Section I

Introduction to Riddle

_The Riddle of Amish Culture_ (hereafter Riddle) focuses on the Amish settlement near Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The first edition, based on fieldwork in the mid-1980s, was published in 1989. The revised edition (2001) was completely updated with new information from interviews and demographic data drawn from a sample of ten church districts.

The purpose of _Riddle_ is fivefold:

- To provide a social history of the Lancaster (PA) Amish community;
- To analyze Amish culture and society in a particular Amish settlement;
- To interpret Amish practices from an “inside” perspective;
- To study how the Amish have negotiated between their traditional practices and the forces of contemporary society; and
- To explore questions about contemporary culture and society that are prompted by the Amish story.

Although the interpretative narrative of _Riddle_ follows the broad sociological tradition of “cultural analysis,” the study focuses on Amish social organization as well as culture. Data were gathered primarily through face-to-face interviews and participant observation in the Lancaster settlement. The specific practices described in _Riddle_ reflect the life of the Lancaster Amish. While many of the values and beliefs described in the book pertain to other Amish settlements, it is hazardous to generalize to all “the Amish” of North America because practices vary greatly across the country. Customs of dress, use of technology, life styles, and occupations fluctuate from settlement to settlement. For example, some communities permit the use of tractors at the barn while others do not. Similarly, many churches allow their members to hire a “taxis” for transportation on a regular basis, but some do not. With more than a
dozen different Amish sub-groups and some 1,300 congregations, it is risky to generalize from one settlement to another. Nevertheless, many of the values and convictions described in *Riddle* are shared by members of other Amish communities.

Readers often ask about the sources of the photographs. For the most part, I obtained them from professional photographers. A few of them were provided by local photographers who developed close friendships with some members of the community. In a few cases, professional photographers took some specific photographs at my request. Although the Amish generally will not pose for photographs, some do not object to having photographs taken of their property. Members who have a long standing friendship with a photographer may be willing to cooperate in other ways as well. They are not censured by the church for appearing in photos taken without their consent, however, they may face disciplinary sanctions if it appears that they intentionally posed for a photograph.
Introduction to The Guide for Instructors and Students

Section II: Instructional Aids

The Guide for Instructors and Students (hereafter Guide) provides resources and suggestions for instructors who are using Riddle (Rev. Ed.) in educational settings. Many of the materials will be helpful to students as well. Sections of the Guide may be copied and distributed for student use. The instructional aids are organized around the chapters of the book. For each chapter the material is divided into five sections: Overview, Key Points, Questions, Statements, and Activities.

Overview. The overview section summarizes the purpose of the chapter and its major themes.

Key Points. This section underscores key ideas in the chapter as well as suggestions for presenting the material in various educational settings.

Questions. A list of questions related to each chapter is provided for classroom discussions, small group discussions, or essay exams.

Statements. The statements are debatable propositions that begin with ‘Support or Refute’. These one-sided statements are designed to stir reactions and engage students. They can be used for classroom discussions, debates in class or assigned for an essay that develops an argument that supports or refutes the statement. Classroom debates that ask teams of students to argue on different sides are a good way to engage students in the material. The “Support or Refute” statements are effective means of motivating students to grapple with the issues raised by Riddle.

Activities. A list of projects and activities related to each chapter provides options for classroom activities and/or assignments between classes.
Section III: Resources on Amish Culture

Section III of the Guide includes additional resources for instructors and students. Among these are possible research topics for student papers, Amish information centers, Amish magazines, websites, and additional books for reading and research.

Revisions of the Guide

I welcome suggestions for improving the Guide. New ideas for projects, exercises, questions, films, and other resources can be sent by e-mail to Donald B. Kraybill at Kraybill4@aol.com.