

Anna's
HEALING

VANNETTA
CHAPMAN



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ANNA'S HEALING

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*For my friend,
Kim Moore*

Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to Kim Moore. God smiled on me the evening I found myself sitting next to Kim at the ACFW gala. We didn't know each other at the time, but what has proceeded from that moment is a lovely friendship and a superb professional relationship. She is an encouragement and a blessing to me, and we enjoy swapping photos of our pets. What more could one want in an editor?

I'd also like to thank the many believers who shared with me the miraculous works of God in their lives.

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Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to the Amish communities in Oklahoma. The folks there are friendly and gracious, and I appreciate their help with this manuscript.

If you find yourself near Tulsa, drive east on US-412 for forty minutes until you reach the town of Chouteau. You'll be blessed by your journey.

And finally...always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20).

*He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed,
miracles that cannot be counted.*

~JOB 5:9



*There are only two ways to live your life.
One is as though nothing is a miracle.
The other is as though everything is a miracle.*

~ALBERT EINSTEIN

PROLOGUE

Oklahoma
Late October

Was Anna healed?”

That’s the question I’m most frequently asked. I might be at a high school football game interviewing players and coaches, or at a council meeting covering the newest city ordinance. Sometimes I’m not even on the clock, but Cody’s Creek is a small town, and people know I write for the paper.

Always the question is the same and often it comes out of nowhere. I could be eating a club sandwich at the local diner when someone comes up behind me and, without even an introduction, asks, “Is it true, Chloe? Was Anna healed?”

I suppose they know my name from the newspaper column I write. It’s a biweekly paper, called the *Mayes County Chronicle*. My name is on half of the bylines. Maybe they recognize me from the accompanying postage-stamp picture.

Why do they ask me about Anna?

After all of the national coverage—the television spots, newspaper columns, magazine features, and an unauthorized book that is coming out with alarming speed—why do they ask me, Chloe Roberts, small-town reporter?

Perhaps because I was there, from the beginning. Or maybe because, as a reporter, I have the reputation for being objective. Honestly, I don’t

know how anyone could be impartial in a situation like this, though I'll try. In my heart I suspect that you either believe what you see or you reject it. Whichever side you land on, you then go in search of facts to support that position.

I first met Anna in the fall three years ago. She had moved to Cody's Creek the summer of that same year. We had no idea, in those first days, how our lives would become intertwined. We couldn't have envisioned what was ahead—the heartache and joy and confusion. Everyone involved found their lives and their beliefs irrevocably changed. To say we'll never be the same would be equal to staring down into the majesty of the Grand Canyon and calling it *nice*. Even when we're old and these days lie far in the past, I believe the memories of the events surrounding Anna will remain crystal clear.

No, I'm not afraid I'll forget. That's not why I'm once again sitting in front of my tablet, with Anna's name front and center on the blank page.

The reason is actually quite simple. I want to share the details of her story in black-and-white and allow you to choose. I want to cut through all of the fear and controversy. I want to do what I was trained to do—answer who, what, where, and when. As to the why, I'm not sure any of us can answer that question. The *why* is something you'll have to wrestle against within your own heart.

You may wonder how I could remember whole conversations, exact times, and precise reactions. I do remember, is the easy answer. But in case you're skeptical, I also conducted hundreds of hours of interviews and filed dozens of stories. As a reporter, I assure you I've done my homework.

I'll lay out the facts as best I can, and I'll resist the temptation to sugarcoat any parts. There are moments I'd rather forget, but this story isn't about us and what we did or didn't do.

It's about Anna.

To understand exactly what happened, we'll need to go back to the beginning, to that day in September when I visited Cody's Creek and first spoke with Anna Schwartz.

CHAPTER 1

Oklahoma

Tuesday morning, three years earlier

Anna didn't mind working in the produce stand situated next to the two-lane road. At least the August heat had given way to a slight September breeze, though it didn't bring much relief. There were times when she wondered if leaving Indiana had been the right thing to do. Oklahoma's weather was more extreme than she had imagined. The summer had been hotter than anything she'd ever experienced. The heat had brought wave after wave of storms. Warnings of golf-ball-sized hail and tornadoes and strong winds became commonplace.

From the produce stand Anna could see miles of green fields, a few rolling hills in the distance, and an occasional grove of trees. Three white-tailed deer foraged along the edge of the pasture. The sky was a vibrant blue, punctuated by white fluffy clouds. There was no sign of extreme weather that she could see, but then there was the ever popular saying among locals—*If you don't like the weather, wait a minute. It will change.*

In the beginning she had been terrified each time she heard the weather alerts from someone who stopped by the stand. The ominous clouds building in the west set her teeth on edge and stole her sleep at night. Now she met such dire warnings with a shrug, same as most of the other residents in Cody's Creek, Oklahoma, which went to show that a person could become accustomed to anything.

From what she'd heard, the winters were every bit as cold as those in Indiana, with the wind howling across the hills and the snow piling high. After the summer they'd had, Anna almost looked forward to a freezing walk to the phone shack or a buggy ride through snow drifts.

Except buggy rides were few and far between. The black mare was only hitched to the buggy on Sundays and special occasions—weddings and funerals. Anna felt sorry for the old gal and would often walk out to where she was pastured to offer her a piece of apple or carrot. Duchess should be living on a farm up north, where she would be used more often than the tractors which had become a part of everyday life in Cody's Creek.

Yes, some days she missed home. Other days she still savored the adventure of living in a new place.

Her eyes had opened that morning when she felt the slight northern breeze tickling the sheet she lay beneath. Perhaps she could withstand another Oklahoma summer. Maybe she'd been right to move in with her *aenti*. Two hours later, she was in the shed they had converted into a produce stand—selling fresh corn, green beans, tomatoes, and squash to anyone who passed by.

Though she'd been in Oklahoma for three months, she still hadn't found her "place," or so it seemed to her. At breakfast her *aenti* had again brought up the Sunday singing as well as which boys would be willing to accompany her on the youth outing. Anna had tried to remain polite but had finally blurted out, "If I'm a burden, please tell me and I'll go."

Onkel Samuel had scowled as he shoved another spoonful of oatmeal into his mouth. *Aenti* Erin had tsk-tsked, but it was *Mammi* who had gently reminded her, "Children are never a burden, Anna."

She wasn't a child, but she didn't point that out to *Mammi*. Her grandmother was a bright spot in Anna's move to central Oklahoma. Samuel and Erin were stern and strict. Perhaps the difficulties of farming the red clay soil had soured their disposition, but Anna imagined they had been that way since birth.

Mammi, on the other hand, was sunshine personified.

A car pulled into the drive, and Anna set aside her mending. She

wasn't very good at it anyway. She'd never cared much for sewing and it showed, but her *onkel* insisted she stay busy while minding the booth.

The woman who walked toward her was pure *Englisch*. Black curls bounced inches above her shoulders, and dark sunglasses accented her high cheekbones. She wore tight blue jeans, a light fluffy shirt trimmed in lace, and leather boots. Anna had never considered leaving the Amish, but there were times she'd trade in all four dresses hanging in her bedroom for one Western outfit.

"Good morning."

Definitely from Oklahoma, her accent was strong and Southern. As she removed her glasses, Anna realized the visitor was also a tad older than she had first thought. She revised her estimate of the woman's age to somewhere between twenty-five and thirty.

"*Gudemariye*. Can I interest you in some vegetables?"

"Yes." The woman smiled and then confessed, "Actually, I don't cook much, but I imagine my mother would love some of the green beans. You could throw in a few tomatoes and four ears of corn too."

As Anna filled the order, the woman fiddled with her sunglasses, finally tucking them into her purse. Pulling out a ten-dollar bill, she placed it on the counter with a smile. "My name is Chloe Roberts, and I'm a reporter for the *Mayes County Chronicle*."

"My name is Anna. Anna Schwartz. Your job must be very challenging. There's not much to report on around these parts."

"My main office is in Tulsa, but my area is Cody's Creek. It's true we don't have the excitement of a large city, but folks like to read stories about their neighbors."

Anna only nodded as she made the change for Chloe's order and pushed it across the counter to her.

"Especially their Amish neighbors." Now there was a definite twinkle in Chloe's eyes.

"Oh, *ya*? Curious, are they?"

"Indeed. I get questions every week."

"Like what?"

"Mostly about your way of life. For example, the tractor thing has people stumped. Lots of folks don't understand why so many Amish

now drive them into town. How did that happen? Why not drive a car if you're going to abandon the horse and buggy?"

Anna waved away the questions. "It's difficult to explain to an *Englischer*." In truth, she barely understood it herself, but why bring that up?

"Today I'm working on a different subject entirely. I'm reporting on the growth of the cottage industries among Amish families." She paused, and then she added, "By cottage I don't mean small homes—"

"*Ya*, I know what cottage industry means. I work in one."

Chloe pocketed the change. "Do people do that to you often?"

"Do what?"

"Assume you don't understand something."

"Often enough."

"I apologize. Let me begin again. My boss wants me to report on the Amish in Mayes County, and in particular the rise of home businesses. Could I ask you a few questions? I promise not to sneak any pictures with my phone."

Anna couldn't help laughing at that. It had been a slow morning, as most weekdays were, and it was nice to have someone to talk to. "If you promise, then I would be happy to help."

"Have you lived here all your life?"

"*Nein*. I moved here..." She stared at the top of the shed as if it would crystallize the events since she'd left home. "A few months ago. It was early July."

Chloe had pulled out a small pad of paper and a pen and was taking notes. "Where did you live before?"

"Indiana. Goshen, Indiana."

"Also a small town."

"It is. Have you been there?"

"We used to visit Chicago once a year to see my cousins. My mom would always insist that we take the toll road east and shop in the Amish communities."

"And now you have your own Amish community." Anna was actually enjoying this conversation. The woman was easy to talk to,

especially for a newspaper reporter. Though come to think of it, her *onkel* probably wouldn't approve.

"You take all of this interest well. I know many Amish are irritated by it."

"No use being irritated by what you can't change, or so my *mammi* says."

Chloe nodded. "She sounds a lot like my mother."

Anna considered that a minute. She didn't believe her grandmother and this woman's mother would have much in common, but perhaps she was wrong. "What can I tell you about operating a vegetable booth?"

They spoke for another ten minutes about farming, the tourist traffic, and the response from the local grocery stores. The answer to the last topic was mixed. While they were willing to buy farm-fresh produce from the Amish and mark up the prices to sell in their stores, they were less enthusiastic about all of the independent produce stands popping up.

"Certainly, what we're doing is not unique to the Amish." Anna twirled her *kapp* string around one finger. "After all, folks have been selling their extra produce in stands like this for ages—much longer than the hundred years the Amish have lived in Cody's Creek."

Chloe's pen hovered over the sheet of paper. "I read that your community has existed for that long, but it's hard to believe. I grew up here and don't remember much about the Amish."

"From what I've heard, the community was quite small at first. I believe the population began growing when land prices increased in the northeast."

Chloe clicked her pen once, and then she placed it back inside her bag, which was a tooled brown leather. "You've been a big help, Anna. I appreciate it. Do you mind if I use your name in the article?"

"I suppose that would be okay." It made no difference to her what Chloe put in her *Englisch* paper. She rarely ever saw a copy.

Anna watched the reporter walk back to her car, and something inside her—probably the same thing that had whispered *move to Oklahoma*—caused her to call out, "We'll have the corn maze open in

another week. You should come back. You can even take pictures—of the corn, that is.”

Chloe hitched her purse strap up on her shoulder. “I’d love that.” She opened the door to her little car, a small blue thing that looked as if it wouldn’t go much faster than a buggy, and started the engine.

As she pulled away, it occurred to Anna that their conversation was the most exciting thing to happen to her in a week. Perhaps her *aenti* was right. Maybe she should go to the singing.

CHAPTER 2

Chloe had barely driven her small car out onto the blacktop when Anna's *onkel* pulled the tractor up to the house.

Tractors!

When Anna had first heard that the Amish communities in Oklahoma had allowed them, she'd envisioned all sorts of things—differences in their dress, a broader role for women, maybe even a chance to do something she'd never done before. But when she'd arrived she had found that everything—except for the tractors—was the same as back home in Goshen.

She understood the allowance. She'd spent part of July and August helping with the family vegetable garden. The dirt was like the Play-Doh her little sister, Bethany, had once brought home from school—malleable at first but quickly turning to something that resembled concrete. Plowing with the big workhorses was difficult, and in some spots, impossible.

It was a mystery to her why her uncle insisted on keeping Snickers and Doodle, two workhorses he'd bought for a good price five years earlier. She'd asked her *aenti* about that.

"It seems the other Amish families here don't have any workhorses at all."

"You're right." Erin had continued hanging laundry as she spoke. "They use the tractors for everything, as is allowed."

"But not *Onkel* Samuel."

“*Nein.*”

Anna waited for more, but as usual her *aenti* was not very forthcoming.

“Is there a reason? That he keeps the horses, I mean. Is it better for the crops?”

“I couldn’t say.” Erin pushed hair back into her *kapp*. The summer sun was hot, though it was early in the morning. “Your *onkel*, he’s stubborn. That’s the best explanation I can give you.”

Thinking back on those words, Anna realized her *aenti* wasn’t criticizing her *onkel*, but rather stating a fact.

Regardless, Anna thought Snickers and Doodle were fine geldings. Both were chestnut-colored Percherons. Snickers had a dark-brown patch that stretched from between his ears to his nose. Doodle had white patches covering her head and neck. Both were strong horses, and she understood why her *onkel* was unwilling to part with them. What she didn’t understand was why he’d bought them in the first place. Tractors had been allowed for many years before her family had moved into the area. What had he seen in the two Percherons to cause him to spend so much money on them? That money could have been used as a down payment on a new tractor.

Whatever the reason, Anna was glad he had. She enjoyed visiting the horses, especially when she was homesick for Indiana. Life in Oklahoma had certainly not turned out the way she’d imagined it would. Yes, farming was different and they drove tractors to town—something she still wasn’t comfortable with, but that was the full extent of their *liberal* lifestyle.

Her *aenti* appeared on the porch, holding a plate filled with lunch. In Anna’s opinion, *Aenti* Erin was thin to the point of unhealthiness. The woman looked as if she stood in danger of being whisked away by the Oklahoma wind. She insisted on wearing drab colors of black, dark blue, and gray—though their *Ordnung* allowed for much more diversity. Her skin was pale and creased, more wrinkled than someone her age should be, as if life’s trials and tribulations had etched themselves on her skin.

Erin’s hair was a different matter. Thick, chestnut brown, and wavy,

she attempted to keep it tightly pulled under her *kapp*. Always, though, tendrils snuck out. Anna loved her *aenti*'s hair because it looked like that of a much younger woman. It proved that *Aenti* wasn't as old as she perhaps behaved.

Anna popped out of the booth and met her halfway.

"*Danki*."

"It's no problem, child. How was your morning?"

"*Gut*. A little slow."

"The woman in the car stayed a long time."

Anna almost told *Aenti* Erin about Chloe Roberts and her news stories. Realizing any such information would be met with a lecture on remaining separate, she focused on her lunch instead. The plate held fresh bread covered with homemade peanut butter accompanied by an apple and two oatmeal cookies. She still had half the water in her thermos, the one she'd carried out with her earlier that morning.

"This looks *wunderbaar*." Throwing a smile over her shoulder, Anna made her way back to the produce booth. If she had thought she would lose weight in Oklahoma, she was wrong. Her *aenti* and *onkel* might be stricter than even her own parents, but the meals were the same—chock-full of calories and fat. That didn't stop her from closing her eyes in a prayer of appreciation before she bit into the fresh bread.

Some might wonder how *Aenti* remained so thin, but Anna had watched her eat. The woman pecked at her food like a small wren.

The rest of the afternoon passed quickly, probably because instead of darning she spent a good portion of the time reading the book she'd brought home from the library. A prairie romance, it boasted a sticker on the side proclaiming it to be *Christian fiction*. Soon she was lost in another life, one similar to hers in many respects; however, it was set in a different place with unusual problems and interesting strangers. That alone was enough to bring a smile to Anna's face.

CHAPTER 3

Three days later, Anna found herself driving the tractor into town. This was a first! *Onkel* Samuel had never trusted her to drive alone anywhere before, but to be fair that may have been because there was rarely a need to go into town, and someone had to watch over the vegetable stand.

She would rather have driven the buggy, but Samuel had merely scratched his head and walked off when she'd mentioned it. He'd showed her three times how to operate the tractor. She was to put it in first gear to plow, but that wasn't something she needed to know. Neither was second or third, which were used for pulling heavy loads and mowing. She only needed to know neutral and fourth.

She stopped at a red light and checked her purse again. Yes, she still had the list.

The light changed and she attempted to pull through, but she popped the clutch and the tractor stalled. She ran Samuel's instructions through her mind—break, clutch in, start the engine, clutch out. The engine started, but she again let the clutch out too quickly. The tractor jerked forward a few feet, so that it now rested in the middle of the intersection, and then the engine again died. A car behind her honked, and several folks walking down the street turned to stare.

Anna ignored them. She'd driven a pony cart when she was in fourth grade, a buggy since she was in eighth, and even the large workhorses

her father used when harvesting. She could certainly handle an old blue tractor with a faded blue canopy, pulling the truck bed of a white Ford pickup.

This time when she started the tractor, it jerked and sputtered but didn't die. Breathing a prayer of relief, she continued on through the intersection and then turned right into Bylers' Dry Goods. Her mind slipped back to a simpler time, when she'd driven her parents' mare to town in Goshen.

But she'd wanted change, or she'd thought that was what she wanted. It seemed that Duchess had looked at her accusingly when she had left her *onkel's* farm. She'd take the mare an extra apple when she returned home.

Dropping the tractor keys into her purse, Anna scrambled out of the contraption and turned toward the store. She fairly bounced up the old wooden steps.

"*Gudemariye*, Anna." Rebecca Byler smiled at her as she walked inside.

It was nearly noon, so the good morning greeting caught her by surprise, but Anna responded in kind.

"It's not often we see you out. I suppose Erin is home caring for your *Mammi* Ruth."

"*Ya*. Doc says she needs to stay in bed a few more days, at least until she's able to eat all three meals again."

"Summer colds can be terrible, especially for older ones."

Anna nodded as she picked up a shopping basket. She spent the next twenty minutes filling it with items from her *aenti's* list. She also paused in the book aisle and perused the latest offerings. Rebecca didn't carry much, and what she did carry didn't actually appeal to Anna—books on farming, herbal remedies, and a small section titled "Plain and Simple Reading." No doubt those books were for the tourists who stopped in, as no one Anna knew needed a book on *A Plain Life Without Electricity* or *Attending Amish Schools*.

Still, she enjoyed glancing over the entire selection. The book covers were crisp, shiny, and unbent. Opening one, she took a deep sniff.

"I'm going to have to charge you for smelling that book." Joseph Byler leaned against his broom, trying to hide his smile by pulling down on his beard.

"Charge me? Will it be fifty cents or a dollar?"

Now Joseph laughed. "You'd probably pay it. I've never seen a gal who loves the book section quite like you do."

Anna sighed and replaced the book on the shelf. "*Onkel* doesn't approve. He says my time is better spent on something useful."

Instead of arguing with that, Joseph patted her shoulder with a large clumsy hand. As he walked away, he said, "Rebecca has something put back for you behind the counter."

Rebecca and Joseph were probably the same age as Anna's *aenti* and *onkel*. She guessed they were in their early fifties. The difference was that while *Aenti* Erin and *Onkel* Samuel approached each day as if it was a huge burden, Rebecca and Joseph seemed to find joy in the smallest things.

Had their lives been so different? Or were people merely different in their hearts? In the way they went about their rest and worship and chores? Joseph couldn't be thrilled about sweeping the shop floor again, yet she'd never seen him when he wasn't smiling about one thing or laughing about another. Rebecca always had a pleasant word for everyone.

Anna had only been in the community a few months, and already these two were her favorite people. Their shop was often filled with tourists and Amish and *grandkinner* all at the same time. At the moment, one of Rebecca's youngest grandsons, a toddler named Simon, was seated on a stool playing with a small toy hammer and pegs.

Rebecca rang up her purchases, chatting about the weather and remarking on a baby that had been born to one of the couples in their district.

"I remember Katie because she was at the last church service looking ready to have that *boppli* any minute."

"*Ya*, she's the one. Blond hair with a tint of red in it, what my *mamm* used to call a strawberry blond. Her husband's name is Brian. He's the teacher at the school nearest to you."

"Isn't he an *Englischer*?"

"Was. He's Amish now."

"We had a few try to convert to Amish while I was growing up in Goshen," Anna admitted. "It never stuck."

"Brian is a special man, though no doubt the changes are difficult. We should keep them both in our prayers." Rebecca handed her the receipt and change, and then she reached under the counter and pulled out a copy of the *Mayes County Chronicle*.

"I was hoping you'd come in today. I saved you a copy of the paper." Rebecca opened it up across the counter and pointed to an article on the top of the second page. "The writer mentions your *onkel*'s farm."

The article was titled "Plain Produce."

Anna couldn't help rolling her eyes at the heading, but then she caught site of the byline—Chloe Roberts.

"Take it home with you." Rebecca tapped the paper. "No charge. I thought you'd like to read it."

"*Danki*, I will. Though it may be best to do my reading in the tractor. *Onkel* can't abide *Englisch* papers, only the *Budget*. He doesn't outright forbid such things. In fact, he caught me reading a library book last week and simply walked away mumbling about young girls and wasted time."

"I don't mean to suggest you go against Samuel's wishes, but I think he may be interested in this article. It's bound to bring more tourists out to your place. *Gut* news, *ya*?"

"It is." Anna carefully refolded the paper and placed it in the sack with her purchases. She glanced left and right. Assured that they had the store to themselves for the moment, she plunged ahead with something that had been circling her mind.

"I'd like to ask you a personal question, Rebecca."

"I'll answer if I can."

"Why is *Onkel* Samuel so harsh? I've been here for more than two months now, and I rarely see him smile."

Rebecca didn't answer immediately. Instead, she pulled out a roll of "New Product" stickers and began placing them on a stack of cook-books. "I wouldn't be judging your *onkel*, Anna."

“*Nein*, of course not. It’s only that I’ve been wondering...is it me? Is it because I’ve come to stay with them? When we wrote to ask about my coming, it seemed as if they wanted me, but—”

“There’s no doubt they do want you.” Rebecca set down the roll of stickers and met Anna’s gaze directly. “It’s as you say. Samuel and Erin have always had a serious disposition. Perhaps they were born that way.”

“But *Mammi* is so joyful.”

“*Ya*. It’s true. Though her husband, your *Grossdaddi* Menno, could be a very somber man at times. I believe Ruth had a positive effect on him. But though she taught him to smile and to appreciate the blessings of our life, his natural temperament was more serious.”

“So that’s why Samuel and Erin are so sour?”

Instead of being offended, Rebecca laughed. “I don’t know if ‘sour’ is the right word, but I understand why you would use it. Some of that answer lies in the past, and it’s not my place to share it.”

“My *dat* and Samuel are *bruders*. I always thought *Dat* was a bit strict and even a little somber at times, but next to *Onkel* Samuel, *Dat* looks like a blushing schoolboy.”

“Speaking of blushing boys...” Rebecca nodded toward the door, where three of the boys from their district were stomping dirt off their boots before stepping inside.

Each boy had asked Anna to the singings, and she had turned down all three. The reason that she’d given her *aenti* was they were too young, and it was true they were one to two years younger than she. But the real reason was she wasn’t ready to settle down. She hadn’t even lived yet. How could she be expected to begin dating—which would no doubt lead to marrying—one of the local boys? She didn’t even know if she wanted to stay in Oklahoma.

So she said goodbye to Rebecca, tucked her package under her arm, and only offered a brief nod to Neal, Adam, and Thomas, who were indeed blushing.

Anna walked to her tractor without looking back, though she suspected they were watching her. Was she that odd of an occurrence? An out of town Amish girl? She couldn’t get used to being a minor

celebrity among the boys. In Goshen, most of them didn't give her a second glance.

Or perhaps she was remembering that wrong. She'd had no more interest in dating back home than she did here. The difference was that when she was still on her parents' farm, she'd thought a change of scenery would calm the restlessness in her heart.

It hadn't.

She climbed up into the tractor, but instead of putting in the key and fighting the clutch, she opened the paper across her lap and found the article she was looking for.

Plain Produce

By Chloe Roberts

Mayes County Chronicle

CODY'S CREEK—If it's wholesome food and fair prices you're looking for, you need look no farther than a few local Amish farms.

Corn, green beans, tomatoes, okra, bell peppers, radishes, and squash—plump, fresh, and picture-perfect—can be had when you pull over to one of the small produce booths that dot the countryside. Amish farmers do not use insecticides or chemically produced fertilizer on their crops. What you buy will be organic in the truest sense of the word.

The Amish population in Mayes County has doubled over the last ten years, bringing with it a resurgence of small farms. Unlike conglomerates with vast acreage and the latest technology, farms owned by the Amish insist on using the old ways and only farming what each family needs to earn a living and feed their own. Though they remain faithful to the Amish faith, their day-to-day practices differ somewhat from larger Amish communities in Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

You have probably seen the canopied tractors pulling the bed of a pickup truck. Amish in the area use tractors for

farming and for local travel. However, a horse and buggy can still be found on most homesteads. Their life here in Oklahoma is one of necessary compromises due to the difficulty of the area's claylike soil.

If you've visited the area on Sunday, you've no doubt had to slow down behind the iconic horse-drawn buggies and Plain-clothed families making their way to church or visiting neighbors. What you may not have realized is that this community east of Tulsa is now home to four Amish church districts and more than six hundred Amish people.

City manager Lex Carlson considers that a plus. "They make good neighbors. Not too much crime among the Amish, and what many folks don't realize is that they pay the same local taxes as everyone else."

Judy Scotts with the Cody's Creek Chamber of Commerce also believes the Amish community is a real asset. She explained that Amish families have been a plus to the local economy. "It only takes one stop by the Amish Cheese House, Dutch Pantry, or Ropp Farm and Bakery to win folks over."

Located near the intersection of Highways 69 and 412, Cody's Creek has become a stopping point for travelers in the market for handmade furniture, fresh produce, or a piece of homemade pie. But not everyone is happy about the Amish move into local tourist, restaurant, and produce businesses. Local farmer Leo Stuebner III admitted, "You cannot underprice these people. Family members work for extremely low wages or nothing at all."

The Amish of Cody's Creek have indeed made a name for their community in the produce business, and their businesses are usually family owned and operated. Anna Schwartz recently moved to the area from Goshen, Indiana. Anna is twenty-four and lives on her *onkel's* farm. She has chestnut hair covered with the traditional *kapp*, and a

pretty round face. Standing a few inches over five feet, she could be the cover girl for Amish women. When asked about the rise of cottage industries among Plain folks, Anna said, "What we're doing is not unique to the Amish. Folks have been selling their extra produce in stands like this for ages."

See the enclosed map for locations of various produce stands, including the Schwartzes'. In addition to fresh vegetables, you can find homemade sweets and the occasional quilt or birdhouse. Mr. Schwartz will also be offering tourists a walk through their corn maze beginning next week-end for a nominal fee.

Anna wanted to reread the article, but she realized her *aenti* would be worried about her if she didn't hurry home. So she folded the paper, set it back inside her shopping bag, and started the tractor, pulling out onto the blacktop and turning it toward the farm.

She didn't know if her *onkel* would be pleased about the article, but she imagined it would increase the number of folks who stopped by the produce stand. In Anna's mind, publicity could be a good thing. She was in favor of anything that would keep her busy enough that she didn't have to mend socks or sew patches on work pants.