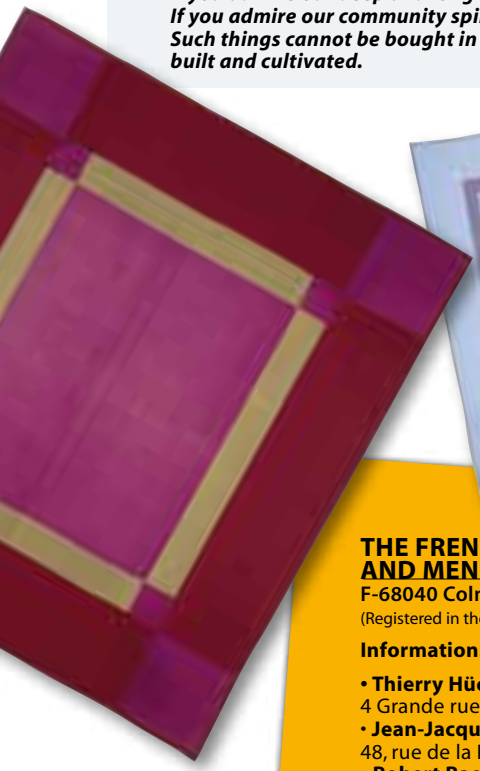
And Today ?

The Amish live a very simple life, far from the attractions of the world which surrounds them. There is a high regard for family. Grandparents usually build small houses in close proximity in order to offer help if needed. Patchwork quilts symbolise a model of community work par excellence. Quilting gives women the occasion to gather together regularly, and also provides a good opportunity for social interaction.
The final product can serve as a wedding present, or be sold for the benefit of MCC, the Mennonite humanitarian association (or the development and humanitarian arm of the Mennonite church).

John A. Hostetler, widely recognised expert on the Amish, declared at the close of the 1993 Amish colloquium held in Ste Marie aux Mines:

> ***"Often those who are seeking a better life, admire the Amish from afar.***
>
> To this, the Amish respond:
> ***If you admire our faith, strengthen your own.***
> ***If you admire our sense of commitment, deepen your own.***
> ***If you admire our deep and long lasting values, live them.***
> ***If you admire our community spirit, build one up.***
> ***Such things cannot be bought in a package nor found in a book. They can only be built and cultivated."***



THE FRENCH ASSOCIATION OF ANABAPTIST AND MENNONITE HISTORY
F-68040 Colmar-Ingersheim
(Registered in the association registry at the tribunal clerk's office in Kaysersberg)

Information:

- **Thierry Hückel :** *President,*
4 Grande rue - F-70400, Couthenans • Thierry.huckel@orange.fr
- **Jean-Jacques Hirschy :** *president d'honneur,*
48, rue de la République - F-68040 Ingersheim • jj.hirschy@ yahoo.fr
- **Robert Baecher :** *historian,*
32b, rue de l'Arc - F-68120 Pfastatt • robert.baecher@orange.fr
- **René Eyer :** *public relations, European patchwork meeting,*
6, rue Rohan- F-67230 Benfeld • rc.eyer@orange. fr

*création graphique : **grafikexpo.fr** • crédit photos : **Jacques Légeret***

The European Meeting

Patchwork

Ste Marie-aux-Mines | Alsace | France

*Cradle of the **Amish** Movement*

Origins of the Amish Movement

The origins of the Amish movement can be traced back to the 16th century, and are found within the Anabaptist-Mennonite branch of the Reformation.

Mennonites per se are not very well known. They were given their name by others as were Lutherans and Calvinists who were named in memory of Luther and Calvin. Mennonites take their name from Menno Simons, a Dutch priest and reformer (1495-1561), despite the fact that the movement originally began in Switzerland in 1525.

The Reformation initiated by Zwingli in Zurich was under pressure. Fundamental differences between reformers appeared on such issues as the separation of church and state, the use of violence and the practice of baptism. Several Anabaptist reformers found themselves at the heart of this debate. These included, among others, Conrad Grebel, a theologian closely related to Zwingli, Michel Sattler, a former prior of Saint Peter's monastery in the Black Forest and co-writer of the movement's first confession of faith entitled "Entente Fraternelle" in 1527, and Pilgram Marpeck, an engineer from Tyrol employed by the city of Strasbourg and a fervent defender of non-violence. These leaders were committed to restoring a church which was more in line with the Christian communities of the early centuries.

Those whose theological convictions led them to refuse infant baptism and recognise only adult baptism upon confession of faith in God through Jesus Christ, were called «Anabaptists», that is to say, the "re-baptizers".
(Subsequent) Persecution led to emigration to Germany, Alsace, the Montbeliard region, and Holland, where the authorities tolerated their presence.
In the centuries to follow, their descendants fled to other countries and continents -- to Russia, then on to North and South America.

The Birth of the Amish Movement

The seigniory of Ribeaupierre, close to Sainte Marie aux Mines welcomed a great number of refugees in the 17th century, including Huguenots as well as Anabaptists.
These two religious communities got on well, and even held common religious celebrations.
It was here in this «Val d'Argent «that the Amish movement began in 1693, under the incentive of Jacob Amman, a Swiss preacher from the Simmenthal.
According to Amman, the Christian assembly was bound to live according to Biblical principles in the manner understood and adopted by the elders of the assembly.
The Christian family known as the «Amish» is in some ways more like a religious order than a church as typically understood. Amish emphasis on mutual aid and voluntary submission to group discipline are two elements which fundamentally distinguish them from other churches.

The establishment of compulsory military service in France during the French Revolution accelerated Amish immigration to the New World. From that moment on, there would no longer be room for this type of Christian community in France or the rest of Europe.
Since that time, the Amish movement, born in Alsace, is now deeply rooted in Pennsylvania and other regions of North America. It is one of the branches of the Anabaptist movement which has connections to other Anabaptist churches, most notably in the sphere of material aid to the world's underprivileged.

And Today?

The Mennonites

Mennonites today are affiliated with other Anabaptist-related churches who share the same common convictions. Thanks to persistent, discreet missionary outreach and work in development, they are now found on every continent in the world. Living in communion is exigent, demanding coherence, realism and perseverance. It is a continual learning process, requiring faith, hope, confidence, forgiveness and brotherly love. It begins at home and in local congregations, and then through participation in the world-wide communion and all its implications. Contributing to the life, growth and witness of its communities and being a sign of hope for the future, herein lies the challenge.

There are presently 1,300,000 baptised members worldwide. 450,000 can be found in North America, and as many in Africa. There are also a large number in developing countries.

There are around 2000 Mennonites in France. They are divided up among thirty local congregations, and located mainly in the northeastern quarter of the country. These congregations are grouped together under the Association of Evangelical Mennonite Churches of France (AEEMF). They are principally directed by lay leadership, and each congregation is allowed a high degree of local autonomy. Leadership ministries include elders, preachers and deacons. . . .
Members generally live within 30 kilometres of their place of worship, and gather every Sunday for worship. Members come with their families. Children and teenagers are grouped together according to their ages for religious education (Sunday school).

Mennonites have been active socially for numerous years through their involvement in the development and management of social institutions for the handicapped and elderly, as well as for children.
Diverse initiatives are also taken in favour of victims of cataclysms, wars and poverty in the world.

The Amish

The Amish usually live in the country.
They are farmers, craftsmen and businessmen. There is not one designated place for worship, but rather homes are usually built large enough to accommodate many people. They meet together every other Sunday. A significant part of the time is spent reading and discussing the Bible, which is interspersed with the singing of ancient hymns.
These gatherings also offer the occasion to discuss a variety of subjects. They are also occasions of communion and communication.
The Amish practice diverse forms of mutual aid. The community covers expenses in case of hospitalisation or major fire damage. In case of fire, the community gathers at the disaster site the following day, and cleans up the rubble before beginning reconstruction.
The men work on the building site, the women cook, and the disaster becomes transformed into a celebration of community.