

Amish Surnames, Settlement Patterns, and Migration

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Distinctive surnames typically associated with Amish populations provide a useful means to identify group members. Utilizing listings of Wisconsin's licensed dairy producers between 1989 and 2001, growth and decline of various settlements of Amish dairymen are mapped and described. Overall, growth far exceeded decline, with the number of identified Amish surnamed dairy farmers increasing by nearly three-quarters. The examination of the spatial distribution of specific Amish surnames demonstrates the central role played by family groups in Amish settlement and migration. The prominence of several common Amish surnames differs among the state's largest Amish settlements, and Amish surnames new to Wisconsin are disproportionately found within recently established Amish settlements. Some of these surnames are only found in single communities.

Rapid growth of America's Amish population (Ericksen et al. 1979) and the expansion of the "Amish homeland" over the past quarter century (Lamme 2001) have been noted, although detailed study of the spatial dimensions of Amish migration and their settlement process is lacking. The rural sociological literature is replete with examinations of conflicting values between the Amish and modern society and growing stresses that a rapidly growing population brought upon their agrarian orientation (Hostetler 1993; Kraybill 1989, 1994; Kreps et al. 1994; Kraybill and Nolt 1995; Smith et al. 1997; Kraybill and Bowman 2001, among others). Although several rural sociologists have touched upon spatial issues and migration, the geographical literature is relatively dated (Crowley 1978) or regionally prescribed (Lamme and McDonald 1995). Furthermore, detailed data regarding the spatial distribution of Amish farms is relatively elusive,

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although Luthy (1994, 1997) has compiled useful settlement statistics.

This paper demonstrates the utility of identifying distinct surnames in public records to study the rapid expansion of Amish dairying in the heart of America's Dairyland at a time that traditional family farmers are abandoning the industry in large numbers (Cross 2001). The acquisition of accurate statistical data concerning the growing numbers of Amish farms is challenging. Census data does not distinguish this group from the general farming population, restricting its collection of ethnic/racial data to Hispanics, Blacks, American Indians, and Asian or Pacific Islanders. Although an Amish directory for Wisconsin was recently published (Miller 2002), it lacks any data concerning over a half dozen settlements in the state, and the completeness of the data appears to vary by settlement. Likewise, it provides data for one point in time, unlike public records that permit longitudinal analysis of individuals engaged in dairying. While field surveys can readily identify Amish farmsteads, given the propensity for Amish farmsteads to have operating windmills, horse-drawn wagons and plows, austere plain houses, clotheslines laden with simple dark garments, fields of shocked grain, and conspicuous kitchen gardens, as well as a lack of electric lines, television antennae, lightning rods, and motor vehicles, among many other cultural landscape clues (Noble 1986), this methodology is too cumbersome when studying the impact of Amish farming at the regional or state level. This paper demonstrates the utility of distinctive surnames in identifying Amish dairy farmers throughout Wisconsin and in noting differing patterns of settlement and migration.

Distinctive Amish Surnames

The variety of surnames represented in Amish settlements is quite limited, with considerable variation among the largest Amish regions with respect to which names

are most common (Smith 1968; Kent and Neugebauer 1990). For example, considering the three states with the largest Amish populations, in Pennsylvania, the most common Amish surnames are Stoltzfus, King, Fisher, Beiler, and Lapp; in Ohio, they are Miller, Yoder, Troyer, Raber, and Hershberger; and in Indiana, the names are Miller, Yoder, Bontrager, Hochstetler, and Mast (Hostetler 1993). In each of these three states, just five surnames, listed in order of prominence, accounted for over half (59 to 69 percent) of the Amish population. Merely three surnames (Miller, Borntrager, and Yoder) accounted for 48.8 percent of Wisconsin's Amish households listed in Miller's (2002) directory. In a single community a particular surname can be shared by a third or more of the households, necessitating the use of nicknames (Mook 1967; Smith 1968; Troyer 1968) or by-names (Enninger 1985) to differentiate individuals having the same first names.

Many of the most common Amish surnames in Wisconsin, such as Borntrager, Gingerich, Hershberger, and Yoder, almost universally identify an individual of Amish heritage. The propensity of the Amish to have given names drawn from the *Old Testament* or honoring early church leaders (Mook 1967; Smith 1968), including many names rarely utilized among the general population (such as Amos, Jonas, Levi, Mahlon, Menno, and Phineas, among others) further distinguishes them from the general farming population. This is particularly helpful with those Amish with the common surname Miller. Identification was further facilitated by consulting a published index of historical Amish surnames (Luthy 1986) and a listing of the ordained ministers, bishops, and deacons in the state's Amish districts (Raber 2002). Thus, just as Kent and Neugebauer (1990) utilized surnames to identify Amish and Mennonite settlement areas in Ohio, a methodology that has also been successfully applied among other ethnic groups (Horst 1970), the same technique was applied in Wisconsin.

Dairy Producer Data

Dairy Producer License Lists, available from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, provide the full name and address (mailing and by county, township, and section) of all dairy farmers in the state. Cross-referencing farm household names and addresses listed in the Amish directory (Miller 2002) with the license data indicated that 79.9 percent of the Amish farms had dairy herds. These dairy producer licenses provide one of the most promising sources of statewide data on Amish farmers, including those living in communities missing from Miller's (2002) directory, who were identified by their distinctive names. Until 1995, the dairy producer lists also indicated whether or not Grade B milk producers shipped milk via cans, providing an excellent opportunity to observe that most farmers shipping their milk by cans had known Amish surnames. As can be seen in Table 1, the five most common surnames of Wisconsin dairy farmers shipping their milk in cans were, in order of prominence, Borntreger, Miller, Yoder, Gingerich, and Hershberger. Many additional farmers with these same surnames utilize bulk storage tanks, which are acceptable in some Amish communities with Grade A or Grade B (bulk) dairy operations.

Distinguishing Amish Surnames

Certain surnames, such as Borntreger, Yoder, Gingerich, Hershberger, and Stoltzfus, clearly identify Amish farmers in Wisconsin. Nevertheless, because some surnames that are common among the Amish are also common among the general population, utilizing surnames alone to identify all the Amish dairy farmers is more problematic. For example, the most common surname among all dairy farmers in Wisconsin is Miller, with 285 dairy farmers sharing that name in 2001; however nearly a third of these farmers did not have Amish roots. In 1989 dairymen named Miller accounted for 15.3 percent of all farmers shipping their milk in cans. In 1994, the

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TABLE 1

SURNAMEN OF WISCONSIN DAIRY FARMERS
SHIPPING THEIR MILK IN CANS - 1994

Surname	Number	Percent
Borntrager, Borntreger,		
Bontrager, Bontreger	95	22.5%
Miller	82	19.4%
Yoder	39	9.2%
Gingerich	24	5.7%
Hershberger, Herschberger	23	5.4%
Schrock, Shrock	12	2.8%
Stutzman	12	2.8%
Mast	11	2.6%
Swartz	9	2.1%
Hochstetler	8	1.9%
Schmucker	8	1.9%
Kauffman	7	1.7%
Lambright	6	1.4%
Mullet	6	1.4%
Hostetler	3	.7%
Kurtz	3	.7%
Petersheim	3	.7%
Swartzentruber	3	.7%
Troyer	3	.7%
Wagler	3	.7%
Zook	3	.7%
Kempf	2	.5%
Kiem	2	.5%
Nisley	2	.5%
Plank	2	.5%
Shetler	2	.5%
Weaver	2	.5%
Yutzy	2	.5%
Other Known Amish		
Surnames in Amish Areas	12	2.8%
Uncertain Given and		
Surnames in Amish Areas	20	4.7%
Non-Amish Surnames		
in Non-Amish Towns	14	3.3%

Source: Analysis of Dairy Producer License Listing from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (April 1994).

number of Millers shipping their milk in cans had risen to 82, or 19.3 percent of those individuals then utilizing cans. In mapping the location of all dairy farmers surnamed Miller, their spatial distribution is too expansive, given the location of know Amish settlements. Thus other common, overwhelmingly Amish surnames are emphasized in this paper. Although not all Amish individuals can be identified through their surnames; this does not seriously limit the utility of studying those that do represent the majority of the Amish population.

Growth in Number of Amish Surnames

The number of Wisconsin dairy farmers with Amish surnames grew substantially over the twelve year period (Table 2). For example, in 1989, there were 100 dairy farmers surnamed Borntrager (including variants Borntreger and Bontrager) and there were 61 dairy farmers named Yoder. In 2001, these figures were 152 and 90, respectively. Similarly, those named Hershberger rose from 20 to 32. Although increases for some surnames were smaller, only two distinct Amish surnames, Chupp and Mullet, experienced declines, falling from three to one and eleven to seven, respectively. Other surnames, considered distinctively Amish in Ohio, Indiana, or Pennsylvania (Kent and Neugebauer 1990, Smith 1968), were not represented in Wisconsin in 1989, but were present in 2001. These include Allgyer, Beiler, Eicher, Hertzler, Mishler, Nissley, Stoltzfus, Swartzentruber, Yutzy, Zook. Altogether, these ten names accounted for 59 Amish dairy farmers in 2001. Seven additional surnames (Glick, Petersheim, Sensenig, Shetler, Swarey, Troyer, and Wengerd) had but one representative each in 1989, but accounted for a total of 38 dairy farmers in 2001.

Surnames Vary Among Settlements

Surnames found within Wisconsin's Amish settlements vary, just as the spatial distribution of dairy farmers with a

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TABLE 2

NUMBER OF WISCONSIN DAIRY FARMERS WITH AMISH SURNAMES

Amish Surname	1989	2001
Beechy, Beachy	4	7
Beiler	0	8
Borntrager, Borntreger,		
Bontrager, Bontreger	100	152
Burkholder	3	10
Byler	2	8
Detweiler	2	5
Gingerich	27	34
Hershberger, Herschberger	20	32
Hertzler	0	5
Hostetler, Hochstetler	17	19
Kauffman	11**	22
Lambright	9	12
Lapp	2	7
Mast	16	25
Miller*	99	195
Mullet	11	7
Nisley, Nissley	2	6
Schlabach	3	5
Schrock, Shrock	29	31
Schmucker	7	10
Sensenig	1	5
Shetler	1	7
Stoltzfus, Steltzfus, Stoltzfoos	0	21
Stutzman	16	18
Swarey	1	6
Swartzentruber	0	6
Troyer	1	9
Wagler	4	5
Weaver	6	14
Yoder	61	90
Zook	0	5

*Only includes dairy farmers with Miller surname located in towns with other known Amish farmers.

** At least half non-Amish in 1989.

Note: Names with fewer than five farms in 2001 are excluded.

particular Amish surname differs. For example, within four of the seven Wisconsin counties that had the largest number of Amish dairy farms, Miller was the most common surname, accounting for between 21 and 41 percent of the Amish dairy farmers (Table 3). These figures are consistent with data from Miller's (2002) directory, which indicated that families surnamed Miller accounted for 36.4 percent of the households in the Amish settlement of Cashton, the state's largest concentration of Amish. Twenty-one percent of the Amish households in the Tomah-Wilton settlement were surnamed Miller, as were 22 percent of those in the Kingston settlement. Borntrager was the most common surname of Amish dairy farmers in two of the communities, while it was in second rank in four. In contrast, in the Marathon county Amish settlements, these two surnames together represented less than ten percent of the identified Amish surnames. There the most common surname was Hertzler, which is not present within any other Amish settlement in Wisconsin. Furthermore, the five most common Amish surnames in Wisconsin represented 56 to 80 percent of the identified Amish dairy farmers within six of these seven counties, but only 15 percent in Marathon county. Within several other counties with relatively small, but new, Amish communities, such as Grant, Lafayette, Buffalo, similar under-representation of the more common surnames was also noticed, although this was not characteristic of all smaller settlement areas.

A comparison of maps of the various surnames indicates that Bontragers and Borntragers (Figure 1), although far more numerous, are more concentrated within several large communities than are Yoders (Figure 2). Yet both groups are more widely dispersed among the state's Amish settlements than are other surnames, with the exception of those Millers who are suspected of being Amish (Figure 3). For example, dairy farmers named Gingerich (Figure 4), the fourth most common Amish surname in Wisconsin, are highly concentrated in the Augusta settlement of Eau Claire County,

TABLE 3

MOST COMMON AMISH SURNAMES IN COUNTIES
WITH LARGEST NUMBERS OF AMISH DAIRY FARMERS

Surname*	Clark N=178	Vernon N=160	Monroe N=142	Eau Claire N=61	Green Lake** N=41	Mara- thon N=33	Taylor N=34
Miller	21%	39%	31%	11%	17%	3%	41%
Borntrager ¹	20%	10%	24%	39%	32%	6%	15%
Yoder	10%	7%	18%	11%	12%	3%	0%
Gingerich	5%	3%	0%	16%	0%	3%	0%
Hershberger ²	5%	6%	4%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Schrock	1%	3%	4%	3%	12%	3%	15%
Mast	3%	4%	3%	2%	7%	0%	0%
Kauffman	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%
Stoltzfus	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	3%
Hostetler ³	1%	2%	4%	3%	2%	3%	6%
Stutzman	4%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%	6%
Most Common	5%	4%	3%	7%	5%	15%	
Others*	BURK 3%	SCHM 3%	TROY 3%	KURT 5%	SCHL 9%	HERT 9%	
	SWAR 3%	LAMB 3%	WAGL 3%	WEAV 5%	BEIL 9%		
	WEAV 3%				SWAR 9%		

*Others listed when number of surnamed farmers exceeded one and accounted for at least 3 percent of Amish dairymen in county.

BEIL= Beiler, BURK= Burkholder, HERT= Hertzler, KURT= Kurtz, LAMB= Lambright, SCHL= Schlabach, SCHM= Schmucker, SWAR= Swarey, WAGL= Wagler, WEAV= Weaver

¹Borntrager includes Borntreger, Bontrager, and Bontreger.

²Hershberger includes Herschberger.

³Hostetler includes Hochstetler.

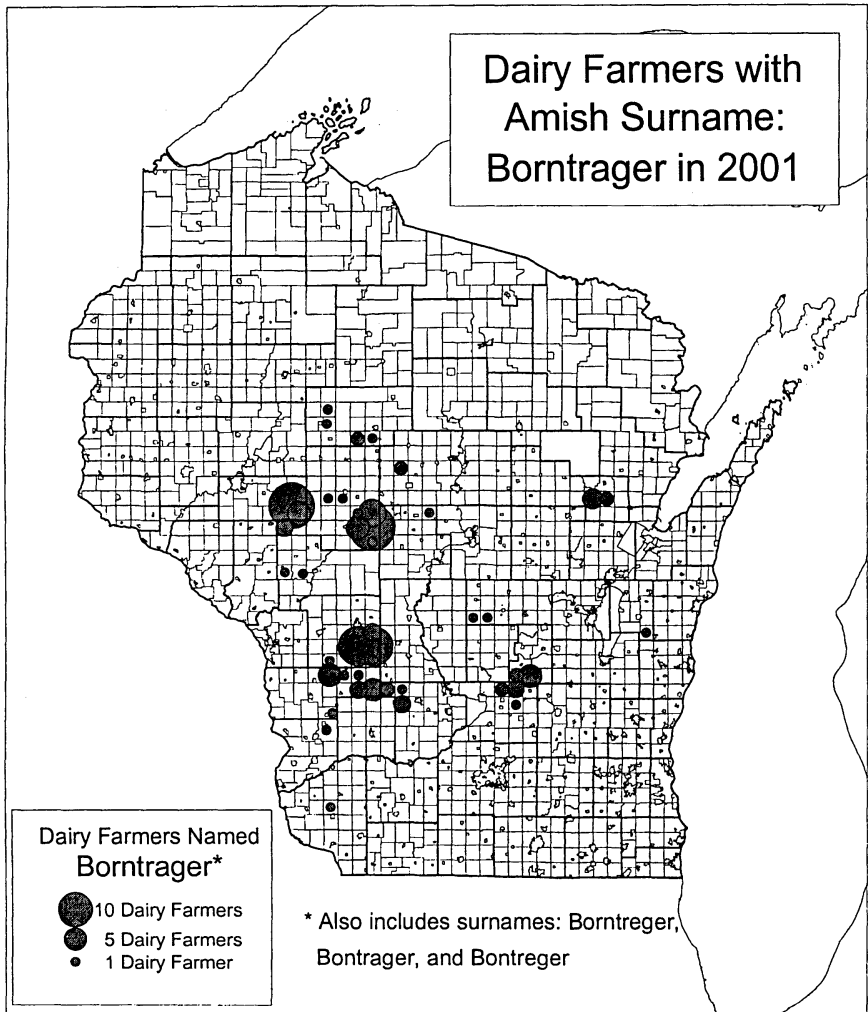


Figure 1

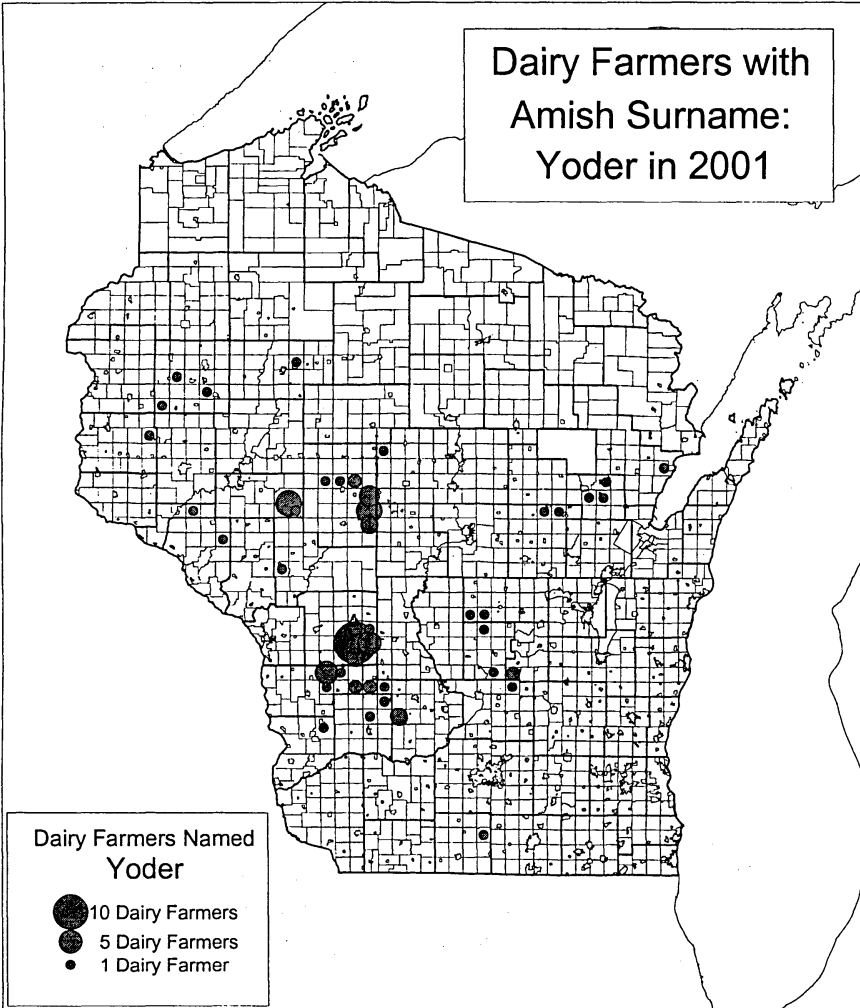


Figure 2

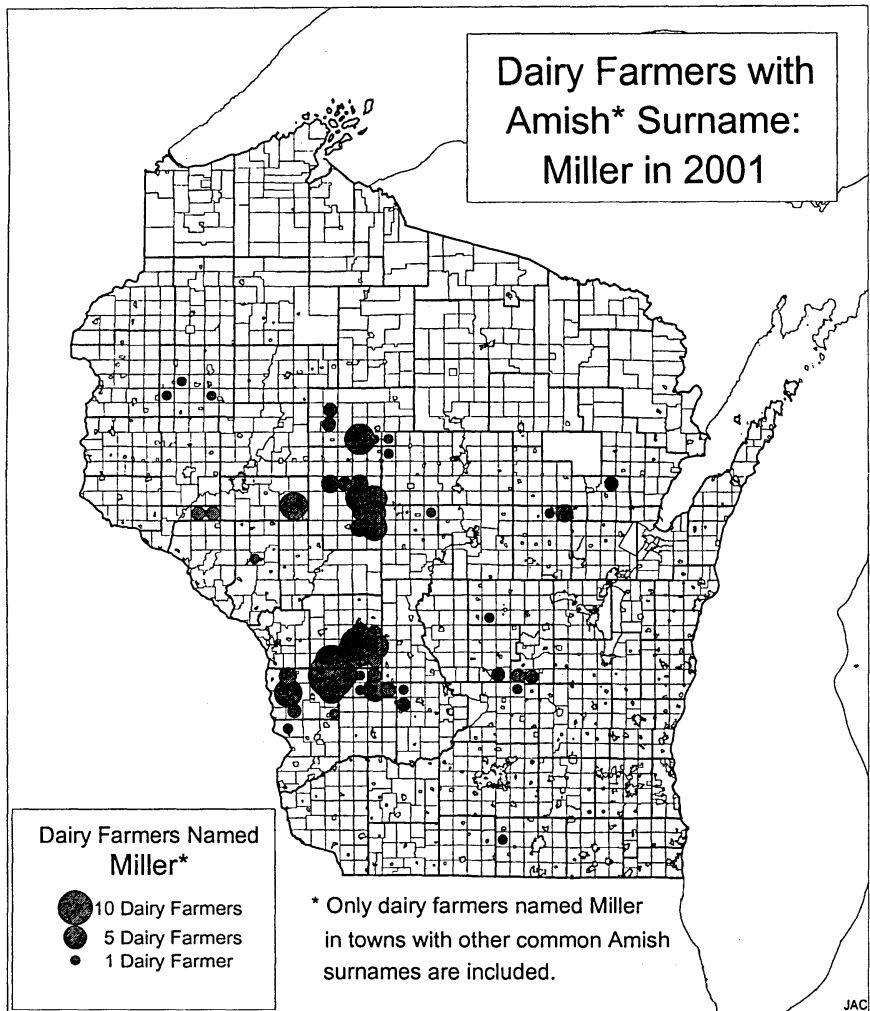


Figure 3

but have only token representation within the Cashton settlement in Vernon county and are absent in adjacent Monroe county, the area with the largest concentration of Wisconsin's Amish population. Likewise, although Hershbergers (Figure 5) operate dairy farms in the three counties with the largest Amish settlements (Clark, Vernon, and Monroe), they are entirely absent from the counties with the fourth through seventh largest Amish settlements.

Growth and Migration

Growth of the Amish population in Wisconsin is related to both natural increase and migration from outside the state. Consider the pattern of change in the number of Borntrager dairy farmers over a dozen years (Figures 6). Growth is concentrated near the largest settlements in Clark, Vernon and Monroe counties, while Borntragers left the now-defunct Amish settlement near Amherst in Portage county and contributed to the out-migration from the state's oldest Amish settlement near Medford in Taylor county.

Migration brings New Surnames

Wisconsin has received large numbers of migrants from other states, illustrated by the presence today of many Amish surnames that were absent in 1989. The fact that Wisconsin has a larger diversity of Amish surnames than the states with the largest communities is indicative that Wisconsin is attracting newcomers from a variety of states, including Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania's Amish population previously had few linkages with the Amish in Wisconsin (Crowley 1978). Known as more progressive than the Amish from the more western states, Amish immigrants from Pennsylvania are often associated with slightly less restrictive rules regarding appropriate farm technologies (Kraybill and Nolt 1995).

New Communities. Although some newcomers settled in the vicinity of already existing Amish settlements, many colonized new communities. Thus, surnames found in certain new communities differ from those typical in the well established settlements. For example, Borntreger (Figure 1) and Yoder (Figure 2) are the most common distinctive Amish names in Wisconsin (more distinctive than Miller which may be confused with non-Amish populations). However, within the new settlements of Amish dairy farmers in Grant county, there are but one Borntreger and no Yoders or Millers, but there are five Stoltzfuses (Figure 7), two Beilers, two Lapps, and one Sensenig, among others. Five other Stoltzfuses settled into the Town of Dover in Buffalo county, where one Yoder, but no Borntregers were present. Similarly, six Stoltzfuses settled in Clark county, selecting towns in which no Borntregers were dairying. Three Stoltzfuses moved to the Town of Johnson in Marathon county which lacked any Borntregers, Millers, or Yoders. Likewise, one Beiler moved into that town, while two more moved into the adjacent town of Bern (Figure 8). Four of the seven Shetler dairy farms in Wisconsin are located in the Town of Springfield in Jackson County, a county that lacked any Amish settlement in 1996, but had a church district by 2001. The other three Shetlers located in new settlements elsewhere in Wisconsin. Lafayette County, likewise lacked any Amish settlement in 1996, yet four Allgyers (the only ones in the state) and three Lapps operated dairy farms there in 2001, along with a Beiler, a Glick, and a Sensenig.

Family Clustering. Many new Amish farm families settled in close proximity to other family members. For example, all six Swartzentruber dairy farms are located in the adjacent towns of Loyal and Eaton in Clark County. Likewise, all five Hertzler dairy farms are situated in the adjacent Marathon County towns of Holton and Johnson. Indeed, when plotting the distribution of Amish dairy farmers with specific surnames, clear spatial differences between and clustering of many

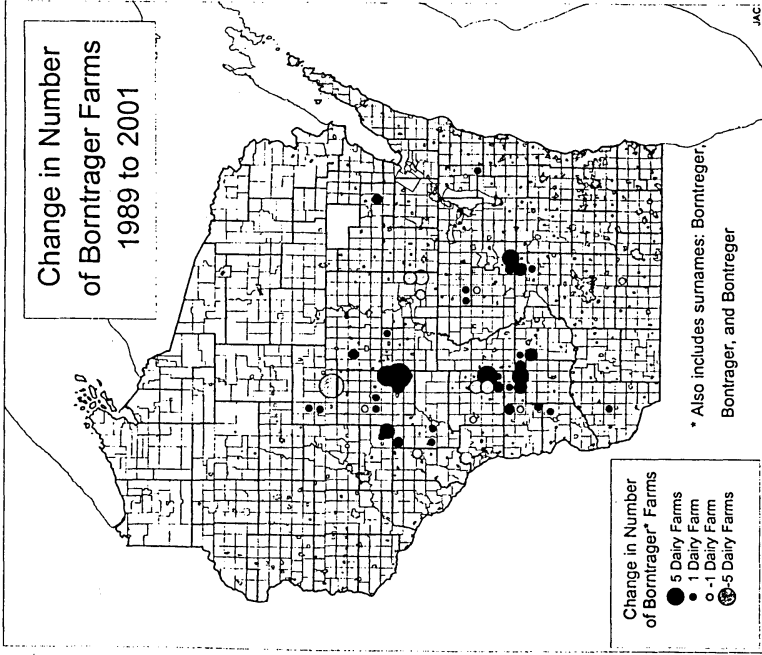


Figure 6

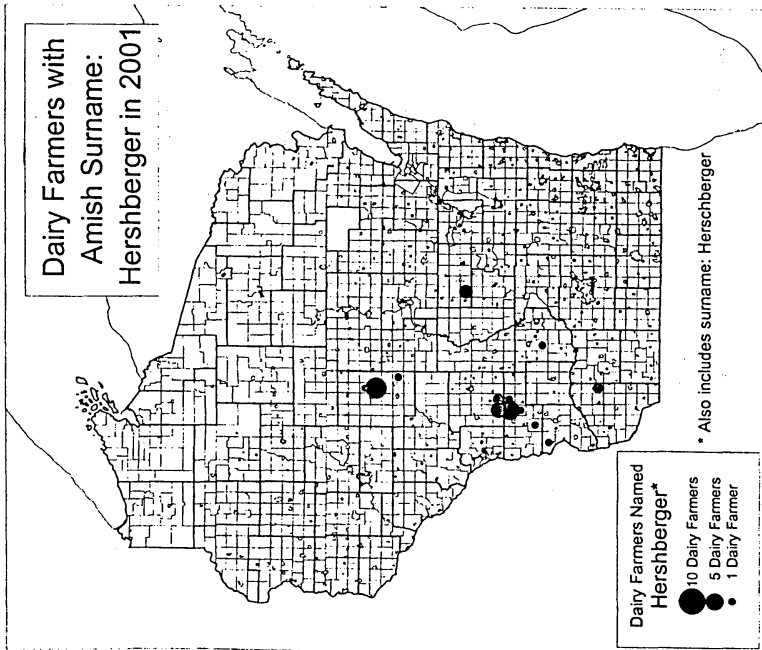


Figure 5

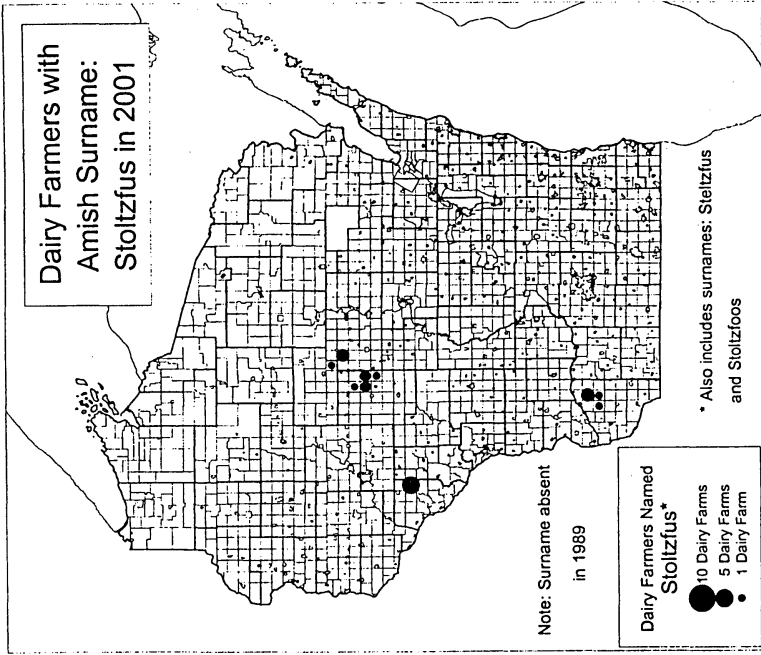


Figure 7

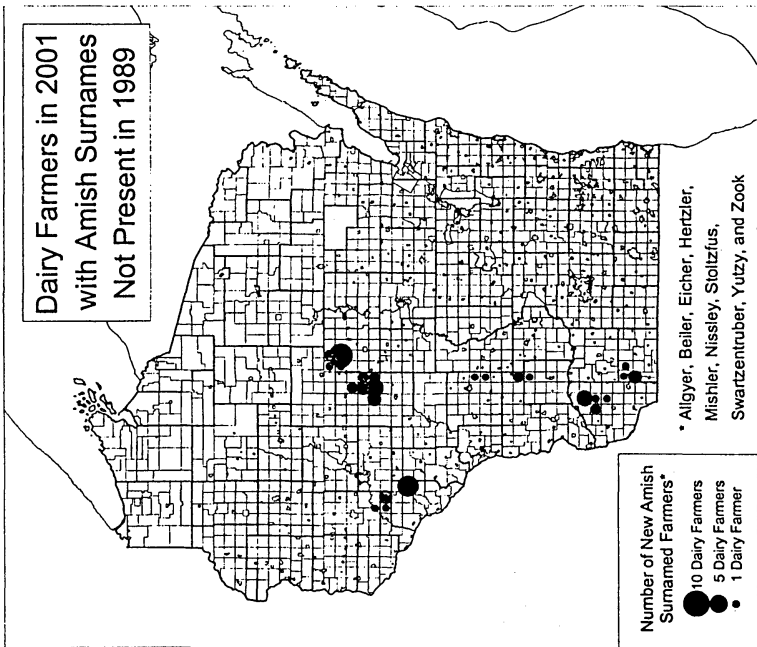


Figure 8

families can be seen. Such patterns are not surprising given the extensive use of “kinship networks as support systems” among the Amish (Ericksen et al. 1980:51).

Surnames and “Plainness” of Community

All Amish are characteristically conservative, yet some Amish communities and families are “plainer” than others, and some seek to “establish a more modern church discipline” (Luthy 1985:2). Indeed, differences in the *Ordnung*, or rules of conduct, exist among various church districts (Kraybill 1994b). Within the less conservative communities, certain technologies are present that are absent in the more traditional settlements. Good examples include the utilization of bulk storage tanks for their milk production, cooled using gas-powered refrigeration systems, or the presence of telephones, either in a small booth in the farmyard or in the barn. A few communities, primarily in Pennsylvania, also permit automatic milking machines (Kraybill 1994a; Kraybill and Bowman 2001). Thus, migrants to new locations can sometimes be differentiated from the Amish in more traditional communities by their behaviors. For example, eleven dairy farmers with Amish surnames (Beiler, Hertzler, and Stoltzfus) not previously represented in Wisconsin have settled in northwestern Marathon County near Athens. All eleven have Grade A dairy operations, which meet stricter guidelines and can sell their milk for fluid consumption. (Grade B producers, whether utilizing milk cans or bulk tanks, are limited to selling milk for manufacturing of dairy products, such as cheese.) Similarly, five of the six dairymen with Amish surnames that are either new since (or only minimally represented in Wisconsin in) 1989 run Grade A dairy farms in Lafayette County. In contrast, all those dairy farmers surnamed Mishler, Troyer, Swartzentruber, and Zook manage Grade B herds and have settled elsewhere, particularly near the margins of longer established Amish settlements in Monroe, Vernon, and Clark Counties. Given

that certain surnames, such as Swartzentruber, have been associated with particularly conservative Amish groups (Kraybill 1994b), plotting their spatial distribution provides an indication of the particular conservative nature of the new Amish communities.

Families and Settlement Exodus

Just as the analysis of spatial patterns of growth by considering Amish surnames provided additional confirmation of the role of family-level decisions in shaping Amish settlements, it is also displayed in their exodus from the Amherst settlement. The collapse of the Amherst settlement in Portage County is particularly noteworthy and unique, inasmuch as it appears to be the largest Amish settlement anywhere to fail in over a century. In 1990, the Amherst community contained three Amish church districts, thirty Amish surnamed dairy farms, and between eighty and ninety families. Now, there are none.

Exodus from the Amherst community was accomplished by various Amish families at slightly different times. Initially, several new Amish surnames, including Lambright, Mast, and Schwartz appeared in the community, being first noticed in 1990, even though the total number of Amish surnamed dairy farmers fell from 34 to 31 between 1989 and 1990. Members of certain extended families left earlier than others. For example, although there were nine Bortrager dairy farming families in the settlement in spring 1989, with three departing that year, six remained in the community through 1994 and four remained in 1996. On the other hand, the number of Yoder dairy farms fell from eight to four between 1990 and 1992 and the number of Schrocks declined from six to two during the same two-year period. Such chronology illustrates the role of family support networks in retaining or uprooting Amish settlers.

Discussion

Certain Amish affiliations are known to be far more conservative than others (Kraybill 1994b), while certain families are disproportionately associated with specific affiliations. For example, not only are the Swartzentruber Amish among the least mechanized, but their conservatism can be seen by their tendency to migrate to new communities that attract other like-minded conservative surnamed families. Although plotting aggregate growth of Amish populations masks such internal differences, the analyses of the distribution of specifically surnamed Amish families clearly display such variation in settlement behavior. The acquisition and analysis of such family level data is particularly rewarding because of the importance of kinship support networks (Ericksen et al. 1980), and the fact that "new settlements are generally founded by individual families...rather than as a well-organized, church-sanctioned migration" (Luthy 1994:247). This is well-illustrated by the clustering of certain surnamed Amish dairymen in several new communities, such as having all six of Wisconsin's Allgyer dairy farms located in far western Lafayette County in 2002.

Population growth in states that have historically had the largest Amish populations have forced members to migrate elsewhere to maintain the agrarian lifestyle that is so intertwined with their cultural and religious values (Luthy 1994, Bridger et al. 2001). The appearance of Amish surnames not previously found in Wisconsin, such as Stoltzfus and Beiler, shows that Wisconsin is forging linkages with Pennsylvania, with which it previously had few connections. Given the continuing arrival of Amish farm families from other states, the high Amish fertility rate, and the exodus of many traditional family farmers, the Amish now account for five percent of the Wisconsin's dairy farmers. Their arrival is clearly displayed in the prominence of Amish surnames in the

lists of dairy producer licenses and by their plain, austere farmsteads relying upon horse drawn implements.

Conclusion

Surnames are an excellent tool to identify and study both population growth and spatial dispersion of ethnic or religious groups, such as the Amish. The examination of settlement patterns and migration by mapping various Amish surnames provides a far more detailed portrayal of change and expansion than possible utilizing aggregate population or settlement data. This study is but another example of the value of onomastics in the investigation of spatial patterns of settlement and the family oriented diffusion or clustering of an ethnic population.

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