

Past Tense, Present Perfect

(Report of the third quinquennial reunion of the Descendants of Jacob Hochstetler)

By [Bob Hostetler](#), Grandson of David, DJH 6146

Four generations of the Helen Hostetler family (son Frank, grandson Doug, and great grandson Jacob) were among the six hundred fifty Hostetlers, Yoders, Millers, Stutzmans, and many others attending the third quinquennial reunion of the descendants of the immigrant Jacob Hochstetler.

Earl and Glenda Schrock (Dover, AR) and their daughter Katie drove to the July 18th reunion with cousins David and Annemarie Maurer (Pittsburgh, PA) and Annagrace and Bud Gallico (Rockwood, PA).

Brent Hostetler (Seattle, WA) went from one "accident" to another; he broke his leg in a skiing accident the weekend before the reunion, held at Northern High School in Accident, Maryland.

Eight-week-old Chadwick William Hochstetler was among the youngest attendees, as were six-year-old Abigail Hochstetler and her four-year-old sister, Heather.

Brothers Willis (LaGrange, IN), Lonnie (Nappanee, IN), Jesse (Nappanee, IN), and Marvin Hochstetler (Goshen, IN) made the trip to the scenic Deep Creek Lake area of western Maryland, as did their sisters Verda (Nappanee, IN) and Mattie (Biddinger, MD).

Attendees came from California and Canada, from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes, to attend the day-long gathering, bringing to over 2,800 the total of people who have attended one of the three reunions (1988, 1993, 1998) that have thus far brought together Hochstetler descendants from across the continent and around the world.

"I'm a 'non-Hostetler,'" said Stephanie Green (Seattle, WA), expressing her amazement over the day's events, "so it's fun to see all these people in the same family together. It's fascinating."

Interest Sessions

Former Penn State standout and NFL draftee Ron Hostetler of Hershey (PA) was among a number of people presenting one of seven informative and motivational morning "interest groups." These sessions, along with multiple showings of a video tour of important Hochstetler sites in Pennsylvania, enjoyed robust attendance, often resulting in standing-room-only crowds. "My husband is the genealogist in the family," said Martha Miller (Sugar creek, OH), but I thoroughly enjoyed all the morning sessions I attended."

Other presentations included: ~"European and Pennsylvania Migration of the H/H/H Family" (J. Virgil Miller, Sarasota, FL), ~"Locating Ancestral Farms with Plat Maps" (John Slabaugh, Akron, OH), ~"Researching and Writing (Interesting!) Family History" (Bob Hostetler, Hamilton, OH), ~"Just Write It Down--Don't Worry About the Form" (Paul E. Hostetler, Mechanicsburg, PA), ~"Updating Your Branch of the Family Tree" (Daniel E. Hochstetler, Goshen, IN).

In addition to these classroom sessions, Daniel E. Hochstetler also narrated a slide presentation in the cafetorium on the European and colonial background of the Hochstetlers, and a computer and printed resources were utilized in the gymnasium for those interested in tracking their family tree.

Carry-In Meal

Phoebe Wiley, a Hochstetler descendant from nearby Springs, Pennsylvania, sat down with her noon meal in the cafetorium, and soon after was joined by Helen Hollada and her son and daughter. Moments later, Phoebe learned that not only was Helen raised in Springs, but that they already knew each other's families.

Such unexpected discoveries characterized many conversations, and particularly those shared around the noon carry-in meal, which was impressive for its quality, variety, and for the well-organized way in which attendees were served through multiple lines.

"I was so impressed with the organization," said Jane Hostetler (Mt. Pleasant, PA), remarking about all the day's events but especially pointing out the food preparation and service. "It went so smoothly." And ten-year-old Dan Bryan (Middletown, PA) added, "My favorite part [of the whole day] was eating! Especially the ravioli. . . or whatever it was."

Displays and Exhibits

"I had read a lot about [our family] before," remarked Christopher Hochstetler (Minerva, OH), who attended the reunion with his wife Cynthia and infant son Chadwick, "but I liked the workshops; they were all good.

And the fact that Sam McCausland was here made it really interesting, out of the ordinary." Artist Sam McCausland was among many individuals and organizations to erect meaningful and educational displays at the reunion. McCausland, who was commissioned by Hochstetler descendants Loren and Ruth Wengerd to create an original oil painting of Tom Lions, a Native American who figures prominently in the early history of the family, attended the reunion with Loren Wengerd, attired in period costume. Wengerd and McCausland sold artist's proofs and numbered prints of McCausland's painting.

Other displays were erected in various areas of the school, including exhibits by the Casselman River Area Amish and Mennonite Historians, the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, and Impact Ministries, among others. In addition to sales tables for the well-known genealogical resources DJH, DBH, and others, John Showalter made available copies of his just published companion volume (Hochstetler Update, Vol. I). The Jacob Hochstetler Family Association (JHFA) also did a brisk business of signing up new members and selling back issues of newsletters and various family materials.

Attendees also frequently crowded around the glass-encased Hochstetler New Testament, printed in 1787 by the Cloister Press and visibly inscribed with the names of Joseph and John Hochstetler and Christian Hostetler.

Afternoon Session

At two o'clock, the afternoon program began in the school gymnasium, with a banner of the official JHFA logo as backdrop (displayed by the family of Moses Hostetler of Walnut Creek, OH). Joseph Hochstetler (Minerva, OH) led the congregation of over six hundred in singing "Faith of Our Fathers" and "Gott Ist die Liebe (God is love)," followed by a brief business session conducted by JHFA President Gordon Hostetler (Elkhart, IN). In the business meeting, association treasurer Pat Dickerhoof reported that reunion expenses exceeded the day's income by over \$900.

Following the group introductions, in which Daniel E. Hochstetler identified those in attendance by family branches and states (and by language!), John R. Showalter (Swannanoa, NC) discussed the compilation of his 1300-page update of Harvey Hostetler's Descendants of Jacob Hochstetler and

Descendants of Barbara Hochstedler and donated a copy to the JHFA. In addition, Loren Wengerd presented the JHFA with a numbered print of the painting of Tom Lions.

Reverend David I. Miller's (Irwin, OH) address on "The Spiritual Legacy of Jacob Hochstetler" was followed by four dramatic monologues depicting Barbara Hochstedler Stutzman (portrayed by Mary Lou Bowers, Iowa City, IA), John Hochstetler (John L. Hostetler, Canton, OH), Christian Hostetler (Delmar Hostetler, Hartville, OH), and Joseph Hochstetler (Ken Hochstetler, Souderton, PA).

Noted family historian J. Virgil Miller (Sarasota, FL) then offered a synopsis of progress in family research over the past twenty-five years, noting important developments (such as the identification of our forefather as a passenger on the Charming Nancy in 1738, and not on the Harle in 1736, as was previously thought) and also presenting some questions which remain unanswered (such as the name of the immigrant Jacob's wife, and where he lived just before immigrating to this continent).

Daniel E. Hochstetler (Goshen, IN) concluded the afternoon's program with a report on the first ten years of the JHFA and a peek into the family association's future, highlighting also the many independent efforts that have added to the treasure of family heritage and history, such as the establishment of a Hochstetler/Hostetler web site (emanating from family members in Italy, no less) and the establishment of a GEDCOM database on the internet comprising over 166,000 names of which a great number are H/H/H-related.

Area Sights

In addition to the scheduled events, many individuals and families took advantage of the weekend's fine weather and the reunion's proximity to important sites in family history, traveling north into Somerset County, Pennsylvania, to visit the site of John Hochstetler's "little house." The 1800 structure, located on the Wendell Yoder farm southwest of Summit Mills, Pennsylvania, was destroyed in the June 2 tornado.

Also near the site of the 1998 reunion were the site of the 1810 infanticide, recorded in family history, and near Springs, Pennsylvania, the area where son Christian and his family lived before moving to Kentucky. In addition, at least eleven grandchildren of our immigrant ancestor are buried in the area.

"I learned a lot about the family I didn't know before," said Nettie Zeni (Morgantown, WV), who attended the reunion with her husband Steve. "You can read the book, but it's not like [experiencing things] firsthand." Rosetta Miller (Middlebury, IN), who attended with her husband Ray, said the reunion's events "made everything more real." She was impressed, she said, by "how the lives of those few people have affected so many generations." "I really enjoyed the monologues," said Brent Hostetler (Seattle, WA), "and whoever did the video did a nice job!"

And Earl Schrock (Dover, AR) expressed the sentiments of many when he said, "We need more than one day!" The 1998 North American Gathering seemed to end too quickly, and as it ended the next gathering (scheduled to take place in 2003) seemed too far away. But five years may be necessary, after all, to plan a suitable encore for a day that not only involved reminiscing over a rich past, but which was also present perfect.

Editor's note: [Bob Hostetler](#), Hamilton, Ohio, is a freelance writer and speaker, author of 13 books, including Right from Wrong and other books co-authored with Josh McDowell. His writings appear in many periodicals and publications. Bob has also begun work on a series of historical novels based on the Hochstetler family history, with the first one revolving around the massacre of 1757.