

# Planning & Zoning for Plain Sect Communities

Northern Oneida County Council of Governments  
Land Use, Code Enforcement, and Property  
Tax Assessment in Amish Communities  
January 28 2025

**Cornell AAP**  
Architecture Art Planning

# Anabaptist Plain Sects



## Amish

- 5,000 – Population of Old Order Amish in U.S about 1900;
- 241,000 – Est. population of Old Order Amish in U.S. and Ontario;
- 1,400 Church districts/26 states.

\* Cooksey, Elizabeth, & Cory Anderson Ohio State 2012

# Anabaptist Plain Sects



## Mennonites

- +/- 1.7 million in 82 countries – “traditional” to “assimilated;”
- +/- 800,000 in U.S.
- +/- 340,000 - Est. population of “traditional” Mennonites in U.S. and Ontario\*;

\* Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, 2012

# Growing Population

## New York

- One of the fastest-growing Amish populations in US;
- Now 5th-largest overall;
- Today over 23,000 Amish live in New York (2024);
- 58 settlements and over 175 church districts identified.

Source: E. Wesner, New York Amish: 2024 Guide, June 2024  
<https://amishamerica.com/new-york-amish/>



# Growing Population



## New York

- Avoiding sprawl;
- Need for agricultural lands to maintain family, community;
- Improve prospects for youth;
- Theological/philosophical conflicts.

# Who Are They

- Rooted in the Anabaptist (“re-baptizers”) movement originating in Switzerland during Protestant Reformation in the early 1500s.
- Broke with Roman Catholic tradition, replaced ritual of infant baptism with adult baptism.
- Rebelled against a legalistic, exploitive and irrelevant church hierarchy (Catholic & new Protestant churches)
- “...in the world but not of it...” (I Peter 2:11)



# Schleitheim Articles (1527)

- Adult baptism – for those who have been taught repentance;
- The ban – for those who fall into error and sin, and refuse to repent;
- The breaking of bread – reserved for those who reject the “dead works of darkness” and the “table of the devil;”
- Separation – from the evil and wickedness of the world and the weapons of violence and their use: *“You shall not resist evil.”*

# Schleitheim Articles (1527)

- The Shepherds – persons of good report, who can preside over the prayer and in the breaking of bread;
- The Sword (government) – coercive, worldly institution that rules according to the flesh not the spirit, that punishes and kills, (but also) guards and protects the good;
- Rejection of Oaths – one's speech shall be yea or nay, as the swearing of oaths are for those who are quarreling or making promises, and against the teachings of Christ.



# Who They Are



## Mennonites (1530s)

- Brethren movement founded in Holland by Simon Menno, Catholic priest who left church.
- Largest of the Anabaptist Brethren groups;
- Span the spectrum – Old Order to almost “English”

# Who They Are

## Amish (1690s)

- Swiss, Dutch and Alsatian followers who joined Jacob Amman in a split with the mainline Mennonite movement over matters of doctrine.



# Central Tenet: Gelassenheit

Roughly translated as tranquil submission, or yielding to a higher authority, .i.e.:

* self-surrender	* forsaking ambition
* self-denial	* contentment
* yielding to others	

*“[A] life etched with modesty and reserve.”*

Donald Kraybill, Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies

# Who They Are



“The Anabaptist farmer.” from cover of an Alsatian almanac, 1841.  
source: Hostetler, *Amish Society*

## 1727-1770

- 1<sup>st</sup> wave of migration to North America

## 1816-1860

- 2<sup>nd</sup> major migration

# Negotiating With Caesar

## 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment religious freedoms vs. public health, safety and welfare

- Pacifism & military service;
- Education;
- Social Security;
- Public health laws;
- Highway safety;
- Building codes;
- Land use regulations.



# Thank You

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