

AMISH-MENNONITE BARNs IN MADISON COUNTY, OHIO:
THE PERSISTENCE OF TRADITIONAL FORM ELEMENTS

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ABSTRACT: - The settlement and migration of Pennsylvania-Dutch peoples has left an almost indelible imprint on the American landscape because of their adherence to traditional modes of livelihood including building practices. Among the Pennsylvania-Dutch, the Amish-Mennonites have most distinctively preserved certain traditions and their settlements provide images of the value system of these people.

As in other parts of Ohio, but somewhat later, Amish and Mennonite families settled in the northern townships of Madison County. Here, as elsewhere, they developed their dairy agriculture. Abandoning the traditional fore-bay barn with entrance to the second floor, they adopted the midwestern-style American barn with ground-level threshing floor and consisting of four to five bays. At the same time, they retained traditional form features by utilizing the lower level of the barn entirely for animals. The characteristic "Dutch" doors leading to various stables indicate the functional divisions of the barn. Also, the large gable-addition to the main barn typical of Amish-Mennonite barns in other parts of Ohio was continued. By far the most apparent traditional form element on these barns is the large pent roof, taking the place of the fore-bay or overhang of the earlier Pennsylvania-Dutch barns.

The Amish-Mennonite barn of Madison County is truly a hybrid form. It incorporates contemporary elements of the American dairy barn and traditional forms of the Pennsylvania-Dutch culture and, thus, serves to indicate the persistence of tradition and its spatial diffusion.

The German settlement geographer August Meitzen once wrote "Das Haus ist die Verkörperung des Volksgeistes" (Meitzen, 1882, p. 3). Translated into English it means that the house is the embodiment of a people's soul. It appears to this writer that the point which Meitzen wanted to make with this statement was that common or vernacular buildings, houses as well as service structures, are built from experience and by their forms, materials, and methods of construction provide an image of a people's traditional mode and livelihood.

To the settlement geographer who is interested in understanding and explaining the built-up human landscape, the persistence of traditional building elements are of considerable significance, permitting generalizations about diffusion and acculturation and providing criteria for regionalization.

Because of their staunch adherence to traditional ways, the Amish who are principally a rural folk, have established some of the more distinctive settlement complexes in America. Typically, an Amish farmstead consists of a multiplicity of structures indicative of its owner's attention to subsistence. Dominating that assemblage of buildings is the large white or red banked barn and its right angle addition to the threshing floor, making for a T or L shape outline. Just as his barn, so the Amishman's house is banked, offering in its partial subterranean portion the cool surroundings for the location of the summer kitchen. The presence of two houses, one called and usually functioning as the "grand-daddy house," must make even the most negligent of observers cognizant of the unique elements of an Amish settlement complex.

The Amish, as is well known, are members of the Pennsylvania-German or Pennsylvania-Dutch culture whose progenitors settled in southeastern Pennsylvania during the early 1700's. Although they number less than five percent of the Pennsylvania-German ethnic strain (Mook and Hostettler, 1957, p. 26), they are certainly the best known Pennsylvania-German sectarian group because of their refusal to assimilate with, as they call it, "English" ways.

From their initial holdings in southeastern Pennsylvania, the Amish have become widely disseminated in the United States, also establishing some settlements in Canada and in Latin America. As early as 1803, Amish

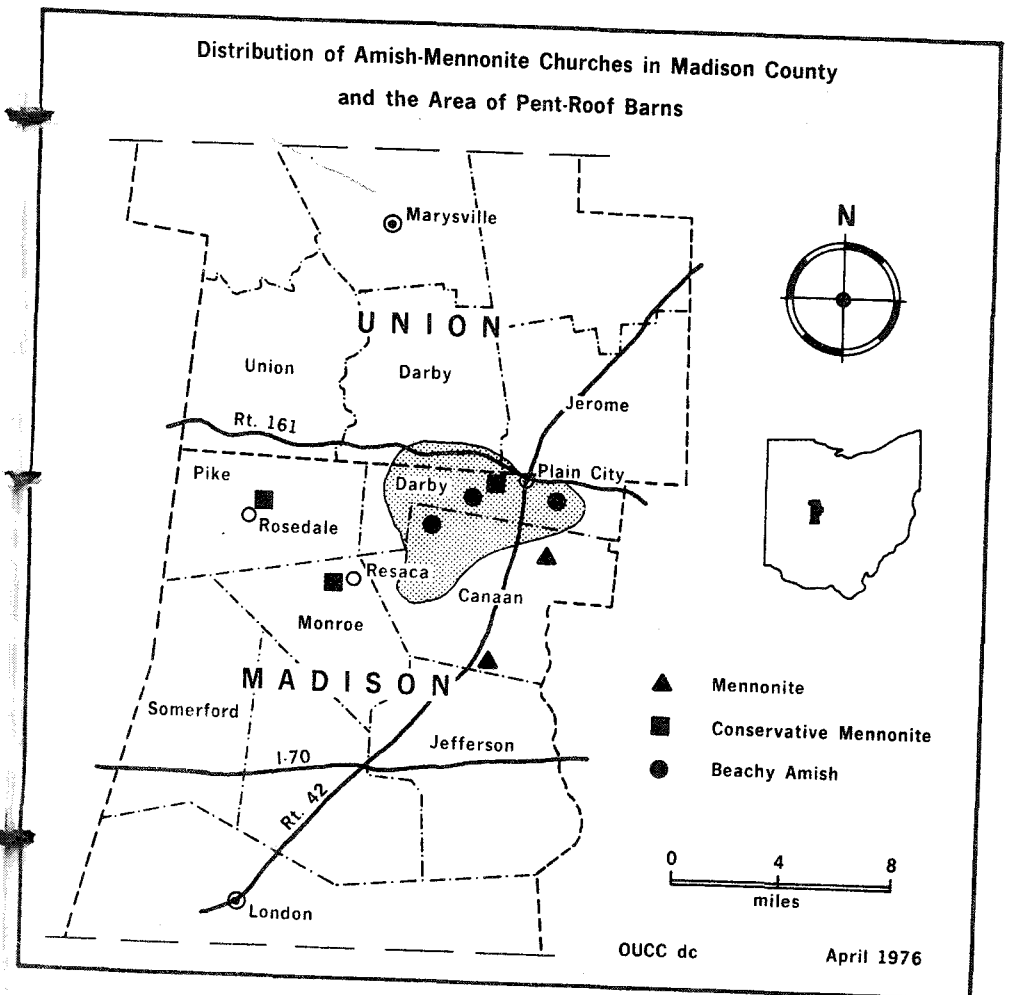


Figure 1.

migrants selected lands in Holmes County to which they returned in 1808, to begin the first permanent Amish settlement in Ohio (Stotzfus, 1969, p. 73). Today the state is home to the largest number of Amish in the United States and their settlements are located in several widely dispersed counties. One of these is Madison County where several Amish families from Holmes County formed a settlement in 1896 (Stotzfus, 1968, p. 168). As elsewhere in Ohio, the Amish who had taken up land along Darby Creek in northern Madison County, began to develop dairy farming. This economic activity remains important today in the settlement area. Socially, however, this one-time Old Order Amish settlement has become subdivided into four different groups including Old Order Amish, Beachy Amish, Conservative Mennonites, and Mennonites. Time and religious reform movements have taken their toll of the Old Order Amish churches which at one time prevailed in the Madison County settlement. Figure 1 shows, among other things, the distribution of Amish-Mennonite churches. The concentration of Beachy Amish churches coincides with an area where the only remaining Old Order Amish congregation and the most noticeable Amish settlement effects are located.

The Amish farmstead in Madison County is little different from those found in other parts of the state. There is the usual cluster of structures including the "grand-daddy house." Characteristically, the main house sits back of a large vegetable garden flanked by rows of flowers. The farm lane continues past the houses and smaller service structures toward the large barn. Facing it, one familiar with Amish or Pennsylvania-Dutch barns would immediately recognize a major contrast because the barn is not banked nor does it include a ramp which, in the absence of sloping terrain, provides access to the usual upper level

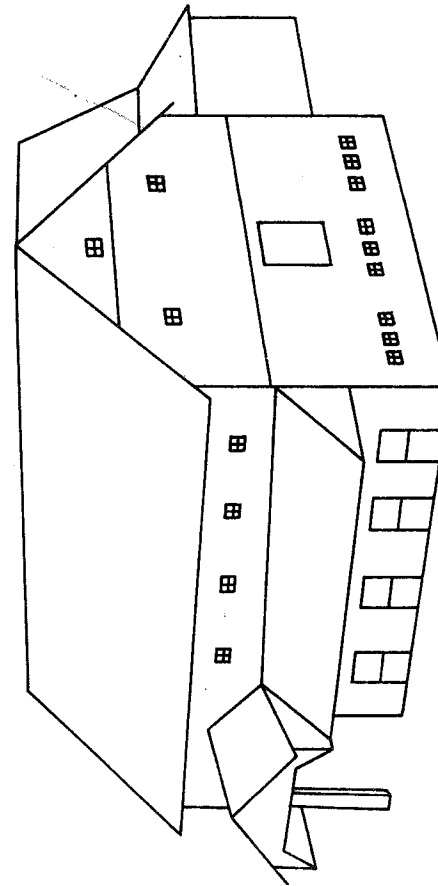


Figure 2.

threshing floor and hay mows. Instead, this barn has as other midwestern barns a ground-level entrance (Fig. 2) leading onto the traditional threshing floor which forms one of its five bays or structural partitions. Unloading hay, etc., is accomplished with a forklift that runs near the ridge of the large gabled roof.

This barn type is distributed uniformly throughout the Amish settlement core of Madison County. Built during the early 1900's it consists of a frame of heavy, sawn timbers whose mortise and tenon joints are secured with wooden pegs. Vertical clapboard siding covers the frame. The dimensions of the barn, excluding its addition, are approximately 75-80 by 35-40 feet. There are five structural divisions or bays. One of these forms the drive or threshing floor area. The others are partitioned for animal stalls at the lower level, but they are open, forming a series of inter-connected hay mows, at the upper level.

In its basic form elements, this barn is unquestionably of midwestern origin and, thus, must be recognized as an adopted material trait of the Amish settlement group. As such it offers evidence of an ongoing acculturation process between the Amish and the greater American rural culture. However, in its final form, the Amish-Mennonite barn of Madison County is neither midwestern nor traditional Amish (e.g., Pennsylvania-Dutch), but is a truly hybrid type. Taking an essentially midwestern barn type, the Amish modified it both internally and externally to satisfy specific traditional needs. The result of these modifications are a series of form elements that reveal the barn's relationship to more traditional types which are found in the older Amish settlement areas.

The most noticeable changes on the adopted "midwestern" barn are:

1. Subdivision of the entire ground level into stall areas. Each stall area functionally set apart and oriented to

the long side of the barn where "Dutch" doors provide access, fresh air, and illumination (Fig. 2). Reliance by Amish on large numbers of draft animals and their practice of stabling dairy cattle necessitates a sizeable shelter, thus influencing the dimensions and functional divisions of the barn. Retention of the internal subdivisions (e.g., stables) of the traditional Pennsylvania-Dutch-Amish barn has caused the shift of the main barn entrance from its generally central position toward the long-side margins. The entrance is protected by a projecting gable which is part of the pent roof assemblage but is functionally modified to permit loaded wagons to enter.

2. Addition of a pent-roof to the main frontage of the barn (Fig. 2). This most apparent form element which has been used to classify the Madison County Amish barn is generally found in southwestern Germany and in portions of Switzerland and is a part of the traditional material trait complex of the Amish. Functionally it takes the place of the protective overhang or forebay typical of Pennsylvania-Dutch barns.
3. Right angle addition to the main structure providing for the T or L-shape outline of most Amish barns. While this feature is not restricted to Amish barns and is not part of the original Pennsylvania-Dutch barns, its ubiquitous appearance in Amish areas makes it an essential criterion in the identification of the Madison County barns. Functionally it serves as a cattle run and to store straw and hay.

The distribution of the pent-roof barns adheres closely to the area which constitutes the original settlement core of Amish in Madison County. That particular part of the county, encompassing essentially Darby Township and situated to the southwest of Plain City, remains to this day the center of the most conservative factions of the greater Amish-Mennonite settlement, a fact which, as previously noted, is well illustrated by the distribution of Beachy Amish churches (Fig. 1). Beyond the area of pent-roof barns are the more liberal Mennonite and Conservative Mennonite churches as well as a number of churches of other denominational groups. This is a transitional area where Amish settlement effects, as for example, those described above are displaced by generally midwestern material traits.

The pent-roof barns of northern Madison County serve as diagnostic traits of Amish settlement. Their presence supports the contention that vernacular forms possess a definite timelessness and that the identification and explanation of such forms are basic to an understanding of the diffusion and spatial arrangements of specific folk cultures.

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THE SILO IN THE EASTERN MIDWEST:
PATTERNS OF EVOLUTION AND DISTRIBUTION

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ABSTRACT: - Silos are quite recent phenomena on the farmsteads of the eastern Midwest. The earliest silos were built subsequent to 1875 and it was not until the late 1880s that silos began to be built in any considerable numbers.

The earliest widely built silos were of rectangular form and of wooden materials. These proved to be inefficient and were supplanted by circular silos constructed first of wooden staves and later by brick, tile, poured concrete, cement staves and fiberglass. Excavated pit or trench silos and bunkers have also been utilized to store green fodder, but are not as common as other types.

The paper discusses the probable dates of introduction of each silo type variation and the current areas of concentration of each.

The eastern Midwest, as defined by the states of Indiana and Ohio, and the lower peninsula of Michigan is a large yet compact area in which a variety of agricultural activities occur. Climatic variations and landform differences are great enough to permit a wide response of farming operations. Some portions of the region are now extensively urbanized while other sections remain rural and more remote. In certain parts of the region agriculture is in decline; elsewhere farming prospers.

Agricultural emphasis within the region is quite diverse. Most of the lower peninsula of Michigan, northeastern Ohio and a small area in northwestern Indiana are considered part of the Dairy Belt. Much of Indiana and western Ohio contains a Corn Belt feed grain and livestock agriculture. Southeastern Indiana and a larger area of southern and eastern Ohio have an emphasis on general or mixed farming. In narrow areas fringing the east side of Lake Michigan and the south side of Lake Erie specialized fruit farming and horticulture predominate.