

The Mennonites of Pennsylvania

PROTECTED BY A democracy which lets men live as they please, thousands of Americans are separated from the rest of us by their curious beliefs. Among the least known of these strangers in our midst are the Mennonites of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Christians who live literally by the Bible, they have always resisted being photographed, because they consider it sinful. But when photographer Jane Latta went to live with them recently, she brought back some of the finest Mennonite pictures ever made. Now Coronet presents the best of these photographs in a new kind of picture story, taking you inside one of America's strangest communities.

Men of God

IN OUR SCIENTIFIC, money-making, fashion-conscious world, it seems almost impossible to resist the fascination of fine clothes, shiny motor cars, telephones, even the electric light. But the Mennonites have done just that, in varying degrees. There are more than 17 American sects of these deeply religious people. Most of them are of German descent. Perhaps the strangest of them all are the Old Order Amish, who dominate the Mennonite com-

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JONATHAN AND ELI pose on the road before their father's neat farm. Eli, the boy on the right, is wearing a homemade straw hat. Following the example of their parents, Amish children respect their religion—few ever break away from it.

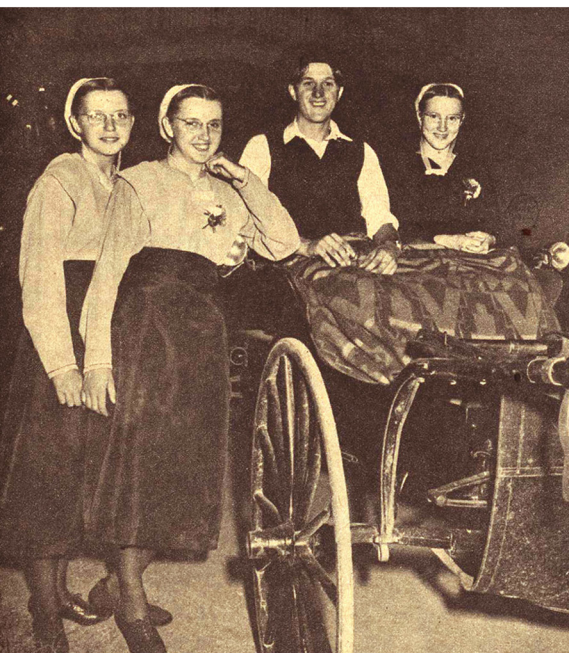


GOOD-LOOKING even with their long hair, most Amish boys take their meager schooling seriously. This lad, in the sixth grade, has two more years of school before he goes to work as a farm hand to earn money toward a place of his own.

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AFTER SCHOOL, Amish children have little time for play; there are too many chores waiting for them at home. Teachers, like the one in this picture, are usually not Mennonites, and one-room schools are administered by the state of Pennsylvania.



TEEN-AGE AMISH youngsters dress up for Sunday night dates. The girls use bright blouses and flowers almost as effectively as outsiders use jewelry and cosmetics.

THOUGH THEIR WORLD looks dull and drab from the outside, Amish children and other Mennonite youngsters don't miss much of the fun of youth.

Sunday night, after the long religious services are over and the inescapable chores done, the young men groom their horses, clean and shine their buggies, and neatly fold their buggy blankets. Then, with

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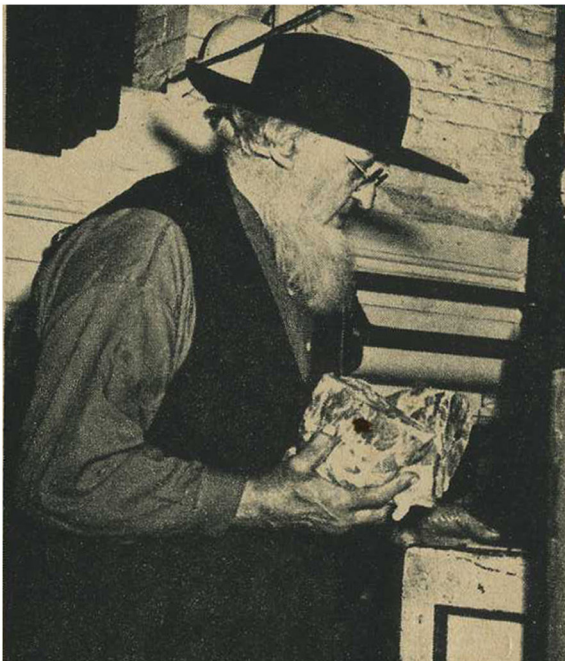
their sisters, they drive to an appointed meeting place. Here, the couples pair off and go to a house where a *singing* is held. A little before midnight, when all the old hymns have been sung and refreshments have been served, they are ready to drive home again. But occasionally a boy and girl will sneak off in a buggy to look at the moon and talk about their future.

Market Days



ON TUESDAY, Friday and Saturday, Mennonite wagons loaded with butter and eggs, fresh-killed and preserved meats, fruits and vegetables, and handmade clothing rumble into Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Though many "outsiders" live there, the town is dominated by Mennonites of various sects, and on these three market days shrewd Amish farmers bring their families to town to sell their home-grown products. Over their counters, Mennonites make their rare contacts with the auto-driving, movie-going, pleasure-loving outside world.

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IN A LANCASTER MARKET, this Amish farmer sells meat from his own livestock. He rents counter space on a yearly basis.

WHILE LANCASTER market days give Mennonites a chance to mingle and do business with the people they call "gay" or "English," it also gives the outsiders a chance to talk with Mennonites. And to people meeting them for the first time, the strangest thing about the Mennonites, aside from their clothes, is their speech. Descended from German immigrants who first came to Pennsylvania in the 17th century, their language has become a queer mixture of German and English, called Pennsylvania-German or Pennsylvania-Dutch. Hard bargainers with religious principles of sincerity and charity, they seem most picturesque as you meet them in the Lancaster markets.

Typical of the Mennonites' business technique, their basic honesty, and their backwards-sounding language, is the story of a city customer who bought some lilacs from a Mennonite mother. The customer was sure she had paid for the flowers, but the lady behind the counter thought she hadn't. There was a little argument, and finally the impatient customer thrust a dime at the saleswoman.

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MENNONITE WOMEN bring homemade foods to Lancaster. Among their specialties are fruit pies, eclairs, and Lebanon bologna.

It was a crucial moment for the Mennonite. Christian charity required that the outsider be forgiven, but a life of thrift made the dime almost equally important.

Suddenly the white-capped Mennonite mother beamed. She had found a solution. "Ve both make out ve right—ain't?" she said. "So ve each take vun nickel from the dime—no?"

This good-natured compromise amused and satisfied the city woman, and the Mennonite market went busily on its way.

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Simple Religion

LIKE AN indestructible bulwark, the Bible stands between all Mennonites and the world beyond their doors. To be a Mennonite is to be religious. Yet many Mennonite sects, like the Amish, have no churches. They meet for services and prayer in private homes and barns, every second Sunday. The picture above, of hard benches and hymn books unchanged since the 16th century, was made in a Lancaster barn. The austerity of this "church" is a veritable symbol of the simple Christianity to which these people are devoted.



THE HOLY KISS is given to a newly baptized youngster by a Mennonite minister. Baptism makes the boy a full church member.

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DURING WORLD WAR II, 40 per cent of the conscientious objectors to military service were Mennonites; for, since their beginning 412 years ago, they have followed the word of Jesus as literally as possible. Force, armed or otherwise, has no place in their religion, named after Menno Simons, an excommunicated Catholic. Like the Quakers, the Mennonites are a peaceful people of endless patience.

Like the Quakers, too, the Mennonites have no paid priesthood. Bishops, ministers and deacons are chosen from the entire community. Some Mennonite sects have church buildings, but not the Amish. They deem it the greatest honor to give their houses over to worship on alternate Sundays, when they may be selected as hosts to an average congregation of some 250 men, women and children.

Prominent in most Mennonite rites are the "Holy Kiss"—symbol of brotherly love—and great "Love Feasts" recalling, on a community-wide scale, Christ's Last Supper.

In both their religion and their daily life, the Mennonites try to pattern themselves after the early Christians. Thus, the Amish do not believe in church buildings; nor do they favor baptism of anyone too young to decide for himself whether he wants to live by Christ's teachings. According to their interpretation of the Bible, they believe they are following the word of Christ in such matters.

No matter how different they seem, and though we wonder at their curious clothes and customs, we cannot ignore the fact that the Mennonites have achieved peace and happiness in a turbulent world.

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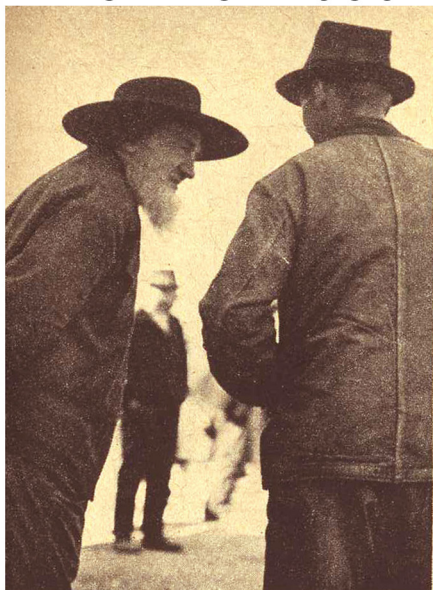
LIKE A SYMBOL of her people, this Mennonite grandmother contrasts sharply with the modern town of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. One of the oldest towns in the nation, Lancaster prospers as the center of this tranquil Mennonite community.

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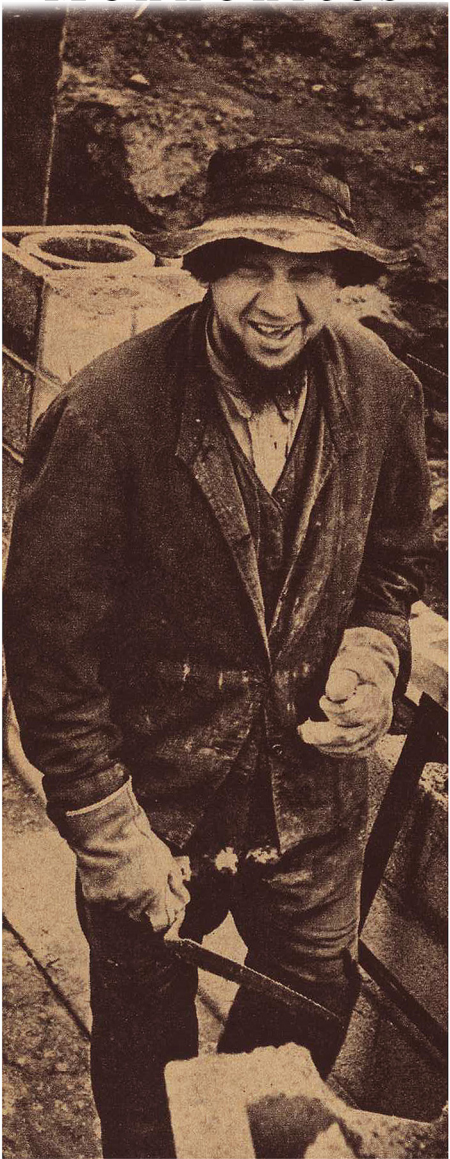


DISCUSSING CROPS with a non-Mennonite, this Amish man may teach more than he learns, for the Amish are wise farmers.

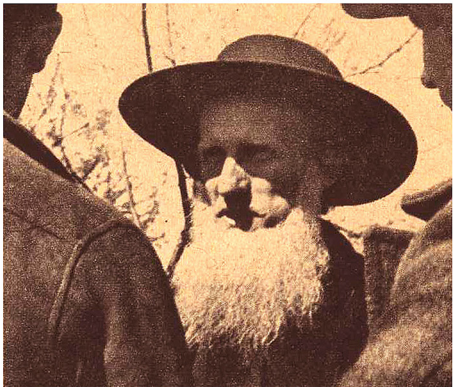
munity of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

The Biblical statement that God wished to “purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” is followed literally by the Amish. They do everything possible to ensure their goodness and to make themselves different from ordinary men. The most startling result is their physical appearance. All Amish men dress and look remarkably alike. Young and old wear their long hair in bangs parted in the middle. After marriage or acceptance into the faith, every man must wear a beard which skirts the edge of his chin. Moustaches are forbidden, as are buttons and lapels on all but work clothes. Yet though they look stern and severe, Amish—and other Mennonite men—are essentially happy and contented. They rule their families strictly, but they never underestimate the importance of wives and mothers in making firm, comfortable homes.

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CRAFTSMEN as well as farmers, Amish men build their own houses. They often save time and money by pooling their labor.



WHITE BEARDS and broad-brimmed hats mark Amish elders. Highly respected, they meet outsiders for business only.

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MONTHLY AUCTIONS at Intercourse, Pa., are social events. This Mennonite salesman is frowning because his picture was taken.

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Mennonites Mothers and Wives

LOOKING OUT on their *plain* world of hard work, large houses, kitchens, children, and prayer, Mennonite women find ample comfort. Whether they wear the solid, dark colors of the Amish or allow themselves the brighter, printed dresses of the more lenient sects, they see little to envy in the lives of the *gay* people outside. Like their husbands, they find real happiness in religion.



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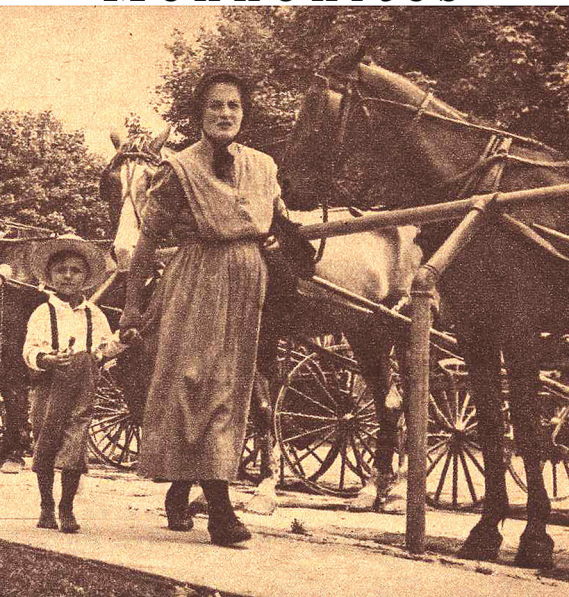
AMISH WOMEN, obeying the strict Mennonite code of "peculiarity," wear drab, unadorned clothing. Only colors like black or dark purple are used for dresses and coats. Under their black bonnets, they wear white caps. Jewelry is forbidden.



EXPERT QUILT-MAKERS, Mennonite women use bright colors lavishly in their work, to compensate for dull clothing. In the homes of the more lenient Mennonites, like these, wallpaper, pictures, and electricity are not considered worldly or sinful.

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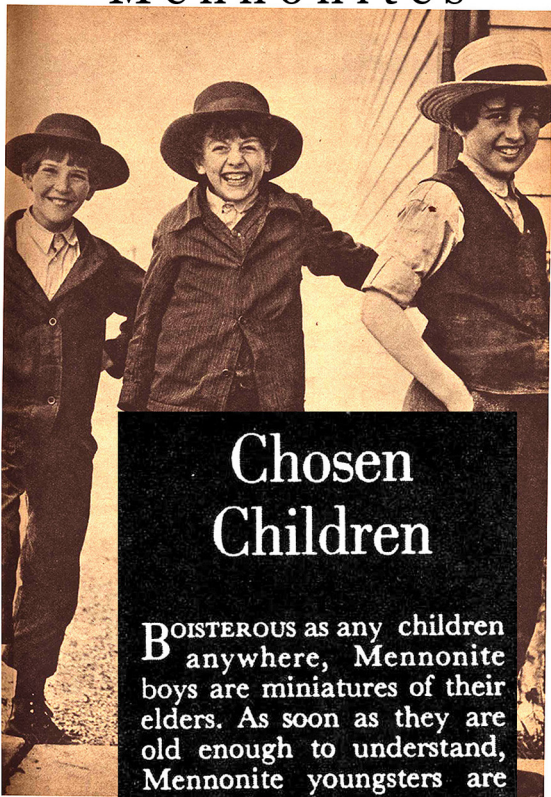


TYPICAL of most Mennonite women is this handsome young mother. The photographer's presence caused her to frown, but her son forgot his lollipop to look at the camera. Candy is one of the few luxuries most Mennonites allow themselves.



AN AMISH GRANDMOTHER, oblivious to the camera, walks away from her typical Amish wagon to make some purchases at an auction in Intercourse, Pennsylvania. She is wearing the costume all married Amish women must wear out-of-doors.

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Chosen Children

BOISTEROUS as any children anywhere, Mennonite boys are miniatures of their elders. As soon as they are old enough to understand, Mennonite youngsters are taught that they are among God's chosen people. In school, where they often meet and play with children from the outside world, their plain clothes and odd haircuts never let them forget that they are different.

IT is 4:30 in THE MORNING. Dawn is just breaking over the neat Lancaster farms. Mother is growing impatient: if the children are not at their chores soon, Father will be angry. There are cows to be milked, farm tools to be kept clean and sharp, milk cans to be scoured in the big barn. In the kitchen, the table must be set for breakfast; there are eggs to be beaten and bread to be set out. There are a dozen tasks to be done before Eli and Isaac, Sarah and Melinda can start for school. So, sleepy-eyed but uncomplaining, the children go to work.

They may be only eight or nine years old, but as Mennonite children they are old enough to share the burdens of housekeeping and

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farming. For to these devout people, running a home and making a living are second in importance only to the proper worship of God.

As to schooling, the solemn Mennonite elders feel their children need to know reading, writing, arithmetic, and the German language—nothing more. Boys and girls must know the three R's to do business with people of the outside world; they must know German in order to read their Bibles and sing the old hymns at Sunday services. Higher education is considered a dangerous exposure to the tempting luxuries of the modern world, so most Mennonite children leave school as soon as they finish the eighth grade. At 14, these well-behaved boys and girls are already thinking of marriage. Their hope chests are beginning to fill up and they have money saved from their childhood labors to start homes and farms of their own.



YOUNG AMISH GIRLS may wear brightly colored bonnets. This young lady, perched on a wagon, is on her way to market.