



*Senior travel correspondent PJK, Trenton NJ:* We have a special connection to the Amish community in Pennsylvania. Exactly a half-century ago, in June 1966, we honeymooned there, about 100 miles west of Philadelphia. We checked into the Amish-named Foodergong Inn. It no longer exists, except in our memories.

It proved to be very comfy and clean. The hotel restaurant, of course, offered genuine Amish food. If fatty meats, butter-loaded potato dishes, heavy breads and family-style serving elbow-to-elbow at ten-person tables is considered cool, then we ate Amish. Additionally, throughout our week in Pennsylvania Dutch country, we found many other restaurants with wonderful, genuine Amish food and loaded up on it. Briefly, the Amish, now in 21 communities throughout the US and Canada, were originally German religious groups who suffered discrimination until English Quaker William Penn invited them to emigrate to his vast lands in Colonial Pennsylvania in the late 17th Century and live in total freedom. The largest group, now consisting of more than 20,000 people, still farm the lands around Lancaster much as they did when they first arrived in America.

As most tourist publicity reveals, some still keep to their old ways of dress, religious practices and rejection of many modern conveniences. Tourists can still see their quaint black, horse-drawn carriages as they travel from their farms to visit others and go into town to purchase cloth, tools and other hardware supplies.

They maintain their own schools and treat illnesses with their own folk medicines. They grow their food and livestock. Despite considerable pressures from modern society and annoyance by tourists, they fiercely maintain their old ways. During America's wars over the past two centuries, many Amish young men have been conscientious objectors. When forced to serve through the draft system, most agreed only to serve in medical units.

If you can't get to Amish country, and want to learn about their ways, see the Harrison Ford movie, "Witness". A Philly cop in hiding, his character lived with an Amish family until he could

catch the bad guys and clear his name. The movie had a happy-tragic ending when he departed, although he was in love with the young widow. The woman could never abandon her Amish ways and live in current society.

If you plan to visit Amish country, contact Lancaster County resources for info on the latest tourist events and attractions. Also check out all the many restaurants, hotels, bed'n'breakfasts and family-style eateries. Consider signing up for such tourist features as buggy rides and visits to Amish farms and ranches (mostly touristy set-ups because the real Amish discourage such intrusions).

Of course, in addition to taking photos and videos of your gang posing with locals, you can do what grinning tourists have done for years. Get your selfies in the quaint towns of Intercourse and Blue Ball.