

THE
AMISH

& THE
SHAKERS

Seeking the Spiritual Life



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PHOTOGRAPHS/DON NESBITT ♦ NARRATIVE/CHARLES STENKEN

The Amish & The Shakers...
Seeking the Spiritual Life

Photographs by Don Nesbitt
Narrative by Charles Stenken

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The Amish and the Shakers

Foreword

Though separating themselves from the mainstream of culture, the Amish and the Shakers have continued to generate widespread fascination and interest among the American populace. It is more than mere curiosity that attracts us, even if that may have motivated our first look. Something deeper draws us back; something about who they are or what they represent stirs our hearts and engages our minds, even as we remain external observers.

For some, it may be a longing for a simpler time or perhaps weariness with the alienation and materialism of contemporary society. For others, it may be an attraction to their communal lifestyle or their commitment to strongly held principles. Whatever the cause, we are moved. It is our sincere hope that the photos and words presented in this book will be a springboard for reflection; an opportunity to consider what it is that intrigues or touches our hearts.

—Charles Stenken



The Amish

Although they share essential religious beliefs, much diversity in outward expression exists among different Amish settlements

Roots The Amish have their origins in the Alsace region of current-day France. In the late 17th century, a group of Swiss Anabaptists, a protestant reform group, emigrated from Switzerland to Alsace and formed a new community of believers. Disagreements broke out between this new group and the mother community. Jacob Ammann, an elder in the Alsatian community, acted as leader and spokesperson for the new group. He argued for changes in certain church practices which the mother community would not accept. The disagreements led to a split between the two communities. The new group came to be known as the Amish after their leader, Jacob Ammann.

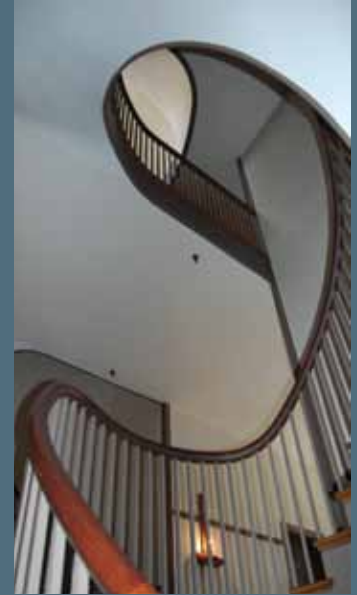
The Amish experienced widespread persecution in their European homeland. During the 18th and 19th centuries, there was a large exodus of Amish to the new world. They first settled primarily in Pennsylvania and, over time, spread to Ohio, Indiana and surrounding states. Today there are Amish settlements in 28 states as well as in Ontario, Canada, with an approximate population of 249,500¹.

Although they share essential religious beliefs, much diversity in outward expression exists among different Amish settlements. Each church district determines the “ordnung” or the standard of practice that the community will follow. Consequently, it is very difficult to say that the Amish do this or don’t do that. There are exceptions to most any generalization. The descriptions of Amish life that are offered in the paragraphs that follow are intended as a general overview, with the acknowledgement that some particulars may not apply to each and every Amish community.

THE Amish & THE Shakers

Although many of the black and white photographs are 40+ years old, there is little if any distinction from the

new 2010 color photos. Amish traditions and the Shaker era presented at Pleasant Hill remain unchanged.







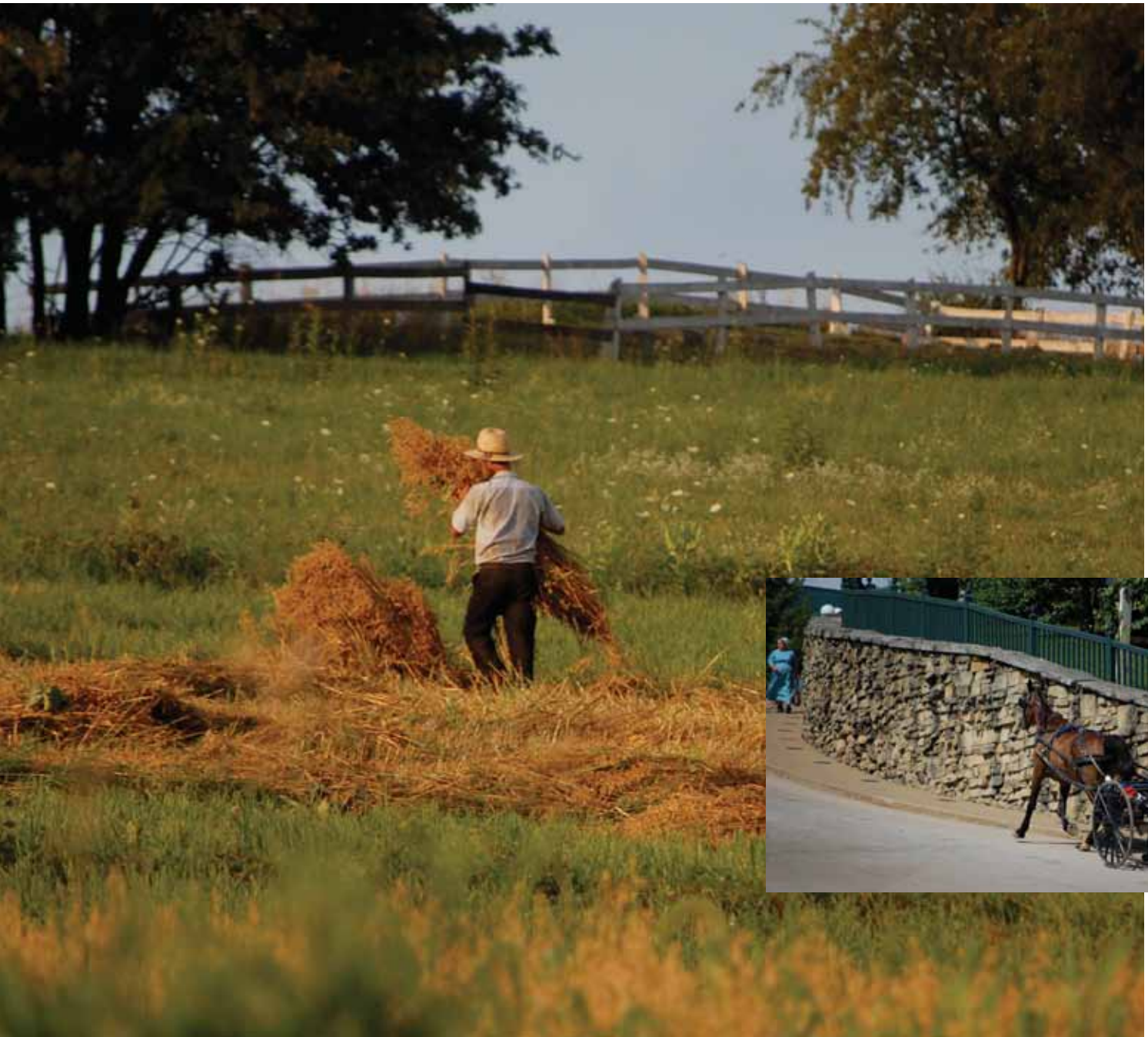


Community fundraisers have no lack of volunteers or patrons

And, raising new buildings is a community effort



Performing common tasks is practiced and valued





Shaker Dancing

*An opportunity to observe
Shaker dancing attracted
people from far and wide*

*The occasions were used
to recruit new members to
the community*





Acknowledgements

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