

N.C. Angus Association Members Tour

CAB Headquarters and Ohio Amish Country

By NANCY CROCKER

Twelve couples departed from Jonesville on a bus of N.C. State colors early on Saturday, April 21, 2012. We were on our way for an enjoyable trip of five days to visit Wooster, Ohio, where the CAB offices are located. A day was to be spent there, a day of farm tours, and a day in Holmes County, the heart of Amish country.

In traveling through West Virginia, a stop was made at Fenton Glass. Many of us remember our mothers and grandmothers having some Fenton glass. This company is closing due to the high cost of firing glass. Another of the problems in the economy.

We arrived later in the afternoon at the Berlin Grand Hotel, a nice lodging in the small Amish town of Berlin, Ohio.

On Sunday, April 22, following breakfast, Elaine Scarlett had a brief Sunday service for us and we celebrated Earth Day with a ride through farm country prior to our first stop. John Fitzpatrick boarded the bus to tell us the stops for the day. He is an organizational director with the Ohio Farm Bureau. We toured Cedar Lane Farms, a wholesale greenhouse operation, where the houses are heated with almost no sulfur emissions from burning coal. CO₂ is captured and piped to large water basins, growing algae for bio-fuel, very scientific. The operation also included aquaculture for edible fish.

Roger Baker boarded the bus and told us about his custom and haylage operation, but his supply was depleted as he supplies to dairy and beef farms in several states. He told us about his thirteen-year-old daughter having her own beef herd and how many farm groups work together in Ohio and what can be accomplished through group cooperation.

The final stop was a large dairy operation. Two adjoining dairy farms had become one, Catalpadale and Bristol, owned by John and Lois Douglass. Milking is 24/7 and the tanker truck comes seven times daily. Three thousand cows are milked in the parlor on two lines, 80 at a time in eight minutes and average more than 80 pounds. We got back on the bus and drove through the free stall barn, 1,400 feet in length, where cows lounged before the next milking. Our driver said it was his first drive through the long barn. We continued around the farm to hear about feeding, cleanup, calving, and recycling. Two sons work at the dairy and a daughter works part time, and 56 others are employed along with some contract work. Even as beef producers, we found this stop most interesting. I was especially impressed with their care and concern for workers, cows, and the environment.

Monday was Angus day. We traveled to Wooster for a morning at the Certified Angus Beef headquarters. Mark McCully, vice president of production, made a presentation along with input from the supply development team. Chef Kyle Miller had a meat demonstration and educational program in which he prepared two meals from the tri-tip steak.

Lunch was provided at the new Education and Culinary Center, adjacent to the headquarters. The Culinary Center is a renovated restaurant that had closed. Following lunch, we toured the office complex and visited with staff.

Later, we visited the Chippewa Valley Angus Farm, seeing some excellent Angus mamas and calves. A veterinarian, Red Ferguson, is the owner and has two young men employed who manage the farm and herd. He says they see most every calf hit the ground. Some of the fellas went out to a pasture to look at bulls. The wind was blowing 50 miles per hour. A few snowflakes flew by and no doubt ended up miles away in another county. That evening we dined at the historic Wooster Inn.

The fourth day was scheduled for stops in the Amish town of Holmes County. Our tour guide, LaVonne DeBois, pointed out many interesting shops and shared her knowledge of the Amish with us, as she has many friends in the community. We would have missed so much had she not been our guide. She told of their customs, church, education, and their farm and home life. Their farms and surroundings are immaculate.

We saw four- and five-team Belgians pulling plows as they turned the soil. They do not no-till. School was out so a young boy, perhaps ten, was plowing with a team of four horses. Horses and buggies are everywhere and businesses in town have a pad and railing for tying.

Our scheduled stops included a leather shop and Keim Lumber, where many Amish work, and it is state-of-the-art in crafting as well as a very large store of tools, yard and garden, and home wares. I saw many American-made items. Our stop for lunch was at Walnut Creek Cheese and Bulk Foods, and we enjoyed lunch at the abundant deli counter. This store had a varied selection of foods.

In the afternoon, we visited Wendell August Forge, featuring hammered gift ware from bronze, aluminum, and pewter. There were also cubicles for other artisans to sell quality crafts.

We then made our way to the northern part of the county and a home where the family makes baskets. The children were outside and barefoot in 40-degree weather. A stop included P. Graham Dunn, specializing in laser engraving and they do special advertising items for CAB.

The men had looked forward to the visit to Lehmans Hardware, the place to find what you can't find anywhere else. The store

hours had changed and we had to cut our visit short. They stock everything for home and farm, a lot of non-electric. We could have looked for hours.

Since time at Lehman's was short and so not to arrive too early at the Yoder home for the evening meal, we made a stop at one of the many Amish furniture shops. They are skilled furniture makers and make and sell quality furniture at reasonable prices.

For the close of the Amish day, we had our evening meal in an Amish home. Food was typical of the region, home prepared, generous, and served by the family. Three couples in our group dressed in some Amish clothing, depicting the wedding feast. Following dinner, the family told of their home life and children. The women are skilled in cooking and sewing and do all the yard work.

Wednesday was travel home day, but we had not yet visited a cheese factory and shop. Our driver knew a place, ending up on a one lane dirt road behind a motor grader. The Amish dairies supply milk to the cheese makers. Shopping was done at the Guggisberg Cheese Makers, where we could sample many before buying. This is the home of the Baby Swiss. Most of us had some with insulated bags.

"On the Road Again" and traveling through West Virginia, we stopped for lunch at Tamarack, the arts and culture center of West Virginia. Arriving back in Jonesville, a "few" shopping bags were unloaded as well as our luggage. The driver for our trip was Raymond Cline of Catawba County. He was so accommodating and familiar with the area as he has taken the Catawba Valley Cattlemen on many trips. Thank you, Raymond.

Jane Ebert of Sparta arranged our trip, the guides, and agenda. If something needs doing, she has contacts or will find someone who does. This was truly an educational and interesting tour and no down time.

Thanks to Jane and her committee of Jim Scarlett and Emily Tennant. Also to Jim Scarlett for all the ice cream stops.

Note: We've had trouble getting photos that were reproduction quality and hope later to have them to do a collage of the trip. Thank you to Nancy Crocker for doing the article and to William & Lucille Leatherman for help w/ the pictures. sbrewer