

Change or Continuity? The Illinois Amish Wedding, 1880-1980

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The Old Order Amish community located in Arthur, Illinois, has grown dramatically since its founding in 1865. The bonds of religion, community, and trust continue to unite its members and maintain their cohesive framework; they do not oppose technological advancement, nor deny its benefits. Instead, Amish residents wish to live their lives within self-imposed boundaries stressing religion and community. They remain humble and set social limits for themselves: they wear plain clothing, prefer anonymity to celebrity, and prohibit the use of electricity in their lives. Their beliefs differ from most non-Amish Americans, also known as the "English," by stressing their conservative Anabaptist theology in every aspect of their lives. This research explores the courtship, marriage, and gift-giving practices within Arthur's Old Order Amish community as an attempt to ascertain how and why certain changes in Amish tradition have occurred over the years.

As the community changes from an agrarian society to an increasingly entrepreneurial one, wedding customs adapt to this new environment. To present the impact of such change, various aspects of Amish weddings have been researched and subsequently divided into the following discussions: courtship practices and age at the time of marriage, wedding preparations and ceremony, changes in the wedding gift-giving process, and the variables determining when Amish couples marry. The marriage data spans one hundred years of Amish settlement, providing a cohesive image of Amish marriage from the 1880s until the 1980s.

The first step on the road to marriage, of course, is meeting the right partner. Amish teens, like their "English" counterparts, begin dating around the age of sixteen. Having completed their education at the end of eighth grade, young Amish continue to live with their parents and spend their days working on a farm or in a shop. The Amish community oversees courtship practices in Arthur, which in turn helps maintain the continuity of the local Amish population. Within the community, courtship is a natural step toward maturity, although some of their traditions may surprise outsiders. Not yet members of the church, many Amish teens experiment with their mainstream surroundings; they may listen to music, wear popular fashions, or infiltrate other aspects of "English" society. While these unbaptized Amish teens are technically allowed to date non-Amish teens, few do. Most Amish teenagers

¹ The author revisited this paper in 2023 to make minor grammatical and reformatting edits. The edits did not change the scope of the paper. She also recreated the original charts and tables using *Historia 2003* (volume 12, print edition) as a guide.

opt to remain within the comfort of their community to marry rather than leaving their family and the only home they have ever known.

As a means of transportation, boys of courting age usually secure a horse and buggy to call upon Amish girls. Tradition dictates that Amish boys must never visit Amish girls during the daytime; boys wait until a girl's parents retire for the evening before visiting.² This custom contradicts mainstream American dating habits, but the Amish community trusts their children and maintains this practice. This habit derives from traditional societal gender rules taught in Amish society. Judith Nagata's study shows that "the young Amish have been taught from early childhood that to speak of attraction between the sexes is improper,"³ although dating allows a boy and girl to spend an extended amount of time together without presenting any social *faux pas*. On Saturday night, the popular date night in the community, teens participate in activities such as taking buggy rides, playing party games with a group of friends, or spending an evening together at home.

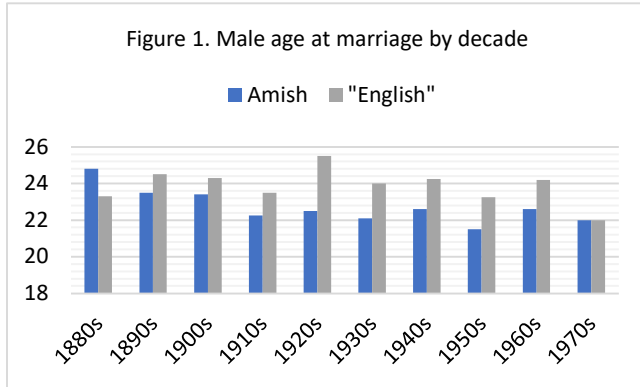
When a girl decides to start dating, she wears a black prayer cap and a white apron with a cape, signifying her coming of age and eligibility to the boys in the community. If a woman remains unmarried into her mid-thirties, "she more often than not takes off the white cape and apron, dons a black set instead, and laughingly tells her friends, 'I joined the old maids.'"⁴ As in mainstream society, after a boy and girl go on ten or so dates together, they often become a steady couple. Their paired-off status quickly spreads throughout the close-knit community. The uniqueness of Amish courtship helps keep young people interested and immersed in the community, thus maintaining its religious and cultural backbone in addition to a substantial population. Amish dating standards often help prepare a young couple for life within the Amish community, as many steady couples join the church and marry soon thereafter. Amish youth typically join the church in their late teens, when the community feels they are ready to join the Church by their own will and choosing. This delayed baptism is a common trait in Anabaptist theology, although for many people a childhood steeped in Amish tradition naturally leads them towards life in the church. Nevertheless, the religion only wants members dedicated to their cause and refuses to force anyone against their own will and choosing. The primary requirement for marriage within the Amish community is membership in the Amish church. Thus, the sudden baptism of a steady pair may hint at their plans to marry. Evidence indicates that many Amish marriages occur at a young age, often during their late teens and early twenties.

² John Andrew Hostetler, *Amish Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 148.

³ Judith A. Nagata, "Continuity and Change Among the Old Order Amish of Illinois" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Illinois, 1968), 100.

⁴ Nagata, "Continuity and Change," 309-10; quoted in Clyde Browning, *Amish in Illinois: Over One-Hundred Years of the "Old Order" Sect in Central Illinois* (Decatur, Ill.: published by author, 1971), 98-9.

The localized data spans a century of Amish settlement in Arthur and helps show the community's change over the years.⁵ Because common Amish surnames run rampant in the mainstream population, a researcher must deduce which records do and do not reflect members of the Amish community based on means other than by name alone. Clyde Browning's *Amish in Illinois* listed Old Order Amish Bishops from which Amish couples were located and researched. The Moultrie and Douglas



County marriage records include the name of the individual presiding over each marriage ceremony, so the published list of Amish bishops lead to the accurate compilation of Amish couples. Similarly, while some couples with typical Amish names could not be proven to be members of Arthur's Old Order Amish

community, they could not be proved otherwise, and the entry was removed from the sample. The cumulative time span of this study, 1880-1980, presents the Arthur community and surrounding neighbors in the light of ongoing growth and transition, a characteristic often overlooked by "English" society when thinking of the Amish. Using data compiled from both Amish and "English" marriages in Arthur and the surrounding counties, a detailed examination of marriage ages shall provide further insight into the similarities and differences between the two groups.

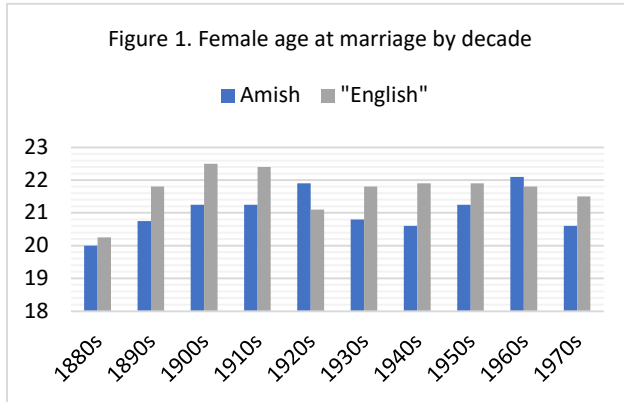
The analysis of evidence indicates that often only a few years passed between the time Amish teens began courting and when they became baptized and married. Because women tended to marry at an earlier age than Amish men, this data proposes that women tended to join the church at a younger age. The data presented in figures 1 and 2⁶ show that on average both Amish and "English" women married at a younger age than men. These figures illustrate 25 percent of Amish women marrying before age twenty, as compared to a mere nine percent of Amish men. This closely compares with the rest of society, as 35 percent of "English" women and only six percent of "English" men marry before this young age. Both sets of data begin to even out between the ages of twenty to twenty-two, as half of both Amish men and women and a quarter of the "English" population married during these years. Thus, between the years 1880 and 1980, roughly 75 percent of Amish women marry before the age of 23 as

⁵ All statistical data obtained from records held at the Eastern Illinois University Illinois Regional Archives Depository, a division of the Illinois State Archives. Marriage records and indexes from Douglas and Moultrie counties in Illinois provided the names, dates, locations and presiding bishops/ministers involved in both Amish and non-Amish weddings. Data from these counties in Illinois were used as the Amish hub of Arthur, Illinois is located on the county line, and these are the only two counties in Illinois containing Amish residents.

⁶ Additional data including numerical statistics available from author.

compared to only 60 percent of Amish men. This contrasts with the non-Amish population, where roughly half of women and only 44 percent of men married as young.

Although this data includes but a small sampling of Arthur Amish marriages from the 1880s, the records contain obvious age differences between Amish men and women. Similarly, "English" records show that the men were, on average, a few years older than their spouses. The five Amish men who



married during the 1880s averaged a marrying age of 27.2 years. This contrasts from their spouses' ages, which averaged a mere 20.0 years of age. This noticeable age difference between man and wife suggests that traditionally, Amish men were older than their brides, a practice still common but usually less noticeable today.

Consequently, this trend continued throughout the century. This both compares and contrasts with the "English" population, whose ages are similar to the Amish, but are usually a bit older, with larger age spreads between bride and groom. Also, the male population shows a steady decrease in marriage age over the century, while "English" trends remain more constant, with a dramatic peak during the 1920s.

Women's trends, while less pronounced, vary despite the fact that most women continue to marry at or before the age of 23. In fact, the averages remain between 20.0 and 22.5 years of age. Peaks in the graph are minor and may be attributed to societal factors such as economic change. However, they may also be the result of the small data sample presented in this study. Nevertheless, until the final years of the sample, there were noticeable differences between the ages of both man and wife. This suggests that for a long time, marriage ages among the central Illinois "English" indicated a different life progression from that of the Amish. Throughout the century, approximately 40 percent of "English" men married at twenty-six years of age or older, fewer than 20 percent of Amish men did. As the age increases the statistics become even clearer. As nearly 25 percent of these "English" men married after age thirty, a mere 0.5 percent of Amish men did. So, while the "English" tend to marry at an older age than their Amish neighbors, they also had a larger spread of ages throughout the century, with the exception of the earliest years when the Amish spread was larger. This information correlates nicely with the discussion of traditional Amish opinion regarding marriage.

While many "English" children may wonder whom, or in latter decades, if, he or she shall marry, Amish culture continues to teach that marriage is not only an important but an expected step in life.

There are noticeable exceptions, however, as many Amish, like their “English” counterparts, choose to remain single. But to those who do marry, the decision was not as surprising or as celebratory as one may assume. To many the question was not if they will marry, but rather, when. This is not to say that mainstream society presented a less important version of marriage in the upbringing of their children. Instead, this argues that the matter-of-fact attitude the Amish possess regarding marriage is a cultural answer to why many Amish members continue to marry at a younger age than their “English” counterparts. This attitude penetrated the society and thus Amish weddings lacked the excitement and preparations often involved with a prolonged engagement and a fancy ceremony.

Seeing no point to a formalized engagement, Amish view marriage more as a financial union than as an occasion for excess celebration.⁷ One reason Amish marriages lack the excitement of an ‘English’ engagement stems from the predictability of their occurrence. Steady, long-term couples usually marry, so an engagement comes as little surprise to friends and family. Weddings are frequent within the Amish community, and the Amish consider them a natural step in life, so it is fairly expected for an Amish person to marry.⁸ In lieu of the engagement process, the Amish prefer to keep wedding plans a secret until mere weeks before the event. Couples reveal their plans to marry during the last church service in the bride’s district before the chosen day.⁹ Following this church announcement, also called a *bann*, the couple travels through the community personally inviting friends and family to attend. Wedding ceremonies are invitation only events, separating weddings from other so-called rites of passage in Amish society such as baptisms and funerals, which are open to the entire community.

The wedding ceremony shares similarities with traditional, non-Amish Christian ceremonies. The engaged couple chooses their bridal party, usually comprised of two males and two females, who are close friends of the couple and often dating each other. The bridal party attends to the bride and groom, wears the designated wedding clothing, and sits in a designated spot during the ceremony.¹⁰ According to Arthur V. Houghton, author of “Community Organization in a Rural Amish Community at Arthur, Illinois,” “All six [attendants] are seated directly in front of the preacher except during the singing of the first hymn, during which time the young people are taken into a separate room apart from the audience and instructed in the mutual duties and decorum.”¹¹ This of course mirrors the practice of incorporating

⁷ Nagata, 220.

⁸ Ibid., 220-21.

⁹ Hostetler, 192.

¹⁰ Nagata, 221-2.

¹¹ Arthur V. Houghton, “Community Organization in a Rural Amish Community at Arthur, Illinois,” (M.S. Thesis: University of Illinois, 1930s), 46.

bridesmaids and groomsmen into a ceremony. Despite the similarities amongst the bridal party, however, other aspects of an Amish wedding further define their basis as a unique communal entity.

The formal ceremony resembles an extended Sunday church service. Unless circumstances prevent it, Amish weddings occur in the home of the bride. If this proves impossible, the groom's house or another Amish home provides an acceptable substitute. Sometimes the event hosts two sermons, as ministers from both the bride and groom's Church districts may wish to speak. Thus, a wedding ceremony may last several hours. The sermons, passages and hymns revolve around the pact of marriage, detailing the duties and expectations of both bride and groom. Vows are exchanged following this religious reminder of marital responsibility.

Continuing the simplicity in Amish dress, traditional wedding attire closely resembles styles worn every Sunday by young Amish girls and teens. The bride and her attendants wear the blue dresses with white capes and aprons worn by girls of dating age. Wedding clothing is functional and often re-worn, promoting the usefulness of Amish material culture.¹² Before and during the ceremony both the bride and her attendants don the traditional black ceremonial prayer cap. Although the Amish community prohibits materialistic expressions of symbolism such as engagement rings and other jewelry, the bride removes her black prayer cap in exchange of a white cap at the conclusion of the wedding ceremony, signifying her status as a married woman. While the bride dons a specific article of clothing, the groom must now grow a full beard to display his newly acquired position. These signs, while creating obvious material symbolism within the community, remain within the acceptable boundaries of both function and simplicity.¹³

Amish weddings provide an ideal venue for the community to work as a cohesive unit; dozens of friends and family members work together to assist with behind-the-scenes preparations for the wedding ceremony and feast. As Clyde Browning observes,

Four or five couples act as waiters, and the bride's nearest girl relative is given the position of principal table waiter. Twelve to fourteen cooks are required to prepare the feast; and this number is composed of the bride's mother, the groom's mother, aunts, sisters-in-law, married sisters, and grandmothers.¹⁴

¹² Browning, 168; Nagata, 221.

¹³ Nagata, 221-2.

¹⁴ Browning, 167.

Until recently, the bride's parents usually did not attend their daughter's wedding because they were needed behind the scenes.¹⁵ Following the ceremony the bride's family serves a feast to hundreds of wedding guests and must find room to seat them all for a full dinner. To accommodate the large number of wedding guests, the feast usually requires multiple sittings requiring both patience and cooperation. Amish weddings revolve around religion, community, and family, and while these weddings lack the celebratory feel found in non-Amish ceremonies, the wedding day remains an exciting event as the couple joins together with the help of their community's assistance and generosity.

While the bride's family supplies wedding guests with a feast, the guests present the bride and groom with gifts. Insight obtained during an oral interview with a local Amish couple focused on the local quilting traditions and how these skills defined the importance of gift-giving as part of an Old Order Amish wedding in Arthur, Illinois.¹⁶ In particular, a quilt given to an Amish bride in Arthur in 1978 provided substantial evidence regarding the importance of gifts and materials in conjunction with a marriage.

At the time of marriage, engaged Amish women are provided with a dowry of sorts. Her family presents her with a supply of useful items including dishes, kerosene lamps and textiles.¹⁷ Thus, quilt production within an Amish family usually heightens in preparation of a wedding. The mother of the bride customarily presents her daughter with a quilt or two, often accompanied by a comforter. The informant explained: "when her daughter gets her quilt from home it would be what we call a Sunday-Best quilt."¹⁸ A Sunday-Best quilt is often of a higher aesthetic value and is cherished and displayed only on Sundays or during other special events. Seen as an important gift from home, daughters look forward to taking a homemade quilt to their new household. Additionally, the bride's grandmother often pieces a quilt as a gift for the new bride to finish.¹⁹ Generation after generation the cycle continues, and the new bride will one day present her daughter with a quilt on her wedding day. The interviewee, for example, completed both a comforter and a quilt for her child's wedding. She explained that it is important and comforting to "have a quilt from home, or a couple [of quilts]."²⁰ In preparation for her wedding in 1978, her two sisters utilized their high skill of quilting to produce a solid, cream-colored top

¹⁵ Nagata, 222; Browning, 169-70.

¹⁶ Oral Interview conducted by Laurie Peterson, Angela Stanford, and Lindsey MacAllister in Arthur, Illinois on October 12, 2001. Interviewed Amish individuals wished to have their name withheld to ensure anonymity and are referred to as the "interviewees." This interview was part of an oral history project conducted by a Material Life and Culture class at Eastern Illinois University to document the crafts and lives of the Arthur, Illinois Old Order Amish community. Additional information regarding this oral history project is available from the Amish Interpretive Center located in Arcola, Illinois.

¹⁷ Hostetler, 149.

¹⁸ Oral Interview, 12 October 2001.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Oral Interview, 12 October 2001.

sheet intricately quilted with difficult quilting patterns, allowing the creative talents of the family to become the visual focus. Thus, the personal worth of an Amish quilt is much more important than any monetary amount or juried appraisal of artistic merit. Quilting traditions pass from mother to daughter, and in this case, amongst siblings, further enhancing the personal significance of receiving an item at a wedding. But, despite all this, while the Amish cherish their home-produced goods, monetary gifts continue to gain popularity as the community transitions from their agrarian roots to an increasingly industrial existence.

This industrial trend provokes the temptation to provide a newlywed couple with a monetary contribution rather than a homemade gift. A seemingly thoughtless endeavor, cash lacks the preparation time and effort involved with other kinds of gifts. According to Judith Nagata, "It was originally the custom in Arthur, at least until after World War II, for all gifts at weddings to be left, unwrapped and unlabeled, on one of the beds in the bride's home for viewing after the ceremony."²¹ Nowadays, she continues, the Arthur Amish often incorporate elaborate gift-wrapping and cards in their gift presentation. Since gift-givers no longer maintain anonymity, the natural habit of one-upmanship threatens to take over the altruistic gesture formerly associated with the process.²² There are but a few designated community events involving the exchange of gifts. As Nagata explains, "Most inter-household gift exchanges not involving cash are restricted to the purely ceremonial context of weddings, birthdays, funerals, visiting and churchgoing."²³ Amish quilting practices are seen as a symbol of unity, exemplifying the sense of the community in Arthur. The work ethic and lifestyle of the Amish, including all jobs related to their daily life, directly relates to the material production and sustenance present in an Amish homestead.

Therefore, the agrarian make-up of East Central Illinois' landscape remains a major factor in how people run their lives. Agricultural responsibilities, in conjunction with religious and familial traditions, dictate feasible times for weddings. The necessary preparation time needed in order to both plan and host a successful wedding and ceremony for the community was carefully scheduled around the busy Amish calendar. As farming demands more attention during the spring and summer seasons, few weddings occur. Therefore, an influx of weddings occurs during the late fall and winter months.

Between 1880 and 1980 marital traditions surface regarding the extent to which cultural and agricultural factors affect Amish weddings. As with the study of ages at the time of marriage, a comparison with non-Amish marriages helps define these cultural traditions, setting them apart from

²¹ Nagata, 131.

²² Ibid., 131.

²³ Nagata, 75.

mainstream society. Between 1880 and 1980 more than 75 percent of Amish marriages occurred during the colder half of the year. Table 1 indicates that an agrarian model dictated Amish marriage. Recent

	Amish	"English"
January	8%	10%
February	8%	6%
March	6%	8%
April	4%	6%
May	2%	8%
June	2%	10%
July	2%	8%
August	6%	10%
September	8%	11%
October	20%	8%
November	14%	6%
December	18%	8%

agricultural changes continue to force many Amish from the farm, searching for home shops and other entrepreneurial means of income. Thus, during the last decade or so of this study, the 1970s and early 1980s, economic changes took its toll on traditional society. No longer solely reliant on the agrarian calendar, marriages now occur more frequently throughout the year, suggesting that Amish wedding tradition is not static. Although the central Illinois region has long been

collectively associated with agriculture, the "English" marriage data shows noticeably contrasting information. One would assume that although their lifestyles differ, Amish and non-Amish agricultural schedules would dictate the occurrence of weddings. A quick examination shows a deviation from this hypothesis.

As early as the 1880s and continuing through the rest of the century, the spread of non-Amish marriage ceremonies is fairly consistent throughout the year. In fact, some decades produced a majority of weddings during the spring and summer months. How these "English" weddings were planned during these busy times is uncertain, but the evidence clearly presents a separation of the two groups, allowing the Amish to further define themselves and maintain their traditions throughout the year.

	Earliest 20 Records		Latest 20 Records	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
January	2	10%	1	5%
February	0	0%	0	0%
March	0	0%	2	10%
April	2	10%	0	0%
May	0	0%	2	10%
June	0	0%	2	10%
July	0	0%	1	5%
August	1	5%	1	5%
September	0	0%	2	10%
October	2	10%	4	20%
November	4	20%	3	15%
December	9	45%	2	10%

A more specific look at Amish marriages shows the definition and deviation from this tradition, slowly but steadily, over the course of the century. The Amish respond to trends and change as do their "English" neighbors, and a wedding during the warmer months probably sounds more attractive to many new couples. By comparing the twenty earliest and twenty latest

marriages in the study, the oldest records clearly define the common fall and winter wedding practices hypothesized for the community while recent records demonstrate otherwise.

Within this sample, 86 percent of marriages between the years before and shortly after the turn of the century took place between October and January, compared with only 50 percent during the

latter years of this study. In addition, the recent records span ten months of the year, omitting only February and April. "English" tradition also hints of change over the years, as summer weddings became more fashionable. Thus, as the Amish struggle to keep their traditions and maintain their sense of community, their reliance on an agricultural lifestyle lessens. However, it appears as though even if time is not a factor, many couples apparently prefer to marry in the winter for the sake of tradition and communal nostalgia.

The annual wedding cycle, segregated by month, comprises only one societal factor taken into consideration when deciding to marry. The busy Amish calendar often dictates which day of the week a ceremony may occur. Wedding preparation time usually lasts one week, as the home is cleared to prepare food and arrangements. In addition, the Amish do not engage in work of any kind on Sundays, as they spend the day consumed with church and other religious activities. The unavailability of Sundays discourages planning a wedding early in the week. Multiple sources²⁴ explain that most Amish weddings occur on either Tuesdays or Thursdays; Clyde Browning provides a viable explanation as to why:

The marriage ceremonies are customarily held on Tuesday or Thursday; for weddings are festive occasions and the Amish believe that worship and work should come before pleasure. Therefore, Monday is preparation day; Wednesday is set aside for unfinished chores and household duties; and Friday and Saturday are spent in preparation for Sunday, a day reserved for rest and worship only.²⁵

Clearly, the differences between the 200 Amish and non-Amish marriages by weekday, outweigh the similarities. Notice the overwhelming number of Amish marriages occurring on Thursdays, followed by less common choices of Tuesdays and Sundays. Mondays, due to reasons previously discussed, hosted only a single wedding. Browning's similar study, a sample of 109 marriages between the years 1950 and 1961, also includes just one wedding held on a Monday, with 63 percent of weddings preformed on Thursdays.²⁶ In order to track changes over the duration of the data, this information must be further prodded. A comparison of the oldest twenty and most recent twenty records indicate the changing trend over time. Thursdays are still by far the most popular day for such an event, but the older data shows half of the ceremonies occurred on Sundays. Amish marriages only occur on Sundays

²⁴ All sources examined that provide a decent narrative of Amish weddings and procedures mention this as if it is common knowledge among the community.

²⁵ Browning, 168.

²⁶ Browning, 172.

when there is no Church service, suggesting that church services have not always been available on a weekly basis, and weddings occurred during alternating weeks. Sunday ceremonies discontinued shortly

	Amish		"English"	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Monday	1	0.4%	15	8%
Tuesday	29	14%	15	8%
Wednesday	4	2%	43	22%
Thursday	142	70%	21	11%
Friday	5	3%	19	9%
Saturday	1	0.4%	51	25%
Sunday	18	9%	36	18%

before and after the turn of the century. Perhaps by this time Amish church services secured a weekly schedule. By the time industry became a dominant factor, the Amish solely favored weekdays for weddings. This is apparent in the data, as table 4 presents a complete lack of Monday ceremonies.

Therefore, the day of the week on which an Amish couple marries matters more than the month of the year, because more constraints exist for weekdays, and higher percentages of couples married during a certain day rather than in a certain month of the year.

The "English" data, while noticeably different from that of the Amish, present some interesting findings. First, the data shows that weekends are favored over weekdays, especially Tuesdays and Thursdays, the preferred days for the Amish. As more and more "English" people worked 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedules with weekends free for weddings, the lack of Tuesdays and Thursdays in the data supports the contrast with Amish traditions nicely. One would, therefore, assume that weekday

	Earliest 20 Records		Latest 20 Records	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Monday	0	0%	0	0%
Tuesday	1	5%	4	20%
Wednesday	1	5%	2	10%
Thursday	8	40%	12	60%
Friday	0	0%	2	10%
Saturday	0	0%	0	0%
Sunday	10	50%	0	0%

ceremonies would be uncommon for people maintaining different lifestyles. But as table 3 shows, "English" ceremonies occurred steadily throughout the week, an alarming contrast to the sample of Amish ceremonies. The reason for these mid-week marriages, however, requires its own

study to fully understand. Nevertheless, the differences found in both sets of data further segregate Amish tradition from mainstream society, suggesting that Amish marital tradition is based less on the agricultural workload than originally thought. Instead, the routine of the standard Amish week, with church services and preparations and community events, combined with a sense of tradition, are the deciding factors when planning a wedding.

The uniqueness of Amish marital traditions in Arthur, Illinois becomes pronounced when teens start dating and continues through the wedding ceremony. Popular Amish dating traditions prepare couples for church membership, followed by a traditional wedding ceremony and immersion in the community. This research showed that the Amish tend to marry earlier in life than the surrounding population, adding to Amish ideas promoting marriage as an important and expected step in life. Their

non-Amish neighbors often waited until later in life to marry and start families. Amish traditions continue as an engagement announcement is made and the ceremony is planned. The glowing differences regarding the months of the year chosen by the two populations suggests that the agricultural calendar does not completely decide when a couple may wed. Rather, as the non-Amish often preferred the warmer months of the year despite their agricultural surroundings, many Amish remained tethered to a cultural cord favoring the fall and winter seasons. The pressure for change, as increased technology took over more Amish and non-Amish farms, occurred throughout the century as Amish couples began to marry during alternate seasons. While this data provides increased insight into the ever-changing life of a new Amish couple, this is certainly not a cumulative examination of the Amish community, their traditions, and preferences. Additionally, much time has passed since the early 1980s; a steady increase of home shops (home-based craft businesses) and the decline of farming continue to pressure the Amish to change their traditions.

Individual situations and reasoning vary, but the results remain similar. The interviewed informant, for example, continues to farm the land with her husband, but all six members of the family work in local Amish businesses. Also, they stopped raising pigs a few years back, as their equipment wore out and prices rose beyond their reach.²⁷ Increased productivity of non-Amish farming equipment, as well as the cost of land, makes farming a difficult means of support for an Arthur Amish family. The increase in wage-earning people also increases the use of monetary profits as gifts, and the community continues its slow transition away from the intrinsic creation of quality, homemade gifts. Only time will tell the long-term effects these changes will have on the community and their marriage traditions. But, regardless of the outcome, the Arthur Amish community continues to grow and adapt to their increasingly industrialized surroundings, all the while staying true to their core beliefs, their community and themselves.

²⁷ Oral Interview, 12 October 2001.