

title: Whispering Brook Farm Whispering Brook Series
author: Bender, Carrie.
publisher: Herald Press
isbn10 | asin: 0836190114
print isbn13: 9780836190113
ebook isbn13: 9780585262932
language: English
subject: Amish--Fiction, Farm life--Pennsylvania--Fiction, Family life--Pennsylvania--Fiction, Pennsylvania--Fiction.
publication date: 1995
lcc: PZ7.B43136Wh 1995eb
ddc: 813.54
subject: Amish--Fiction, Farm life--Pennsylvania--Fiction, Family life--Pennsylvania--Fiction, Pennsylvania--Fiction.

Whispering Brook Farm

Books by Carrie Bender

Miriam's Journal Series

A Fruitful Vine

A Winding Path

A Joyous Heart

A Treasured Friendship

A Golden Sunbeam

Miriam's Cookbook

WHISPERING BROOK SERIES

Whispering Brook Farm

Summerville Days

Chestnut Ridge Acres

Hemlock Hill Hideaway

Dora's Diary Series

Birch Hollow Schoolmarm

Lilac Blossom Time

Whispering Brook Farm

Carrie Bender



Herald
Press



Scottsdale, Pennsylvania
Waterloo, Ontario

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bender, Carrie, date.

Whispering Brook Farm / Carrie Bender.

p. cm.

Summary: Depicts the life of the Petersheims, a large, close-knit Amish family living on a farm in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

ISBN 0-8361-9011-4

[1. AmishFiction. 2. Farm lifeFiction. 3. Family lifeFiction.] I. Title.

PZ7.B43136Wh 1995

[Fic]dc20

94-39706



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Website: www.mph.org

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 94-39706

International Standard Book Number: 0-8361-9011-4

Printed in the United States of America

Book design by Paula Johnson

Cover art and illustrations by Joy Dunn Keenan

04 03 02 01 00 99 10 9 8 7 6 5

Over 23,500 copies in print

*To my
beloved family*

Scripture is based on *King James Version of the Holy Bible*, adapted toward current English usage. Lines from "Ringe Recht. . ." are from *Church and Sunday School Hymnal* (MPH/Herald Press, 1902), Deutscher Anhang, no. 10. "How Great Thou Art" is available in *The Mennonite Hymnal* (Herald Press, 1969), no. 535. "Home, Sweet Home" is quoted from John Howard Payne; "Ask me no questions" from Oliver Goldsmith; "God's in his heaven" from Robert Browning; "Life is real! . . . Dust thou art" from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; "All this and heaven too" from Matthew Henry; and "All is well that ends well" from John Heywood. The baptismal service is based on Donald B. Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1989) and otherwise verified.

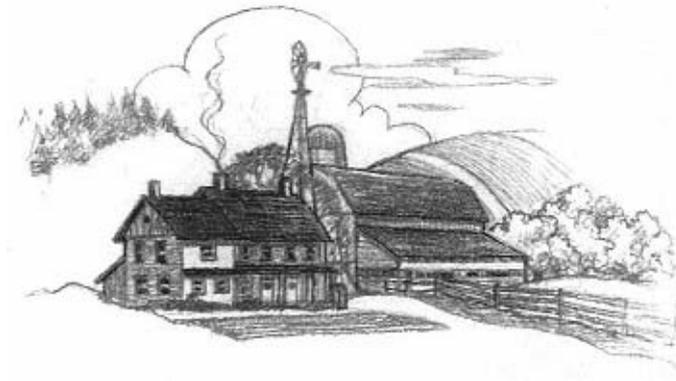
Note

This story is fiction,
but true to Amish life.
Any resemblance to persons living
or dead is coincidental.

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1

The Secret Perch

Saturday evening on the Petersheim farm: The hurry and work of the day was over, and sweet peace settled over the picturesque countryside. The white lilac bush beside the washhouse door gave a delicate fragrance to the evening air. In the barnyard, two little brown Jersey calves with soft, sweet eyes stood looking over the fence at the playful antics of Snowball and Calico, two of the farm's kittens.

The old apple orchard in back of the barn rang with the merry laughter of Omar, Steven, and Henry.

They were playing ball tag, under trees that great-grandfather Petersheim had planted years ago.

The barking of Lassie, their tawny-and-white collie dog, mingled with their shouts as she romped with them. In the pasture field, *Daed* (Dad) was checking a fence for necessary repairs next week.

The barn door opened, and a whistling Joe emerged, leading Chief, his new standardbred horse, harnessed and ready to be hitched to the buggy. Sixteen-year-old Joe was just beginning his *rumschpringe* years (going out with the youths). Tomorrow night would be his first at the young people's singing. Tonight, he and his sister Mary were invited to a volleyball game at a friend's house.

Eighteen-year-old Mary came demurely out of the house, dressed up and ready to go with Joe. She chatted briefly with grandma and grandpa, who were sitting on rockers on their porch. Musical joy rang out as she called good-bye; Mary was a great one for laughter. She was the picture of wholesomeness, from her white prayer covering and neatly combed hair down to her polished shoes.

Chief was a spirited horse. With a lunge and a flurry of gravel, they were off.

As the youths passed, *Mamm* (Mom) and three-year-old Susie waved to them from the garden. They were strolling along the path, among rows of peas, potatoes, lettuce, and other early vegetables. From a nearby tree, a robin flung its cheery notes into the sweet evening air.

High in the maple tree beside the barn, nine-year-old Nancy swayed, watching and listening to the evening activity. No one had discovered her secret hiding place yet. To get to it, she had to climb up into the haymow in the barn, then out the barn window onto a limb. She had found a comfortable seat where three branches grew out from the main trunk. None of the limbs were low enough to be reached from the ground, and this was the only reason the boys hadn't discovered her hiding place.

From her lofty perch, Nancy could see all the dells, slopes, and fields of the entire farm. She could see the fir grove with its dark shadows, the friendly, beloved old orchard, and the row of Lombardy poplars to the east. She treasured every inch of the farm, but best of all was the misty, buttercup-filled meadow, through which Whispering Brook flowed. Nancy delighted in naming trees, paths, and brooks because she loved them so dearly.

There was a cozy, shady nook where the brook flowed around a curve and over smooth stones. There Nancy liked to sit and dream, soaking up the tranquillity and beauty surrounding her. The water made a gentle, whispering sound as it flowed. At first Nancy thought it was only the wind rustling through the trees. But one day she had heard the whispering when not even the tiniest breeze was stirring, so she knew it was the stream. From that day on, she called it Whispering Brook.

When Nancy wanted to choose a name for their

home, no other name pleased her as well as Whispering Brook Farm. However, she told no one else about the name. Only *englisch* (non-Amish) people named their farms, and she was sure her dad would not approve.

Over her head, a white board was wedged securely between the trunk and two side-by-side branches. Nancy reached up and pulled down her sign to admire it. In neat black letters, she had painted on it WHISPERING BROOK FARM. How she wished she dared nail it to the side of the barn. Then everyone driving in would know that this is Whispering Brook Farm. With a sigh, Nancy put the board back on its tree forks.

Twilight was creeping over the farm, and peaceful evening sounds floated to her. Jeremiah, the big bossy rooster, and his biddies had flown to their roosts for the night and were cackling softly to each other. A mockingbird sang a few notes, then quieted down for the night. In the sky, an evening star twinkled at Nancy, and through the branches of the tree she could see the silvery moon. A light went on in the grandparents' kitchen, and a moment later a light burned in their own kitchen as well.

Reluctantly Nancy left her perch and climbed in through the barn window. The sweet scent of hay from the mow greeted her, and a pigeon cooed sleepily from the rafters. There was a flash of white and grey, as Tabby, the mother cat, vanished behind a stack of hay bales. "Tomorrow I'll find her nest of



kittens," Nancy told herself. By now they must be several weeks old. In the stable below, the horses whinnied to her as she passed, and the cows contentedly chewed their cud.

Outside the barn, Nancy stood looking at the house. How dear it was, and the people in it! She always loved to stand outside after dark and look at its glowing windows. It was such a comfortable, friendly house, built of brown sandstone, with high ceilings and wide window seats in each room. A curved walk led from the veranda, under the rose arbor, past the windmill, then on out toward the barn.

The boys and Lassie came trooping in from the orchard. "Where have you been?" cried Henry, next younger than Nancy. "We needed you to make our teams even."

"Probably sitting under a tree or beside the brook somewhere, dreaming of fairies and elves and moonbeams," teased Steven. He was a year older than Nancy and took a dim view of such things. Fourteen-year-old Omar was the only one who shared her love for dreams and fancies.

The kitchen door opened. "Come, children, it's time to take your baths," Mamm called from the porch. There was a chorus of groans from the boys. Saturday night was bath time.

"*Mamm* (Mom), may I take my bath at *Mammi's* (Grandma's) house again?" Nancy asked eagerly. She loved her parents dearly, but still there was something special about going to Mammi and

Daadi's (Grandpa's) end of the house. Somehow her grandma always understood exactly how Nancy felt. There was a merry twinkle in her eyes behind her gold-rimmed glasses, and her round face was framed by a halo of silvery white hair. Grandpa, too, was an understanding old soul and could be depended upon to take Nancy's side.

"Ask her if she doesn't mind," Mamm replied. "And don't forget to take your nightgown and housecoat along over."

The grandparents' kitchen was a cheery place. Geraniums bloomed at the windowsills, the black gas stove sparkled and shone, the walls and ceiling were painted with high-gloss white paint, and on the dry sink stood the familiar blue-and-white washbowl and pitcher set the very one that Daadi had bought for Mammi when she was a bride.

After her bath, Nancy sat at the kitchen table across from where Daadi sat reading the big German Bible. Mammi poured her a glass of milk from the old-fashioned brown ceramic pitcher and set out a plate of oatmeal raisin cookies.

The Petersheim grandparents loved all the children of their son, Levi, but they had extra warm feelings in their hearts for Nancy, because she loved and needed them so much. Since childhood, she had come to them with her little hurts and fears and questions, and they had soothed her and answered her questions the best they could.

"Did you ever hear of an Amish farm with a

name, Daadi?" Nancy bent forward, eagerly awaiting his answer.

Daadi chuckled. "It seems to me I did. Wasn't there once one named Whispering Brook Farm?" His eyes twinkled at Nancy.

Nancy's eyes grew large. "Did you climb my tree?"

Grandpa threw back his head and laughed heartily. "No, a little bird saw it and came and told me."

"Now, Daadi, you can just stop your teasing," scolded Mammi. "Next she'll take you seriously. He peeped into the shop when you were painting your sign, Nancy."

"Did you think it was dumb?" Nancy asked, looking hopeful.

"No indeed! I thought it was clever. And if you want me to, I'll put up your sign for you, right up on the middle of the barn for all to see."

"Will you really, Daadi? But what will Daed (Dad) say?" Nancy was breathless with excitement.

"He won't say anything if I put it up. I'm still boss of this farm," Daadi boasted.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" Nancy jumped up and patted his stooped shoulder. "You're the bestest Daadi in the world."

"My, my, it's way past your bedtime," Mammi cried. "Off to bed with you."

Nancy snuggled happily under the covers. *Remembering to say your prayers is easy when you're*

happy, she thought. She prayed for everyone living on Whispering Brook Farm, and for all the animals, too. Then she fell asleep, dreaming happy dreams.

2

Courtin' Time

The house was astir with excitement on Sunday evening a week later. The whole family had been to church at Cousin Elam's, in a neighboring district. They had opened folding doors between rooms, carried backless benches in from the church's bench wagon, and set them in neat rows. On Saturday, to make room for the benches, some of Elam's furniture had been stored in the bench wagon. On Sunday morning, some of the beds were taken apart and set aside. Then the congregation crowded in.