

**A People Apart.** Kathleen Kenna. Photography Andrew Stawicki. Somerville House, 1995. 64 pp. \$19.95 cloth. ISBN 1-895897-59-9.



This is not a book of fiction but rather a description of what it means to be a Mennonite today living in a rural community. Kenna's writing is appropriately plain and superbly lucid, and Stawicki's thirty black-and-white photos are excellent illuminations of the text. The study has an introduction on the historic origins, eight chapters on various aspects of Mennonite life, and a brief Bibliography. The author presents an objective but sympathetic view of Mennonite life. She stresses the people's determination, born of the long persecution they have suffered, to preserve past traditions whose simplicity is believed to make them more resistant to evil influences from the "outside" world. At the same time, though, she does not evade the problems of a closed society structured on inflexible rules and the ultimate threats of expulsion and shunning. This book would be suitable for reading to a child of six or more years, and for reading by any young person (or adult). It presents two very useful lessons. By teaching an appreciation of other manners of living, it fosters a tolerance of those who choose to be different without harming anyone; specifically, in the case of the Mennonites, the young reader can see the possibility of living in the virtues of simplicity, humility and peacefulness. And secondly, the young reader of *A People Apart* will have a chance to understand the meaning of "community" and the value of participating in and contributing to one's own community: the vital notion of identity through belonging.

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