

## Living and Learning

The first time that I can recall hearing about the Amish was in the late 1950s, and it involved a family trip to Pennsylvania Dutch country in the vicinity of Lancaster. My main recollections were of food: lots of noodle dishes, chicken corn soup, and what had become a Philadelphia favorite—scrapple. I learned that buttons often took the place of zippers, and suspenders that of belts. Broad-brimmed black or straw hats worn by the men and bonnets (or prayer coverings) for the women rounded out my very limited perception of Amish culture, and I was still totally ignorant of who or what the Mennonites were.

Trips to the Lancaster County Farmers Market, first in Wayne and later in Strafford, brought a little more familiarity, following conversations with some of the standholders—mainly about produce and farming.

Fast-forward to 2004 when my wife, Debbie and I decided to lease a stand at The Market in Strafford, becoming one of four non-produce vendors there. Our market niche was to be centered on gifts, crafts and accessories, some of them hand-made items. Debbie, her mother, Millie and her sister Bonnie were all crafters, so it seemed like a good fit.

Several months into our adventure, a world opened up to us. After observing our neighbors at the Market for a while, our perceptions began to change. We had marveled at the long hours they put in, many arriving from Lancaster in vans that they hired for coming and going. Quite a long day from 3 AM 'til whenever they got home after dark. But the best part for us was getting to know names and families, and sometimes family stories. Among them was young Stephen who rehabilitated tired-out workhorses (he ran a used horse market on the side), and Liam across from us at the bakery, with 13 kids and a perennial smile on his face.

Gradually we had become part of the community, and gradually my waistline grew along with the generosity of our good neighbors at The Market. In a sense, being there was like living a history lesson from days gone by—simpler times without the habitual reliance on advanced technologies common in our culture. Not to say that cell phones weren't in evidence, but I think their main purpose was to call people, without getting overly involved with social media and other tempting distractions.

It was a pleasure to work at the Market with such a nice group of people—we miss them dearly now that we have moved on to the next chapter of our lives. — *Loyd Pakradooni*

*Loyd Pakradooni grew up on the Main Line, worked in the printing industry, and is a past editor of the History Quarterly.*

## Comments from a Loyal Market Customer

As loyal customers for over 20 years, it would not seem like Saturday if we were not at the Market in the morning.

As the years have gone by, it is a 7:00 AM arrival time, going from vendor to vendor purchasing the high quality items such as meats, vegetables, bread, prepared foods, as well as candy, etc.

For us, shopping at the Market is different than a traditional grocery store not only in offering a higher quality product, but also in the friendships we have made over the years with both vendors and other customers. It is not uncommon, if someone doesn't show up at their usual time, to become concerned and call to check on them to make sure they are okay. Special bonds and long term friendships have occurred along with picking up my produce.

We look forward to many more years of continued friendships and shopping at the market. — *Barb & Dan Kurkjian.*



Produce colors abound at the Good Harvest Farm produce stand at the Strafford Market as Andrew Herr waits on a customer. *Courtesy of Roger D. Thorne.*