

Pennsylvania Dutch Country Overnight Tour

By Tom Kenney

The countryside around Lancaster was just starting to come to life from winter in mid-April. It was a great time to take a few days off from our everyday grind to have some fun exploring the Dutch Country before the late spring and summer crowds arrive.

We selected April 18th to 20th because there were few antique car events on the calendar to compete with a two-night tour. Another advantage was that we got some great lodging rates. One thing about the Lancaster area is there is so much to explore and do that you could take a whole week. We wanted to look at off-the-beaten-path places that weren't "tourist traps".

This tour started off Friday morning with a brunch at the Cracker Barrel in New Freedom, PA. Tour routes were designed for back roads, which most of us took. For the impatient few the alternate route was over interstates and main highways. The first stop along the tour route was the Green Dragon Farmers Market and Auction in Ephrata, PA where everyone was on their own.

The Travelers Rest Motel in Gordonville, PA was our operations

base. We had dinner Friday evening at the nearby Bird-In-Hand Restaurant. Afterward we had a special showing at Gene Renninger's Ford Model A store, which is next to the restaurant.

We were all up at the crack of dawn in the morning for the free continental breakfast at the motel. We were scheduled to leave early for a two-hour bus tour of the Amish countryside – this was also included in our room rate. Members were on their own for the afternoon. We had a wine and cheese party scheduled for 4:30 PM, which actually started at 3:30. But just like Jimmy Buffett, we knew it was 4:30 somewhere!

Dinner that evening was at the Stolfus Farm Restaurant – great family style food. We got one free dinner with our deal, so we drew chances on it and Thelma Johnson won. So where did she come from? Well, she and Dave were camping nearby and joined us for wine and cheese and then dinner. These Johnsons are the luckiest pair!

On Sunday morning we were all up early to get our continental breakfast and be on the road to Poole Forge, a 1700s mansion and outbuildings with a

restored covered bridge on the road in. Most of us got a photo op on the bridge.

After our tour of the Poole Forge site, we returned for check out and the trip home. Alternate route maps were provided to everyone so that they didn't have to travel the same roads back. There was an optional stop at The Amish Village in Strasburg.

Everyone enjoyed the easy pace of the tour and events and we got to experience quite a bit of the Pennsylvania Dutch Country – Amish and Plain People lifestyle, quilts, covered bridges, one-room schoolhouses, family style dining, antique shops, and outlet shopping.

Participating on the Overnight Tour were: Carrie & Dave Benson, 1957 Thunderbird; Ruth & Eck Blankenship, 1966 Pontiac; Janice & Dale Carter, 1967 Camaro; Carol & Bud Currey, 1965 Pontiac; Jean & Bob Wilhelm, plus Franklin Gage, 1951 Chevrolet; Lynn & John Horn, 1965 Thunderbird; Anne & Tom Kenney, 1955 DeSoto; Sandy & Robert Mantz, 1955 Chevrolet; Sandy & Ralph Stroud, 1965 Mustang; and Mary & Ed Allen, modern vehicle.



Shown clockwise from the top left: One of the Amish lifestyle scenes we saw; Renninger's Model A store; The Horn's 1965 Thunderbird at the covered bridge; The Stroud's 1965 Mustang; Another curio shop; The Currey's 1965 Pontiac.