

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC Amana Colonies

AND/OR COMMON

Amana Colonies

## 2 LOCATION

STREET &amp; NUMBER

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Southeastern  
Iowa

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

— VICINITY OF

1st

STATE

Iowa

CODE

19

COUNTY

Iowa

CODE

095

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Board of Directors, Amana Society

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Amana

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Iowa County Courthouse  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Iowa

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington,

STATE

D.C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In November 1854, a committee from Ebenezer searching for a place to remove the Society, for cheaper land and greater isolation, was most favorably impressed with a tract along the Iowa River about 20 miles west of Iowa City and 18 miles southwest of Cedar Rapids. Another committee returned to Iowa and bought 18,000 acres of this land in a continuous tract. Then the Society began a gradual ten year long removal to Iowa, during which all the Ebenezer holdings were liquidated without loss, and the Iowa holdings were increased to 26,000 acres--the size the colony has retained to date.

Amana was the first village to be erected, in 1855. Then followed West Amana, South Amana, High Amana, East Amana, then Middle Amana. In 1861 Homestead was purchased to provide access to train service for the community, bringing the colony's land to its present size. The villages, each nearly self-sufficient, were scattered throughout the territory, several miles from each other, to facilitate farming throughout the large area.

This valley of the Iowa River was soon cultivated into acres of corn, grazing pastures and meadows, vineyards, fields of grain, with much of the area in timbered hills, and so the valley remains today. Along the valley bottom is a six mile long canal dug by men and oxen in 1861 to power the woolen and flour mills. Coralville Dam just east of the colonies was built in 1958 and created Coralville Lake, which occupies land in the southeast section of the Amana Colonies and presents flooding problems for the fields south of Middle Amana and Amana, and threatens historic structures, especially in the village of Amana.

Members of the Society, who were all of German, Swiss and Alsatian ancestry, built their structures in Iowa in a style probably determined both by the architecture of their homeland and their religious belief in simplicity in material affairs. Many structures were built during the settlement period 1850-1880 and most of these have continued in use through to the present day, since the society membership has remained relatively constant, at about 1,750, for the past 130 years, and the members are a naturally conserving people, with strong ties to family and community, and they continue to use the structures as houses, churches and stores from generation to generation.

The older Amana structures are easily identified and comprise the central area of all the villages, by far outnumbering any twentieth century buildings. They are very similar in style--large, at least two-stories in height, sturdy, rectangular, gable-roofed buildings of brick, locally quarried brownish sandstone, or unpainted clapboard. There is little decorative detail except for wooden hoods or porches protecting the doorways, and simple brick hoodmoulds and sills on the windows, and wooden trim which is painted white. Most of the buildings have retained their original details, including unusual old hardware

(CONTINUED)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1854-

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Amana Society was by far the most successful of the several utopian communities founded in the United States during the 19th century. It was also the longest lived; in fact, it still exists today, although in modified form.

The Society was an outgrowth of a pietistic movement begun in Germany in 1714 by a group which withdrew from the Lutheran Church and formed "The Community of True Inspiration." Persecuted as a religious minority, 800 of these pietists, led by Christian Metz, emigrated from Germany to the United States between 1843 and 1846 and established six small villages near Buffalo, New York, with two in Canada, and called their community the Ebenezer Society. Although it was not part of their original religious doctrine, the members agreed to set up as a communitarian society as a means of unifying in the new land. The first constitution of the Ebenezer Society provided that all property with the exception of clothing and household goods should be held in common, a fair practice since the wealthier members had paid to move the community to America, buy land and build the Ebenezer villages.

By 1854 the growing population of Buffalo threatened the tranquillity of the settlement, and the group began its migration to Iowa. Amana (meaning remaining true), the first village to be established was settled in 1855. During the next seven years Middle Amana, High Amana, West Amana, South Amana and East Amana were founded and the town of Homestead was purchased so as to acquire direct access to a railroad.

In 1859 the Community of True Inspiration was incorporated under the laws of Iowa as the Amana Society, as a religious and benevolent society, and adopted a new constitution similar to that of the Ebenezer Society. The declared purpose of the society was, as it had been since the eighteenth century beginnings, to serve God "according to His law and His requirements in our own consciences, and thus to work out the the salvation of our souls, through the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ, in self-denial, in the obedience to our faith and in the demonstration of our faithfulness in the inward and outward service of the Community..."

Control and management of the Amana Society was vested in a Board of Trustees, an elective body of 13 elders. The Board was the high court of appeals for all disputes and complaints. The members of the Board made up the Great Council of the Brethren, which was the high governing authority in spiritual affairs--combining religious and temporal control. Each separate village was governed by a

(CONTINUED)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 26,000 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	15	598100	4633900
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	15	581200	4621900

B	15	598100	4621900
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D	15	581200	4633900

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Continuation Sheet

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Iowa	19	Johnson	103
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Blanche H. Schroer, Landmark Review Project; Ray H. Mattison, 1964

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

9/20/76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11/29/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

10/10/78

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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Amana Colonies

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

and latches on the doors. A number of the old buildings have been covered with siding during this century or had additions constructed, but these could probably be removed in most cases, with little damage to the plain original facades. Most of the houses maintain their own gardens and many have wooden trellises attached along the walls of the house for vegetables to climb.

Each of the seven villages are nearly identical in organization, and contain the same basic elements. The church, always of the same rectangular design, of two definite sections, and of sandstone or brick, is located in the center of the village--usually in the very center of a block. The interior is one extremely plain large room, with white walls, unpainted wooden benches, where the women in black caps and shawls sit on one side, men on the other during the services, which are conducted by a male member of the community, still predominantly in German.

The community kitchens are probably the largest buildings in the villages, and there were several kitchens in each. The interiors were calcimined an unusually deep blue and the large rooms accommodated between 30 and 50 people. The bakery, with deep brick ovens was often located next door, and the blacksmith shop was nearby, as was the community general store, the wash house and the school. Many of these structures are now used as homes, or, in a few cases, museums, and several of the bakeries still operate, while the general stores are a major tourist attraction.

At the edge of the village--which is only several streets in size, is a cluster of farm buildings--several large barns with many sheds and fenced yards for the animals. All the buildings are frame, clapboarded and shingled and painted white, with some simple decorative details on the exterior, and huge hand-hewn beams inside. These are used today for storage and to house some animals, and are often full of old wooden equipment. Most of the modern barns and farm equipment are located far outside of the villages, near the fields.

Just outside the village on another side is the village cemetery, protected by towering pines, where members are buried in order of death, in little rows, and their graves are all identified with the same small white stone markers.

While most the villages are made up of the big rectangular structures built before 1900, there has been a considerable amount of building in the past two decades, in the form of houses, public schools, community facilities, and additions to the older buildings, by both the Amana Society and outside commercial interests. Unfortunately much of this have been done in styles and

(CONTINUED)

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RECEIVED
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Amana Colonies

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

materials not at all complementary to the traditional Amana buildings. Fortunately, however, much of the recent building has been fairly restricted to certain areas and has not been within the central residential areas of the villages. In the past the community has not been consciously preservationist, but because of their strong attachment to their community and their sense of pride in their traditions and their products they have carefully maintained the structures and practices which especially distinguish their Amana heritage. (Recently, however, The Amana Society has become increasingly aware of the need to establish zoning to protect their historic areas and to provide guidelines for future modern development.)

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

Amana Colonies

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

board of from seven to nineteen elders, including the resident trustees. Each board supervised the particular work done in its village, in accordance with the resolutions of the Great Council and Board of Trustees.

Although most of the property was held in common by the society, each family was assigned to permanent living quarters, where they could keep such personal property as they were permitted to acquire with small allowances from the general funds. There were no private dining rooms or kitchens. All meals were prepared and served in large community kitchen-house, with from 30 to 50 people of the same neighborhood eating together. All the men and women worked for the society either in farming or in the small industries, while small children were cared for in kindergartens and older children attended school. Religious services were perhaps the most important activities of the community and there were usually 11 services during the week.

The main idea in the industrial and agricultural enterprises of the old Amana Society was to produce enough to supply the needs of the community, with perhaps a small reserve. By 1932 the community realized, especially with increasing and necessary contact with the modern world outside their community, the need for reorganization and new goals for the society. The new arrangement separated religious and temporal affairs, although the old leadership in spiritual matters was retained. Community kitchens, bakeries and wash houses and the substitution of family homes was abandoned and a new Amana Society was formed with the features of a joint stock company, organized for profit. Each member received non-transferable stock entitling him to one vote in the corporation, as well as additional shares in proportion to his years of service to the community, and he and his dependents living in the colonies were to receive free medical and dental care and burial at the expense of the society. Members were to be employed in the society's industries and a business manager was to be hired to institute modern business methods and supervise activities of the corporation.

This reorganized form is the basic shape of the Amana Society today. The Amana Society, with very strong religious roots, owns and produces many of the agricultural necessities for the communities, and provides its members with many special benefits, while promoting individual enterprise within a community which enjoys great economic success, excellent resources and a fine reputation for quality workmanship.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

Amana Colonies

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

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(June, 1950).

"Christian Metz," Dictionary of American Biography XII, (New York, 1946).

The Amanas Today; Seven Historic Iowa Villages, published by The Amana Society,  
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The Amana Colonies; New World Home of the True Inspirationists, published by  
The Amana Society, 1974.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Amana Colonies

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

The boundary of the Amana Colonies National Historic Landmark is outlined in red on the accompanying map, "Amana Society Telephone Company Rural Map," dated February 1971. This is the boundary of the 26,000 acre area which the Amana Society owned by 1854, the year when the whole community was finally settled in Iowa, and this has remained the boundary of the Amana Society to the present. This area includes the seven villages of East Amana, Amana, Middle Amana, High Amana, West Amana, South Amana and Homestead, which are located some distance from each other throughout the tract, surrounded with large sections of land in timber and cultivation.

The rectangle, part of which is located on both the USGS Davenport, Iowa; Illinois map and the Des Moines, Iowa map, Iowa map, (scale 1:250,000), indicates the area within which the Amana Colonies landmark is located, in order to provide UTM coordinates for the site. The precise boundary is outlined on the much more detailed local telephone company map, where the irregularities of the boundary can be seen because of the larger scale.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

Amana Colonies

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE 1

PHOTOGRAPHS

The following photographs taken by Blanche Higgins Schroer, Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service, May 23, 1975, accompany this report:

1. Collection of barns on southeast edge of East Amana.
2. East Amana cemetery, identical in design to all six others--a quiet tract on the edge of the village, surrounded by towering fir trees, where all headstones are the same in style and members are buried in little rows, in chronological order of death.
3. Large sandstone building, an early kitchen, in Amana.
4. Former community laundry in Amana.
5. View to the east along the main street of Amana, the most commercialized and industrial of the villages.
6. Furniture company and shop, located in east section of Amana.
7. Woolen mill and shop, located in the eastern section of Amana.
8. Cluster of farm buildings on east edge of village of Middle Amana.
9. Large brick house with trellis and porch in Middle Amana.
10. View of street in Middle Amana.
11. Brick church in Middle Amana.
12. Community kitchen, now a museum, with typical trellis on wall and garden, in Middle Amana.
13. Middle Amana, former community kitchen, open as a museum.
14. Old blacksmith shop, still filled with tools, in High Amana.
15. Old blacksmith shop in Middle Amana, now a museum.
16. Remodeled Middle Amana house.

(CONTINUED)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Amana Colonies

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE 2

PHOTOGRAPHS

17. Modern housing along Rte. 220.
18. Electric generators and water tower, next to group of old farm buildings, on Rte. 220, just east of Middle Amana. This stretch of road probably has the most intrusions, in the form of modern housing, school facilities not in character with older sections of the colonies.
19. Amana Refrigerator Plant (not associated with the Amana Society) located south of Middle Amana.
20. Sandstone house on Rte. 220, near High Amana.
21. Large sandstone house, formerly community kitchen, in High Amana.
22. Entering West Amana from the southeast.
23. Sandstone store in West Amana.
24. West Amana, church constructed and gardens.
25. View of South Amana and surrounding country, taken from the north.
26. View east of six mile long mill race, dug by hand in 1860, from bridge north of South Amana.
27. South Amana, white frame barn, typical of style found throughout the colonies.
28. Post office and ship, South Amana.
29. Old brick school house and gardens in South Amana.
30. Brick church of South Amana.
31. General store in South Amana, one of several gift stores and groceries selling Amana Products in the colonies.
32. Fire department and <sup>WA</sup>characteristic gas station on Rte. 149 in South Amana.
33. Homestead, meat market.
34. Sandstone church building, and addition, in Homestead.

(CONTINUED)

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Amana Colonies

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE 3

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PHOTOGRAPHS

- 35. Frame barn in Homestead.
- 36. Brick school building, with bell tower, in Homestead.