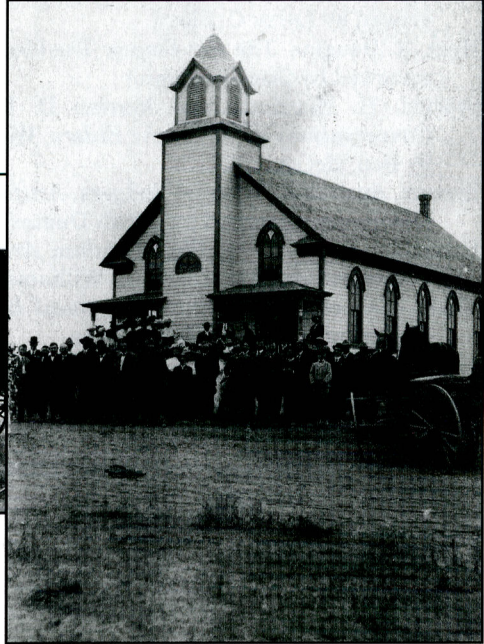
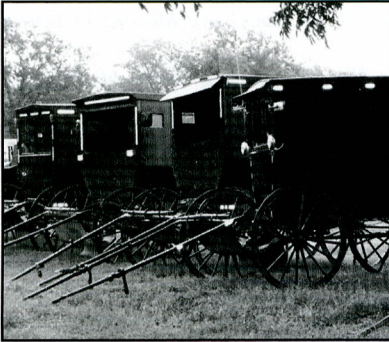


## A Separate People: A History of the Oklahoma Amish



*By Marvin E. Kroeker\**

The Amish are an intriguing and resilient people. Against all odds and predictions they have survived for 320 years, including 277 years in the United States and 120 in Oklahoma. This, despite severe persecution, harassment, and expulsion at the hands of church and government authorities in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe and the currents of assimilation, conformity, and modernity in melting pot America. Through it all, many of the distinctive Amish countercultural beliefs, folkways, and customs have remained virtually intact.

Along with the Mennonites and Hutterites, the Amish are the direct heirs of the Anabaptist religious tradition that dates to the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. The Anabaptist movement, originating in Switzerland in January 1525, was the radical wing of the Reformation

whose leaders held a vision that went far beyond the goals of leading Protestant reformers. Some scholars characterize the Anabaptist concept of the church “A Third Way,” asserting that it is radically different from that held by both Catholics and Protestants.<sup>1</sup> The Anabaptists saw the church as a voluntary body of believers accountable to each other and that baptism—the sign of church membership and commitment to Christ—should be conferred only on adults or those old enough to comprehend what they were doing. Since infant baptism, routinely practiced by the established churches, was not considered a true baptism, they proceeded to rebaptize their adherents upon confession of faith. The name Anabaptists, meaning rebaptizers, was given to the followers of this movement by their opponents. To address this so-called heresy, the baptism of adults was declared a capital crime and a ruthless wave of persecution was launched in an effort to squelch this growing movement. Felix Manz, in whose home the first rebaptisms took place, was drowned in the Limmat River in Zurich, and thousands thereafter suffered a martyr’s death.<sup>2</sup>

The threat to the established religious order went beyond the issue of baptism. The Anabaptists raised a basic question of who had ultimate authority over religious beliefs and practices. The Anabaptist position, as explained by historian Stephen Nolt, was that “the state could have no part in controlling or directing the activities and doctrines of the church. The church must be free of government control.”<sup>3</sup> This posits the principle of the separation of church and state—a truly radical idea for that time. Not only did these reformers reject the state church, according to J Denny Weaver, “Anabaptism also rejected the idea of a ‘Christian society,’ or a professed belief that the cause of God’s reign is identified with a particular nationality or social order”<sup>4</sup> Another characteristic of Anabaptists was the principle that allegiance to the sovereign reign of God takes precedence over allegiance to a sovereign state.<sup>5</sup> Adherence to this belief helps explain why the Amish today will not fly the flag or pledge allegiance.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Anabaptism, including the Amish wing, is the rejection of violence and the sword of war. This is based on their interpretation of the teachings of Jesus found in the New Testament.<sup>6</sup> From the birth of Anabaptism to the present the refusal to serve in the military has caused considerable hostility and persecution, including in Oklahoma. Other Anabaptist emphases include: the refusal to swear oaths; social separation from the larger society (the “evil” world); service to others; the exclusion of unrepentant errant members from communion, and in some cases, shunning of excommunicated members. The Anabaptist reformers, for

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the most part, accepted the historic creeds of the Protestant Church, their quarrel with the existing church was based on other grounds.<sup>7</sup>

Intense persecution and evangelical fervor led to the spread of Anabaptism from Switzerland into Moravia, Germany, and the Netherlands. Menno Simons, a Dutch theologian and Catholic priest, joined the Anabaptists in 1536 and emerged as perhaps the movement's most influential leader. Menno's followers were called Mennonites, a name that came to identify the major Anabaptist stream. When Menno assumed leadership the Anabaptist fold comprised a widely disparate host of people with a variety of views. In 1534 a misguided fringe group used military force in an effort to impose its beliefs on the German citizens of Münster. An army of Protestants and Catholics routed the fanatics but in the aftermath a new wave of persecution ensued against all Anabaptists—even those who had denounced the action against Münster. Anabaptism was in danger of losing its original identity. Through his theological insights, writings, and leadership Menno steered the movement through these troublesome times. He regenerated the peaceful wing of Anabaptism and defended the radical Anabaptist vision of the church.<sup>8</sup>

Church discipline was an issue that bedeviled the Anabaptists. They all agreed that the church should be kept pure and undefiled, but they disagreed on how to enforce such a high standard. Banning errant members from the communion table was commonly practiced, as was excommunication from membership for the commission of gross sin. A major controversy erupted over another disciplinary practice known as avoidance, or shunning. This meant that a person excommunicated was to be avoided or ostracized in all social relations. This practice was based on the Apostle Paul's injunction "not to eat" and to "have no company" with an unfaithful member so that he "may be made ashamed" and thereby be induced to amend his ways."<sup>9</sup> In the strictest churches even spouses were obliged to shun each other if one of them was placed under the ban. Some believed that "not to eat" referred to the communion table, not all social relations. The controversy disrupted the unity within churches and between the Dutch and German Mennonites. The Swiss Anabaptists, who did not take the name Mennonite until they came to America, never supported shunning as a form of discipline. Bridging their differences over this issue proved difficult.<sup>10</sup>

In 1693 the dispute over the role and practice of discipline re-emerged and was the key factor leading to the formation of the Amish Church. Jakob Ammann, from whose name the word Amish is taken, was a strong-minded Swiss Anabaptist leader. He gained a following after he moved to Alsace and began calling for church renewal through



*Mennonite Men's Chorus in Geary, Oklahoma, c. 1914 (20315.25.8, Kent Ruth Collection, OHS Research Division).*

stricter adherence to early Anabaptist teachings, including the exercise of discipline. He also called for certain changes, including holding communion twice a year rather than annually. Holding the ceremony more frequently, he believed, would convince members to pay closer attention to their Christian walk. Hans Reist, a prominent Mennonite pastor, defended the once-a-year practice as biblical because the first Lord's Supper had been a part of an annual Passover meal. Reist and Ammann also disagreed on whether foot washing should be a required part of communion. However, these issues were not the crux of Ammann's dispute with the church, all sides agreed that individual churches had the liberty to adopt Amman's proposals if they wished.<sup>11</sup>

The heart of the dispute was the shunning of excommunicated members. Going beyond banning them from the communion table, Ammann taught that excommunicated members also should be ostracized in all social relations. He believed that those churches that continued to associate with worldly transgressors were losing their purity and defying the biblical injunction to be "separate from the world." Personality clashes among opposing leaders, the exchange of harsh words, and lack of trust thwarted all efforts at compromise and reconciliation. Such behavior and attitudes were hardly reflective of the "pure and undefiled" church both sides championed, a fact that surely was not lost on

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members of the church laity Nevertheless, the result was a permanent division. "Disagreements over shunning drove the final wedge between various clusters of Anabaptists in 1693," wrote Kraybill and Hostetter "Swiss Anabaptism originating in 1525 had two branches after 1693: Amish and Mennonite. Nourished by a common heritage, Amish and Mennonite life has flowed in separate streams since the division."<sup>12</sup>

Although Jacob Ammann's ordinances on dress styles and physical appearance were not an issue in the split, they soon thereafter became a distinguishing feature in Amish culture. The church should demonstrate humility and simplicity as a visible alternative to sinful society, he taught. "Haughty clothing," or fashionable styles, he declared, represented frivolous spending and must be avoided. Hooks and eyes were to be used instead of buttons, which to him smacked of the style of military uniforms; also decreed were shoestrings instead of buckles and conservative dresses with no bright colors. In addition, males should wear broad brimmed hats and not trim their beards. New fads and styles should be avoided. Some of his stipulations, as Smith and Krahn noted, "Once merely a common custom, acquired a religious significance." Ammann was a tailor by trade, and some speculate that this may account for his emphasis on dress style.<sup>13</sup>

Continued waves of persecution and harassment scattered small communities of Amish into various European countries and, ultimately, North America. In the eighteenth century the prospect of immigration to America captivated the Amish. European Mennonites had settled in Germantown, Pennsylvania, as early as 1680. Thereafter, as Steven Nolt stated, "Pennsylvania was the destination of virtually all Mennonites who left [western] Europe and it would become the Amish destination as well."<sup>14</sup>

The first Amish settlers in America arrived around 1736 and located in what later became Berks County, Pennsylvania. Others took up lands in Lancaster County and throughout frontier Pennsylvania. By 1800 it is estimated that there were close to one thousand Amish living in America. The wave of immigration peaked during the 1817-60 period when an estimated three thousand people arrived. Most of these immigrants settled in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, New York, Iowa, or Louisiana. For the first time some located in Canada. By the end of the century virtually all the Amish had left Europe and were putting down roots in North America. Those congregations that did not emigrate soon dissolved or merged with nearby Mennonite groups. Once in their new homeland the Amish exhibited remarkable mobility, often moving to the "hither edge" of the new frontiers of the expanding nation. Historically, the largest concentrations of Amish have been found

in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana.<sup>15</sup> Today Amish communities are located in thirty-three states.<sup>16</sup>

In the last half of the nineteenth century a major schism occurred in the Amish church. Change-minded, or progressive, Amish joined together to form a body called the Amish Mennonites. They left the original, more conservative and tradition-minded group that thereafter came to be called the Old Order Amish. Amish Mennonite members, over time, trended into the mainstream of American ideals and lifestyles. They gave up their distinctive clothing styles and the Pennsylvania German language. They also gave up shunning, a fundamental principal for which some of their founding fathers would have died. In sum, they gave up their public Amish image and more and more looked and acted like their non-Amish neighbors, referred to as the "English." Gradually the Amish Mennonite churches dropped the word Amish from their name. After the Amish schism, one scholar noted, "The continuance of historic Amish principles in a way that did not easily adopt society's values and idioms fell to the Old Order Amish."<sup>17</sup> Whether those principles would long survive in modern American society was an open question. The answer would be forged in small Old Order Amish communities scattered throughout the country, including several in the state of Oklahoma.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, after the fallout of the great schism had stabilized, the Old Order Amish population numbered only about five thousand. Two-thirds of the church districts had joined the Amish Mennonite branch. Nevertheless, the Old Orders continued to establish new communities and demonstrated a surprising ability not only to survive but also to thrive. By 1900 Old Order communities were found in twelve states and in Oklahoma Territory<sup>18</sup>

The first Amish settlement in Oklahoma came in the wake of the Land Run of 1892. In October 1893, eighteen months after the opening of the Cheyenne-Arapaho lands, Moses K. Yoder, his son Rudy, and Ben B. Miller filed homestead claims to land in what became the Thomas community in northeastern Custer County. The Yoders were Old Order Amish and Miller was affiliated with the Amish Mennonites; they came to Thomas from Reno County, Kansas.<sup>19</sup> Their arrival coincided with the beginnings of a national economic depression and a serious drought in Oklahoma. Life was hard, even for a people devoted to a simple and frugal lifestyle. Undeterred, in a report to *The Budget*, a weekly Amish newspaper published in Sugarcreek, Ohio, Moses Yoder boasted that "there is no better place on earth for the poor class of people. We have just as good prospects as any other new country"<sup>20</sup> If Yoder thought his boosterism would entice more Old Orders to head

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west to Thomas, he must have been disappointed. Three years later there were still only six Amish families in the community, and no minister to lead or nurture them.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to the few Amish arrivals, there was a steady stream of other Anabaptist settlers coming into the area. A large German-Russian Mennonite settlement emerged some twenty miles to the southwest of Thomas at Korn. It appears there was little interaction between the two communities. Another smaller community of Mennonites developed southwest of Hydro, and a Mennonite-sponsored Cheyenne-Arapaho mission station was located on the banks of the Washita at Clinton.<sup>22</sup> Also, members from an Anabaptist offshoot called the River Brethren, later renamed Brethren in Christ, located near Thomas. Among those was Reverend Abraham L. Eisenhower, an uncle to Dwight Eisenhower, who arrived in 1899 from Abilene, Kansas. He not only served as minister, but he also established and managed an orphanage for ten years. Although President Eisenhower's great-grandfather, grandfather, and two uncles were Brethren in Christ ministers, he obviously rejected their churches' pacifist theology. The Brethren and the Amish had much in common, not only theologically, but also in their conservative dress and lifestyle.<sup>23</sup>

In 1896 the ever-optimistic Yoder wrote *The Budget* that he remained "well satisfied with our locality," and wished "to see more of our members come and locate in this lovely country." Ben Miller, in the same widely-read newspaper, issued a plea and the hope that "someone who's well versed will come our way and give us some spiritual food and locate with us in the near future." Two years later their hopes were fulfilled. In August 1898 Jacob Yoder, originally from Pennsylvania, arrived to organize an Old Order congregation and serve as minister. The Amish Mennonites organized a church with ten charter members that same year.<sup>24</sup> A significant influx of Amish settlers occurred thereafter. The arrival of ministers may have been a factor, but probably more important was the fact that area farmers had experienced several years of good wheat and corn crops. Also, a railroad was built through nearby Weatherford in 1898 and four years later another line reached Thomas, which greatly facilitated the marketing of farm products and the acquisition of outside goods. Earlier, to gain access to markets required a fifty-mile trip across the treacherous South Canadian River and over rugged terrain to El Reno. The improved conditions permitted the Amish to exchange their dugout homes for wooden houses and make other improvements.<sup>25</sup>

By 1907 there were more than one hundred Old Order Amish at Thomas. This included a group from Indiana who had briefly resided

in Mississippi. They had purchased a passenger coach to take them to Mississippi, but when they moved to Oklahoma they left the train car behind, along with a climate they hated and unfriendly neighbors who apparently did not appreciate these strange-looking outsiders.<sup>26</sup> As was their tradition, the Old Order group did not construct a church building; instead, they held biweekly worship services in homes. Their membership reached its peak in 1931 when it numbered 147, organized geographically in two districts or congregations. A bishop, one or two preachers, and a deacon shared leadership responsibilities in each congregation. All were chosen by lot. The bishop was looked upon as the spiritual elder and had considerable influence.<sup>27</sup>

The church community is the most important social unit in Amish society, even more important than the family, according to some scholars. The life and practice of the church is regulated by the *Ordnung*, a set of rules established by each congregation. A German word meaning order, the *Ordnung* set the boundaries, established discipline, and generally detailed what is off limits to community members. Obedience and submission to the collective will of the church is strongly stressed. Unlike mainstream American society, the Amish focus is always on the community, not the individual. The main goal is to keep the community together. Separation from the worldly values and practices of the larger society is a major emphasis. Nonviolence, humility, modesty, and service to others are likewise stressed. The Amish object to anything that draws attention to the self, including photographs. Old Order ordinances called for simplicity and uniformity in all things. The prescriptions and proscriptions in the *Ordnung*, which vary from congregation to congregation, are learned from childhood and are a part of Amish life and tradition, it is not a written document or rulebook. Occasionally the *Ordnung* is revised to address new situations, but only if change will not disrupt the basic values of the community.<sup>28</sup>

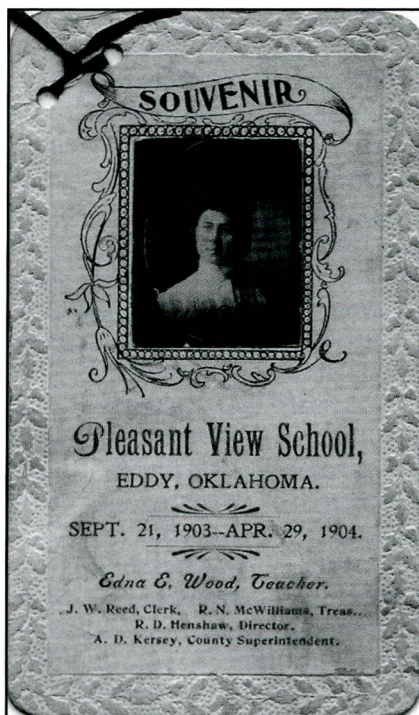
In their late teen years Amish youth decide if they want to be baptized and make an enduring commitment to the church and community. Baptism occurs by pouring water three times over the kneeling subject's head in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thereafter they are subject to the obligations and the discipline of the church, including the application of the ban and shunning. Prior to baptism and membership the church does not exercise discipline over individuals who may violate the standards of the church.<sup>29</sup>

The more progressive Amish Mennonites had built a church northwest of Hydro named Pleasant View by 1906. Gradually they became less Amish and more Mennonite. Like the Mennonites they held weekly services and organized graded Sunday School classes. The Old Orders



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*Souvenir program from Pleasant View School, Eddy, Oklahoma Territory, 1904 (19415, Dyane Dye Wood Collection, OHS Research Division).*



preferred to keep the entire congregation together for instruction and worship. Both groups originally held services in the German language but as early as 1905 the Amish Mennonites switched to English, much sooner than other Oklahoma Mennonites. Eventually the congregation affiliated with the so-called (Old) Mennonite branch of the denomination, and their Amish heritage faded away. The designation “old” described the oldest-existing Mennonite body in North America, mostly composed of members of Swiss and south German descent.<sup>30</sup>

Kraybill and Hostetter isolated ten “badges of identity” shared by most Old Order Amish.

(1) horse-and-buggy transportation, (2) the use of horses and mules for fieldwork, (3) plain dress in many variations, (4) a beard and shaven upper lip for men, (5) a prayer cap for women, (6) the Pennsylvania German dialect, (7) worship in homes, (8) eight grades of schooling, (9) the rejection of electricity from public utility lines, and (10) [in more recent times] a taboo on the ownership of televisions and computers.<sup>31</sup>

The first four decades saw little change in the traditional, Old Order way of life at Thomas, but the twin blows of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl led to significant alterations in Amish practices. The drastic drop in prices for farm commodities required larger-scale production and more efficiency in order to survive. The serious soil loss caused by wind erosion during the "Dirty Thirties" could be limited to some extent with timely tilling of the dry, crusted soil. Cultivating and maintaining larger acreages could not be done effectively with horse-drawn equipment. Hard times drove a number of Amish families from the region, others called for the use of tractors for field work, convinced that without the utilization of this new technology they could not survive in western Oklahoma. They pointed out that in 1935 the Partridge, Kansas, Old Order Amish had accepted tractor farming. In 1937, as a result of the dire circumstances, the Amish leaders at Thomas agreed to a change in the *Ordnung* allowing the use of steel-wheeled tractors. Rubber, air-filled tires were forbidden. After a few years of tractor usage some Amish farmers complained that the steel wheels did not maneuver well in sandy soil or muddy terrain. It did rain occasionally in that region. The *Ordnung* was modified further to allow the use of rubber tires, but only on the rear wheels. Soon rubber tires were allowed on the front wheels as well.<sup>32</sup>

If the tractor served to keep the Old Orders on the farm, it also soon functioned to transport them off the farm. With rubber tires and the manufacture of tractors with a faster fourth gear, the tractor began to replace the horse and buggy for road transportation. The steel wheel mandate had been invoked to discourage such a development. Most members of the community accepted the use of tractors for field work, but it opened the door for more changes. Beginning in 1957, members were allowed to wire barns and houses for electricity, and there were calls to permit automobile ownership. This was done in 1959. The latter two significant changes did not come without controversy since it meant removing two major badges of Old Order identity.<sup>33</sup>

A mission movement among some midwestern and western Amish contributed to the growing foment for change in the mid-fifties. Also, a number of younger ministers and bishops called for the spiritual revitalization of the Old Order church. They organized weekly young people's Bible studies, used gospel song books instead of the traditional Amish *Ausbund* hymnal, and urged youth to get involved in outside mission. One of the spokesmen for reform was David A. Miller of Thomas, ordained as minister in 1938 at the age of twenty-eight, and as bishop in 1953. He took his emotionally charged evangelistic message of moral reform on the road, speaking to churches in Penn-

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sylvania and Ohio—the heart of Amish country. Some of his views and his preaching style provoked controversy; the Lancaster bishops banned him from their districts. Whatever support there was among traditionalists for some changes crashed when mission leaders began to promote car ownership and college training as tools for more effective ministry. In fact, Miller himself joined the car-driving Beachy Amish, along with a majority of his Thomas congregation.<sup>34</sup> The Old Order remnant now left the split community, with the last member departing in 1960. Thus the sixty-seven-year-old Old Order settlement at Thomas came to an end. All that remains is an old cemetery where about 150 Amish are buried.<sup>35</sup>

The Beachy Amish emerged as a separate Amish group in the 1920s. The name derives from Bishop Moses Beachy, a progressive leader who separated from the Old Orders in Pennsylvania over the issue of strict shunning. Change-minded from the start, the Beachy Amish freely utilize tractors, cars, and electricity. They allow secondary schooling, worship in church buildings, and have less stringent dress codes. The distinguishing badge of identity for Beachy Amish was their focus on mission evangelism. The church, through its mission outreach, expanded into ten countries on four continents. By 2002 they were found in twenty-three states, with only one congregation in Oklahoma. Since their founding as the Zion Amish Church at Thomas in 1957 the congregation has modernized further: solid black cars are no longer mandated and cell phones and computers are allowed. Although worldwide the Beachy membership has more than doubled since 1972, the Zion congregation has experienced a gradual decline, with a total population of thirty-five in 2012.<sup>36</sup>

The lands in the eastern half of Oklahoma, Indian Territory until 1907, could not be acquired under the terms of the Homestead Act; however, they could be purchased from Indian allottees, or from non-Indians who had acquired acreages in that manner. A group of independent-minded Amish Mennonites from Sycamore Grove, Cass County, Missouri, obtained land in Mayes County beginning in 1910. Their move was motivated by the preaching of an Amish Mennonite lay minister from Indiana named John Kaufman. Kaufman was part of the “sleeping preacher” phenomenon manifested in several Protestant denominations in the late nineteenth century. He claimed that his “Spirit” preaching while in a deep sleep-like trance was divinely inspired. For a church member to doze off occasionally during a long sermon was not uncommon. However, for a preacher to seemingly fall asleep listening to his own sermon, and still keep on preaching, was highly unusual, with the result that the medium often overshadowed

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*Amish cemetery near Thomas with the caretaker Truman Schrock. Schrock is a member of the Beachy Amish Church. Unlike the Old Order Amish Church, the Beachy Amish do not object to photographs of individuals (photo courtesy of Don Heinrichs).*



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the message. But Kaufman found a receptive audience at Sycamore Grove. On a visit to that church he strongly urged members to leave their congregation because he believed it had become too worldly. His message resonated with the true believers and a search for land was begun in northeastern Oklahoma. By the end of 1911, fifty to sixty members had settled on uncleared and unimproved acreages near Pryor. Other families arrived from Arkansas, conveniently bringing their church building with them, loaded on a boxcar.<sup>37</sup>

Other than for their infatuation with the unorthodox sleeping preacher, the life and practice of the Zion church community at Pryor was similar to that of the Amish Mennonites at Thomas-Hydro. They held weekly Sunday school and worship services, and some members were the first in the area to use the telephone and the automobile. On the other hand, the congregation refused to affiliate with any Amish Mennonite conference because Kaufman had convinced them that its leaders were promoting worldliness. He also encouraged many of the traditional practices, such as shunning and the retention of the German language. Some in the larger Amish Mennonite body considered Kaufman and the other sleeping preachers charlatans, and there was

*Mennonite church (20315.25.5,  
Kent Ruth Collection, OHS  
Research Division).*





*Mennonite General Conference encampment, 1914 (20315.25.1, Kent Ruth Collection, OHS Research Division).*

not unanimity on these issues in the Zion church. In 1937 the congregation decided to cut its ties to the Amish Mennonite churches and to cast its lot with the (Old) Mennonite Church. That same year it changed its name from the Zion Amish Mennonite Church to Zion Mennonite Church, thus ending the Amish period of this congregation's history. Later it affiliated with an autonomous body called the Conservative Mennonite Conference.<sup>38</sup>

Between 1910 and 1912 at least seven Old Order Amish families settled on lands also purchased in Mayes County Near Chouteau, the community grew slowly but steadily through subsequent migration and natural increase. Most of the settlers migrated from Ohio, but some came from Old Order communities in Kansas. One-hundred-sixty-acre farms were common in the Amish community. In addition to grain crops, the farmers grew cotton, milked cows, and raised chickens and hogs. They put up considerable hay for their livestock and horses.<sup>39</sup>

The Old Orders experienced the usual frontier hardships but, unlike many residents in eastern Oklahoma, none lost their farms during the Great Depression.<sup>40</sup> Like at Thomas, an *Ordnung* change ushered in tractor farming, which members claimed was the key to their survival in hardscrabble eastern Oklahoma.<sup>41</sup> In 1980 the settlement consisted of about thirty-five families with a total population of approximately 250. Because of the size and geographic spread of the community the

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church was divided into two districts, each with its own ministers, a deacon and a bishop. New church districts were generally formed when a congregation grew above twenty-five to thirty families. Further growth and perhaps even the continued existence of the Amish community was threatened when a public power company launched plans to build a nuclear power plant at the edge of the settlement. Although the Amish did not join with environmental groups who opposed the project, they rejoiced when their efforts successfully killed the plan.<sup>42</sup>

The Chouteau Amish community has experienced fairly significant growth since 1980. In 2004 there were ninety-one Old Order households; thirty-nine had the name Yoder. The total population numbered more than 350, organized into four church districts.<sup>43</sup> Until recent years, the Amish children attended the local public school. This did not pose a cultural problem since the vast majority of the pupils were Amish or Mennonite. The decision to establish their own private school was prompted in part by the growing emphasis in education on computer training and usage, which their *Ordnung* does not allow. The elders did not feel comfortable with schools placing their children within arm's reach of this enticing temptation in the classroom. However, some Amish children continue to attend the public school.<sup>44</sup>

The refusal of the Old Orders to send their children to high school apparently was not an issue in the area even though compulsory attendance laws in Oklahoma require youth to attend school through the age of sixteen.<sup>45</sup> The 1972 unanimous Supreme Court decision in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* permits Amish children to drop out of school after the eighth grade, at approximately age fourteen. Prior to this landmark ruling there had been repeated run-ins with the law in states with larger Amish concentrations. The Amish believed the practical knowledge taught in their own schools and the skills developed working with one's family on the farm or in family business were adequate for a good life in Amish society. The purpose of secondary and higher education, in their view, was to prepare students to live in the English world, not the Amish world, and they did not want their children to become a part of that other world.

Interspersed among their English neighbors to the southwest of Chouteau near Inola were pockets of Low German and High German-speaking Mennonites who had located there soon after statehood. Some fifty miles northwest of Chouteau in southern Nowata County a tiny Old Order community emerged beginning in 1931. The founder was Bishop Eli Nisly of Partridge, Kansas. The scarcity of available and affordable land for his large family of boys in that compact Amish community led him to search for property elsewhere. He discovered

that the severe agricultural depression had caused the price of farm land in northeastern Oklahoma to drop precipitously. His search led him to the small Osage town of Watova, where he managed to buy land for twenty dollars an acre, compared to one hundred dollars or more in Kansas. He immediately moved his sons and extended family to the region, where they did well for two years. Then they discovered why the land had sold so cheaply. One settler, Clara Nisly, recalled, "We were plagued with severe droughts, incessant burning winds, driving rains, and hailstorms." In summer 1936 Mrs. Andrew Miller reported, "We are having dry weather, and grasshoppers and chinch bugs eat our harvest." By that time John Steinbeck's Okies were fleeing eastern Oklahoma, but only a few of the Watova or Chouteau Amish settlers left the state during the depression years.

During its short twelve-year history, the Watova settlement experienced little prosperity and virtually no growth. It remained primarily a Nisly family enclave. Ultimately, it was the death of the patriarch Bishop Nisly in 1941 that signaled the end of the Old Order community. Two years after his death, following successive years of drought, the thirteen remaining families, all related, agreed to move. One of the bishop's sons-in-law wrote in retrospect that his family "never regretted the lessons the Lord taught us while living in Oklahoma." He stated that despite trials and hardships they would always cherish the memories of living "in harmony" with the Osage people and their "very good" English neighbors. The departing Old Order families left behind Eli Nisly and six infants buried in a small cemetery near Watova. The six infant deaths must have been the most difficult trial the small, close-knit community experienced during their brief sojourn in Oklahoma.<sup>46</sup>

In 1978 a new community of Amish began to emerge in southeastern Oklahoma, about thirty-five miles southeast of Ada. The scarcity and high cost of farmland in Ohio caused a number of younger Old Order Amish families from Sugarcreek and Millersburg to look elsewhere for farming opportunities. Four families were lured to Coal County, Oklahoma, one of the poorest counties in the state, by real estate ads appearing in *The Budget*, published in Sugarcreek. By fall 1978 they had selected land in a rather sparsely settled area near the small towns of Clarita and Olney. Relatives and friends soon followed. Unfortunately their arrival coincided with the beginning of a cycle of unusually hot summers and dry weather, making their start-up operations much more difficult than anticipated. But these hardy souls stuck it out. Among the early settlers were three ordained bishops and three ministers who could exercise leadership to organize a congregation and



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provide spiritual nurture to sustain the struggling community during those trying times.

Initially almost all the Amish worked exclusively as farmers. Soon some found work as skilled carpenters and cabinet makers. One went into a buggy building business, filling orders from as far away as California. Other small businesses were established, including a bulk food store, bakeries and notions, and crafts production and sales. A number moved into dairy and beef farming, and one concentrated on goat farming. Another young couple opened a plant nursery. Recently several Amish families have gone into the business of operating kennels for dog breeding and raising puppies for sale. Elaborate outside kennels and indoor whelping houses are constructed to care for more than a dozen varieties of canines.<sup>47</sup>

Meeting the state health requirements for dairies initially posed a problem for Amish farmers. By regulation, milk for resale must meet strict sanitary cooling standards. With the Amish restrictions on the use of electricity, this proved difficult. An innovative and acceptable solution was the use of diesel motors to power milking machines and compressors for refrigeration units. Diesel or gasoline engines providing power for machinery soon became common in both the Chouteau and Clarita communities. Gas stoves and refrigerators are now found in many homes.

Still, the first love of the Amish is tilling the soil. "When you work the land you are as close to God as you can get," is an old Amish adage. The search for land—good land or poor land that can be made better—is a persistent theme in American Amish history. The eastern Oklahoma Amish are innovative and pragmatic when it comes to making a living off their land. They soon discovered that the Oklahoma weather has extremes and the soil varies even on the same farm. Most Amish farmers raise hay for dairy and beef cattle. The more successful ones get the soil tested and apply fertilizer and lime as needed. They realize the importance of properly preparing the soil and breaking up the hard crust. An effective and efficient method is the use of a tandem disc and harrow, or a chisel plough. The Amish learned that essential soil preparation and management could scarcely be accomplished with horse-drawn implements. For a time, non-Amish farmers with tractors were hired to work the fields, but this was expensive.

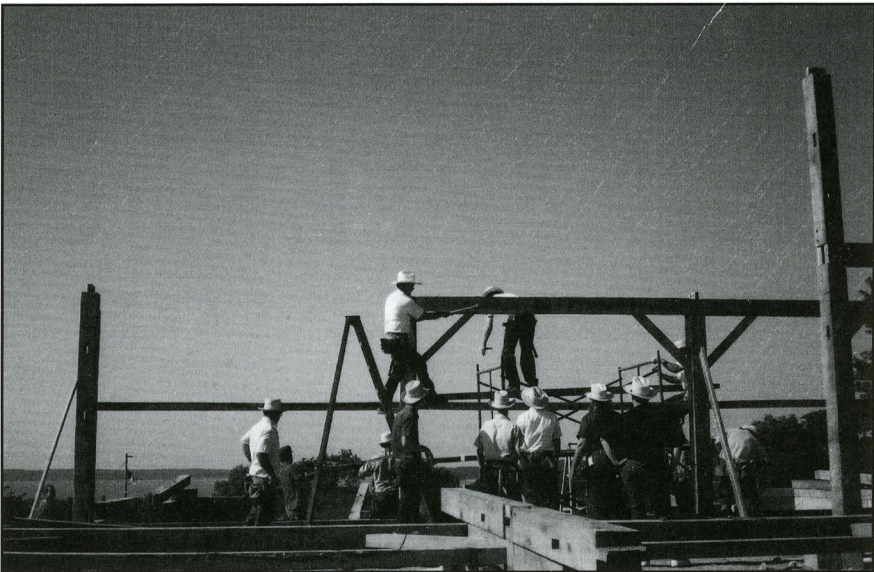
Consequently, both the Chouteau and Clarita church districts modified their *Ordnung* to allow the use of tractors for fieldwork. Chouteau is in its third generation of tractor use. Only a handful of Old Order Amish communities in other states farm with tractors. The decision at Clarita in 1994 came only after "much counseling in the church" and

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over the objections of a sizeable number of members. Within months, ten families moved from the community, but since then about the same number of new families have arrived.<sup>48</sup> One Amish minister explained. “The reason we agreed to use the tractor was so that more of our young people can stay on the farm and raise the family at home.” Pull-type, hard rubber-wheeled tractors were at first mandated, but now balloon tires are acceptable.

Members at Clarita report that they do not use the tractor as a substitute for cars, whereas at Chouteau the tractor is freely used for transportation, not just for field use.<sup>49</sup> Commenting on the ban on car ownership, an Amish bishop at Clarita stated. “A lot of people ask us if we think we won’t go to heaven if we drive an automobile. We were brought up without cars and have always been without them. We don’t need them. So for us, I would say ‘yes.’ But I wouldn’t tell you that you couldn’t get into heaven because you drive a car” The bishop’s wife added, “We like to keep our family close. If the kids get a car, then they’re always away and it splits up the family” The Amish do not ob-

*Amish barn raising of an era-correct 1879 barn on the Will Rogers Birthplace Ranch, Oologah, Oklahoma, July 17 1993. Some two dozen Amish carpenters from Chouteau erected the barn in one day using the traditional notch-and-peg method (photograph courtesy of Will Rogers Memorial Museum, Claremore).*



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ject to riding in other people's cars. They regularly hire drivers to taxi them if they need to travel more than about a twelve-mile distance.<sup>50</sup>

William E. Thompson, a sociologist who studied the Chouteau Old Orders, concluded that the Amish are pragmatic decision-makers. The leaders who supported tractor usage saw it as a practical decision for a greater good. "While the introduction of the tractor alters traditional Amish farming practices," he wrote, "it is rationalized as a necessary compromise" if they want to preserve their most basic traditional value—living off the land. "Consequently, what could be interpreted as an element of major change in Amish culture becomes redefined as being a major element of preservation of that culture." Similarly, Thompson noted, "the use of commercial fertilizers, hybrid seeds and other modern farm implements are all pragmatically defined as being absolutely necessary" if they are to "maintain their 'non-modern' simple agrarian lifestyle."<sup>51</sup>

The growing importance of home-based businesses to the economic well being of the Amish stimulated a change in the *Ordnung* regarding the use of telephones. Originally the two Oklahoma Old Order settlements had only a few telephones strategically located for community use. The modification for business purposes permitted the installation of a phone in any family's yard, but not inside the home. Clarita was the first to permit the expanded use of the telephone, but the older community at Chouteau soon followed suit. The establishment of Amish restaurants catering to the tourist trade, two in the town of Chouteau and two on Amish farms, influenced the decision.<sup>52</sup>

According to Thompson, the Old Orders did not look for inconsistencies in the logic of their arguments justifying the introduction of some modern technology. Instead, they viewed their actions as consistent, pragmatic attempts to preserve their traditional agrarian culture in a particular Oklahoma environment. "They are not becoming more modern," Thompson observed, "but are using a modern technology in order to avoid becoming more modern. In this way, the members simply define the situation in such a way that the new becomes a means of preserving the old. This redefinition becomes a necessary element in the process of their construction of social reality"<sup>53</sup>

The Amish do not carry medical or other insurance, choosing to put their trust in God and each other. A hospital mutual aid program, funded by membership dues, has been established by and for the Amish in Oklahoma and surrounding states. Those experiencing other special or emergency needs often are assisted through special fundraising and anonymous giving. Under the Internal Revenue tax code amended in 1965 the Amish are exempt from social security payroll taxes and

therefore receive no social security benefits, including Medicare. That exemption also applies to the individual mandate in the Affordable Care Act of 2010 requiring everyone to carry health insurance.<sup>54</sup>

Amish spiritual and social life revolves around the church. Everyone attends the biweekly church services. They gather in the larger homes in the community or in farm buildings large enough to accommodate the congregation. At Clarita there is one church district with one bishop, two preachers and two deacons. The bishop also serves as a preacher. A typical Old Order worship service begins with the somber, chant-like singing of three German hymns, without instrumental accompaniment, followed by a twenty minute sermon by one of the ministers. A second preacher then reads an assigned passage of scripture. The main sermon, about forty-five minutes to an hour in length, is delivered by a third preacher. The entire service is in German. A lunch is served following the service.<sup>55</sup>

The hymnal used by the congregation contains songs written in the 1530s by a group of Anabaptists facing death in a prison dungeon. Eventually the original fifty-three hymns were printed in book form, along with lengthy martyr ballads and other early day songs. Entitled *Ausbund*, the compilation came to be widely used by Anabaptist groups, and today nearly all Old Order Amish churches continue to use it. Without written musical notes, all 140 tunes have been passed on orally from generation to generation, thereby preserving a valuable collection of Reformation-era hymns. According to Stephen Nolt, and confirmed by a Clarita Amish church member, "The stories of martyrdom and persecution strengthen the Amish sense of humility and dependence on God and remind them of their heritage."<sup>56</sup>

In addition to the biweekly Sunday morning service the young people meet later in the evening for socializing and a Sunday night singing. In this service the *Ausbund* is not used, instead, they sing from a more modern German songbook for about thirty minutes and then from an English gospel song book for another thirty minutes. These gatherings serve another purpose for young couples: dating. Amish courtship occurs mostly at Sunday night singings. The order of worship in the Chouteau settlement churches is very similar to that described above, including the use of the *Ausbund* hymnal and the Sunday night program. Communion, including the foot washing ceremony, is observed twice a year by the Oklahoma Amish as prescribed by their founder, Jakob Ammann. The communion and foot washing ceremony is an extended service lasting most of the day.<sup>57</sup>

The shunning of erring, unrepentant members, the issue that led to the founding of the Amish church in 1693, continues to be practiced in

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all five Old Order congregations. “Sadly, Satan [sic] is still at work,” one church member explained. But shunning, according to this member, is not as rigid and severe as generally pictured by outsiders. Although ex-members are generally banned from social events and members may not ride or eat with them, they may converse with each other. Also, if they or their family need help, it is provided.<sup>58</sup> The discipline of shunning has evoked considerable criticism of the Amish people. “Cruel,” “barbaric,” “judgmental,” are words used by critics to describe the practice. Some question the effectiveness of this form of discipline by pointing to the fact that few shunned members return to the church, which is true generally, and also in Oklahoma. In some quarters Pennsylvania Amish have been accused of hypocrisy in their willingness to forgive the murderer of five Amish schoolgirls but their unwillingness to forgive their own members. The Amish reply that they do forgive and that the door is always open for the excommunicated to return to the church and receive pardon upon repentance and confession of sin. The rationale for shunning has been summed up as follows:

“The Amish believe that they have a divine responsibility to judge those who break their baptismal vows, to remind them of what the Amish believe to be the eternal consequences of their negligence, and to preserve the purity of the church. But their view that the church is distinct from the world also means that they can be remarkably nonjudgmental toward outsiders who have not taken a vow of obedience before God and the Amish church.”<sup>59</sup>

Another historic book of importance to the Oklahoma Amish is *Martyrs Mirror*. This is a voluminous collection of Anabaptist martyr stories first published in 1660 by a Dutch Mennonite. In 1748 the book was translated into German and gained wide circulation in Europe and North America. The first of numerous English editions was published in 1837. In 1849 a Pennsylvania Amishman produced a new German language edition. The *Martyrs Mirror* is found in Amish homes in Clarita and Chouteau and it is not uncommon for ministers to reference it in their sermons. Recounting the graphic, gripping tales of martyrs in the sixteenth century who chose to suffer rather than to fight or recant is seen as one way to call the church in the twenty-first century to faithfulness.<sup>60</sup>

Oklahoma Amish faithfulness to religious pacifism was severely tested during America’s twentieth-century wars. The first-ever national draft law of 1917 had no exemptions for conscientious objectors to war (COs). As a result, Amish draftees were sent to military training

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camps just like regular recruits. The law vaguely stated that religious objectors were to be restricted to noncombatant duty, but this provision was generally ignored. Once in camp under military law and discipline, army officers did their best to knock pacifism out of them and pressured them to accept full military service.<sup>61</sup> This, reportedly, was the experience of Reuben Stutzman, an Amishman from Thomas.<sup>62</sup> And when Reuben Eash, another Old Order draftee from Thomas, arrived at Fort Travis, Texas, he was ordered to wear a uniform, drill, and swear the military oath. Eash refused to fully comply, on the grounds of his religious beliefs. He was courtmartialed and sentenced to imprisonment at the US Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Confined in a cold, damp basement cell, Eash reportedly was tortured, contracted pneumonia, and died—a twentieth-century martyr who chose to suffer rather than give up his faith and religious peace principles. Two Oklahoma Mennonite draftees also withstood severe pressure to renounce their pacifist beliefs, only to die in the same prison.<sup>63</sup>

Under terms of more enlightened draft laws during World War II, COs were assigned to civilian public service work designated to be of national importance. Quite a few Amishmen were granted farm deferments, while those drafted were generally assigned to work—with neither pay nor benefits—on a variety of conservation projects or in mental hospitals. Similar alternative public service programs were established during the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. Apparently all

*Buggies for sale at the Clarita Amish School Auction, September 13, 2008 (photograph courtesy of Bradford Dunham).*



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draft-age Amish church members registered as COs during the times of military conscription, holding fast to an Anabaptist principle going back to the sixteenth century<sup>64</sup>

The Clarita settlement has experienced considerable in and out-migration. By 2003, according to one study, fifty-two Old Order families had at one time lived, or were still living, in the community. They came from a surprising number of states and foreign countries: Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Iowa, Virginia, Kansas, Montana, New York, Texas, Missouri, Kentucky, Oklahoma (Chouteau), Canada, and Paraguay. About thirty-seven families migrated out of the settlement between 1981 and 2003, but ten later returned. Generally, the number of Old Order households has ranged between twenty and thirty<sup>65</sup>. In 2012 there were twenty-seven households with a total population of more than one hundred people.

Soon after their arrival the Clarita Amish established two elementary schools, later consolidated into one. Although the language of church and home is Pennsylvania German, school is conducted in English. To raise the necessary funds to operate the school they conduct an annual quilt, food, and consignment sale. From its rather modest beginnings in 1988, it has grown into one of the largest one-day tourist attractions in Oklahoma, drawing twelve to fifteen thousand visitors from multiple states. Old Order Amish from Chouteau and Yoder, Kansas, assist the local members in this massive undertaking. Held on a large Amish farm, the proceedings begin at dawn with a pancake and German sausage breakfast prepared by the Kansas contingent. As many as four auction rings run simultaneously throughout the day. Sale items consist of a wide variety of goods, including Amish buggies, furniture, antiques, and collectibles. Scores of non-Amish craft and other merchandise vendors rent booth space in large tents spread across the grounds. Amish food booths and homemade ice cream produced by a giant motor-powered freezer are popular venues. The main attraction is the quilt auction featuring more than one hundred primarily hand-quilted Amish and Mennonite quilts. In addition to providing funds for their school, the sale has developed into an important supplementary source of income for Amish families. Area non-Amish businesses tap into the traffic and also profit financially during the weekend sale. Fire departments from Olney, Tupelo, and Clarita manage the parking arrangements on the sale grounds, retaining 90 percent of the parking fee proceeds to help finance their firefighting operations.<sup>66</sup>

The non-Amish residents of Coal County include not only what the Amish call the English, but also a significant number of Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians. One Chickasaw man stated that when the Amish

first arrived they looked upon them “as an oddity,” but came to view them in a positive way because “they brought outside money into a depressed area and paid good prices for land, cattle feed, and building supplies.” Some Chickasaws employed Amish women as housekeepers and health caregivers, and hired Amish boys to weed gardens and look after crops. Reportedly, one tribal member “became so enamored of the Amish lifestyle she took to driving a horse and buggy, very fast and rather recklessly, according to both Amish and non-Amish observers.” The woman’s family was greatly relieved when she “went back to her Crown Victoria” after she passed the age of eighty.<sup>67</sup> Regarding relations with the larger community, Amish leaders have stated. “We want to be separate from the world but we want to be friends with the world.” It appears that they have indeed won the friendship—and respect—of their non-Amish neighbors in southeastern and northeastern Oklahoma. But some Amish are worried about it, recognizing that there is a fine line between being “friendly with” and being “conformed to” the world. And they know the history of the Thomas, Oklahoma, church where creeping conformity led to the demise of that Old Order community.

In 1900 the Old Order population in the United States and Canada was barely five thousand, and as late as the mid-twentieth century the consensus was that the Amish were dying out. But there has been an amazing turnaround. By 2000 the total population of Amish groups that use horse and buggy transportation, primarily the Old Order and a few subgroups, had reached approximately 175,000.<sup>68</sup> By 2010 it had increased to an estimated 249,500, found in twenty-eight states and the province of Ontario. Between 1991 and 2010 the overall growth was 102 percent, attributed to high birth rates and a high retention rate of 85 to 90 percent. Oklahoma’s Old Order Amish growth of 25 percent was well below the overall average. The state’s total (adults and children) increased from about 540 in 1991 to an estimated 675 in 2010.<sup>69</sup> Since 2010, a small Old Order Amish settlement has emerged near Welch in Craig County, adding to the Oklahoma total. The settlers arrived from a larger Amish community at Bethany, Missouri. The retention rate at Chouteau is approximately 80 percent, and about 90 percent at Clarita.<sup>70</sup>

Along with the remarkable growth of the Old Order Amish population is a marked trend toward occupational diversity. During the last four decades there has been a significant shift to nonfarming jobs, especially in the states with large numbers of Amish. Because of insufficient land for growing families, or the high cost of farm land and equipment, an increasing number of Amish have moved into industrial

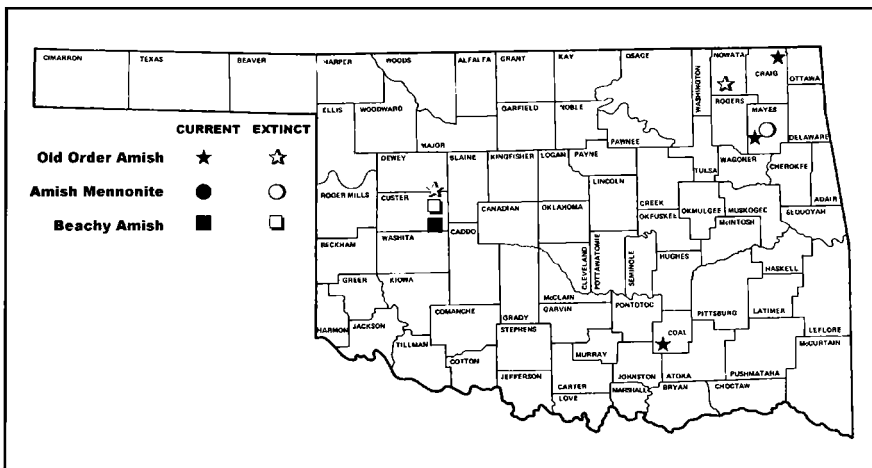


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employment, carpentry work, home businesses, and other nonagricultural jobs. Today, fewer than half of the Amish nationwide support themselves by farming. This is one of the most significant changes for the Amish people since coming to America and carries the seeds of transformation that could reshape Amish society in subsequent generations.<sup>71</sup> As previously indicated, the Oklahoma Amish adopted selected modern technology to improve profitability and thereby keep the boys down on the farm. Still a growing number, about half, now make their living in nonfarm employment. Many of the wage laborers at Chouteau and Clarita work as carpenters, and six from Chouteau are employed at a manufacturing plant in Inola. Recently a number of Amish from Arkansas moved to Westville in far eastern Oklahoma to take jobs in a poultry processing plant. This is a temporary move to earn needed income for their families. They plan to return to their home community as soon as possible. Nevertheless, most of those with jobs off the farm still maintain some limited farm operations, such as raising cattle and producing hay. This is also true of those with home businesses.

Not to be overlooked is the contribution of Amish women to family income. At Clarita, many of them work throughout the year preparing quilts to be sold at the annual school sale. Although taught from childhood to avoid new fads and changing dress styles, they keep well-informed on the latest quilt designs and color trends. With their exceptional handwork they produce beautiful, highly desirable quilts that

*This map shows the locations of past and present Amish settlements in Oklahoma (map by Preston Ware).*



bring premium prices at auction. Women also contribute management skills and labor to family business enterprises and some assist with farm work.

The history of the Oklahoma Amish is a story of preservation and perseverance. Although they have lived in the state for more than a century, scarcely anyone outside of the immediate communities where they reside has noticed—which suits the Amish just fine. They believe they are called to be a separate people—pilgrims passing through this world—and want nothing more than to live their lives quietly and peaceably as guided by the Holy Scriptures and tradition. They neither proselytize nor readily verbalize their religious beliefs, preferring to let their lives demonstrate their Christian faith as a visual rhetoric. Although some acculturation has occurred, the Old Order Amish have managed to preserve virtually all their distinctive traditional badges of identity and remain faithful to their historic core values.

Yes, the Amish are an intriguing and resilient people. Although few in number their unique culture adds a distinctive flavor to the Oklahoma cultural mix. But they do more than that. In a world seeking security in more powerful weapons, happiness in the accumulation of consumer goods, success through individual merit, self-development, and promotion, Amish life invites moderns to stop, watch, weigh, and think about their own choices and decisions, as the Oklahoma Amish story continues.<sup>73</sup>

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Donald B. Kraybill and C. Nelson Hostetter, *Anabaptist World USA* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-23.

<sup>3</sup> Steven M. Nolt, *A History of the Amish* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2003), 10.

<sup>4</sup> J. Denny Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist: The Origins and Significance of Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005), 170.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>7</sup> Kraybill and Hostetter, *Anabaptist World*, 23-24.

<sup>8</sup> C. Henry Smith, *Smith's Story of the Mennonites*, rev. ed. by Cornelius Krahn (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1981), 11-12, 53-64, 72-73; Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> These directives from Paul the Apostle are recorded in First Corinthians 5:11 and Second Thessalonians 3:14-15.

<sup>10</sup> Smith and Krahn, *Story of the Mennonites*, 68-69; Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 18-22.

<sup>11</sup> Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 31-33.

<sup>12</sup> Kraybill and Hostetter, *Anabaptist World*, 27-28; Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 33-40.

<sup>13</sup> Smith and Krahn, *Story of the Mennonites*, 84; Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 44; Kraybill and Hostetter, *Anabaptist World*, 28.

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<sup>14</sup> Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 63.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 74-77 95, 122-31, 235.

<sup>16</sup> This number includes the two major Amish groups, Old Order and Beachy Amish. Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College, "Amish population trends 1991-2010, 20 Year Highlights," [http://www2.etown.edu/amishstudies/Population\\_Trends\\_1991\\_2010.asp](http://www2.etown.edu/amishstudies/Population_Trends_1991_2010.asp); Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 338-39.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-75, 196, 210, 230.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 231-32.

<sup>19</sup> David Luthy, *The Amish in America: Settlements That Failed, 1840-1960* (Aylmer, Ontario: Pathway Publishers, 1986), 375-76.

<sup>20</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.

<sup>22</sup> Marvin E. Kroeker, "'Die Stillen im Lande': Mennonites in the Oklahoma Land Rushes," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 67 no. 1 (Spring 1989): 84-88.

<sup>23</sup> Gladys Dodd, "The Early Career of Abraham L. Eisenhower," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1963): 233-49.

<sup>24</sup> Luthy, *The Amish*, 376-77. Paul Erb, *South Central Frontiers* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1974), 387.

<sup>25</sup> Luthy, *The Amish*, 378-79.

<sup>26</sup> Kay Parker Branson, "The Amish of Thomas, Oklahoma: A Study in Cultural Geography" (master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1967), 18-20.

<sup>27</sup> Luthy, *The Amish*, 383.

<sup>28</sup> Kraybill and Hostetter, *Anabaptist World*, 72.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 74-75.

<sup>30</sup> Erb, *South Central Frontiers*, 388-90.

<sup>31</sup> Kraybill and Hostetter, *Anabaptist World*, 71.

<sup>32</sup> Moses Mast, telephone interview by the author, May 23, 2007. Luthy, *The Amish*, 383.

<sup>33</sup> Luthy, *The Amish*, 383.

<sup>34</sup> Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 311-14.

<sup>35</sup> Luthy, *The Amish*, 383.

<sup>36</sup> Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 330; Truman Shrock, telephone interview by the author, August 7 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Erb, *South Central Frontiers*, 80, 394-95.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 396.

<sup>39</sup> C. Freda and Enos Yoder, comp., *Oklahoma-Kansas Directory, 2004* (Topeka, IN: Marianne's Typesetting, 2004), 4-6.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> L. Y., telephone interview by the author, July 14, 2012. The Chouteau and Clarita churches recently decided to permit families to install telephones on their properties (though not inside their homes), which facilitated these interviews.

<sup>42</sup> William E. Thompson, "The Oklahoma Amish: Survival of an Ethnic Subculture," *Ethnicity* 8 (1981): 477 484-85; N. M., interview by the author, June 3, 2007

<sup>43</sup> Freda and Enos Yoder, *Oklahoma Directory*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> N. M., interview by the author, June 3, 2007

<sup>45</sup> L. Y., telephone interview by the author, July 14, 2012.

<sup>46</sup> Luthy, *The Amish*, 385-89.

<sup>47</sup> The information on the early history of the Old Order Amish in Coal County was provided by several members of the Amish community.

<sup>48</sup> N. M., interview by the author, February 27 2007. Susan Hochstetler, *Home Life on the Prairie: An Amish Family's Story of Life on the Oklahoma Prairie, with Community and School History* (Sugarcreek, OH: Carlisle Press, 2005), 183-85.

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<sup>49</sup> R. M., interview by the author, May 12, 2005; N. M., interview by the author, June 3, 2007

<sup>50</sup> *Ada (OK) Sunday News*, May 15, 1983.

<sup>51</sup> William E. Thompson, "Old Order Amish in Oklahoma & Kansas: Rural Tradition in Urban Society," *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology* 12, no. 1 (May, 1984): 41-42.

<sup>52</sup> N. M., interview by the author, June 3, 2007; L. Y., telephone interview by the author, July 14, 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Thompson, "Old Order Amish," 42-43.

<sup>54</sup> S. M., telephone interview by the author, August 7 2012; *Mennonite World Review* (Newton, KS), July 23, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> S. M., telephone interview by the author, June 15, 2012.

<sup>56</sup> Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 25.

<sup>57</sup> S. M., telephone interview by the author, June 15, 2012; L. Y., telephone interview by the author, July 14, 2012.

<sup>58</sup> S. M., telephone interview by the author, June 15, 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher, *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007), 152.

<sup>60</sup> Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 20-21, S. M., telephone interview by the author, June 15, 2012; L. Y., telephone interview by the author, July 14, 2012.

<sup>61</sup> Kroeker, "In Death You Shall Not Wear it Either: The Persecution of Mennonite Pacifists in Oklahoma," Davis D. Joyce, ed., *An Oklahoma I had Never Seen Before* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 82.

<sup>62</sup> Truman Schrock, telephone interview by the author, August 6, 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Kroeker, "In Death," 85-86; Schrock, telephone interview by the author, August 22, 2012; J. D. Mininger, *Religious C.O.s, Imprisoned at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas* (Kansas City, KS: J.D. Mininger, 1919), 1-8 (unnumbered pages).

<sup>64</sup> Kroeker, "In Death," 91.

<sup>65</sup> These figures were compiled from information in Hochstetler, *Home Life on the Prairie*, 148-275.

<sup>66</sup> N. M., interview by the author, June 3, 2007; S. M., telephone interview by the author, June 15, 2012.

<sup>67</sup> Steve Denson, email correspondence with the author, April 23, 2007

<sup>68</sup> Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 336.

<sup>69</sup> "Amish Population Trends 1991-2010, 20 Year Highlights." Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College.

<sup>70</sup> L. Y., telephone interview by the author, July 14, 2012; S. M., telephone interview by the author, August 7 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 322-23.

<sup>72</sup> L. Y., telephone interview by the author, July 14, 2012; S. M., telephone interview by the author, August 7 2012.

<sup>73</sup> Final sentence adapted from Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 334.