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Travel

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Amish: another world only a drive away

By Doris Scharfenberg
special writer

THE 16-INCH cloth doll on my desk speaks clearly of another way to live.

Black dress, black shoes, white apron. On her head are two black bonnets; an organdy "everyday" cap under a heavy, deep-brimmed "Sunday" bonnet with a black ruffle around the back of the neck.

She has no face. No button eyes or embroidered lips; no rosy cheeks on her muslin head. In the Amish view, adding these realities would be making a graven image, and human likenesses displease the Lord.

Less than two hours south of Cleveland in the scenic rolling countryside of eastern Ohio — western reaches of Appalachia — you can find Amish-made dolls and quilts, handcrafted buggy harnesses, horseshoeing and wheelwright services. A dozen area workshops will custom-build you a carriage; not the horseless kind, either.

In Tuscarawas, Holmes, and adjoining counties, 13,000 Amish (more than there are in Pennsylvania) have clung to their rural ways. Back roads curve past one unwired farm after another, past farmers tilling with horses or harvesting from wagons.

ON RESTAURANT signs, "Amish" replaces "mother" as an assurance of good cooking.

Followers of Jacob Ammann, who form a branch of the Mennonites, have long been a "curiosity," but since the movie "Witness" worked the peacable sect into its violent plot, interest is even higher.

My doll came from a store on one of the Amish-Mennonite homesteads near Berlin. A red barn of cathedral size looms close to the shop, across a gravel drive from two pin-neat houses.

One is a Mennonite home; the larger, boxy and white house is occupied by old-order Amish. A hand pump stands between the houses, and a rope swing dangles from a giant shade tree on the lawn.

I WAS with a small group escorted by Lloyd Miller, social studies teacher who conducts personalized tours through the area. We stepped through the Mennonite house where there are regular vis-



The Amish living in the rural areas of Ohio have interesting habits and customs. Here is an Amish doll in dress in black dress, black shoes, white apron and black bonnet. She has no facial marks, no eyes lips or rosy cheeks. Adding these realities would be making a graven image, and human likenesses displease the Lord. The Amish method of transportation is invariably a farm buggy pulled by a former race horse.

iting hours, then Miller respectfully asked if we might enter the Amish house, a rarer privilege. Miller is known here and usually gets the come-ahead, but this time, it was a Mennonite neighbor who acted as guide.

Beneath a kerosene lamp in a kitchen that hadn't seen an innovation in 50 years, cookie odors came from the oven as I tried to memorize the details around me.

Bending over a wide table, the wife (we weren't introduced) was cutting out a dress for her little girl. Adults and children wear the same style, but this cloth was pale blue. Use of color (never bright) often reflects the bishop's strictness.

THE WOOD stove in the living room was empty; a small boy was napping soundly on an overstuffed brown sofa. The Amish never went beyond wood stoves, and I thought of the current resurgence of their popularity. No family pictures on the walls; only a small embroidered mejo in German.

Upstairs the big surprise was the eldest daughter's room. She was a young lady of courting age, who was allowed to sew a few cats of fanciness with frilly curtains and

lavender bedspread. She could sit with a sultor on two chairs separated by a small table.

The Amish do not condone bedding, which today is nothing more than premarital sex, but they don't speak out against it, says Miller.

"Bundling originated in Colonial days when a boy had to travel miles by horseback to court a girl, many times staying overnight. Pioneer houses were small, and John-ner would often be placed in a bag to make sure nothing happened to Suzie."

In the boys' room, brown quilts with appliqued horse designs represented an achievable dream; to own your own horse.

THE SIGHT of an Amish buggy going up the road at a sprightly pace has caused many to wonder how they train their horses. Maybe they don't. Amish frequently buy harness races horses after the steeds have lost their last bet.

In another room hung the remaining wardrobe of the lady downstairs; a dark green dress and a black one of the same pattern for Sunday. On Sunday, her husband puts on his straight black jacket with hooks and eyes. There are hid-

den buttons on the trousers. Every-thing looked very hot for summer.

Despite the lore of gift shops, Amish do NOT believe in hex signs of any type. They may seem sober and unemotional to outsiders, but cry and laugh heartily among themselves (probably at us) in a low German dialect. A car is shunned as a worldly possession, yet certain communities allow black cars if the bumpers and chrome strips are also painted black.

BACK IN the kitchen, chocolate chip cookies came out of the oven and we each had one. Marvelous. As we said "Thank you" and "good-bye," the little girl who was going to wear the new blue dress appeared, eyeing us shyly.

I wanted to hug this child, who would not be going to school past the eighth grade, would probably never see a play or peer through a microscope. She will be sewing on a treadle, haying, feeding her family well.

I didn't know they ate chocolate chip cookies.

If you go, please remember that the Amish are sincere about not wanting to have their picture tak-

en; keep your long lens and photo-journalist fantasies under wraps. Dress with respect to their feelings.

UNTIL NOV. 1, everyone is welcome to the Amish Farm on Route 39, one mile east of Berlin, although the house with the family is understandably not always open. For a personal tour in your own car, Lloyd Miller's address is R#2, Box 238, New Philadelphia, Ohio 44663. Phone 218-339-2936. Lloyd's the one who looks like Burl Ives.

Ohio's eastern heartland is known for unworllyd secularians, but beats with hundreds of small industries, craft shops, antiques, and towns that you'd like to have been born in:

ZOAR, founded in 1817 by a German Society of Separalists; an early American commune, now a lived-in museum town of total charm. For tours and information, write Box 523, Zoar, Ohio 44697.

DOVER (adjoining New Philadelphia), home of the late master carver Ernest Warther. Mr. Warther is gone, but his fabulous carvings

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of steam trains are housed in a small must-see museum. From walnut and ivory, every steam engine from 250 B.C. to the present day is in the collection which the Smithsonian called a "priceless work of art." Mr. Warther's trains and his wife's button collection (73,000 of them), are at 351 Karl Ave., Dover 44622.

ROSCOE VILLAGE, restored canal (Ohio & Erie) hamlet of the 1830s at Cochocton. Before the railroads, getting around was via canal and you can still find out what it's like to be on a boat pulled by a team of horses. On an antique lane of stores and boutiques, the Roscoe Village Inn gets applause for its neat merger of modern hotel and quaint atmosphere. North Whitewoman Street, Cochocton, Ohio 43812. The street name was not explained.

SUGARCREEK, the "little Switzerland" of Ohio, clip-clops with Amish buggies, especially on summer weekends. Little dolls with eyes not authentically Amish, are among the souvenirs. Plenty of Swiss and German imports and locally made cheese. Big Swiss Festival coming up, Sept. 27-28. Yodel your heart out. Box 361, Sugarcreek 44681.

NEWCOMERSTOWN can't beat the name for friendliness. Newcomerstown's newest comers heard the first Presbyterian sermon west of the Allegheny Mountains (Info culled from an Ohio road map). Good canoeing and camping nearby.

For Ohio travel information, dial 1-800-BUCKEYE, or write P.O. Box 1001, Columbus, Ohio 43216.

travel notes

Montreal trip

The Community House in Birmingham is offering a trip to Montreal, Quebec, Nov. 7-10.

Montreal is a city of charm with carefully preserved 17th-century stone buildings and houses, art galleries, antique shops, candlelit restaurants and boutiques for shoppers.

A unique exhibition, "Pablo Picasso Meeting in Montreal" will be at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and will be included in the tour.

The 80 paintings that are the focus of the show come from the personal collection of Madame Jacqueline Picasso, the artist's wife, and for the most part have never been seen by the public.

Included in the tour price are three nights at the LeCentre Sheraton Hotel, air transportation from Windsor via Nordair, tour of Montreal, tickets to the Picasso exhibit, two lunches, a professional lectur-

er-guide, transportation to and from the airport. The cost for double occupancy is \$426 per person; \$265 for single occupancy.

For further information contact The Community House, 380 S. Bates, Birmingham, 544-5832.

Bed/b'fast

The newly published guidebook "Bed & Breakfast in Michigan and Surrounding Areas" has 128 pages describing inns and private homes which have adopted the centuries-old European tradition of bed and breakfast.

The book describes inns and cozy private homes in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin and Ontario.

Some are in mansions and homes built at the turn of the century and

refurbished by owners. Many are private homes in resort and recreational areas. "Bed & Breakfast in Michigan and Surrounding Areas," by Norma Buzan and Bert Howell, is available from Betsy Ross Publications, 3057 Betsy Ross Drive, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013. Price is \$8.25, which includes postage.

It's cider time

A record one billion pounds of apples should be plucked off Michigan trees this year — up 30 percent over 1984 — and that will mean plenty of sweet cider this fall.

"One of the great, low-cost family outings available to Michiganders is a trip to a cider mill to enjoy the cider," said state AAA travel operations manager Jim Drury.

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Harbor Island Spa 1-800-SPA SLIM (1-800-772-7546)

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All welcome - It is a fantastic Trip!