number seven (H7) was Jonas Smoker's residence. Jonas worked as a laborer when he was not busy on his small (fifteen-acre) farm. Next—and last—came Isaac Fisher's seventy-eight-acre dairy and tobacco farm. Right on the township line, it was owned by Isaac's father, Elam, who also owned properties four and sixteen (CP4; CP16).

* * *

Now watch as the years go by: More and more farms are purchased and occupied by Amish families; more *Daadi* houses go up. The church grows to more than forty families, and by 1979 there's talk of dividing the district. Always a great topic of conversation, this can bring some adversity, but the younger folks, who sit furthest away from the ministers, can't hear the preaching, the smaller houses can't hold all the people, and the upstairs rooms can't hold all the sleeping babies. And, since it takes from thirty-five to sixty *snitz* [dried apple] pies, that means more baking and preparation. But there is another consideration too: Dividing the district means there must be four more ministers ordained—which rests on the young men's shoulders—and another bishop chosen before long.

But in this case, as always before, the needs become urgent. So, in February, 1981, when services were at Amos and Christ Stoltzfus's farm (CP1), after the last hymn was sung council was taken, and the district was divided in two. The north district was called Soudersburg, the south, Fairview. Paradise Lane was the dividing line, although all the farms north of Paradise Lane with lanes running into it were in the south district. This was done so the four ministers were divided equally.

THE SOUDERSBURG DISTRICT TODAY

Looking at our Soudersburg church district in the summer

of 1993 we see there are many more working housewives, many different occupations and businesses, and a lot fewer farmers. (In other districts in the county, however, farmers are more numerous.) Now the first church place (CP1) is the farm belonging to presiding minister Joe Fisher. Joe has retired from the agriculture business, and he and sons Levi and Amos operate a trailer shop called Cherry Lane Manufacturing. Joe's son Dave, who runs the sixty-five-acre, forty-cow dairy farm, also lives here in a house (H1) too tiny for services. Just out the lane a short way is the home of the Sam M. Fishers (H2). They are in their eighties and take care of each other.

The second church place (CP2) is a new dwelling, the Steve Fisher residence along Soudersburg Road. Steve works for his brother Allen, who operates Garden Craft Manufacturing; they make gazebos and cupolas and do millwork. Steve's wife, Anna, has a craft shop along Route 30 in Soudersburg. Next is the residence of Alvin Lapp (CP3) who works as a mason. As is the trend these days, the house has a large basement and church services are held there. In the lane is preacher Ike Fisher's seventy-five-acre dairy and tobacco operation (CP4). Ike runs the farm and has a soft pretzel business. His parents live in the *Daadi* house; Ike Sr. works at the Pequea Saddle Shop.

Across the fields is Elam B. Stoltzfus's new house (CP5) and several acres of paddocks. Elam buys and sells horses; his business is called Irishtown Stables. Just across the lane is his fifty-acre farm and its buildings (CP6). The house, built in 1769, is a landmark here in Leacock Township. Living in it is John Fisher, who runs the forty-two-cow dairy and tobacco operation. Elam's wife, Marion, has a quilt shop in the east end of the house. Another farm, a seventy-five-acre, thirty-five-cow dairy operation run by Amos Stoltzfus, is the next church place (CP7). It also has a *Daadi* house, where Amos's parents, the Gid B. Stoltzfuses, live; Gid helps on the farm, has a fix-it shop, and goes to sales.

Along the Irishtown Road is the Simeon Stoltzfus residence (CP8), a story-and-a-half house with room for services in the basement. Simeon has a carpentry business and makes bird feeders in his shop. His wife, Barbara, makes shirts for several local retail outlets. (How do these non-farmers move the church wagon? Well, the farmers lend their motive power—a team!)

On the outskirts of Gordonville we come to Aaron King's place (H3); he works as a painter. Three houses east is the John Fisher residence (H4), a small, one-and-a-half story house on two acres of land. John works at DS Machine. Home number five (H5) belongs to John Esh, who works for his father as a carpenter. John's wife has a sewing business making men's coats. They used to have services upstairs in their barn, but it was somewhat crowded. The Dave King residence (H6) sits on a small lot. Dave works at the Esbenshade Turkey Farm in Strasburg, and his wife, Emma, has a little upholstery shop. The Elmer

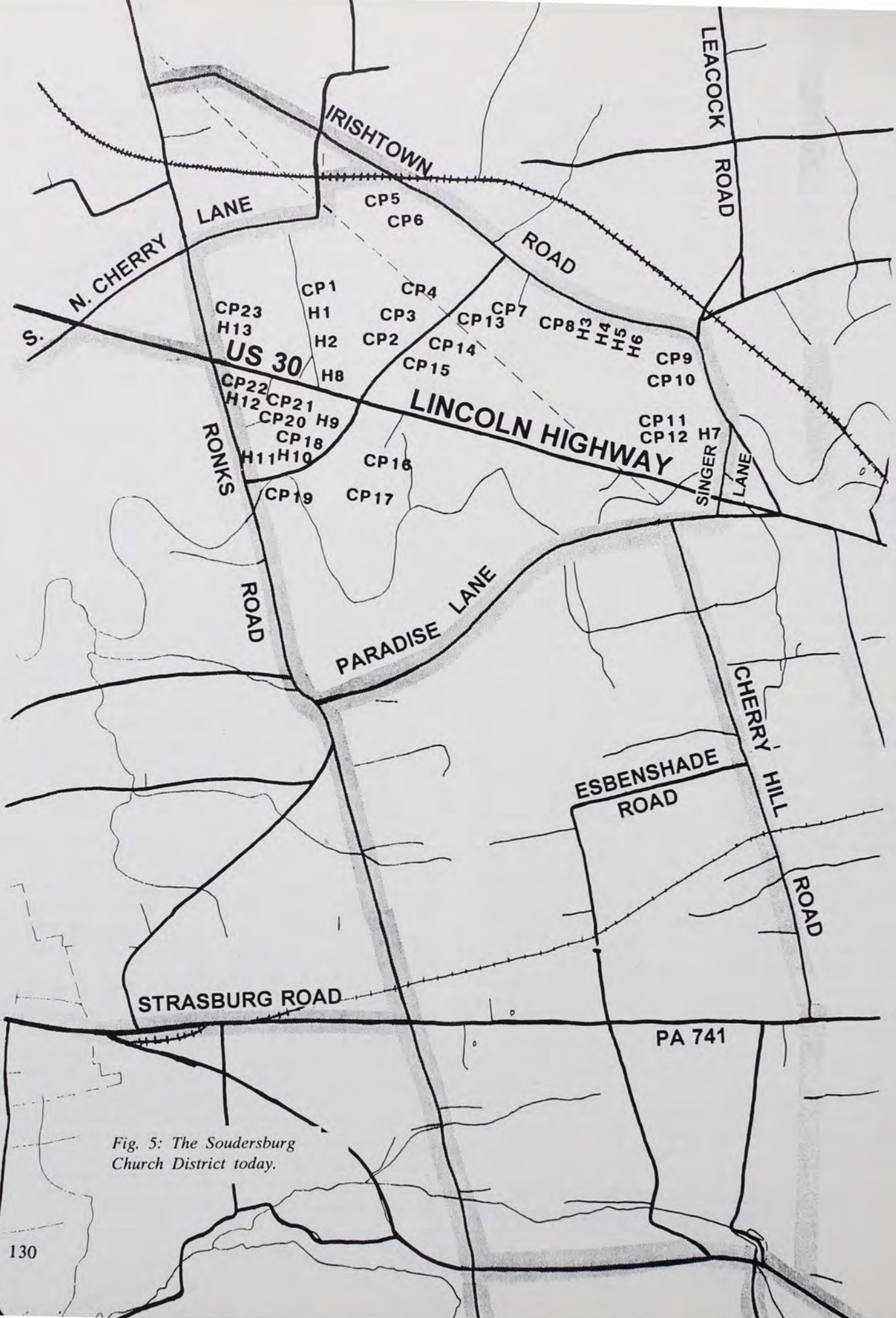


Fig. 5: The Soudersburg Church District today.

King home (CP9) is a nice, big house with a thirty-by-fifty-foot barn. Elmer works at the Hooper Feed Mill in Gordonville. Services are held in the basement of David E. Stoltzfus's new house (CP10), built, along with a shop, in 1987. With fifteen employees, Dave operates DS Machine, manufacturing display and advertising racks and doing stainless steel and repair work.

Next comes my home, a forty-two acre, thirty-two-cow dairy farm. Son Gideon lives in the east half of the house and runs the farm; I operate a woodworking shop and my wife makes and sells fresh prepared horseradish (Leacock Manor Horseradish). Services are held here two times (CP11, CP12)—once for us and once for Gideon. This is probably the oldest property in the district: it was deeded to the Ferre family by the Penns in 1715.

In Paradise is a little place (H7) where Sol Wagler lives. Sol, ninety-one, is a widower; his wife died in July, 1993. From here the church wagon has a mile-long trip to Jess Lapp's eighty-five-acre, forty-four-cow dairy and tobacco farm (CP13). Jess is a dyed-in-the-wool farmer, and there are no other economic activities here. The property was settled by John Lapp in 1810, and the family has been here for seven successive generations. Just a short way south of here, on a one-acre lot, is Allen Fisher's home (CP14), a typical story-and-a-half house. There is also a two-story, thirty-by-fifty-foot barn shop and a small horse meadow. Allen started his Garden Craft Company here (he makes gazebos and cupolas), but outgrew the space and moved his business to the Leola Industrial Park about six miles away. Now he commutes daily for a 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday.

Next is the Ivan Fisher farm (CP15), an eighty-five acre, forty-cow dairy operation. Ivan's parents, the Steven Fishers, live in the *Daadi* house; he helps his two sons on their farms. Along Route 30 in Soudersburg is the little residence of the Amos Fisher family (H8); Amos works for Tyler Foods. The Sam F. Stoltzfus place (CP16) is a sixty-five-acre dairy and tobacco farm. Sam's parents, the Deacon Dan L. Stoltzfuses, live in the *Daadi* house here; Dan works for Jay Advertising in Ronks, and his wife makes quilts. Dan L.'s farm [CP5 in 1963; 130 acres] was divided in 1976, making Sam F.'s place and another sixty-five-acre dairy and tobacco operation (CP17) owned by Jess Lapp's brother Dave, who moved to Kentucky; it is operated by Christ Fisher.

Along Soudersburg Road is Sam Suarez's residence (H9); he works at Pequea Batteries in Ronks. The Levi Fishers (CP18) usually have council meeting, where only half as many people as usual are present since no children attend. House ten (H10) is maiden lady Linnie Fisher's residence. Across the Pequea Creek is John Fisher's fifty-acre, thirty-eight-cow dairy farm (CP19). This farm was

once part of the Herrs Mill tract, land that belonged to a grandson of Hans Herr. Herr, the first Mennonite bishop in the Pequea Valley, came here with his five sons in 1710. John Fisher also owns the Dave Fisher home (H11) on South Ronks Road. Dave works at the Pequea Saddle Shop. Just next door is Sam and Verna Fisher's residence (CP20). They have a small house also, and usually have fall council meetings. Sam has a lawn furniture business, called Countryside Manufacturing, located in Strasburg, about three miles west.

Some two hundred yards farther north on South Ronks Road is the sixty-acre, thirty-six-cow dairy farm (CP21) owned and operated by David Fisher; it is one of the Ben Fisher farms settled in 1822. Jonathan Esh's place (H12) is an apartment-like residence. Ervin and Susie Stoltzfus (CP22) usually have services in their basement; Ervin operates a sawmill business.

Crossing over Route 30 we come to the Dan Stoltzfus residence (H13). The Stoltzfuses had services several times when the district was first divided, but their house was soon too small. Dan was a metal fabricator for years until his sight failed; he does some work for Jay Advertising now, and also raises potbelly pigs. Now, proceeding in the lane from Linnie Fisher's house, we come to the last church place (CP23). This is the original Ben Fisher farm purchased in 1822. Still in the direct Fisher family, the eighty-acre, thirty-six-cow dairy farm is owned and operated by Preacher Sam Fisher. Sam is the fifth generation of his family to run the farm; his widowed mother lives in the *Daadi* house.

So, in an area a mile-and-a-half wide and two-and-a-quarter miles long, there are twenty-three church places (only eleven are farms), thirteen homes, and five *Daadi* houses, with eighty-four members all told. Thus, [since services are held every other week] you can expect church to be at your place every forty-fourth week, unless you are having a wedding. Then, because your house will be all cleaned and the benches there, you can be moved ahead or back a turn or two. Or, if your wife just had—or is about to have—a baby, you can change places with someone else.

* * *

A "For Sale" sign goes up along South Ronks Road. In due time the property is sold and the family moves to Perry County, Pennsylvania, because of the potential for more growth there. But a young married couple moves into the house, so there is still potential for growth here, too. So, no doubt as long as the Pequea Creek keeps flowing through the Pequea Valley, the Amish church in the area will keep growing.

IMAGES OF THE AMISH ON STAGE AND FILM

by William Fetterman



Witness was filmed almost entirely in Lancaster County, where peaceful scenes such as this abound.

Although always a minority within the Pennsylvania-German community, according to the mainstream American entertainment media it is the Amish and Old Order Mennonites who exemplify the "Pennsylvania Dutch." The following discussion, however, is not a comprehensive survey of stage and film depictions of the Amish, but rather a close look at the two most significant examples: the 1955 musical comedy *Plain and Fancy*, and the 1985 motion picture *Witness*. Without their Amish elements both would be completely undistinguished examples of popular entertainment. Yet, ironically, a close examination shows that both reveal more about mainstream American cultural assumptions than they do about these Plain People.

* * *

Not a major Broadway hit, *Plain and Fancy* did have a respectable run of 476 performances;¹ was performed throughout the country by a professional touring company; had a semi-popular hit song;² and for years afterward was often performed at amateur summer theaters and dinner theaters in southeastern Pennsylvania.³ The impetus for its creation was the new direction given the Broadway musical comedy by Rogers and Hammerstein, and the increase in tourism at the time. The latter was particularly significant: severely curtailed during World War II, automobile travel was widely encouraged in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Automobile manufacturers, gasoline companies, and groups such as the Automobile Association of America and local chambers of commerce actively promoted day and weekend trips. In southeastern Pennsylvania, the earliest and greatest increase in tourism in Pennsylvania-German areas was the result of the creation of the Kutztown Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Festival in 1950. Souvenir programs from the Festival's early years featured slickly designed road maps of the area showing Allentown, Reading, and, of course,

Lancaster (City and County), the major destination.

Important, too, in fostering an interest in the Plain People was the region's proximity to New York City. For many years theatrical people such as the actor Claude Rains and lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II had country houses in the New Hope area of Bucks County. It is probable that at least some of those involved in the creation of *Plain and Fancy* had visited the area and were responding to the burgeoning interest in Pennsylvania-German tourism. That they were able to see the Amish as suitable subjects for musical comedy was largely due to Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein II. Their groundbreaking 1943 production *Oklahoma!* was a simple love story placed in the context of the conflict between farmers and ranchers around the turn of the century; the time of the closing of the American frontier. Unabashedly sentimental, it found its integrity in a folk-rural-domestic and nostalgic Americana, and gave new respectability to the Broadway musical.

The plot of *Plain and Fancy* concerns Dan King, who has just inherited a farm near Bird in Hand, Pennsylvania. With long-time female friend Ruth Winters, Dan travels (by car, of course) from New York City to Lancaster County, and, after some difficulty in finding the farm, discovers the most likely buyer for it is one Papa Yoder, an Amishman. Papa Yoder has arranged the marriage of his daughter Katie to Ezra Reber, but she is in love with Ezra's brother Peter. Believing Peter to be a fighter and a troublemaker, Papa Yoder will have none of this. Then, shortly after Peter is involved in a fight, a barn burns down; Papa Yoder believes that Peter has "hexed" it.

Despite Dan's pleas on his behalf, the Amish community shuns Peter. Soon afterward, Dan's friend Ruth unwittingly gets Ezra drunk and he goes to a local carnival. Peter goes after his brother, and then Papa Yoder relents and allows Katie and Peter to marry. Meanwhile, Dan, the

object of the Amish girl Hilda Miller's affections, persuades her to marry within her community and as a result, realizes he is really in love with Ruth. In the end, Dan sells the farm to Peter, and love triumphs for all the couples.⁴

Without the novelty of the Amish, *Plain and Fancy* would have been just another mediocre musical, and *Witness* would merely have been typical television and motion picture fare. Filmed almost entirely on location in Lancaster County, it begins with the funeral of Jacob Lapp, who leaves behind his young wife Rachel, his son Samuel, and his father Eli. After the funeral Rachel and Samuel leave to visit her sister in Baltimore, and the boy witnesses a brutal murder in the men's room at Philadelphia's 30th Street Station. Questioned by detective John Book, Samuel identifies the murderer from a display case of police awards: he is a member of the Philadelphia Police Force. Book tells his superior officer of the identification, but it turns out he, too, is implicated in the murder, which involves police collaboration with the local illegal drug trade.

Wounded by the murderer, Book takes Rachel and Samuel back Lancaster County where, after he is nursed back to health, he is given Jacob's clothes to wear. These enable him to hide in the Amish community, which tolerates his presence. Eventually, of course, the corrupt officers discover his hiding place, and then—just as in an old western movie—there is a shootout at the Lapp farm. Predictably, Book and Rachel fall in love, but in the end he gives her up and returns to the city.⁵

* * *

Both *Plain and Fancy* and *Witness* share common themes, although they are handled very differently. (In part, of course, because they are very different kinds of entertainment.) For example, in both a barn raising is the high point of the narrative structure. Emblematic of cultural unity and solidarity, it is a personal and social identification of Amish society. In *Plain and Fancy* the barn raising (at the opening of Act II) is the occasion for one of the grandiose, flamboyant, and overly enthusiastic song-and-dance numbers so typical of Broadway musical comedy. Outsiders Dan and Ruth are merely passive observers of the activity. In *Witness*, on the other hand, John Book's latent carpentry skills allow him to take an active part in the work. (It should be noted that although Dan King always remains an outsider, John Book does seem to become—at least temporarily—a part of the Amish community.) Lasting about eight minutes, the barn-raising sequence in *Witness* is filmed in documentary style, relying more on edited visual images than spoken dialogue.

Superstition or backwardness—or both—are seen as integral to the Amish way of life in both the play and the film. In the former it is the supposed *hexerei* (witchcraft) by Peter with the coincidence of the burned barn; in the latter, the use of traditional remedies (a salve, herbal teas) to heal John Book's near-fatal bullet wound. Again, there is a difference in approach. *Plain and Fancy* adopts a comical, patronizing tone; in *Witness* the old ways are seen

as still viable.

In both, too, a young Amish woman becomes romantically involved with a male, urban outsider. In *Plain and Fancy* the relationship is between Dan and Hilda; in *Witness* it is John and Rachel who fall in love. Both women are symbols of sexual naïvete—vulnerable and emotional, they are personal embodiments of their culture. There is the possibility they will rebel against that culture and be shunned in consequence. Because of the conventions of the musical comedy we do not expect Dan and Hilda to consummate their budding romance, but in *Witness* this almost happens. When John Book realizes what the consequences of that would be, he sacrifices himself for their mutual good. And, when Rachel realizes that although she wants John, it is not meant to be, she reaffirms both her cultural ties and her own identity.

The practice of shunning is certainly touched on in both works, but in neither the play nor the film is the threat taken seriously; it is merely a device to move the plot along. In *Plain and Fancy* the outcast Peter redeems himself and is accepted back into the community. His casual reacceptance is somewhat curious in real-life terms, but perfectly understandable by musical-comedy standards. In *Witness*, while John and Rachel are dancing playfully in the barn to music from the radio in his car, Eli enters. He says she shames herself, and if she continues she will have to be shunned. Defiant, she says (truthfully) that “nothing happened”; adding, “You shame yourself!”

The “Germelshausen” theme is another element *Plain and Fancy* and *Witness* have in common. (*Germelshausen*, by Friedrich Gerstäcker [1866], is a classic story from the German Romantic Movement; it concerns a vanished, haunted village that reappears from time-to-time and so is symbolic of a remote, anachronistic society that occasionally interpenetrates with contemporary consciousness.) In *Plain and Fancy* this is apparent at the very beginning, when Dan and Ruth are unable to follow the road map or signs to Bird in Hand, and must ask some of the locals for directions. They suggest various landmarks, always with the refrain, “You can't miss it!” In *Witness*, the corrupt police supervisor knows that John Lapp is staying in Lancaster County with an Amish family named Lapp, but is told modern police surveillance techniques are ineffective there: Not only are there thousands of Lapps in the county, but the Amish do not have telephones or live in the twentieth century.

The theme of the outsider redeemed by brief contact with the Amish also figures in both works, although it is of much greater importance in *Plain and Fancy* than it is in *Witness*. For Dan King, being among the Amish is a cathartic experience—a time away from the city that enables him to get his feet back on the ground through exposure to rural, traditional (“honest”) values. This experience helps him rediscover his true self and his true emotions—particularly his love for Ruth. *Witness*, on the other hand, is really about personal equilibrium. (The screenplay was originally titled *Called Home*.⁶) The main



In Witness the police detective John Book takes refuge on an Amish farm in Lancaster County.

plot is the conflict between good and evil; the subplot is a romance that cannot be. Thus the film is not so much about the Amish as it is about justice, responsibility, and reciprocation. The visual metaphor is a birdhouse: After he returned Rachel and Samuel to the farm, John Book tried to leave, but weak from his bullet wound collapsed and drove into a birdhouse. Later, he and Grandfather Eli reerect it. Watching from the house, Rachel knows this means that John is going to leave. In setting the birdhouse right again, he is leaving their world as it was before he intruded into it.

The pursuit of justice is John Book's primary reason for being. It is the reason he protects Rachel and Samuel from the corrupt Philadelphia police officers, and the reason he stays in the Amish community; it gives him a chance to work out a way to bring the guilty to justice. Book has to confront himself and consider his personal and professional values. On a personal level, he is willing to sacrifice; to deny himself. But his stay among the Amish will not change the violent way he responds to crises in the outside world. There is redemption, but more on the order of a pause for reflection than actual personal change. When John Book drives away from the farm, we know that he has become deeper as a person, but we do not expect he will give up his previous way of life when he returns to the city.

* * *

Although both productions have themes in common, there are major differences as well. *Witness* relies heavily on visual images, while *Plain and Fancy* is, by contemporary standards, a rather "talky" script. *Plain and Fancy* is loud, *Witness* is quiet; *Plain and Fancy* employs a broad, cartoon-like approach, *Witness* is subtle, understated. The language in *Plain and Fancy* is basically the "Dutchified English" found on diner placemats thirty years ago ("throw the cow over the fence some hay"), with a liberal sprinkling of dialect words intended to lend authenticity to the script. *Witness*, with its semi-documentary approach, uses *Bibel Deitsch* (Pennsylvania High German) in the opening funeral scenes, and English with a few dialect words in the Philadelphia scenes. In the majority of the film—the Lancaster County sequences—there is some Pennsylvania-German dialect interspersed with the English.

Listening to the original cast recording of *Plain and Fancy* one notices that all the Amish characters use standard English pronunciation when they sing, but speak with an inconsistent pronunciation reminiscent of either a Swedish or European-German accent.⁷ In *Witness*, too, there is an inconsistency in the pronunciation of the dialect and the

English spoken by the "Amish," and the *Bibel Deitsch* does not sound entirely convincing either. But this is, after all, a commercial film and the actors are obviously not fluent dialect speakers in real life, so such inconsistencies can be overlooked. In fact, the language usage is not objectionable in *Witness*, whose makers were certainly more sensitive in this regard than those of *Plain and Fancy*.

Concerning costume, I have little argument with the men's clothing in the original production of *Plain and Fancy*. It was meant to look Amish and it does. The women's dresses, however, were not appropriate. Amish women wear dresses that are comparatively shapeless and which de-emphasize the body. In the play the Amish women wore "farm dresses" with definite waistlines and bustlines. These actually look more like the dresses in mid-1950s copies of *Vogue* or *Harper's Bazaar* than they do Amish attire.⁸ This is not a problem in *Witness*, where the actors wear clothing that is authentic and appropriate.

But perhaps the biggest difference between the two works is the way the Amish are depicted. In *Plain and Fancy* none of them have a sense of humor. In fact, all the "humor" in the play comes from jokes at their expense. The stereotypical portrayal of Papa Yoder (the very embodiment of Amish society) as stern, dogmatic, unemotional, and even insensitive to the personal needs and frailties of others, does not even begin to address the values and concerns (positive and negative) of a patriarchal society.

This is not the case in *Witness*. One of the nice touches in the film is a scene in which Grandfather Eli wakes John Book well before dawn so that he can help with the farm chores. Eli explains how the milking should be done, but Book is unable to get any milk to flow. "Haven't you ever had your hands on a tit [pronounced "teet"] before?" Eli asks. "Yes," Book grumbles, "but not one this big." Eli pauses, thinks about it, and then laughs and slaps Book on the back before walking away. This admittedly sexist joke gives us an insight into humor in a patriarchal society (theirs and ours), and helps us to realize the Amish are "just folks" after all. So the scene, which began as an example of personal and cultural conflict, ends as a male-bonding ritual with the audience discovering that the Amish, although unworldly, not only have a sense of humor, but a knowledge of intimate human sexuality as well.

Plain and Fancy presents the Amish in almost completely patronizing terms as a hard-working, honorable people who are nonetheless naive, exotic, novel, and anachronistic. A people to be viewed as distinct objects (much as one might look at a picture postcard) rather than as human beings. The Amish "credo," as presented in a

musical number at the conclusion of Act I, begins:

Plain we live/For plain we see/It's good for people
to live plain.

Hard we work/So life is good;/When life is hard we
don't complain.

Like the rest of the play, this gives no real insight into Amish life or values.

In *Witness* the Amish characters are more than cardboard cutouts, and there is a real attempt to escape a patronizing tone, although ultimately it is unsuccessful. For *Witness*, too, portrays the Amish as quaint, childlike people with an idyllic lifestyle best appreciated at a distance. Like *Plain and Fancy* a secular representation, it has no real element of Christianity either, although it does have an important scene between Eli and young Samuel about the nature of pacifism, worldly involvement, and the difficult moral question of recognizing good and bad people. It must be noted, too, that *Witness* does present the Amish respectfully. Book comes to appreciate and value them so much that he threatens to strangle a rather obnoxious female tourist if she takes a photograph. A moment later, a few rowdy teenage boys are mocking the Amish, so Book gets out of the wagon and tells them to stop. When one of them continues to be disrespectful, he is brutally beaten by Book.⁹

By far the most important and successful popularization of the Amish to date, *Witness* is not necessarily any more valuable than *Plain and Fancy*. At least with that show the obvious limitations of musical-comedy conventions allow us to accept it as fiction and nothing more. The semi-documentary approach of *Witness* lends it an air of authenticity not really warranted, and questions of nudity and violence, and the nitpicking about the accuracy or inaccuracy of the language, obscure what I believe to be major misrepresentations or inconsistencies. For example, the scene at the beginning that shows the Amish walking abreast through a wheat field makes an engaging visual image, but in real life farm people do not trample their crops. Another gratuitous image—this one intended to titillate—is that of Rachel (seen nude from the waist up) bathing with the door open. This, of course, is a way of furthering the romantic subplot.

More important, though, is the question of role: in the film it is Rachel who decides that John Book can stay, and it is she who hides the gun and the bullets (in the kitchen). It is far more likely, however, that in a patriarchal society Eli would make decisions like this, and would hide the weapon—probably in the toolshed. There is, too, the question of allowing John Book to wear Amish clothes in order to conceal his identity. This seems to be duplicity and worldly collaboration to an alarming degree. And having the Amish elders agree to Book's remaining in the community after he has recovered from his bullet wound is also questionable. His continued presence is dangerous and could easily lead the murderer to young Samuel. More fundamentally, after his recovery John Book could have turned his investigation over to an independent agency such

as the FBI. Had this been the case, there would have been only a minor Amish presence in the first half of the movie and, ultimately, a very different film.

With any theatrical presentation of the Amish there will always be some who are not completely satisfied. I am neither a spokesperson for the Amish nor an apologist for these dramatic works. I do believe, however, that the real crux of the matter is that in mainstream Western theater the very word "theater" is equated with drama, and drama means conflict.¹⁰ In fact, ours is a society centered on conflict (usually with violence), while, as I see it, the Amish (ideally at least) are a society centered on harmony with God, nature, and other human beings. Life for the Amish is real, and adults are not involved in frivolous activities such as acting. Actors are those pretending to be someone else; those who speak scripted words in a fictional context. In other words, they are liars, and the fact that the context is a play or a film does not excuse the lies. This means that no matter how well-intended, the theatrical model will always be objectionable in any depiction of the Amish, because it is misplaced within the context of Amish society.

ENDNOTES

¹Daniel Blum, ed., *Theatre World Season 1955-1956* (New York: Greenberg, 1956), p. 125.

²Material in the *Plain and Fancy* files, collection of the New York Public Library. The song, *Young and Foolish*, was sung by Dean Martin and Jo Stafford.

³Many of my older informants such as Richard Peter Hoffman, Sally Rue Ruhf, and Linda Bowers, who are interested in local theater productions in southeastern Pennsylvania, have recalled various amateur productions of *Plain and Fancy* in the late 1950s and early 1960s. And the play's title became a boon to tourism. In the 1960s, when I was a child, I remember many roadside diners called the "Plain and Fancy." And even today there is a "Plain and Fancy Motors" just north of Allentown, Pa.

⁴Joseph Stein and Will Glickman (book), Arnold B. Horwitz (lyrics), and Albert Hague (music), *Plain and Fancy* (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1956).

⁵Earl W. Wallace and William Kelley, *Witness* (film directed by Peter Weir, theatrical release by Paramount Pictures, Hollywood, Calif., 1985; video release by Paramount Pictures, 1985).

⁶The screenplay for *Witness* is unpublished, but because of the many filmmaking students in New York City, there is an underground of illegally photocopied filmscripts. I bought a photocopy of *Witness*, which is dated 8 April 1984, with revisions through 15 June 1984. This is not the final shooting script, as there are scenes which appear in the final film that are not in my copy. However, by mid-June the screenplay was basically in its final form.

⁷*Plain and Fancy* original Broadway cast recording (Hollywood, Calif.: Capital Records, 1955).

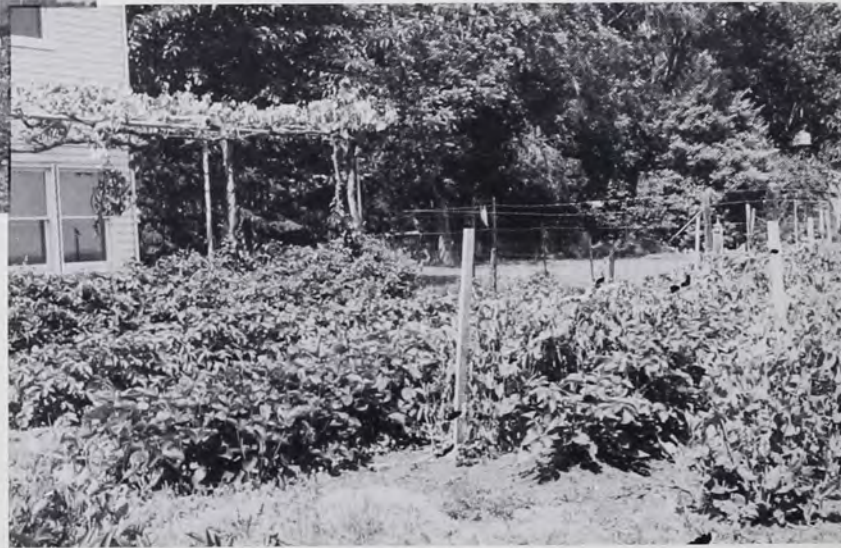
⁸Linda Bowers, special collections librarian at Muhlenberg College, told me a very funny story about an amateur dinner theatre production of *Plain and Fancy* that she attended in southeastern Pennsylvania around 1960. The production was made on a very meager budget, but someone had donated a quantity of ball fringe to the producer for possible use with costumes. Being economical, the producer decided to make use of the material, and as a result the women's Amish costumes in that production were decorated with ball fringe.

⁹When I saw *Witness* in a movie theater in 1985, the audience had been so manipulated (through John Book) to identify with the Amish that they cheered Book's revenge.

¹⁰There is, though, a form which need not involve conflict, as in some of the works of playwright Samuel Beckett and composer John Cage, in which there is no narrative and no characters involved in fictitious situations that require—by convention—a resolution of crisis.

AMISH GARDENS: A Symbol of Identity

by Bernadette Hutchison



Even those Amish who are not farmers have a garden; this one—photographed in early and late spring—takes up all of the space between the front of the house and the road.

The Old Order Amish are one of the few groups in the United States who have resisted modern culture and technological progress. They have done so in order to preserve their own culture, identity and, most importantly, their religion. The Amish have been able to do this by selectively rejecting some features of the larger society while at the same time subtly integrating other parts of it into their lives. They are a tightly knit community whose identity is in part maintained by many outward symbols—such as their traditional style of dress, and their use of the horse and buggy—which not only homogenize the community, but mark its separateness as well.

The aspects of Amish life which separate them from the rest of modern society are the result of deliberate rather than arbitrary choices, and often involve specific rejections which, when studied, give a greater insight into their

culture. Research on the group has taken two different approaches, with some scholars emphasizing a detailed description of Amish life, and others analyzing changes in Amish society. The gardens of the Amish have been mentioned in these studies, but have never been discussed at great length. Yet all the Amish have a garden regardless of their occupation, and these gardens seem to have a symbolic as well as a utilitarian function: they help feed the family and give rich meaning to Amish life. So, while admittedly not as obvious a symbol of Amishness as their style of dress and mode of transportation, their gardens are, nonetheless, a real and significant part of what it means to be Amish.

* * *

Driving through Lancaster County it is hard not to notice

the large and tidy gardens of the Old Order Amish. On first thought this does not seem to be an unnatural circumstance since most of the group are farmers, and gardening could be assumed to be a part of farming. Moreover, on a farm a garden is relatively easy to maintain. Yet two problems arise from this assumption: the gardens of non-Amish farmers are, for the most part, smaller, not as well-kept, or non-existent; and, as already mentioned, all the Amish on the other hand have remarkably similar gardens, whether or not they are farmers.

Interviewing a variety of Amish people with a diversity of occupations (including working and retired farmers and shopkeepers) in order to find out why gardens are so important to them, it becomes apparent they are not interested in explaining their actions and motives, but would rather show their reasoning by example. Discussing themselves directly would be viewed by the Amish as prideful, and none will ever speak highly of their own garden. Thus, even meticulously cared for gardens are most often described as merely "adequate," and "in need of improvement."

The importance of a garden to the Amish can be gauged in part by their willingness to meet the sometimes arduous conditions necessary for its cultivation. The Amish garden is large, taking up roughly one-sixth of an acre, so that farmers must set aside land from other uses for it, while those with non-farming occupations must buy enough land for it, as well as for a house and a shed for the horse and buggy. Of course a garden requires not only a significant amount of land, but a considerable amount of time and work as well. Although they enjoy it, garden work is considered an obligation, for the Amish firmly believe we all have a special tie to the land: in Genesis 3:17-19,

God told Adam and Eve that their descendants would be stewards of the earth. So the Amish will work in the garden before they do other work, and the general rule is that gardens must be neat and well cared for. This explains why, even when it is really not economical, or when the time could be more profitably spent earning money, the Amish feel it would be very difficult to do without their gardens.

There is another factor, too, which must be considered when discussing Amish gardens. For, as important as they are as a source of food, gardens are probably more valuable to the culture as an instrument for teaching the most significant Amish values: hard work, discipline, and cooperation. Although the women and children do most of the work, gardening is a family affair symbolizing their togetherness, self-sufficiency, and interdependence. From the small tasks they are given, children learn the value of consistency and perseverance, and gain a sense of accomplishment.

* * *

Once the ground has thawed in the spring, the garden becomes the first task of importance. Early in the year the men will help turn the soil over with manure, working it until it is ready to be planted. The soil is turned by a plow hitched to a horse (the buggy horse will be used if the family does not live on a farm); later a disc, cultivator, or motor tiller is used to break the soil into finer pieces. The husband controls the plow while the wife leads the horse; this is a wonderful and rare opportunity for them to work together, for during most of the summer the men are occupied with work in the fields or barn, while the women are busy with cleaning, cooking, child care, and, of course, gardening.



The buggy horse will be used to turn over the garden soil if the Amish family does not live on a farm.

As noted above, the main fertilization of the garden takes place in the spring when the ground is first turned over. Most of the Amish use whatever manure they have available to them, the most common being horse manure. Dairy farmers may use cow manure but it is difficult to work with since, in an effort to increase milk production, feed for dairy cows has been concentrated with protein. This increase in protein without an increase in bulk in the cows' diet means their manure now has a liquid consistency, and so it is often mixed with some other manure (usually horse manure) to make it easier to handle. Others may use pig or chicken dung, either by mixing it in with, or alternating its use with, another manure from year to year.

The garden is not plowed all at once, but row by row as each vegetable is ready to be planted. It is easy to see the order in which the crops were planted simply by following each row in turn from the peas, the first crop to be put into the ground. Although no major effort is made to rotate crops, most Amish will move the peas down a row each year, which in effect shifts the remaining crops as well (some will do this only every other year). In general, it is important to rotate crops so that the nutrients in the soil depleted by one plant can be replaced by another. It is especially important for potatoes, not so much because of nutrients, but because it prevents potato bugs from establishing themselves and destroying the crop. Perennials such as strawberries, asparagus, and rhubarb which cannot be rotated are usually planted together on the edge of the plot so they will not interfere with spring plowing.

Once the peas are in (and with, of course, the perennials already in the ground) the rest of the vegetables are planted according to their growing season up until about June. Generally, the Amish raise a large variety of vegetables so they will mature at different times during the growing season. Some crops—especially corn—are planted every two weeks during the season to give them a longer yield. In addition to corn and peas, most will plant at least lettuce, cabbage, onions, tomatoes, red beets, lima beans, string beans, potatoes, and carrots. Also planted are certain other crops that tend to vary from year to year: melons, pumpkins, eggplants, soybeans, cucumbers, herbs, teas, broccoli, and spinach. (These latter two, like lettuce, are cold tolerant and will sometimes be planted in the fall as well.) Whether or not these will be grown often depends on the time and space available for the garden, and on need. Cucumbers, for example, are planted only in the years they are needed to make pickles; one crop of cucumbers usually makes enough pickles to last a family two years.

Obviously planting is only the beginning of the gardener's job. Daily work in the garden includes cultivating, weeding, controlling insect pests, harvesting the crops, and then sometimes replacing harvested plants with flowers. The garden is usually not watered daily unless plants are in danger of being lost to drought, or unless there are young plants that have just been put into the ground. Older plants usually do not need daily watering since they are mulched

enough to keep the soil around the roots moist. Insect pests, especially the already-mentioned potato bug, can easily destroy crops, and a good example of the way in which the Amish use the garden to train children to work is seen in one of the methods used to control them: the first job often given children is picking bugs off plants by hand. (Sometimes this will earn a child a penny a bug.) Other methods used to discourage such pests include spreading wood ash or the fine dust from tobacco stripping on the plants.

* * *

When asked why they have a garden, a common response from the Amish was that home-grown vegetables taste best. Yet later, many said they grow rhubarb and asparagus even though they do not really like them. Further research revealed that these are enjoyed not so much for their flavor, but because they are the first fresh vegetables available. It does seem reasonable to assume that gardens are valued for their ability to provide fresh produce throughout the growing season, but on a practical level they do more than that. Amish gardens yield enough for the winter as well as the summer months, and this surplus is preserved by canning or freezing.

Since canning is time consuming and laborious, the preferred method of preserving is freezing. It has become more and more popular among the Amish even though it can be difficult for them to find a freezer to use, since they do not have electricity in their houses. Oftentimes commercial freezer lockers are leased and used to store frozen produce as well as any meat from animals they have raised—or bought—and slaughtered. Alternatively, they may make arrangements to use a freezer in a non-Amish neighbor's house, or they may be renting from a non-Amish landlord who has provided them with electricity for a freezer in the barn.

While other varieties are grown for eating fresh, white corn (Silver Queen) is thought to be best for freezing. Seemingly a universal favorite among the Amish (one woman interviewed said that "corn in itself is supposed to be enough for a meal"), the corn is blanched on the cob, and then cut off and frozen. Peas are also a favorite and will be frozen, as will asparagus if it is grown in large enough quantities, and strawberries. During the winter these frozen strawberries can be used for dessert by making a mush with tapioca pudding. Other vegetables sometimes frozen are string beans, lima beans, and soybeans.

Although it is more work, canning is often the best way to put up certain crops for the winter. Tomatoes are canned as pizza sauce or ketchup; string beans are thought by some to be better canned than frozen; and fruits such as peaches and pears are also canned, either whole or as jam. Apples are mainly canned as sauce, and beets and cucumbers are pickled and then canned. Some vegetables are neither canned nor frozen, but are stored for the winter in a cold, dry cellar. Among these are onions, potatoes, and carrots.

Not all the produce consumed by Amish families is home grown. Some crops are purchased if it is not practical

to raise them, either because of the length of the growing season or the expense. For example, most of the fruits eaten fresh or canned are bought because of the cost of maintaining an orchard that needs constant spraying. Fifty years ago most Amish farms had orchards with peach, cherry, apple, and other fruit trees. The invasion of the Japanese beetle in the 1940s changed that; today most have only a few apple or peach trees or both, although there is a new trend toward planting dwarf fruit trees that are resistant to pests. In the winter the Amish will also buy citrus fruits such as oranges and grapefruits, as well as other tropical fruits such as bananas.

The decline of orchards is only one aspect of the changes in food-production methods on Amish farms. Most farmers used to have a small flock of one to two hundred chickens to provide eggs and meat for the family all year round. But dairy farmers were forced to get rid of their flocks when milk inspections became more stringent and loose animals were prohibited from roaming in the milking barn. Now the expense of constructing pens, coupled with rising feed prices and competition from large-scale chicken-raising operations, has made it too costly to raise chickens for family consumption.

In the same manner, the large-scale raising of all livestock has led to the disappearance of most small herds, so a dairy farmer's income must now stretch to cover the cost of buying meat since it is no longer cost-effective to raise it himself. This situation, along with an increase in land prices and taxes and a decrease in milk prices, has made it more difficult to run a small farm profitably, and has forced some young Amish men to explore other ways of making a living.

But changes on Amish farms have been mainly in the area of running them as a source of income, and such changes have been slow to affect the family garden. Before the industrial revolution farmers raised a variety of crops throughout the year for market sales, a strategy known as generalized farming. Once tractors and other mechanized equipment became available, however, it became much more profitable to raise one crop on a large scale. The Amish have been forced to adopt this method as well, but have been able to preserve the ideal of generalized farming in their gardens, which today are cultivated in very much the same manner as they were in years past.

For instance, herbicides and pesticides have had a significant impact on farming communities. Herbicides can increase yields considerably, giving slow-growing crops a chance to thrive by killing opportunist weeds that would choke them out. But, while the Amish have begun using these herbicides on field crops, they do not use them in the garden, and there is no evidence that they would even consider doing so.

Pesticides, too, are frequently used on field crops, and there *may* be a trend toward using them in the garden, although most Amish resist the idea, choosing instead to use the methods of pest control already discussed. This resistance to the use of chemicals reflects Amish concern

about the quality of the food they consume, and their preference for natural and traditional methods. They are not afraid of hard work and do not look for short cuts that have the potential to be harmful.

Contrary to the belief of many, change has come to the Amish community in a variety of ways. A few of these changes (like some of those mentioned above) may be rather visible, but in other cases the Amish have subtly integrated modern materials into their culture in ways not obvious to the casual observer. Although this may seem hypocritical to some, close examination shows that it is not. In the case of wearing apparel, for example, we find the Amish have begun wearing machine-made shirts and using machine-made fabrics for their clothing. Yet the materials used and the methods of production are not simply ends in themselves, for it is the traditional *style* of dress—which has been retained—that helps them maintain their separate identity. In the same way, even though buggies now are built with modern materials, the fact remains that this method of transportation limits the movement of individuals and so helps preserve the integrity of the community.

On the other hand, the very lack of change in gardening methods seems to suggest that the family garden is much more important to the community's identity than previously thought. For instance, would the symbolic significance of the Amish garden not be the same if it were fertilized with a commercial product rather than with manure? Or, if gardens were cultivated simply for their output, would it not be simpler and more efficient for one man in each community to grow produce for all, just as one person now makes buggies, another hats, and still another shoes, and so on?

Obviously the garden is not primarily symbolic, but rather is representative of something much more deeply ingrained in Amish life. In "English" (non-Amish) societies, ideas give rise to behavior: people act in ways they think appropriate to the situations in which they find themselves. In Amish society the opposite is true—behavior gives rise to ideas. The Amish teach their children to behave a certain way in order to instill the ideals of their culture, and gardens are an important part of the process; they are reminders of the past and nurturers of the future. Without this vital link of understanding between the generations, the traditions, history, and religion of the group would be lost.

More, therefore, than a symbol of Amish society's resistance to the modern world, the garden is a way of preserving Amish traditions and beliefs, and a way of teaching and perpetuating Amish values and ideals. It is an outdoor classroom where children learn to work together and to work hard. Indeed, at one time or another during the year every member of the family is involved in its cultivation, working toward a common goal—that of putting food on the table. In every sense, then, the garden is truly a real and significant part of what it means to be Amish.

THE MYTH OF THE IDEAL FOLK SOCIETY VERSUS THE REALITY OF AMISH LIFE

by John W. Friesen



Amish farmhouse, western New York (All photographs by James Roach)

Journalists and visitors in general, tend to romanticize the Amish . . . until inconsistencies are discovered.¹

THE "TELL IT NOT IN GATH" SYNDROME

Anabaptists, it seems, and perhaps ethnic groups generally, do not like to have their histories portrayed with any shading of negative light. Early Mennonite writers, in fact, were sometimes thought of as "liars and rascals" by their more conservative members who felt that even the act of writing about their lifestyle was wrong and sinful.² Perhaps the penchant of Anabaptist writers to write only favorable stories has been at least partially motivated by the difficulties they experienced trying to attain a positive public image when they first migrated to North America.³

As a means of promoting such an image, then, only the praiseworthy aspects of their histories are told. This

perspective has an ancient historical base, found in the Biblical account of an incident in the history of the tribe of Israel. Trying to keep the story of the cause of King Saul's death from enemy Philistine ears, the Israelites were commanded to "tell it not in Gath, [to] proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice."⁴

A cursory examination of the more popular literature about the Amish will confirm the tendency outlined above. This is particularly so when their lifestyle is characterized by Mennonite writers, rather than by members of the Amish community themselves. The bulk of the literature analyzed herein appears to be targeted at tourists for the implicit purpose of explaining Amish life to outsiders. Some illustrative examples will substantiate this hypothesis.



*Amish playhouse, western New York.
Even the arena of child play is not
exempt from rules and regulations.*

AMISH BEGINNINGS IN AMERICA

Investigating popular literature profiling the Amish migration to this continent, one encounters some very positive-sounding titles, as, for example, *The Gentle People*; *The Quiet Land*; *The Amish: A Pioneer Heritage*; *Real People: Amish and Mennonites in Lancaster County*; *A Quiet and Peaceable Life*; *This is Good Country*; and *Our Amish Neighbors*.⁵ And, as the following excerpts show, Amish origins are described in warm, glowing terms which vividly portray the concepts of peace, tranquility, unity, and community:

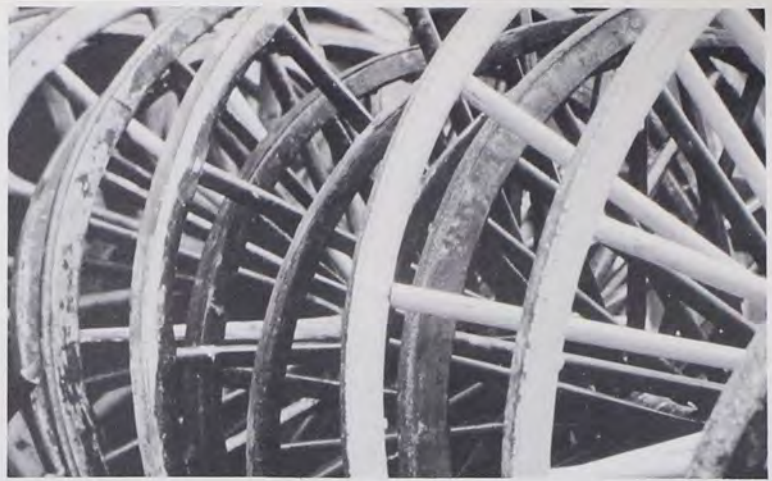
They are a culture born out of turbulent times when the Christian world was dividing into liberal and conservative factions. They are God-fearing people who believe in following the teachings of the Bible. They live simple and somewhat uncomplicated lives because they feel God commands this of them. They are simply a people who are following the dictates of their consciences.⁶

Stemming from the conservative Old Order Amish are many more liberal sects, each with its own varied forms of customs and worship. Despite the differences, however, all are bound together by their traditions, basic beliefs and code of ethics. Their ideal is to live simple, work-filled lives, with humility and obedience to the word of God.⁷

... another unity that the Amish have preserved is that of work and pleasure. The lives of fellow creatures and our delight in those lives are great possessions. And these are secured and made available by great possessions that are cultural . . . [the Amish] look at the world and find it good, and . . . they honor its goodness in their daily work . . .⁸

... to this day there are no books printed that can fully explain the true spiritual, brotherly love of their religious faith. There are no words found in any language that can explain the basic fundamentals of their faith that was inherited from ancestors of many generations ago, which was granted to them through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and is to this day cultivated as their every day mission.⁹

Described in these genteel terms, the Amish have justifiably been idolized by various other sectors of society. During the Vietnam War era, for example, the Amish became the symbol of the simple lifestyle idealized by many of the young people who rejected militarism and materialism.¹⁰ Their effective control of outside cultural influences has been envied by many North Americans weary of resisting the pressures of a technologically driven, pleasure-seeking society. To an extent, the Amish have created a distinct counterculture rooted in Christian understanding. Their intent has been to combat assimilation by



*Amish buggy shop,
western New York*

creating a system for living which allows little deviation, and which extends to virtually every aspect of daily life.¹¹ Due in part to the nature of the literature describing their way of life, however, the attention of observers has been drawn to the uniqueness of Amish ways without any awareness of the intrinsic press for conformity or the individual struggles emanating therefrom.

AMISH PHILOSOPHY

The Amish philosophy, or way of looking at life, is quite specific, much of it based on an oral tradition explicated for the newborn by elders and parents. Deviancy in any form is quickly attended to and, hopefully, corrected, the transgressor being made well-aware of the serious nature of the errant act. Contrast this reality with the descriptions encountered by the tourist:

Tara and I took a seat among the tomato plants and corn stalks and silently watched as these flowers unfolded. The beauty of the flowers made me appreciate even more the beauty of those with whom I was sharing them . . . the beauty of the Amish.¹²

Practices that identify the Amish as a people draw them together and accentuate their differences from mainstream culture. Accepted ways . . . all build parameters that help the Amish to live humbly, gently and peacefully with God's people and earth.¹³

The Amish must be viewed as a socio-religious group with attending economic stipulations. For the past three centuries they have tried to maintain a rather close relationship between religious beliefs and the everyday activities of their members.¹⁴ This admixture has necessitated the formation of a close link between daily behavior and earning a living. It also has historical roots for the Amish, since, ". . . being ethnically Swiss, they have a pronounced need for sharing and group involvement. A loner is a rare thing among these people. They just naturally like to do things together."¹⁵

This sense of "comprehensive" community distinguishes the Amish from the workings of mainstream society. It is a difficult orientation for outsiders to comprehend. For example (and in more poetic terms), the academic world and science are preoccupied with theory and the reconstruction of the order of nature, while the Amishman is simply awed by the orderliness of the seasons, the heavens, the world of growing plants, the animals, and the process of living and dying. The Amish, with this philosophy, have prospered on the land more often than their "English" (non-Amish) neighbors who are engulfed in the high cost of mechanization and finally forced to sell and move to industrial or more lucrative livelihoods.¹⁶

Clearly a sense of superiority is evident in the comparison of the Amish lifestyle with that of their English neighbors. Enlarging on that, we are told that "the Amish community experiences little delinquency in minors, causes and fights no wars, uses no polluting machines, eschews



Amish buggy, western New York

materialism, and has no economically based class system."¹⁷ It is also pointed out that although "the latest discoveries of science and the most recent inventions of electricity, tractor, and automobile have not penetrated the lives of the Amish, nevertheless, the restless, curious, and acquisitive advocate of gadgets of fashion, mechanics, and science may find here a healthy antidote."¹⁸

And, finally, we learn that "their generous brotherhoods . . . are made up of hard-working and generally prosperous people. Their neighborliness, self-control, goodwill and thrift contribute immeasurably to the foundations of our civilization . . . candidates for the Biblical way of life which nonresistant Christians alone can fulfill are altogether too few."¹⁹

There is a price to pay for these virtues, and that price includes implicit obedience to the order of the community, respect for and adherence to religious discipline, and unquestioning conformity. These regulations are in effect from early childhood through adulthood. Even the arena of child play is not exempt. For example, "one school has forbidden the use of baseball gloves and hard balls at school. By the children's playing with a sponge ball or other soft ball, and no gloves, baseball does not become a competitive game with worldly methods which might range out of control among teenagers and be carried on into adulthood."²⁰

In return for playing by the rules, the Amish member receives "a durable identity, a sense of belonging to a distinctive people, a meaningful world view, a keen sense of social roots and an unwavering emotional security."²¹

THE AMISH LIFESTYLE

There is considerable truth to the statement that much of the Amish way of life resembles the way most Americans lived a century ago.²² Perhaps public admiration for their way of doing things simply represents a nostalgic yearning for the "good old days" in which such virtues as hard work, hospitality and neighborliness allegedly abounded. Consider, for instance, "this variously told story of a plain-dressed Dunkard accosted on the streets of a Pennsylvania town by an evangelical young man who

asked, 'Brother, are you saved?' The long-bearded Dunkard did not respond immediately. He pulled out a piece of paper and wrote on it, then handed it to the stranger. 'Here,' he said, 'are the names and addresses of my family, neighbors and people I do business with. Ask them if they think I'm saved. I could tell you anything.'²³

If one listens carefully to those who speak longingly of the "good old days," there is a realization that this kind of religious testimony would have been characteristic of almost any rural section of North America a century ago. The same may be said of this observation: "The elderly are highly respected in Amish society. Older persons do everything they can to help the young get started. But the young respect their parents and grandparents and involve them in meaningful ways of being useful."²⁴ And the following, too, evokes memories of years gone by when the pace of life was slower: "I have seen many a modern farmer so busy in his field that he barely had time to wave. But every Amish farmer working his land with his team of horses always had time to stop by the fence for a chat."²⁶

For the most part the Amish probably do not "play to their audience," but are concerned with the careful protection and nurture of their children in an effort to maintain the cultural continuity and cultural integrity which has enabled them to remain a discrete minority steadfast to their own vision of the good life.²⁵ Their methodology naturally involves community discipline as well as community support, but only the latter appears to be highlighted in "touristic" presentations to the public.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

The poetic and unrealistic image of the Amish probably contributes to feelings of envy and inadequacy on the part of the casual observer. Imagine contrasting one's own harried middle-class urban lifestyle, with all of its self-imposed demands and responsibilities, with that of the pastoral, peaceful "people of God": "I remember many nights arriving home past midnight and lying on the grass watching the stars dance in the sky. It would be quiet and peaceful, and I felt as if I just might be in touch with God. To me, this is what being Amish is all about."²⁷

As the Biblical accounts will attest, all people of God—including the Jewish patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Peter, and Paul—have their human side. As members of Christendom believe, these individuals and their corresponding families or communities were “in touch with God” in the same sense that the Amish (and members of other structured Christian communities) may be in touch with God. As has been noted, however, “when people attempt to be as Christ-like, consistent and perfect as possible, several results surface again and again . . . the dual themes of perfection and humility provide fertile milieu for many, but tear other persons apart. . . . Those who can’t stand the tension suffer emotional and spiritual anguish.”²⁸

It is also true that “the quest for peace with God is sometimes advertised as the simple process of seeking and finding. However, after the initial experience the concomitant community produces guidelines consisting of rewards, punishments, sanctions and taboos by which the process is to be continued. In the case of the Amish, they also believe that if anything is a hindrance to the spiritual well-being of the church it should be abstained from.”²⁹

These hidden directives may not be immediately visible to the outsider, but they are certainly well-known to younger members within folk communities like the Amish. A closer look will reveal the extent to which these guidelines apply to the various sectors of “ordinary life.” To begin with, warnings are given. For example, many Plain People see the large-scale putting off of Plain clothing as part of the apostasy of the end times, and refer to the Biblical prophecy concerning a “great falling away.”³⁰

Warnings also take on a specificity not immediately apparent to those not familiar with Anabaptist ways. For example, “an Amish youth who quits smoking, or stops telling the usual dirty jokes, or gives up the rowdy barn dances is immediately suspected of fellowship with the Mennonites. Of all the ways youth can rebel, association with the Mennonites or some other religious order is the most feared.”³¹

Moving away from the arena of warnings is the matter of informal social control. Even the idyllic world of the Amish quilter is not devoid of elements of group protocol and influence—some of it quite restricting for the semi-skilled quilter: “No one wants to be next to the fastest quilter because she will be ready to ‘roll’ before they are. Straight lines are easier to quilt than curves so the less experienced quilters will sit at those places if they exist.”³² Moreover, “being assigned to the kitchen when you would rather quilt can be humbling. It is sometimes the younger girls whose stitches are not yet tiny enough or neat enough who get that job.”³³

Conformity to group expectations is evident even in the recreational aspects of Amish life, and with the “encouragement” of group approval or disapproval one is motivated to quilt faster, to be neater and to try to make smaller stitches. In addition, forms of approval or non-approval

also apply to other constituencies: Speaking of another Amish group slightly less strict than hers, an Amish woman said, “They iron too much.”³⁴

Closer to home is family life, another arena in which the human element of the Amish lifestyle becomes apparent. In large families sibling rivalry is not uncommon, even though it is probably not quite as intense as in dominant society. After many hours of bending over picking strawberries in the hot sun, tempers might occasionally flare. Then, one of the boys will grab a horse whip and chase an innocent victim around the pasture until the offended one gives in, and throwing himself on the ground cries out, “Go ahead and kill me.”³⁵

The Amish believe that customs are good because they are old and therefore are authentic or true. How or why the rules came to be in the first place is not important to them; they must be obeyed. Without this requirement there is no certainty of any future with God. The Amish firmly believe that modern civilization will come to a terrible ruin, and that only they have a chance at salvation.³⁶ Thus the implicit rationale for explicit obedience, whether enforced by coaxing, by example, or by coercion, is the only safe route. The popular Amish literature says little about this, nor does it give much hint to the attending spiritual tension with which the Amishman must cope.

AN AMISH PERSPECTIVE

The Amish child has an enormous sense of security in community. The practice of mutual aid and caring for one another assures children that they will be supported and kept from complete loneliness from the day they are born until the day they die.³⁷ “The Amish provide a social model wherein the individual’s needs are fulfilled not through the delights of individualism, but in sacrifice and submission to a greater collective good. There are no promises of free-wheeling self-fulfillment in Amish life, but the individual is cared for and cherished by a supportive social system—a humane and durable promise.”³⁸

This assurance is comforting to the individual and the “fleeting pleasures” of the outside world are readily viewed as temporary, risky, and even dangerous. In the meanwhile, the Amish community offers approved outlets to meet all aspects of human need—physically, socially, and spiritually. Note these expressions “from the inside,” and catch the human elements of, respectively, caring, loneliness, hurting, humor, belonging, and prayer:

To Susan he [her husband] seemed so strong and capable. His voice was so kind. She hoped she would never disappoint him. He was a quiet person, and so patient.³⁹

No visiting ministers had been through this year. Mart and Susan longed once more to have fellowship with other Amish families. They enjoyed their own Bible reading and singing, but they needed fellowship with others too.⁴⁰

A short while later as they knelt for the evening prayer, their hearts ached for the young widow and the six little children. Only God could heal their broken hearts.⁴¹

Now the bachelor hears some voices, and he stares in disbelief! Surely that can't be! Yes, sure enough, a whole gang of them, giggling, talking womenfolk coming straight for his cabin. Too late to run out the front door! If only there was a back door! At the last minute he decides to quick climb the ladder to the loft and escape to the very far corner.⁴²

They beckoned "Come!" Mart and Susan knew that it would mean leaving family and friends all over again. But they were still young, and the urge to go back to the land they had so loved was great, so great it was almost like a magnet.⁴³

She made one last climb to her spot on Olsen Hill to pray and talk with the Heavenly Father before they left. She needed this moment to renew her faith. She didn't know where her special spot would be near her

new home, but she knew she'd find one somewhere.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

The reality of Amish life is that it is first and foremost a human lifestyle, albeit somewhat unique in comparison to that of other ethnocultural communities or dominant society. There is a good deal of literature about the Amish and their lifestyle that is both informative and objective,⁴⁵ but, unfortunately, it will probably not be encountered by tourists, who will likely continue to be influenced by more poetic and mythological renderings, thanks to their perusal of readily accessible materials. The tragedy of this reality is that the Amish will continue to be perceived as a kind of ideal folk society, and their true humanity will not be appreciated. Thus any lessons to be learned from them may be lost because of the distraction of their unique "cultural covering." This may also restrict any meaningful intercultural interaction with members of the outside world which could serve to reinforce the mutuality of the human family.

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