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Amish Church District Fissioning and Watershed Boundaries among Holmes County, Ohio, Amish

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Abstract

Upon reaching 40 households, an Amish church district typically divides into two smaller, relatively equally sized districts. This article analyzes the relationship between Amish church divisions and topographic demarcation lines within Clark Township, Holmes County, Ohio, from 1930 to 2010. In findings, divisions often follow physical geography boundaries, such as ridges that outline the edge of a watershed, or rivers and streams that essentially define topography within a watershed. Further, Amish leaders divide churches with objectives based on several socioreligious factors, from the maintenance of the faith community to the goal of preserving Amish neighborhoods and rural identity, while also facilitating the continuation of traditional agricultural practices.

Keyword

Old Order Amish; New Order Amish; Faith community; Rural identity; Traditional agriculture; Church division; Watershed boundaries; Population growth

Introduction

The most fundamental spatial unit among the Amish is the church district (Anderson and Donnermeyer 2013). The district is the locus of routine religious activities like church services, which are hosted in private homes, shops, and barns, as well as some of the most intimate, day-to-day social interaction. When a district reaches about 40 to 45 families, the facilities used to host church services are pressed to capacity. The district must divide to accommodate growth. This growth is driven by natural increases (see Appendix) and a high retention rate, differing markedly from divisions driven by schism.

Intentionally dividing a single church district is an exercise in agrarian communalism. Amish face many socioreligious and pragmatic considerations when creating new district boundaries. For example, an overarching goal is to maintain a relatively balanced number of families on either side of the divide. Another goal is to create districts that follow natural physical boundaries so that a sense of community is preserved. This article focuses on the Amish church district fissioning with particular attention given to where the geographical dividing line is drawn with respect to topographic watershed features.

Amish Districts as Distinctive Mountain Villages

As a fiction author of nature and folk culture, Austrian author Adalbert Stifter described societal variation from one Alpine valley to another in several of his nineteenth century German-language novels.² Stifter took great care in portraying provincial life among eastern European Alps villages. Where prominent landscape features separated villages, each village maintained a cultural history and traditions distinct from ethnically similar villages across the mountain ridge. As such, Stifter's concept of provincialism and societal variation offers an intriguing parallel to the Amish geographic units of local church and local affiliation. In both settings the inhabitants are spiritual, rural, agrarian, and inextricably tied to the land. Such mountain-village enclaves provide a sense of comfort and familiarity.³

In his 1853 novella *Bergkristall*, Stifter (1945) contrasted two villages only three miles apart (yet separated by a mountain range) that differed in customs and social behavior.

Since the people of Gschaid seldom leave their valley and almost never go to Millsdorf, from which they are separated by mountain and by customs—and since, furthermore, no one ever leaves his valley to settle in a neighboring one... (33).

Such a stage could be set for the Holmes County Amish as well, who, like nineteenth century Swiss villagers, are limited in mobility without personally owned automobiles. Clark Township, located in the southeast corner of Holmes County, features numerous hills and valleys with broad meadows that together comprise parts of four regional watersheds. South Fork of Sugar Creek drains eastward across the center of the township covering about 60% of the land mass, with the Walnut Creek, Doughty Creek, and Mill Creek watersheds making up the bulk of

the remaining drainage.

Holmes County Amish resident Mary Raber (personal communication, 2012) recalls changes that occurred after the Flat Ridge East church district divided in 1986 to accommodate population growth. The nearest farm family across the recent fission line gradually grew socially distant. Although the neighboring farm had always been situated on the opposite side of the ridge from the Raber farm, members of both families hiked up the steep slope for a visit less and less often after the district split. Essentially, the two families no longer shared the same church meetings, nor did they share in district-level social activities. The peak of social activity became occasional visits to the other's church district. As such, the social separation of Amish neighbors by geography embodies Stifter's (1945) contrasting villages of Gschaid and Millsdorf on opposite sides of the mountain range. A social structure (the district) once brought them together across a physical boundary, but when the district divided along the ridge, social distance grew.

If church divisions include both socioreligious as well as pragmatic factors, the importance of the socioreligious foundation must also be noted. Much of Stifter's literary work was accomplished during the Biedermeier period (1815-1848) in central Europe. This era was characterized by new industrialization, urbanization of an emerging middle class, *Gemütlichkeit* (cordiality and neighborliness), and an increased sense of belonging, especially among urban dwellers. Yet, the "Beidermeier" social milieu further alienated Anabaptists, who by this time had fled persecution by becoming agrarian (Hostetler 1993, 50). Even in the nineteenth century, the French and the Swiss governments persecuted the Anabaptists, pressuring them to participate in military service. In spite of their predicament, the Amish adopted and maintained some European social values of the Biedermeier period including a strong dedication to mutual aid (Nolt 1992, 49) and other practices that are today the Amish "repertoire of the community" (Reschly 2000).³

In this paper, we investigate the relationship between topographic watershed features and Amish church district fissions, focusing specifically on nearly 30 divisions that have occurred in Clark Township between 1950 and 2010. A further objective is to identify socioreligious and pragmatic factors Amish elders employ in deciding where to draw a dividing line with respect to geographical boundaries.

Methodology

In order to determine how church districts followed topographic features, we needed to collect both physical and human geographic data. First, we investigated and mapped the location of watershed boundaries (ridges) and streams. While we used plat maps to initially gather these data, we also employed extensive field observations of Clark Township to observe actual geographic features, such as the true location of a ridgeline, verifying or adding to plat map features. We also observed how property lines relate to streams, ridgelines, and other geographical features.

Amish church district boundaries were developed from three sources. The first source included all editions of the Holmes County Amish directory, which dates from the 1940s. Second, we consulted the Amish Farmer almanacs, which date from the 1930s. These two sources provided information on the progression of church growth and diffusion across eight decades. Finally, Emanuel Yoder's *Begebenheiten fon Holmes County deiner fon 200 yohr, 1808-2008* (2009)—translated *Happenings of Holmes County Church Leaders for 200 Years*—provided a wealth of invaluable details on specific church divisions that rounded out our data collection. For continuity, although some district names have changed, current names are used when a district is referenced except when presented in its historic context. Given that Amish church districts do not fall neatly within township lines, only those districts that are mostly within Clark Township are included.

Furthermore, some of the church district borders on the 1950 and 1970 maps have shifted slightly given that portions of neighboring church districts have variously extended into Clark Township. This affects inclusion of a few church districts for given map years. For example, in 1955, a small portion of Doughty church district extended to Charm, covering the northwest corner of Clark Township, which is not indicated on the maps. By 1975, the Flat Ridge district and Charm district subsumed the Doughty church district land within the township.

Using ArcMap, we overlaid the watershed boundaries and streams with the church districts at four periods: 1950, 1970, 2000, and 2010. The watershed boundaries demarcate the hilly topography of southeastern Holmes County, while larger streams follow lower elevations. Districts are individually colored, and the complexity of color range grows as five Amish church districts become more than 30 during an 80-year span. [Editor's note: *Print copy readers can find color maps in the online version of this article; see the inside cover for a web link. The maps' focus is on district boundaries, not the districts themselves, and hence the acceptability of printings maps in grey scale*]. The last map, that of 2010, highlights recent church district divisions; thick black lines denote a recent dividing line.

This research uses an historical ecology perspective in that it seeks to holistically explore cultural and practical relationships between Amish church district boundaries, land ownership, and geographic features. Church district fissioning is a cultural and spatial practice, and hence, we collected qualitative data to help interpret the spatial trends noted. Informal interviews were conducted in 2011 and 2012 among five Amish elders, including two bishops, a minister, and farm owners in Clark Township. These interviews were a means to generating an historical narrative of how farmland is transferred and church districts divide.

Results

Church District Growth in the Holmes County Settlement and Clark Township

Until the mid-twentieth century, growth in the number of Amish church districts in North America had been slow to moderate beginning with the Anabaptist migration to Pennsylvania in

the 1730s and to Ohio during the early 1800s (Nolt 1992, 88). By 1930, the Holmes County settlement totaled 19 church districts, inclusive of five ultra-conservative Swartzentruber districts (Raber 1931). Several volumes of Holmes County Amish directories and almanacs indicate the increasingly rapid rate of population expansion for the region during the past 80 years (Table 1).

In this study, church district fissioning specific to Clark Township begins with an assessment of Amish church organization circa 1930. In 1950, seven church districts are represented within the township. Growth in the number of Amish church districts in Clark Township (Table 2) parallels Amish church expansion in the Holmes County settlement region.

Table 1: Growth of Amish Church Districts in the Holmes County Settlement

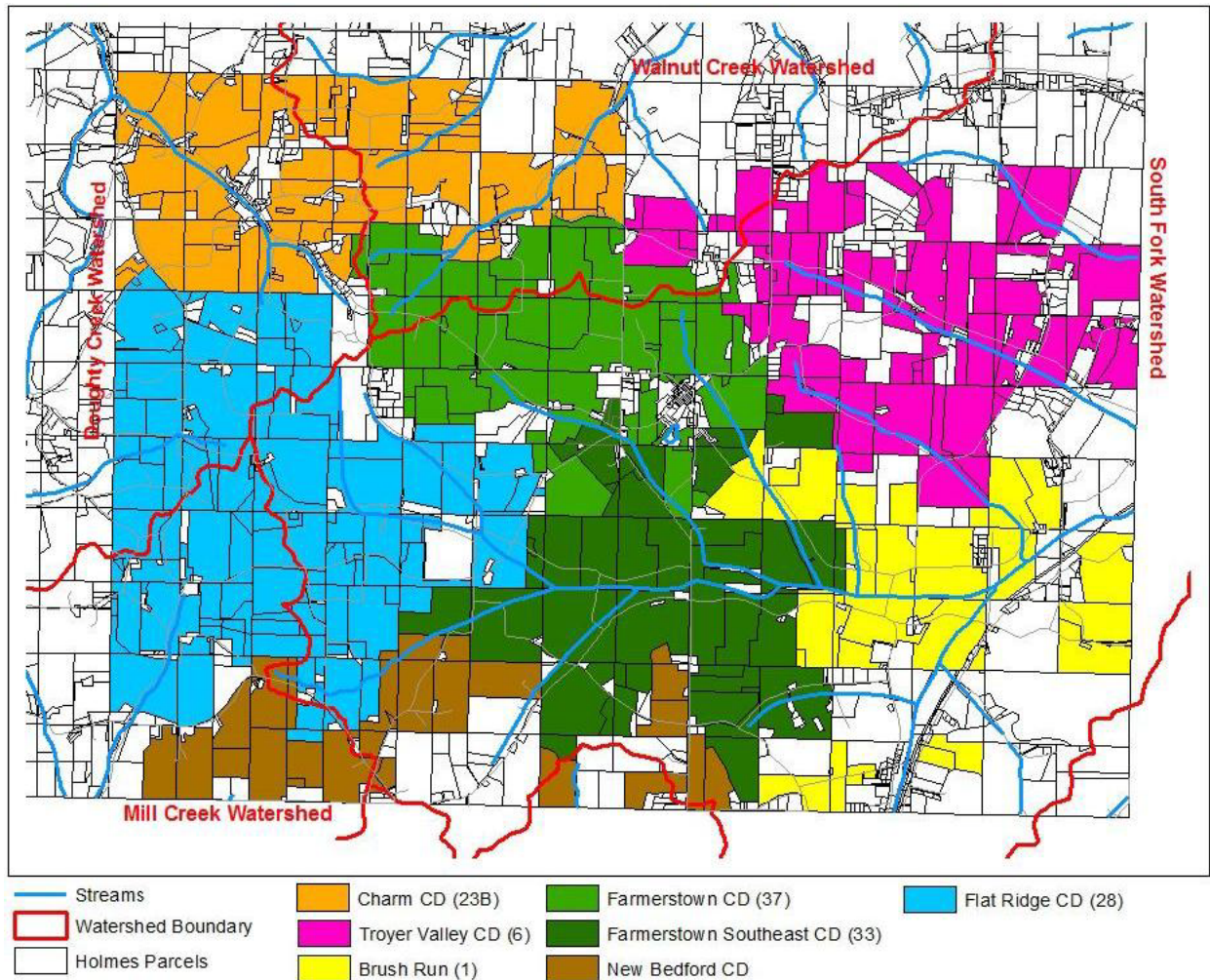
Year	Church districts	Source
1930	19	Almanac
1955	33	Directory
1958	40	Almanac
1965	46	Directory
1973	72	Directory
1981	93	Directory
1986	123	Almanac
1996	156	Directory
2003	224	Almanac
2010	235	Directory

Table 2: Amish Church District Expansion in Clark Township

Year	Church districts	Source
1930	3	Almanac
1950	7	Directory
1965	9	Directory
1973	13	Directory
1981	16	Directory
2000	27	Almanac
2010	32	Directory

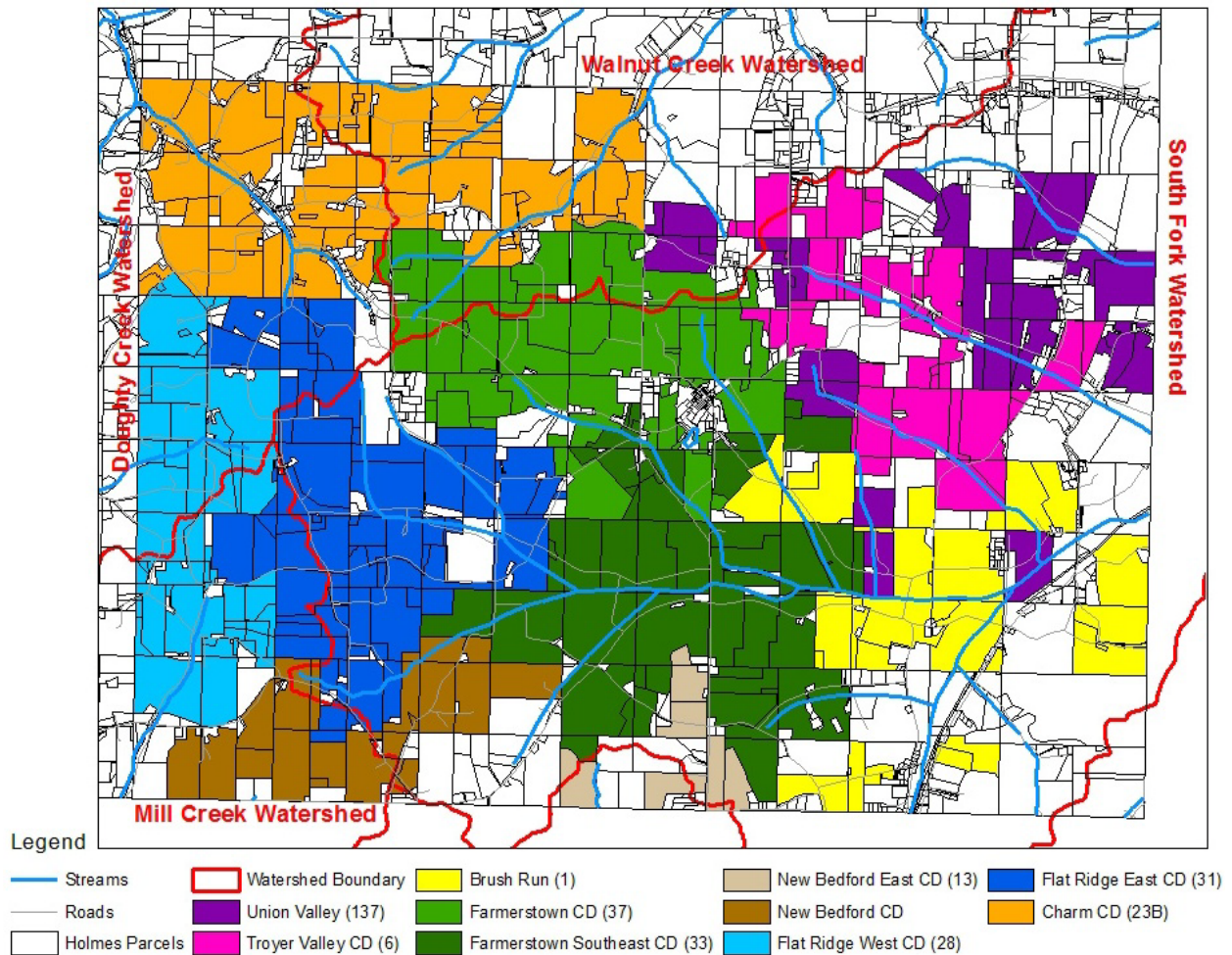
The Case of the Chestnut Ridge Church District and Its Succession

Perhaps the most observable change among the Holmes County Amish communities during the past 80 years is the reduction of land mass for each district due to the approximate 85% decrease of Amish households engaged in full-time farming over the same period (Yoder 2009). The Flat Ridge church district, descending from the original Chestnut Ridge district in the west-central region of Clark Township, well illustrates this demographic trend.

Figure 1: Clark Township (Holmes County, OH), 1950

The Flat Ridge district occupied about 18 square miles (including part of Mechanic Township to the west) in 1946, an era of much less densely populated Amish farmland (Figure 1).⁴ Today, each of the now seven church districts within the former Chestnut Ridge district averages about 1.5 square miles with few non-Amish neighbors. Accordingly, the original Flat Ridge district held as many as 25 to 30 Amish farm families, while each of the seven smaller church districts average eight to 10 active farmers. Closer inspection of the Flat Ridge district reveals how growth and division of a selected Amish church district unfolds over time.

In the 1960s, the Flat Ridge district split into Flat Ridge East and Flat Ridge West (Figure 2). As the Amish farm community continued to grow, Flat Ridge West was divided in 1981 to create two districts called Flat Ridge North and Flat Ridge South (“West” ceased as a name). In 1986, Flat Ridge district was carved from Flat Ridge East (Figure 3). Flat Ridge South divided in 1995 into both Twin Creek district and Scenic Valley district, discarding the “Flat Ridge South” identity (Figure 3). Similarly, the “Flat Ridge North” label was abandoned as a name after dividing to become Flat Ridge Northwest and Becks Mills East. The most recent

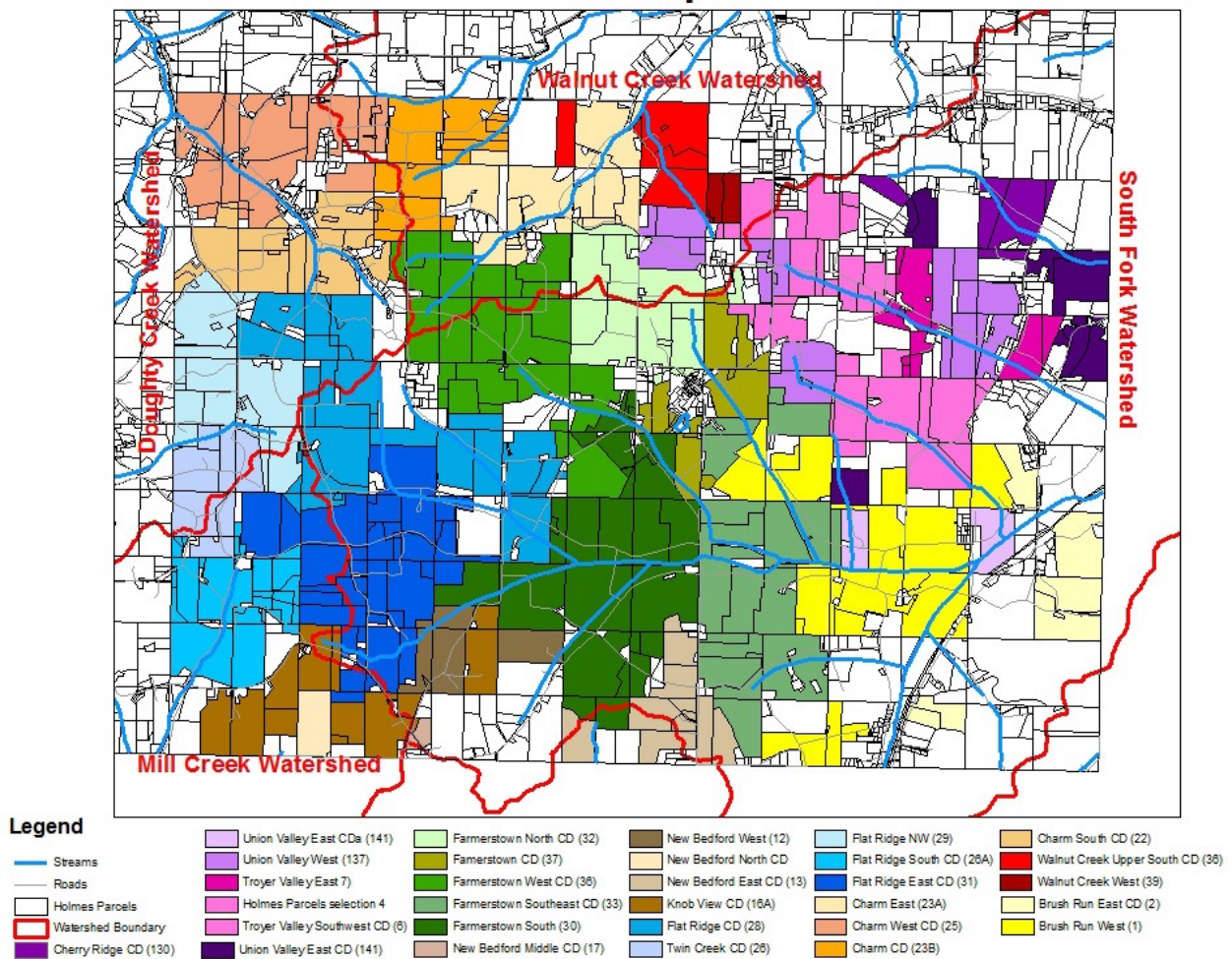
Figure 2: Clark Township (Holmes County, OH), 1970

split occurred in 2003 with Maple Valley being sectioned out of Flat Ridge district (Figure 4). By 2010, seven districts had come from the original Chestnut Ridge district over the span of 60 years (Yoder 2009, 118).

Examination of maps reveals association between watershed demarcations and church district boundaries drawn in the process of organizing each new Amish church district, both in the area encompassing the original Flat Ridge district and in the rest of Clark Township. In the partitioning of the Flat Ridge and Maple Valley districts, the dividing line was drawn in the vicinity of the South Fork headwaters (Figure 4). As its topographical name implies, the Flat Ridge district is centered on a ridge running north and south. Several miles in length and featuring some of the highest points in the township, the prominent geographic landform known as Flat Ridge begins at the intersection of Doughty Creek, Mill Creek, and South Fork watersheds. Flat Ridge, from which the region and church district are named, then straddles the crest between Mill Creek and South Fork watersheds southward toward New Bedford.

Somewhat of a different geographic setting appears in the Maple Valley district. This

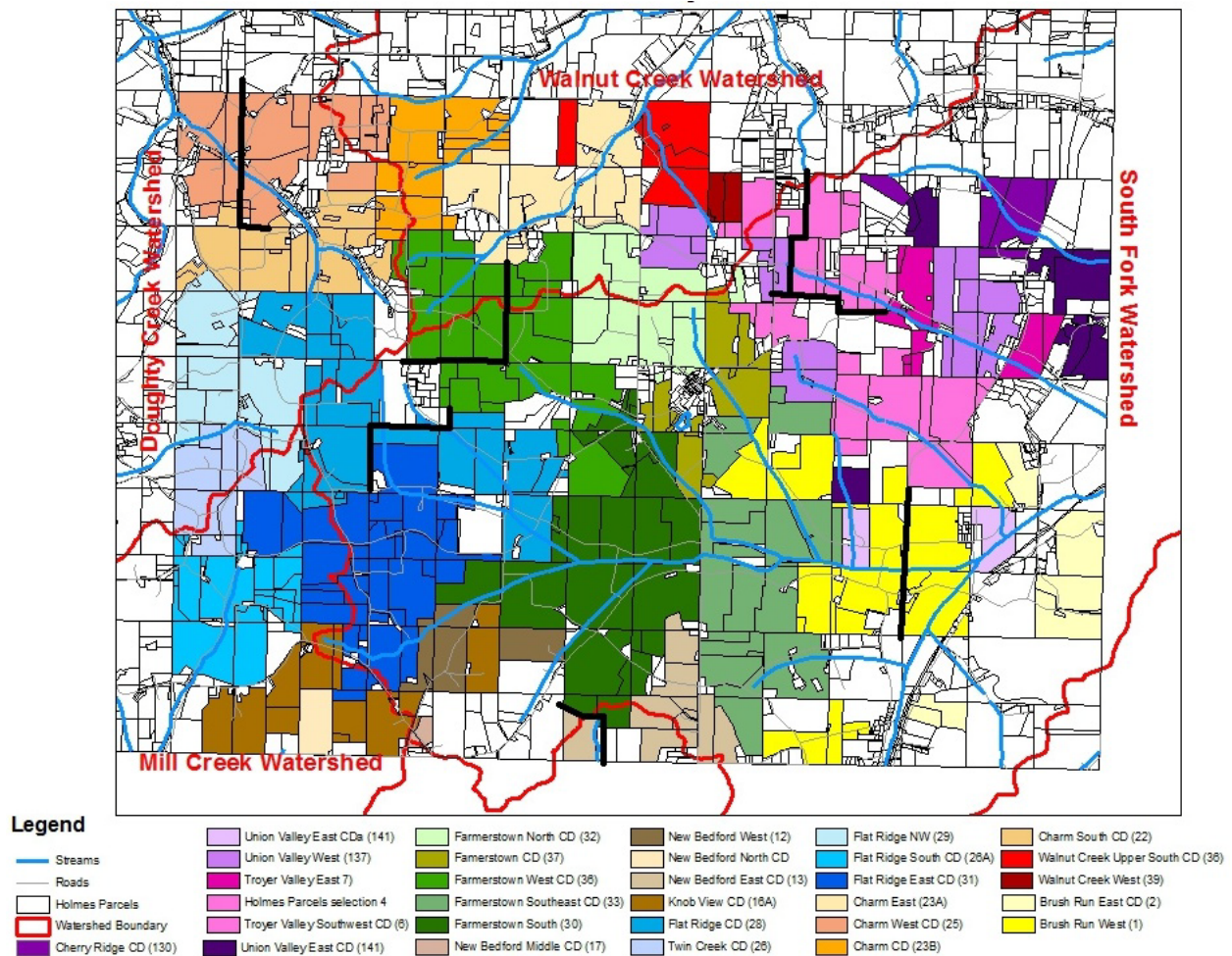
Figure 3: Clark Township (Holmes County, OH), 2000



church’s boundaries remain entirely within the South Fork Sugar Creek watershed. It follows a central narrow valley defined by South Fork sub-watersheds and headwaters on each minor tributary. The farmers in the Maple Valley district are geographically linked along the length of the small creeks.

After the district division, both the Maple Valley and Flat Ridge church districts engendered a more compact and contiguous geographic shape, in which the majority of residents and farmers live within closer proximity of one another. In practical terms, this encourages cooperation and communalism. Along with shared values and beliefs, Maple Valley and other Amish farmers maintain cooperative arrangements in labor-sharing rings to fill silos, thresh small grains, and harvest hay. Many of these associations fall within the same church district while others cross church district lines. Yet, cooperative work settings also serve to maintain group cohesion, both within church districts and throughout the greater community.

Overlap between church district boundaries and watersheds may also enhance cooperation in addressing environmental issues. For example, through their affiliation with

Figure 4: Clark Township (Holmes County, OH), 2010

extension, crop consultants, and conservation groups, Amish farmers increasingly demonstrate concern for stream management and agricultural runoff issues affecting their watershed. In one Clark Township case, an Amish farmer's compost pile leached, polluting a downstream neighbor's fishing pond. Upon learning of the problem, the Amish farmer addressed the situation by changing manure management practices.

Such cooperation among farm neighbors is common in many societies. Balinese rice farmers have maintained a complex and effective irrigation system for centuries through strong social bonds, yet it is an arrangement that succeeds due to the active participation of its members (Lansing 2006, 67-68). In conducting field observations of a Swiss alpine community, Netting (1981) found water resources and shared irrigation as being vital to the residents of the village of Törbel. Additionally, farmers in the alpine village optimally managed communal land in higher elevations through an alp association known as *Burgerschaft* that both limits grazing and promotes cooperative labor (Netting 1976, 141).

Considerations for Church Division

When an Amish church district becomes too large, the decision of where to divide the existing church population includes both pragmatic and socioreligious considerations. Most Amish church elders begin the discussion by pointing to practical goals as part of their decision making process. Such pragmatism includes splitting a church district into two similar sizes, keeping each new district as contiguous as possible, and dividing along some identifiable boundary such as a ridgeline or a river. At the same time, Amish elders also recognize the importance of socioreligious factors in determining where to divide a large church district, including the purposeful maintenance of rural character, preservation of close-knit family ties, and the observation of historic precedence.

Given the importance of maintaining an active faith community on both sides of the fission, church elders address several key concerns in determining where to draw the new boundary line:

1. The division must create two relatively equal “daughter” church districts, each having a similar number of families.
2. Each new church district should be geographically intact: in other words, boundaries should be drawn so that the land mass remains as contiguous as possible.
3. Where farms and rural homes are clustered together along a roadway or within a valley, such neighborhoods should be kept together if possible.
4. The dividing line should be a recognizable boundary: property lines are usually marked by a fence, roadway, river, or stream; such lines are often associated with regional watershed features.
5. Preservation of rural character should be maintained by portioning an equal number of active farmers within each side of the church fission.
6. In some cases, extended family members of different households wish to remain in the same church district, which may result in a departure from being contiguous.
7. Where possible, the current bishop remains within the division that retains the name of the “parent” church district. Both daughter church districts uphold the existing *Ordnung* thereby becoming “sister” districts.

Prominent geographic features that also act as natural barriers more often become boundary lines. Rivers in the Holmes County Amish settlement region more often serve as a boundary than a stream; steep hilltops forming a high ridge are more often boundary lines than a series of lesser hills. In a broad valley, each farm with an average of 80 to 100 acres is within visual sight of three to five other farms. As such, a sort of *visual neighborhood* exists within

these larger watershed areas,⁵ where farm households prosper through optimal visual and spatial orientation to one another, thereby maximizing labor exchange and other social opportunities (Long 2003). One such area in Clark Township, known as Meadow Valley along the main branch of South Fork, includes large portions of Farmerstown South and Farmerstown Southeast church districts.

Neighboring families who have coexisted in a valley for generations tend to reinforce a sense of community. In his study of Swiss Alpine landholders, Robert Netting (1981, 11) observed the concept of shared hay barns for adjacent meadows in the isolated community of Törbel. Although the Amish migrated from Europe more than 200 years ago, some Amish farmers in Clark Township continue to maintain a hay barn in the pasture. At first glance, such a practice seems archaic and impractical; however, farmers along the South Fork who use a “meadow barn” assert its usefulness of getting cows out to the pasture during the winter, providing an opportunity for livestock to exercise while also alleviating some of the manure buildup in the barn (Albert Troyer, personal communication, 2005). Moreover, the contemporary Amish meadow barn houses a visual stockpile of forage that may be shared, if needed, within the farm community.

Some church district boundaries in Clark Township follow irregular property lines. Farmers have occasionally redrawn property lines, usually diagonal to the section line, in order to share surface water resources with a neighboring farmer. Although many farm borders follow 80 and 160-acre section lines, it was not unusual for new owners to adjust property lines so that a stream or springs can be shared between neighbors (Albert Troyer, personal communication, 2005). In Clark Township, such practices were more common 50 or more years ago.

Sharing of natural features is also found in church fissioning. Along South Fork the eastward flowing stream was bisected with each succeeding fission event so that four contiguous church districts would eventually share somewhat equal lengths of the stream as well as the idyllic expanses of Meadow Valley. Beginning in 1980, Brush Run district split perpendicular to South Fork, creating Brush Run East and Brush Run West.⁶ Just two years later Farmerstown Southeast was divided with the boundary lines for newly established Farmerstown South district also bisecting South Fork (Figure 3). The most recent division in 2010 segmented Brush Run Middle district out of the Brush Run West, completing the fourth congregation to share in the three-mile length of South Fork and its broad basin.

Although Clark Township Amish live and travel along gravel township roads, paved county roads, and state highways, such roadways infrequently become church district boundaries given that the vast majority of these roadways wind and curve through valleys and over ridges. As such, certain types of geographic features clearly unify church districts (such as small streams, meadows, and valleys) while other geographical features (such as ridges and rivers) become convenient demarcation lines to separate Amish church districts. Farther north in the vicinity of southeastern Wayne County and northeastern Holmes County, the milder topography

allows for straighter roads compared to the Appalachian foothills of Clark Township. Because straight line roads tend to follow a grid, the roads themselves often become Amish church district boundaries. Yet, even with the grid system, environmental concerns remain. The Mt. Hope Northwest church district in northeastern Holmes County recently divided. Salt Creek was bisected so that the congregation on each side of the divide would retain somewhat of an equal portion of the stream and surrounding valley (David Kline, personal communication, 2012).

Church District Place Names and Lineage

Naming of church districts has evolved during the past 100 years, in part simply to distinguish one from another. Place names reflect the significance of identifying with the land and associated visual markers. The lineage of district names provides a rich history of associations with founding members, descriptive place names, and schisms that collectively characterize the Amish population of the Holmes County settlement region.

During the 1930s, the vast majority of Holmes County church districts were identified by either the founder or by the current bishop, such as the Mast church or Wengerd district (Raber 1931). By the 1950s, this practice ceased almost entirely, with the Swartzentruber church being the lone exception (Raber 1958). Increasingly, Amish church leaders have assigned church district names in accordance with either physical geographic features of the region such as valley, ridge, and creek (Doughty View, Rock Ridge, Maple Valley, and Twin Creek church districts)⁷ or nearby towns and villages.

In Clark Township, the Beachy district, named for its founding bishop Mose Beachy Sr., divided in 1921, forming Beachy South. Beachy South split in 1941 to form Farmerstown and Farmerstown Southeast church districts (Figure 1) (Yoder 2009), thus switching from a bishop's name to the name of a nearby village.⁸ In 1963, New Bedford East split from Farmerstown Southeast, introducing a second village name of a church district to the area. Yet, the dividing line was not just in reference to village proximity, but the line also followed roughly along the ridge marking the southern edge of the South Fork watershed. This pattern would continue. Farmerstown South was created in 1982 as a division of Farmerstown Southeast, each sharing the valley along South Fork (Figure 3). Farmerstown district divided in 1971 to form Farmerstown West. The subdivided Farmerstown district would split again in 1984, creating Farmerstown North as a new district centered on the headwaters along the northern edge of South Fork (Yoder 2009). By 2004, the original Farmerstown church district fostered 10 named districts, five associated with the village of Farmerstown along with Charm Southeast, New Bedford East, New Bedford West, Rock Ridge, and Center Ridge.

During the late 1960s, a division of Beachy North separated to form the New Order Amish church. Represented by Union Valley district in Clark Township, the New Order districts appear geographically fragmented within the region (Figure 2). As the New Order grew and divided into Union Valley East and West, adding Cherry Ridge district in 1994 and Pleasant

Valley district in 2006 (Figure 4), its four churches remained spatially disjointed compared to the compact and contiguous church district layout among the Old Order majority (Yoder 2009).

Conclusion

Given the history of European rural German-speaking societies and associated settlement patterns along with Anabaptist persecution and migration, contemporary Amish organize their church districts according to a well-established model of living as religious separatists in rural enclaves with purposeful consideration of natural geographical boundaries while also taking into account both pragmatic and socioreligious factors.

The common-sense approach followed by church elders in deciding where to draw new church boundaries translates to evenly portioned daughter districts that are geographically compact while also following recognizable boundaries. Socioreligious considerations begin with an emphasis on preservation of the rural agrarian setting and traditional agricultural practices, importance of neighborhood, and reinforcement of the spiritual community.

Through this study, the importance of spiritual community in Amish society is evident in the manner of how church elders divide congregations. In many cases, church divisions occur with preservation of neighborhoods as a key element, so that neighbors who have coexisted in a valley for multiple generations reinforce a strong sense of community. Such neighborhoods exist both in broad valleys and smaller, compact valleys. Broad valleys have the advantage of visual orientation of multiple farms to one another along with the corollary benefits of sharing knowledge and exchanging labor. In smaller valleys where tributary streams form sub watersheds, there are usually only one or two farms that, together with nonfarm Amish households, comprise a neighborhood.

Lacking the church bell that defines the area of audible sound of traditional European communities and the circular shape of a village (Schafer 1989), Amish communities thrive in rural neighborhoods where acoustic space consists of a *Vorsinger* (elder song leader) on Sunday mornings, the sounds of children playing, or the rhythm of horse hooves and buggy wheels (Kline 1990). Thus, even with fewer farm families in each church district along with smaller size families, the concept of Amish rural identity remains firmly entrenched in its agrarian and spiritual roots, all centered in a neighborhood where a sense of community stretches across the valley.

Endnotes

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²Adalbert Stifter's major works include his 1857 *Nachsommer* (Indian Summer), considered by some to be among the most important nineteenth century German-language novels.

³Moreover, Stifter and other Beidermeier writers alluded to Benedictine world piety in terms of obedience and the pursuit of humility, or *Gelassenheit*, which became a central theme for members of the nineteenth century Amish faith. Although in the broader sense, *Gelassenheit* refers to an “easy-going nature” within the ambiance of *Gemütlichkeit* society, the Amish view *Gelassenheit* as the ultimate way of demonstrating yieldedness to God, self-denial, and humility (Kraybill 2001, 29). Such can be more easily accommodated in a secular society. As Armstrong (2004) describes, the “Benedictine model combined geographical separation from society with asceticism, prayer and contemplation” (45).

⁴Before 1970, most Amish farmers participated in labor sharing rings with English farmers due to the convenience of geographic proximity.

⁵As an anthropological term, *visual neighborhood* is defined as a “cluster of farms that is enhanced both by geography and through property boundaries so that neighbors may casually observe one another when they are out of doors. These lines of sight enable a farmer to see what his neighbor is working on, if he needs help, and leads to more interactions and exchanges of innovations among neighbors” (Long 2003, 164).

⁶The New Order Amish schism of 1969 created Union Valley church district, which pulled some members from several Old Order districts including Brush Run. After the 1980 Brush Run division, the majority of Brush Run East was located in the area of Baltic and not centered on South Fork.

⁷In the Holmes County settlement region, Amish parochial school names include such suffixes as creek, run, springs, meadow, valley, bottom, ridge, hill and grove.

⁸Walnut Creek Mennonite Church withdrew from the Walnut Creek Amish district in 1865 (Yoder 2009, 112). The ultra-conservative Roman *Gemeinde* southeast of New Bedford broke away around 1955-1957 from the Troyer district, sister church to the original Beachy district.

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Appendix: Population Growth Rates

Change as simple as population growth can alter the social structure of small communities. Church district fissioning is one obvious result and is the primary subject of this article. Given that farmland in the Greater Holmes County settlement area has become increasingly scarce over the past four decades, a logical response for the Amish would be to intentionally limit family size. On the one hand, Amish generally proscribe birth control, especially birth control used to limit family size (Wasao and Donnermeyer 1996, 237). On the other hand, Netting (1990, 234) suggests that human populations self-regulate according to a number of factors including land availability and social influences. Hence, it is worth analyzing whether the rapid increase in population and church fissioning is accompanied by some reduction in births.

By measuring family size according to marriage year among the Amish population of the Greater Holmes County settlement, parity or number of children for each married couple can be established. Using the 2010 *Ohio Amish Directory of Holmes County and Vicinity*, 50 church districts were selected in and around Clark Township, the geographic focus of this study. Further, a census was taken of all marriages (by marriage year) between 1941 and 1990 with the total number of children produced for each married couple. (Children were counted of all Amish married couples, with the exclusion of a few cases where a woman married in the late 1980s or 1990 may still be fertile; the main determinant would be the question of when the last child was born.) During the 50-year period of the census, 728 households were counted with a total of 4,405 children.

Overall in the Clark Township and surrounding region, Amish family size averaged 6.05 children per household, which is consistent with Wasao & Donnermeyer's (1996, 241) Amish parity study average of 6.2 for farm families. Moreover, the decades of the 1950s and 1960s produced an average of 6.4 children per household, which dropped to 5.4 children per married couple by 1990. Table 3 indicates the average number of children per household for selected years of the study.

Table 3: Parity in Amish Marriages by Year in Clark Township and Surrounding Region

Year	Number of households	Number of children	Average family size
1945	7	47	6.7
1950	6	43	6.1
1960	11	77	7.0
1970	12	75	6.3
1980	18	103	5.7
1990	34	182	5.4

In comparing average family size by year, the correlation (Pearson's r) is $-.565$ (significant at 0.05). The negative trend line indicates a decline in family size among Amish households for the period 1941 to 1990. Ten-year spans are used to illustrate parity, with the exception of 1945 (not enough data in 1940). This finding suggests that the Clark Township Amish population has shown a trend toward intentional restriction of family size over time as the number of church districts increase and available farmland decreases within the same land area. Thus, the drop in parity can be strongly correlated with greater numbers of non-farm households that tend to have smaller families.

This demographic analysis allows for a clearer historic perspective on the phenomenon of more people occupying less land over several decades. In John Hostetler's work, he observed in 1951 that the average Amish church district was comprised of 15 to 30 families (Weaver-Zercher 2005, 175). During the past decade most Amish church districts have not divided until reaching the size of 40 or more families. In addition, there are also fewer numbers of Amish farm families as part of each church district.