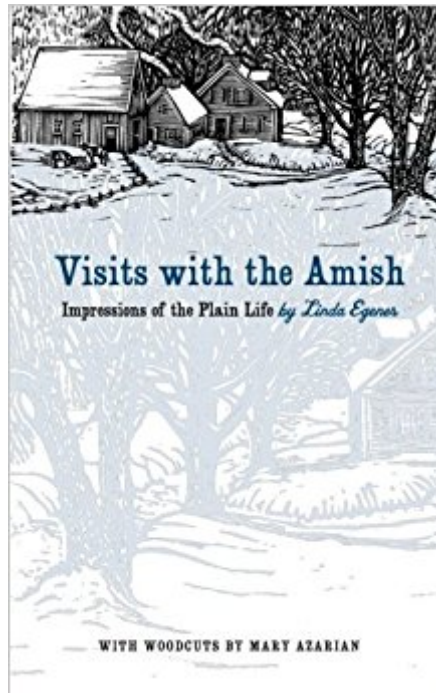




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# Visits With The Amish: Impressions Of The Plain Life (Bur Oak Book)



## Synopsis

Who are the "plain people," the men and women who till their fields with horse and plow, travel by horse and buggy, live without electricity and telephones, and practice "help thy neighbor" in daily life? Linda Egenes visited with her Old Order Amish neighbors in southeast Iowa for thirteen years before writing this informative and companionable introduction to their lifeways. Drawn to their slower pace of life and their resistance to the lures of a consumer society, Egenes found a warm welcome among the Amish, and in return she has given us an equally warm perspective on Amish family life as she experienced it. The Amish value harmony in family life above all, and Egenes found an abundance of harmony as she savored homemade ice cream in a kitchen where the refrigerator ran on kerosene, learned to milk a two-bucket cow, helped cook dinner for nine in a summer kitchen, spent the day in a one-room schoolhouse, and sang "The Hymn of Praise" in its original German at Sunday service. Whether quilting at a weekly sewing circle above the Stringtown Grocery, playing Dutch Blitz and Dare Base with schoolchildren, learning the intricacies of harness making, or mulching strawberries in a huge garden, Egenes was treated with the kindness, respect, and dignity that exemplify the strong community ties of the Amish. Her engaging account of her visits with the Amish, beautifully illustrated with woodcuts by Caldecott Medal winner Mary Azarian, reveals the serene and peaceful ways of a plain people whose lives are anything but plain.

## Book Information

Series: Bur Oak Book

Paperback: 126 pages

Publisher: University Of Iowa Press; 1 edition (March 15, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 158729785X

ISBN-13: 978-1587297854

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,728,531 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #16 in Books > Travel >

United States > Iowa #239 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations &

Sects > Mennonite #11597 in Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Travel

## Customer Reviews

"Visits with the Amish is as gentle and open as the lives of the people it chronicles. The detailed mini-portraits are compassionate yet as candid and observant as anything written about the plain people that I have read. By honestly sketching the little things of everyday Amish culture, Egenes manages to capture the faithful heart of this community of believers."

•Scott Savage, author, *A Plain Life: Walking My Belief*

"Direct, respectful, and informative, *Visits with the Amish* takes us into the very homes and businesses of the plain people. There we enter a culture so different from the American mainstream that we are forced to examine our own spiritual beliefs, identities, and values. This slim, quiet book should assume a big place on the bookshelves of anyone interested in anthropology, religion, folklore, or sustainable living."

•Mary Swander, author, *Out of This World: A Journey of Healing*

"Visits with the Amish invites the reader to experience glimpses into the daily life of the Old Order Amish and gives a full sense of what it means to be Amish. Conversations about milking, cooking in the summer kitchen, quilting, and more capture in their own words their heartfelt commitment to home, school, community, and customs."

•Martha Moore Davis, author, *Sarah's Seasons: An Amish Diary and Conversation*

Linda Egenes has written about the Amish for *Cobblestone*, *Plain*, the *Iowa Source*, and the *Plain Reader*. She is an adjunct faculty member at Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, Iowa. Vermont artist Mary Azarian won the Caldecott Medal in 1999 for her illustrations in *Snowflake Bentley*.

The book is somewhat romanticized, but I believe it was just because the author fell in love with the Amish. That fact doesn't detract from the book in anyway. It is a beautiful take and I will read it over and over to glean out fun facts :) the Amish are a very interesting bunch and she paints a easy to follow picture that draws you in.

This was a short, quick read that provides lots of insight into the life and beliefs of the Amish people.

Sitting down to read *Visits with the Amish*, *Impressions of the Plain Life*, by Linda Egenes, I was instantly transported into a world where there is no sense of time. A world in which the pressures of my daily life—of the unanswered emails, the flashing phone notifications, and looming work deadlines simply fell away for a while. This non-fiction book is written in a style that matches the candidness of which the Amish people live. It paints a picture of the simple yet

profoundly family-oriented daily lives of a people who have turned away from the modern life as we know it. Through *Visits with the Amish*, We get to peek into the closed off world of a people who live today as we did just a few generations ago. We get to meet their delightful children as they go about their daily chores, and ride with them on the Iowa farm roads in their black buggies. We get to go to their one room school houses for lessons, and sit in with the entire Amish community as they get together in their homes for their Sunday service. Quite simply we get to see the world through their eyes — the eyes of a people untouched by our modern day distractions. And we get to live for a moment, if only in our imaginations, that sweetness of a simpler life.

I've long been fascinated with Utopian communities and anthropology, partly because I've always wondered if there were better ways of living than what we have now -- isolated families watching too much TV, endless consumption, working 50 weeks a year, no time to volunteer or spend much time with neighbors, no time to cook meals from scratch so our food is chemical, fattening, and non-nutritious. Seems like our way of life could be improved on. Of all the societies I've read about, the Amish are one of the best, and Linda Egenes's book is one of my favorites on this topic, because she captures so well what it would be like to actually live in that community. I've read several university press books about the Amish, but those don't give you a real feel for day to day life at home, school, work, or within the community. And I was pleased to see that the aspects I'm not fond of -- the shunning, and excessive religious emphasis at the expense of scholarship, are not as severe or go as far as I thought. Those who don't fit in can join more liberal Amish or Mennonite groups, can be forgiven by the congregation, and so on. I especially wish I could do my canning and other chores with people, that we could all help one another out instead of living in isolated nuclear family units. Chores aren't chores when you're working with other people. If you're interested in learning more about the Amish way of life, I highly recommend this book.

This book, *Visits with the Amish, Impressions of the Plain Life* by Linda Egenes, with Woodcuts by Mary Azarian astounds in a gentle way: the background matter, and the narratives, are full of love both because of the subject matter (the people the book is about) and the gentle flow of consciousness of the author creating the book (which we read). And the woodcut illustrations are worth the price of the book, too. The book illustrates a way of life which strengthens by bringing the family members close to each other, and close to God. The book has useful recipes. For food. But it shows how the Old Order Amish way of living works, too. The author is a superlative writer. Each chapter opens with exposition, as introduction and background, to the narrative of a visit, which

follows. Excerpts from The Budget (a newspaper or periodical for the wider Amish community) give a broader area of information, i.e. other parts of the U.S. The book is very interesting, fun and really rewarding reading. It's enjoyable to read. There are many informative and welcome facts about the customs. The writer's style is unpretentious. The book is easy to read. It reads like a story. I have a simple and peaceful feeling while reading it. Here is a quote from the third paragraph of Chapter 2: "The Amish believe that farmers live closest to God. 'On a farm, you can see that God is in all things that are alive and growing', explains Leah Peachy, an Amish woman I met in North Carolina."

I read this book on a cold winter Sunday and was warmed by its descriptive portrayal of Amish life. Egenes has a strong way with words that transports, entertains, and informs sharing her personal accounts of treasured visits to Amish families in Iowa and North Carolina. Through her eyes, we learn their customs, philosophies, and gentle humor. Extras are thrown in too: recipes, Amish songs, and how to make a horse harness from "huge sheets of leather, loosely rolled like giant cinnamon sticks." In our harried lives, it is good to learn from a contemporary culture who chooses to not rush: "Do not be like the world, but be contented." We should all strive for that now and then.

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