

The Amish

Perhaps the most well known component of Lancaster County tourism is the region's Old Order Amish community. Lancaster County is home to more than 25,000 Old Order Amish, the oldest and second largest community in the United States. The Amish lead a frugal, humble life. They prefer horse drawn buggies to automobiles and shun modern technology.

The Amish came to America from Europe in the late 1600s and early 1700s in search of the religious freedom they desired. Today, the Amish live a life of humility and simplicity, much as they did when they first settled in Pennsylvania. The Amish dress in Plain clothing and do not own things like cars or computers. Their homes do not have electricity, telephones, or other modern conveniences that the "English" (how the Amish refer to their non-Amish neighbors) take for granted.

The Amish are true to their values and to the communities in which they live. Always willing to lend a helping hand, the Amish could be compared to one big extended family. If one Amish family is experiencing a hardship, such as unemployment, a health issue or death or property loss, the whole community rallies together to offer assistance. Close knit communities have been a constant since the Amish first settled in North America three centuries ago.

The traditional nuclear, multigenerational households practiced by the Amish keep men working outside the home while the women tend to the house and children. Farming is an important part of their lifestyle. The Amish initially settled in Lancaster County because of its fertile soil; about half of the Amish still do work in agriculture, but in recent years, some Amish have chosen to trade in their crops for small businesses. Construction, woodworking, iron making and other businesses run by the Amish help provide them with a sturdy income and provide a service to the community. Some Amish entrepreneurs have also set up quilt and craft shops inside spare rooms in their homes and barns.

For more information please contact the Pennsylvania Dutch Convention & Visitors Bureau at 1-800-PA-DUTCH or go online to www.padutchcountry.com.

