

The Amish and the Media

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Reschly, Steven D. "The Amish and the Media." *The Annals of Iowa* 68 (2009), 335-337.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.1374>

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Comprehensive Colleges” — its primary intent is to commemorate the birth of the statewide community college system in Iowa.

Over the years, the concept of a community college has changed. The enabling legislation created 15 community college districts with elected local boards to oversee the affairs of the colleges. The functions of community colleges also changed. Beyond transfer academic credit and vocational programs, adult and continuing education offerings and later workforce development responsibilities were assigned to the community colleges. In this broadening context, the designation of “comprehensive” was added to the description of the institutions, and by 2004 one in four college students in Iowa was enrolled in a community college — and the ratio is even greater today. Students of all ages and abilities, including those undertaking remedial study, attend these institutions, which generally admit all who apply for admission.

Important historical trends, events, and disputes as well as contemporary issues associated with Iowa’s community colleges are presented in this short, glossy-page paperback study, which is augmented with pictures, maps, tables, and charts. Although the research is documented, the study’s limited depth is perhaps a product not only of the author’s intention but also of the paucity of available source materials. For the reader wanting a brief but multifaceted story of Iowa’s community colleges, this work suffices. Moreover, *Forty Years of Growth and Achievement* makes the integral role of community colleges in Iowa’s educational network abundantly clear, and it may be hoped that in the future a wider and deeper examination of this important topic might be produced.

The Amish and the Media, edited by Diane Zimmerman Umble and David L. Weaver-Zercher. Young Center Books in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. ix, 275 pp. Illustrations, table, notes, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Reviewer Steven D. Reschly is professor of history at Truman State University. He is the author of *The Amish on the Iowa Prairie, 1840 to 1910* (2000).

Mass media writers, film makers, and reporters have discovered the Amish — repeatedly. So have scholars and tourists, although the various Amish groups have no great wish to be fodder for these groups. The mediations among media, scholarship, tourism, and Amish faith and life are observed and interpreted in this book, which originated in a 2001 conference at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

The book consists of ten essays, plus an introduction and conclusion by the editors, divided into two sections: Old Order Amish as Media Images; and Old Order Amish as Media Producers and Consumers. Acknowledging Amish participation in shaping their representations in mass media and illuminating their production of books and periodicals by Amish-owned presses are significant aspects of the essays.

Two events that shaped the collection are the June 1998 drug bust of two Amish youths, and the October 2006 school shooting at Nickel Mines. Both took place in Lancaster County, and both resulted in worldwide media attention. Most of the essays, in fact, are situated in Pennsylvania, with the exception of Susan Biesecker's analysis of tourism in Ohio (chap. 5) and the filming of *Devil's Playground* (2002) in Indiana. Lancaster is close to major media markets and, boosted by the 1985 movie *Witness*, is the most visible and well-known Amish community. Similar media processes apply to midwestern Amish regions, but it is difficult to imagine a similar feeding frenzy as those produced by a drug bust and the murder of Amish schoolgirls in Lancaster.

Reading the book is a bit like watching an episode of *The Simpsons*. There are savvy references to pop culture and many creative and playful, sometimes provocative, turns of phrase. Crystal Downing, for example, in her essay on the Hollywood movies *Witness* and *For Richer For Poorer* (1997), calls Highway 30 east of town "Lancaster's camino real of commodified kitsch" (25). Associating media depictions of Amish idylls with the mystified rural life praised by ancient Greek poet Theocritus (third century BCE) and the Arcadia of Latin poet Virgil (first century BCE) (26), shows the range of cultural references and juxtapositions.

Dirk Eitzen's essay on *Amish in the City*, a reality TV show that ran on UPN from July to September 2004, is a strong entry in the collection (chap. 6). Eitzen situates the show in the larger world of "reality" television, commenting that reality TV shows are "extended commercials for materialistic living" (142). Amish plain living is never presented as a realistic alternative to a life of conspicuous consumption. More important, he points out that rights of privacy and fair treatment are individual, not communal. The legal framework controlling the treatment of human subjects is thus incapable of protecting Amish society as a whole (147-48).

Steven Nolt compares two critical creators of "imagined community" for scattered Amish groups, *The Budget* and *Die Botschaft* [The Message]. Both are correspondence newspapers in which scribes send news from their areas for publication, resulting in a sort of "collective

diary" for many Amish communities. One thinks of a slower-paced blog or wiki. *The Budget* began in 1890 and was used historically by a range of Amish and Mennonite groups; *Die Botschaft* was founded in 1976 to address a more restricted Old Order audience. Nolt's chapter is followed by Karen Johnson-Weiner's chapter on Amish publishing houses, which were started to meet a demand for Amish school textbooks. Gordonville, Pennsylvania, reprints standard textbooks, such as the McGuffey Readers, while Pathway Publishers (Aylmer, Ontario, and LaGrange, Indiana) produces original literature that is self-consciously Old Order. Amish people communicate with one another in many ways with little dependence on mass media to do it for them.

The Amish and the Media does well in tracing the current state of media treatment of Amish communities and the ways the Amish shape their own modes of communication. Reaching back further in time would strengthen the collection; the complex relationship of media and Amish did not begin with *Witness*. For this task, there is David Weaver-Zercher's *The Amish in the American Imagination* (2001) and David Walbert's *Garden Spot: Lancaster County, the Old Order Amish, and the Selling of Rural America* (2002). In any event, the book under review will prepare readers for the next Amish media feeding frenzy, whatever it turns out to be.

Historic Preservation for Professionals, by Virginia O. Benson and Richard Klein. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008. x, 242 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$35.00 paper.

Reviewer Paula A. Mohr is an architectural historian and the certified local government coordinator at the State Historical Society of Iowa. Her research interests include nineteenth-century public architecture and sacred spaces.

Historic Preservation for Professionals is a "state of the field" textbook supplemented with a description of the numerous career opportunities in the field of historic preservation. It provides a useful overview of the preservation movement, especially for individuals interested in entering the field of preservation and for those just beginning their careers. Authors Virginia O. Benson and Richard Klein teach historic preservation and urban design at the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University.

In addition to its intended audience, the book also has value for more experienced preservationists. Chapters that describe the passage of historic preservation legislation, recount early and pivotal preservation battles, and detail important preservation organizations and private sector involvement are a constructive summary of the preservation