

## An Amish Vegetable Stand

Whenever we visit our son Mario Jr. and his family, we take U.S. Route 30 (US 30), going east from Mansfield to Canton, before heading north to North Canton. (For you non-midwestern folks, we are talking about Ohio.) US 30 is one of the longest US routes, connecting Atlantic City, NJ with Astoria, OR, predating the interstate system by decades. Parts of US 30 were formerly the Lincoln Highway, the oldest coast to coast highway, going from New York City to San Francisco. A good Jeopardy hint would be “eastern terminus of the Lincoln Highway.” The question would then be “what is Times Square.” US 30 goes through the middle of Wayne county, which is directly north of Holmes county. Holmes county has the highest population of Amish in any U.S. county. Amish communities abound in Holmes county, with the largest concentration around the towns of Walnut Creek, Berlin and Millersburg. The Amish population of Ohio is somewhat larger than the more famous and older settlements near Lancaster, PA. Just east of Orrville, on the southeast corner of the intersection of US 30 and SR 94, you will find a vegetable stand belonging to an Amish family. It is usually attended to by a very young woman and an even younger boy, who typically go barefoot during the summer.

We like to stop at this stand, which is only a half hour from Mario & Deidra’s home. We stopped there the other evening, finding the stand well stocked with the bounty from the fall harvest. They had sweet corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, zucchini, gourds, Indian corn, pumpkins, garlic, onions, cider, apples, peaches, etc. It was after six in the evening and still light, but there was no one in attendance at the stand. A woman and her daughter were picking out produce, and I asked her, “where do we pay?” She said the family leaves everything open, with a strong box underneath a sturdy table, skirted by some planks. There is a slot cut into the table for dropping your money in. Doing your own figuring, I suppose you would round out your purchases to the nearest dollar. Everything is left overnight. No alarm, no security cameras. Besides, the Amish don’t believe in using electricity or motorized devices. If a horse or a human can’t run it, they don’t use it.

The other shopper told me the family has never had any problems with theft or vandalism. Not even on Halloween? I also wondered what happens during Sundays, a day that the Amish devote to worship and the family. I’ll have to find out one of these days. It is heartwarming to see a farmer’s stand of this nature, albeit in a rural area. Mind you, US 30 is a busy four lane highway, with a lot of truck traffic. Adjacent to the Amish stand is a frozen custard store. Across the street are two large gas stations and a Wendy’s. Here, you see the stark contrast. The gas stations cater to three ton SUV’s and forty ton semis. On the other corner, a stand of vegetables raised on an organic farm where the ground is still plowed (and fertilized) by horses. Sometimes, one can witness an Amish buggy crossing US 30 while the semis, their diesels growling, wait at the stop light. Of course the reverse is true. For the price of a ten year old used car, you can buy one of these buggies, fresh off the assembly line. There is only one color, though. The horse is extra. Oh, we have at times seen Amish families park their buggies at the custard store and Wendy’s. I guess it is difficult to make or keep ice cream or milkshakes when you eschew electricity.

It seems like an anachronism, but what a beautiful one. On one occasion, we drove back to Fairfield on a Sunday, going off US 30, south and west into the heart of Amish country. It was

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almost like stepping back in time, there was hardly any vehicular traffic except for the standard black one-horse buggy used by the Amish. Sometimes, there would be a longer coach pulled by two horses. I call it the Amish minivan. Not having formal church buildings, the Amish conduct their Sunday worship at each other's homes. So if you want to see lots of Amish traffic, drive through Holmes county in Ohio, especially on Sunday mornings. In this rural part of our Buckeye State, not far from its capital and geographical center of Columbus, a different world lives on. I pray that it be preserved forever.

Mario E. Orosa  
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