

# Old Ways and New Blend in Pennsylvania Dutch Country

By Irene McMahon

**R**oadside horse-and-buggy warning signs and orderly well-tilled farmlands signal that you are in Amish country.

You pass a family in dignified, severe outfits, the men erect in black silhouettes, the women blending rather than standing against, the children peeping over the buggy door as you race by. Slow down long enough to hear the clip-clop of the horses' hooves, to enjoy the covered bridges near the old mills, the sight of men plowing in the rich black earth with a team of mules, and a young boy pushing a lawn mower in the front yard of a trim white farmhouse.

These are houses without electric lights or TV antennas...unattached to the rural electrification that has so changed the lives of their neighbors. To resort to electricity would surely connect the Amish to the outside world. And that they don't want.

While the most obvious sign of Amish disbelief in progress is the absence of utility lines to the immaculate farmhouses and milk-white barns, we are told that what most distinguishes the Amish is a life style based on strict Biblical interpretation of family, work, and education. The young boy pushing the lawn mower has been educated in reading, writing, and arithmetic in a one-room parochial classroom; he probably speaks three languages—German, Pennsylvania Dutch Dialect, and English. He swims in the creek, plays baseball in the meadow, ice skates on the pond, and looks forward to a life devoid of the telephone, the television, and the radio.

His elders abide by a philosophy of caring for each other best demonstrated in a barn-raising. When fire strikes the barn of an Amish family, hundreds of men voluntarily gather to supply the labor for a new structure to be built over the blackened ashes. Women prepare food for the bountiful buffets and the barn-raising becomes an enjoyable event.

Sunday is a busy time on the rural roads. Amish buggies transport families

to a neighbor's house for a prayer meeting. It is a scene of dark figures moving across the landscape. Graceful upright buggies are parked behind the farmhouse and horses are led to the barn while small children frolic in the barnyard.

**F**or those of us enthralled by the picturesqueness of this bucolic scene it is something of a jolt to discover that there is another side to this south central county of Pennsylvania. Aggressive small industry thrives here, producing brands that are household words all over the world—Hamilton Clocks, Danskin, Carter, and Dansk are only a few. There are so many that Lancaster County is called the "factory outlet of the world."

From the beginning, important technological advances have been made in this Pennsylvania Dutch county—the accurate long-range Lancaster rifle, used in the Revolutionary War; the Conestoga wagon, known as the "ship of inland commerce"; and Robert Fulton's steamship. Hundreds of pioneers made their last supply stops here before taking the journey into frontier country. These thrusts toward the future have always existed side by side with the responsible stewardship and frugality of the German and Swiss founders of William Penn's state, a bastion of freedom for all sorts of Americans. The Amish must have come to realize that their disciplined family-oriented lives are closely tied to what goes on around them and both benefit.

Among the places to visit:

- The medieval Germanic Hans Herr House is the oldest in Lancaster County and was used as an early Mennonite meeting place. It is more famous in our time through an Andrew Wyeth painting. On display in the house is Christian Herr's Bible dating from 1719.
- The Amish Farm and House is a replica of an Old Order Amish farmstead with animals, Conestoga wagon, veg-

etable and fruit drying house, and a bakery. You might even see a sheep being shorn and talk with members of an Amish family along the road; buy some of the "plain people's" preserves. Outsiders are still referred to as "the English" and visitors are expected to respect the Amish belief that the taking of photographs that bear a personal likeness violates the Biblical warning against graven images.

- In the midst of the Amish country is the People's Place, Intercourse. Revealing documentaries on the Amish, Mennonites, and Hutterites are shown. At the Clay Distelfink Shop at



A man and his dog approach one of the covered bridges so prominent in Pennsylvania Dutch country (right). Near Bird-in-Hand, Amish families gather for Sunday morning worship (below).

Illustrations by Franklin McMahon



### SNITZ AND KNEPP

#### SNITZ

2 lb. snitz (sweet)  
2 T. brown sugar  
1 C. chopped ham  
3 qt. water

#### KNEPP

$\frac{3}{4}$  C. flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  C. sugar  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  t. baking powder  
 $\frac{3}{8}$  C. milk  
1 egg

Place water, brown sugar, chopped ham, and snitz in a pan. Boil about 10 minutes. Drain items from pot, saving juice. (This is done so items do not break up knepp when placed in juice.) Mix dry ingredients. Mix egg and milk and add to dry ingredients slowly. Add till mixture just separates from sides of bowl. (You may not need all of milk and egg mixture.) Bring juice to boil. Place a teaspoon in hot juice for 5 seconds, take out and fill half full of knepp. Place into hot juice, shake spoon and knepp will drop off immediately. Continue until all knepp is in juice. Boil 3 minutes and add remaining drained ingredients.

Miller's Smorgasbord

### FUNNEL CAKES

1 egg  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  C. milk  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  C. sifted flour  
Beat egg and add milk. Sift flour, salt, sugar, baking powder, and baking soda together. To this add the egg and milk, beat until smooth.

2 T. sugar  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  t. salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  t. baking soda  
 $\frac{3}{4}$ " funnel

electric fry pan or iron pot

Holding finger over the bottom of a funnel, pour some batter into the funnel. Drop batter into hot, deep fat (375° temperature), swirling it into circles from the center out. Each cake should be about 6" in diameter. Fry until golden brown, drain on paper towel, serve warm with powdered sugar or molasses.

Note: Funnel should have  $\frac{3}{8}$ " opening. Deep electric fry pans can be used as well as deep iron pots used by Pennsylvania Dutch cooks.

Kutztown Folk Festival

### HOAR HOUSE CORN AND CRAB BISQUE

Stock:  
5 lb. dressed Blue Crab  
4 qt. water  
Cook down to 2 quarts.  
Strain and discard shells.

Add:  
2 T. Zatarain's Liquid Crab Boil  
3 bay leaves  
2 T. garlic (granulated)  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  T. cayenne pepper  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  T. black pepper  
1 T. salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  T. thyme

$\frac{1}{2}$  T. oregano  
Bring to a boil, then  
boil for 10 minutes.

Thicken:  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. hot melted butter  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. flour  
Bring back to a boil.

Add:  
1 lb. crabmeat  
2 qt. heavy whipping cream  
2 lb. canned corn  
Bring to a boil and serve

Yield: serves 12 Hoar House



Christmas at Hoar House is reminiscent of old Victorian times.

Plain and Fancy Farm in Bird-in-Hand, the youthful Marilyn Stolfus's creatively designed plates bloom with hearts, flowers, tulips, and birds, typical of the decorative Pennsylvania German redware made centuries ago. In this shopping center of hex signs, quilts, and pottery, don't be surprised if the adjacent parking space, equipped with a hitching post, is reserved for a horse and buggy.

North of the City of Lancaster are the towns of Ephrata and Lititz, both founded by one-time dissident Protestant groups. From the time that William Penn welcomed those persecuted for their faith, religious roots have been deep in Lancaster County.

Ephrata, land of plenty according to its Biblical translation, centers around the Ephrata Cloister, a Seventh Day Baptist monastery of huge medieval European-style buildings that flourished in the 1700s. Its members wrote music, excelled in calligraphy and manuscript illumination, and began printing books. Originally a small farming community, Ephrata still finds its citizens attending the Green Dragon Farmer's Market and Auction every Friday morning.

Lititz, one of America's first Moravian communities, honors the followers of German Pietism, a doctrine that has become embodied in modern Protestantism. Today, attractive stores line the main street, with pedestrian alleys leading to shops tucked away behind restored homes. The Candy Americana Museum delves into old time confection making and celebrates a time before Americans became aware of counting calories. Sturgis Pretzel House is the oldest pretzel bakery in the nation.

In fact, this is America's pretzel belt. Looking like oversized hard pretzels, Pennsylvania Dutch soft pretzels are a different eating experience. They are the consistency of a water-boiled bagel, plump and chewy with grains of coarse salt that give them a sharp edge. They're not designed to be munched by the handful; just one is a snack in itself. Many eat them with a squirt of mustard on top and they are always best just a few hours out of the oven or in a bowl of pretzel soup. Pretzel twisters at work in the factory turn out about a thousand per hour.

Everybody comes together just off the square in downtown Lancaster. At the Farmer's Market, organdy-capped Mennonites and dark-garbed Amish



Downtown Lancaster's Farmers Market brings city folk and farmers together.

mix with the townfolk to buy and sell Lancaster County swiss cheese, old-fashioned sweet bologna, sweets and soups, and the harvest of these skilled farmers. It's a colorful meeting place surrounded by stately maples, soaring church steeples, and a brick-paved historic district.

You can wander among the stalls sampling sticky buns and mashed-potato-based doughnuts called *fasnachts*. A farmer might offer you a taste of cup cheese that has been ripened from sour milk into a smooth custard. Scrapple, a specialty of Lancaster County, may not have many fans outside the area. The thrifty Pennsylvania Dutch knead together pork shavings, cornmeal, and spices (heavy on the sage), producing a loaf crisp around the edge with a moist center.

The bounty of the fertile land makes its way to the restaurants all along the roadside. The Amish Barn serves a special Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine. Many of the fresh flowers and vegetables are grown in a garden viewed from the window. More sophisticated fare is offered by Hoar House, Lancaster's most elegant dining affair, named after Jacob Hoar, a prominent nineteenth-century coal and ice dealer. Adorned with lace curtains, secluded tables, and Victorian red velvet, this place hints at another kind of life.

The Pennsylvania Dutch are pie-conscious. At no place is this more obvious than at People's Restaurant in New Holland. Here it is possible to sample "funeral pie," not grim as one might suspect,

but a deliciously pleasant raisin pie that dates back to when the womenfolk stored their baked goods in cool cellars for weddings and wakes. At People's, "wet bottom" shoofly pie also is served—as opposed to dry bottom. The molasses layer almost oozes out as the pie is cut, soaking up the crumbs, while a dry-bottom shoofly pie has more texture.

Today's Pennsylvania Dutch cooks reportedly have a repertoire of more than 50 different pies. At People's Restaurant, the menu suggests shoofly, raisin, pumpkin, pumpkin pecan, graham cracker custard, cherry crumb, apple crisp, pure white coconut, and grasshopper pie. In that man does not live by pie alone, the restaurant also serves the regional specials: Lancaster sausage with a horseradish sauce made in nearby Ephrata; roast turkey with sausage filling; and pork and sauerkraut.

Food fanciers from all over are attracted by the hearty food served at Groff's Farm Restaurant, an old 1765 stone farmhouse. The plentiful fare is served family-style with choices of ham, prime rib, and fish, and the traditional relishes: pickled celery and cinnamon, and clove-spiced cataloupe. The house specialty is Chicken Stolfus (no connection to the pottery painter of tulips and birds). Betty Groff named this dish of large chunks of chicken smothered in cream sauce and topped with diamond-shaped pastry crust after her Amish friends Elam and Hannah Stolfus.

Eating is one of few rituals not

strictly regulated by the Amish and the Mennonites. Traditionally the pies and cakes are placed on the table with the meat, vegetables, and sweets and soups, and eaten in any order. Abe and Betty Groff modify this practice and the first course is a small serving of chocolate cake and cracker pudding—so that you can enjoy them while you still have room.

Groff's has been so successful they have opened a second restaurant, Cameron Estate Inn. Once the home of Simon Cameron, Lincoln's first Secretary of War, this beautifully restored mansion of eight fireplaces with paneling and marble, oriental rugs, and period pieces has accommodations for 25 guests.

Plant Lovers Tourist Home offers a simpler lodging overlooking five flower-filled greenhouses that provide fresh flowers for each room. If you have never stayed on a farm, try Tourist Farm Home, Landis Farm, or Vendent View Farm. For those who like a swimming pool, sauna, and indoor tennis, there is the Sheraton Lancaster Resort.

A highly developed and progressive Lancaster County coexists side by side with an old world community of 14,000 "plain people." The small towns that dot the countryside, surrounded by peaceful farmlands and flowing hills, retain their unique personalities even in a contemporary rushing modern world. An amazing balance accommodates those who survive on ancient skills of the past and those who move in the advanced technology of the present. All seem to prosper in Lancaster County.

# The Bridge of Bureau County

by Irene McMahon

The aptly named Red Covered Bridge, just off Interstate 80 on the outskirts of Princeton, is one of only five remaining covered bridges in Illinois and the only one through which cars can be driven.

At one time there were no fewer than 200 of these bridges in the state, designed to protect bridge underparts from wintery elements and offering shelter to rain-swept travelers and trysting places for young "spooners."

Now the confluence of a best-selling book and blockbuster movie offers new focus on these old structures.

"The Bridges of Madison County," by Robert James Waller, tells the story of a four-day romance that changed the life of Francesca Johnson, a bored Iowa farm wife.

Besides the Red Covered Bridge, in Bureau County, the remaining Illinois bridges are in Shelby, Sangamon, Henderson and Randolph counties.

There is probably no living soul in any of these five counties willing to identify with the goings-on of Francesca Johnson, played by Meryl Streep, and her romantic partner, Robert Kincaid, a National Geographic photographer, played by Clint Eastwood.

Linda Annel, proprietor of The Bookworm on Main Street in downtown Princeton, features Waller's book. She says it's a sure-enough bestseller.

If the story had been about the bridge of Bureau County, Francesca would not have been bored and the romance might not have happened.

It is not that easy to be bored in Princeton because the town has always been a lively place.

Abraham Lincoln often passed through, and the home of fiery abolitionist Owen Lovejoy was one of the most important stations on the Underground Railroad, which was a hidden route for escaping slaves before the Civil War. And Carl Sandburg gave readings here when he was courting his wife-to-be, a local high school teacher.

With all this history, the town prides itself on architectural preservation. This is a great place for antiquing and mini-vacations. For shopping — a flea market is held the second Sunday of each month.

This treasure snuggles in a hilly stretch of farmland surrounded by corn fields and woods. Today it is picturesque and calm, but once the bridge was on the busy main route between Peoria and the lead mines of Galena.

Nowadays, folks stop and take photos of their friends and relatives, or of their car being driven through the bridge. Visitors can picnic in Red Covered Bridge Park and imagine a day when only horses, buggies, cattle and hikers crossed the structure.

Before there was a bridge, Bureau Creek was crossed on wooden planks purchased for \$15 each and replaced frequently because of high waters.

Demand for a more permanent bridge began during the Civil War in 1862. In response, the Bureau County Board of Supervisors appointed the Union Bridge Committee to oversee the construction and financing of a bridge.

The bridge was completed in 1863 at a cost of \$3,148, a pine and oak construction on masonry piers across

a 95-foot span. At the end of the project, \$31.88 was left over and it was used to paint the bridge red. A hand-carved sign, still in place today, announces the crossing rules: "Five dollars fine for driving more than twelve horses, mules or cattle at one time or for leading any beast faster than a walk on or across this bridge."

Legends about the bridge abound in Princeton. There are stories of times of bad storms when so many rigs gathered under cover of the bridge that it was feared the bridge might give way. And stories of the first "horseless buggies" noisily transgressing the bridge, sounding just like corn-shellers, and frightening the animals. Ever since those early days of the automobile, parents have honked the horn for their children when passing through.

Mary Winn Norris is a Princeton artist who has painted the bridge many times. Her great-grandfather was Princeton's first sheriff and she lives in the Gothic-revival-style family home of her ancestors, one of the architectural gems of Princeton. Her English garden features a Noah's Walk (flowers planted two-by-two) that meanders through in a blaze of color.

Mary Williams, curator of the Bureau County Historical Museum, says her family has lived in Princeton for three generations. Those first frugal settlers from Massachusetts came with enough money to buy land and beseeched their children to save all their possessions until there was time and money to build a museum.

Recently, plans surfaced that would replace the covered bridge with a more efficient crossing for farmers. But the farmers said "no," so this reminder of bygone days

seems here to stay. The Red Covered Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and maintained by the Illinois Department of Transportation.

There is no evidence of timber-truss bridges, with or without covering, in the ancient world. But the 13th-century sketch book of French architect Villard de Honnecourt contains notes of a truss bridge, and Italian Andrea Palladio's "Treatise on Architecture" (1570) describes four designs.

Several notable covered bridges were constructed in Switzerland, and the Kappelbrücke of Lucerne is decorated in the interior with 112 paintings within the triangular spaces between the roof and crossbeams, depicting the history of the town and the lives of its two patron saints. In the 18th century, the Grubermann brothers of Switzerland built covered truss spans of 390 feet over the Limmat River in Baden.

However, it was in North America that the covered bridge achieved architectural maturity and importance. From simple king-post trusses, in which the roadway was supported by a pair of heavy timber triangles, New England carpenters in the 18th century developed bridges capable of spanning wide rivers.

The first long covered bridge was built by Timothy Palmer, a Massachusetts millwright, over the Schuylkill in Philadelphia. After that, covered timber-truss bridges were erected all across the country.

The Red Covered Bridge may not have the sweep of the Mackinac or Golden Gate bridges, or the history of the Bridge of San Luis Rey and the Old North Bridge at Concord, but it has a significance and a romance of its own.

It was Longfellow who wrote, "The grave itself is but a covered bridge, leading from light to light, through a brief darkness."



The covered bridges in Illinois were mostly built during the 1800s by carpenters accustomed to building houses. An "X" on the map above designates Illinois' covered bridges.



Mary's River Covered Bridge in Randolph County was built in 1854, restored in 1954. It rests on original stone abutments. (Photo by Gene Howard, "Covered Bridges of the Midwest")

One hundred years ago, long before Robert Kincaid set out to photograph the bridges of Madison County, covered wooden trussed structures were preferred for bridges in this state, according to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency in Springfield.

In the days when bridges were built to carry travelers on foot and horse-drawn wagon traffic over rivers and streams, the covered bridge offered several advantages over other methods of construction.

The most important was that the roof and siding served to protect the bridge's wooden support system from the elements, much as the roof and siding on a house protects the contents inside. In addition, cattle often balked at crossing open bridges, but readily crossed covered bridges. (Early settlers claimed the covered bridges reminded cattle of the barns that were associated with food and shelter, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency says.)

The first covered bridge in Illinois was probably constructed in 1827 at Carrollton in Greene County, while the last to be built was the Greenbush Covered Bridge which was built in the late 1890s in Warren County. By that time, though, iron-trussed bridges were beginning to replace the covered bridges, as ability to handle heavy weight became more important than shelter offered by bridges.

At one time during the last century, there were more than 200 cov-

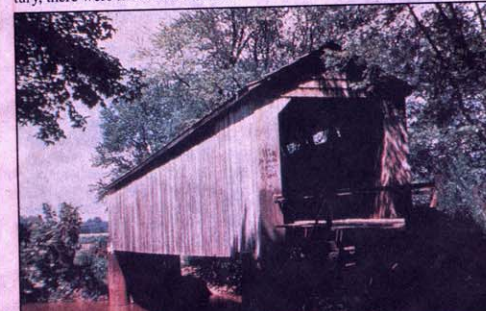
ered bridges in Illinois. Seven survived until recently when two were destroyed by arson: the Washington Street Bridge in Sangamon County in 1977 and the Wolf Covered Bridge in Knox County in 1994.



Sugar Creek Covered Bridge in Sangamon County was built around 1880 and restored in 1965. (Photos by Charles Dees)

Today, five covered bridges remain in Illinois. All are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and all are maintained by the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Mary's River Covered Bridge crosses the Little Mary's River about 4 miles north of Chester and along the southeast side of Illinois Route



The Thompson Mill Covered Bridge crosses the Kaskaskia River in Shelby County. (Photo courtesy, the Illinois Department of Transportation)

# Five covered bridges survive in Illinois

150. The 86-foot-long bridge was built in 1854 of hand-hewn native white oak timber and was in constant use through 1930.

Original construction was financed by a toll on the Randolph County Plank Road, which was used to move farm products from the Bremen area to the busy river port of Chester.

The Thompson Mill Covered Bridge crosses the Kaskaskia River one-half mile north of Cowden and 2.5 miles east of Illinois Route 128 in Shelby County. It was built in 1867, near the site where a mill, owned by John Thompson, once stood. It has also been called the Dry Point Bridge for the township in which it is located.

Shelby County appropriated \$2,000 for the bridge and later added \$500 for roofing and siding. It has an overall length of 160 feet with a

Thomas Black, and has a 60-foot clear span. Sugar Creek Covered Bridge was restored in 1965 following passage of a state law requiring covered bridge maintenance.

Further work is now under way with federal funds from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act.

The Oquawka Wagon Bridge crosses Henderson Creek about 2.5 miles south of Oquawka. It was built in 1866 by Jacob Allaman at the site of a previous structure, known as the Eames Bridge, on land claimed by one of Henderson County's first settlers, James Ryason.

Allaman built barns and bridges in Pennsylvania before he moved, in 1858, to a home 4 miles east of Oquawka, and he likely built other bridges in the area.

In service for 68 years, the Oquawka Wagon Bridge was given to the State of Illinois in 1935, when the road was relocated and a new bridge was built 300 feet downstream.

The bridge was restored after a flood in 1982, and the restoration work won a Historic Preservation and Cultural Enhancement Award from the U.S. Department of Transportation.



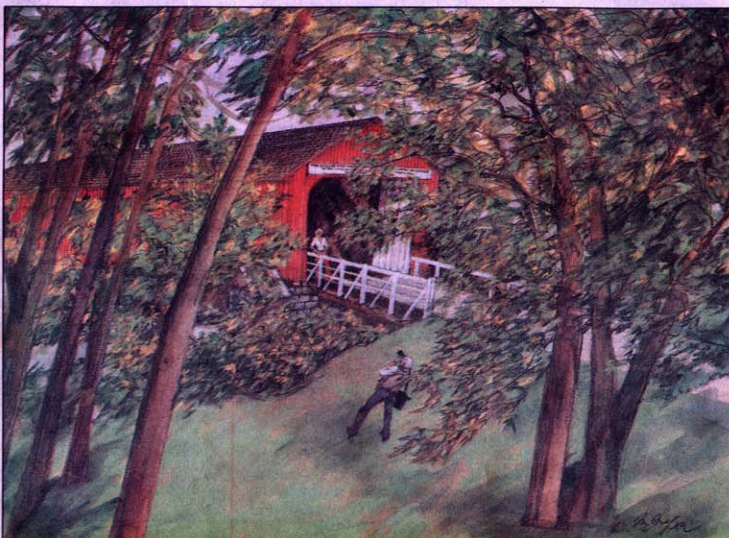
The interior of the Sugar Creek Covered Bridge.

covered span of 103 feet. The original timbers are still intact, and the roof and siding have been restored.

Sugar Creek Covered Bridge crosses Sugar Creek about three-quarters of a mile west of Interstate 55 and 3 miles south of the Lake Springfield Bridge in Sangamon County. It was built around 1880 by



The Oquawka Wagon Bridge in Henderson County was built in 1866 and served the area for 68 years. (Photo by Tony Miller)



Today's visitors to Red Covered Bridge can relive a piece of history or imagine it as the background of a romantic tale. (Watercolor by Franklin McMahon)