

The Amana Colonies: Remaining Faithful to a Dream

The history of the Amana Colonies, a National Historic Landmark and one of America's longest-lived communal societies, begins in 1714 in the villages of Germany and continues today on the Iowa prairie.

In turbulent 18th century Germany in the midst of a religious movement called Pietism, two men, Eberhard L. Gruber and Johann F. Rock, advocated faith renewal through reflection, prayer and Bible study. Their belief, one shared by many other Pietists, was that God through the Holy Spirit may inspire individuals to speak. This gift of inspiration, or prophecy, was the basis for a religious group that began meeting in 1714 and became known as the Community of True Inspiration. Though the Inspirationists sought to avoid conflict, they were persecuted for their beliefs. Eventually the Inspirationists found refuge in central Germany settling in several estates, including the 13th century Ronneburg castle.

Seeking Freedom

Persecution and an economic depression in Germany forced the community to begin searching for a new home. Led by Christian Metz, they hoped to find religious freedom in America and left Germany in 1843-44. Community members pooled their resources and purchased 5,000 acres near Buffalo, New York. By working cooperatively and sharing their property, the community, now numbering some 1,200 people, was able to carve a relatively comfortable living. They called their community the Ebenezer Society and adopted a constitution that formalized their communal way of life.

When more farmland was needed for the growing community, the Inspirationists looked to Iowa where attractively priced land was available. One valley on the Iowa River seemed particularly promising. Here was fertile soil, stone, wood and water enough to build the community of their dreams.

Remaining True

In 1855 they arrived in Iowa. After an inspired testimony commanded the people to call their village, "Bleibtreu" or "remain faithful" the leaders chose the name Amana from the Song of Solomon 4:8. Amana means to remain true. Six villages were established, a mile or two apart, across a river valley tract of some 25,000 acres - Amana, East Amana, West Amana, South Amana, High Amana and Middle Amana. The village of Homestead was added in 1861, giving the Colony access to the railroad.

Communal Life

In the seven villages, residents received a home, medical care, meals, all household necessities, and schooling for their children. Property and resources were shared. Men and women were assigned jobs by their village council of brethren. No one received a wage. No one needed one.

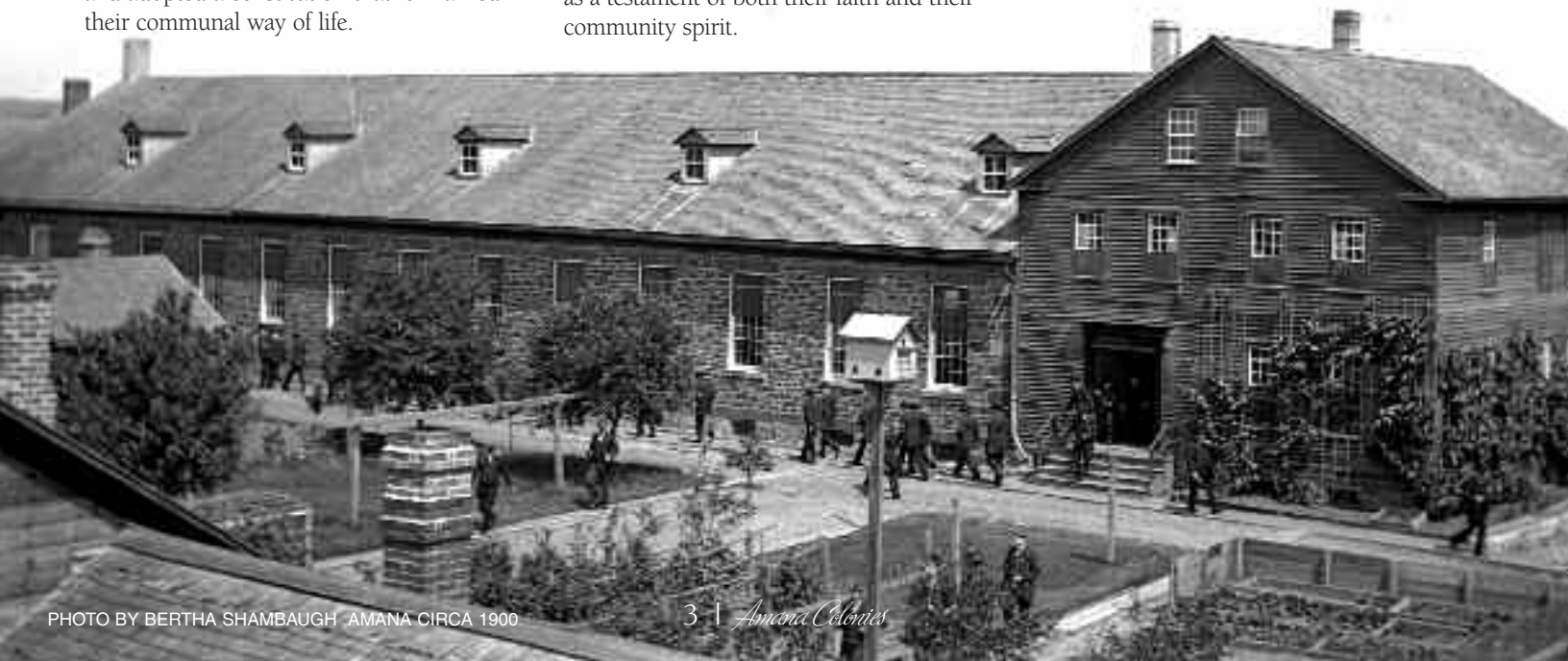
Farming and the production of wool and—calico supported the community, but village enterprises, everything from clock making to brewing, were vital; and well-crafted products became a hallmark of the Amanas. Craftsmen took special pride in their work as a testament of both their faith and their community spirit.

Up before dawn, called to work by the gentle tolling of the bell in the village tower, the unhurried routine of life in old Amana was paced very differently than today. Amana churches, located in the center of each village, built of brick or stone, have no stained glass windows, no steeple or spire, and reflect the ethos of simplicity and humility. Inspirationists attended worship services 11 times a week; their quiet worship punctuating the days.

Over 50 communal kitchens provided three daily meals; as well as a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack to all Colonists. These kitchens were operated by the women of the Colony and well supplied by the village smokehouse, bakery, ice house and dairy, and by huge gardens, orchards and vineyards maintained by the villagers.

Children attended school, six days a week, year-round until the age of 14. Boys were assigned jobs on the farm or in the craft shops, while girls were assigned to a communal kitchen or garden. A few boys were sent to college for training as teachers, doctors and dentists.

In 1932, amidst America's Great Depression, Amana set aside its communal way of life. A ruinous farm market and changes in the rural economy contributed, but what finally propelled the change was a strong desire on the part of residents to maintain their community. By 1932, the communal way of life was seen as a barrier to achieving individual goals, so rather than leave or watch their



children leave, they changed. They established the Amana Society, Inc. a profit-sharing corporation to manage the farmland, the mills and the larger enterprises. Private enterprise was encouraged. The Amana Church was maintained.

Amana Colonies Today

Today the seven villages of the Amana Colonies represent an American dream come true; a thriving community founded by religious faith and community spirit. Declared

Amana Heritage Sites

Amana's unique past is here for you to explore at seven historical sites maintained by the Amana Heritage Society. Single admission or multi-site admissions are available. For more information on Amana Heritage Sites and to check their calendar of special events and programs visit www.amanaheritage.org or phone 319-622-3567.

Amana Heritage Museum, Amana

One of your first stops should be the Amana Heritage Museum. With an award-winning, 20-minute video, exhibits in three communal era buildings and grounds recalling turn of the century Amana life, the museum tells Amana's story from 18th century Germany to the present. The Amana Heritage Museum is among Iowa's top historical attractions. Special programs and exhibits. Museum store. Open daily April - October; 10am - 5pm Monday - Saturday, noon - 4pm Sunday. Open Saturdays in March, November and December.

Communal Kitchen and Cooper Shop, Middle Amana

Preserved just as it was on the day in 1932 when the last communal meal was served in the Colony, visiting the Communal Kitchen and the Cooper Shop across the street is like stepping back in time. Guides explain kitchen routines and share insights on communal life. Popular with all ages, the Communal Kitchen and Cooper Shop are an Amana historical treasure. Open Saturdays, May - September, 10am - 5pm. Open Monday - Friday, June 16 - August 15, 11am - 5pm.

High Amana General Store, & High Amana

So little has changed at the High Amana General Store since the day it opened in 1858 that the smell of handmade soap and kerosene lanterns lingers. Today the shelves are stacked with dry goods and merchandise reminiscent of bygone days. Open daily April - October, 10am - 5pm Monday - Saturday, 10am - 3pm Sunday. Open Saturdays and Sundays in March, November and December.

a National Historic Landmark in 1965, the Amana Colonies attract hundreds of thousands of visitors annually all of whom come to see and enjoy a place where the past is cherished and where hospitality is a way of life.

Evocative of another age, the streets of the Amana Colonies with their historic brick, stone and clapboard homes, their flower and vegetable gardens, their lanterns and walkways recall Amana yesterday. But a vibrant community, celebrating both its past and its future, is here today for you to experience.

Communal Agriculture Museum, South Amana

Built in 1858 the South Amana barn housing the Communal Agriculture Museum is one of the oldest barns in the seven villages. Tools, implements and photographs from Amana's communal era depict operations on the nation's largest communal farm. Open Saturdays, May - September, 10am - 5pm.

The Amana Community Church Museum, & Homestead

Whether you want to learn more about the Colonies or simply wish to experience a setting uniquely suited to reflection, visit the 1865 Saal (church or meetinghouse) in Homestead. Guides discuss religious beliefs and practices of the Amana Church, while explaining the unique history and architecture of this 140-year-old church. Open Saturdays, May-September, 10am - 5pm. Open Monday - Friday, June 16 - August 15, 11am - 5pm.

Homestead Blacksmith Shop, Homestead

Commerce sustained communal Amana, and its importance is explored at this historical site in Homestead. Craft and industry, plus an examination of the community's relationship with the "outside world," are depicted. View storage of museum artifacts and display of Colony buildings in miniature make the Homestead Store well worth discovering. Open Saturdays, May - September, 10am - 5pm. Open Monday - Friday, June 16 - August 15, 11am - 5pm.

Homestead Store Museum, Homestead

Experience the sights, sounds and smells of the original village blacksmith shop. Also on site is a traditional print shop with operating Linotype and hand-set printing press. Blacksmith, printing and bookbinding demonstrations. Open Saturdays, May - September, 11am - 4pm.

Amana Heritage Society Summer Programs

Winter Warmth: Stories of Old Amana – January 26

Be warmed by the potbelly stove at the Homestead Blacksmith Shop & hear stories of old Amana. Limited seating; reservations recommended.

Easter Egg Hunt – March 22

Kids 12 & under join us for our annual Easter egg hunt in the Amana Heritage Museum yard. \$3.00 per child. Reservations required, starts at 9am.

Swing in Spring – May 3

Come Swing in Spring with Amana Heritage Society & Rod Pierson Big Band Featuring Craig Boche. Don't worry if you don't know how to dance, the University of Iowa Swing Club will be giving lessons. Come dressed in your favorite vintage swing style & get a dollar off admission. Lessons start at 7pm, Rod Pierson will take the stage at 7:30 at the Festhalle Barn in Amana. Admission: \$6 per person.

Special Exhibit – Open May 3

The Community of True Inspiration: Pacifism and Patriotism. Exhibit explores the community's role in war; both on the battlefield & on the home front. Free with museum admission.

Craft Demonstrations and Hands-on Activities at Amana Heritage Sites Saturdays, May-September
Crafts and sites vary. Call for schedule.

Passport to History, GPS Adventure - Saturdays, May-September; Mon-Fri, June 16-August 15

Explore the history of the Amana Colonies using the Global Positioning System. Start this fun, family-oriented adventure at the Amana Heritage Museum. Don't worry if you don't have a GPS unit, you can borrow ours!

Village Walking Tours - Friday evenings June & July

Take a guided tour through the streets and stories of old Amana. Starts at the Amana Heritage Museum at 5:30pm. \$3.00 per person or free with museum admission.

Lily Lake Bike Tours – Fridays, May & September

Take a guided ride on our beautiful bike trail & learn about the Colonies unique cultural & natural history on your ride. Tours begin at the Amana Colonies Visitors Center at 2:00pm. Bike rentals are available. Tour admission: \$3.00 per person or free with museum admission.

Industrial Tours - Friday, August 1, 8, 15

Learn about Amana's industrial past. Includes calico factory, woolen mill, millrace and the Hydroelectricity plant. Tour starts at the Woolen Mill at 5:30pm. Admission: \$3.00 per person.

Amana Wine Tours - Thursday, May 29, June 26, July 24, August 28

Take a walking tour of the village of Amana, learning about the Colonies wine-making history. Also sample the best of the modern day Colonies wine. \$5.00 per person. Tour begins at the Amana Heritage Museum at 3:00pm.

Barn Tour - September 21

Learn about agriculture in the Amana Colonies through its barns. Tour starts at 1:00pm at the Amana Heritage Museum. Reservations required.

Amana Volksmarsch - October 12

This popular German sport of walking is a great way to get out & see the Amana landscape with your family & friends. Route starts at the Middle Amana Park at 1:00pm.

Glimpse of Amana's Christmas Past - December 5-7

Experience the unique traditions of an Amana Colonies Christmas through storytelling, museum exhibits, poetry & song at the Amana Heritage Museum. Extended museum hours. FREE.