

Hochstetler decendants gather in Berlin

Event every five years includes genealogy research, seminars

By **DAN STARCHER**
Staff Writer

BERLIN — About 600 family members from across the country, all decendants of Jacob Hochstetler, gathered at the Perry Reese Community Center at Hiland High School on Saturday to celebrate the life and legacy of Jacob Hochstetler.

“Being a part of this family sets a high bar,” said Matt Hochstetler of Wooster. “We have a lot to live up to. The challenge for us is to live our lives in way that continues to achieve that high standard of faith and integrity of Jacob.”



Dan Starcher, The-Daily-Record.com

A group of decendants of Jacob Hochstetler make their way to the gymnasium for lunch at the Hochstetler National Family Gathering on Saturday at Hiland High School. The event is held every five years.

The Hochstetler family name, with at least a dozen different spellings, originated sometime in the 1300s or 1400s, near Schwarzenburg, Switzerland, and every five years family members

choose a place to meet to exchange stories and lore and try to dig a little deeper into their family history.

Jacob Hochstetler left his native Switzerland to avoid religious persecution and settled in Northkill Creek, near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Nineteen years after his arrival in the United States, his home was set on fire by a Native American tribe who was displeased with the family.

“Basically in 1738, Jacob Hochstetler left the old country and emigrated to the United States,” said author Bob Hostetler, who wrote a series of books about the ordeal. “He settled here and helped to establish the first Amish congregation. Nineteen years after their

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Above: Descendants of Jacob Hochstetler start to gather for lunch at the Perry Reese Jr. center for lunch of Saturday after attending breakout sessions to learn more about their ancestors.

Darvin Martin, an analytical chemist from Brownstone, Pennsylvania that taught people how to use DNA as a means to help solve riddles in family trees.

Hochstetler

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arrival, at the outset of the French and Indian War, his family was attacked and half the family was murdered by a war party. Jacob's wife and infant son and daughter were killed. Jacob and two other sons were taken into captivity."

Family lore says that when Jacob and his two sons emerged from their home after the massacre, some of the remaining members of the Native American tribe were still present and his sons took up arms to fight them, but Jacob ordered them to put the guns down, saying that they are a peaceful family and guns are for killing.

Galen Graber of Wellman, Iowa, drove 10 hours to take part in the event.

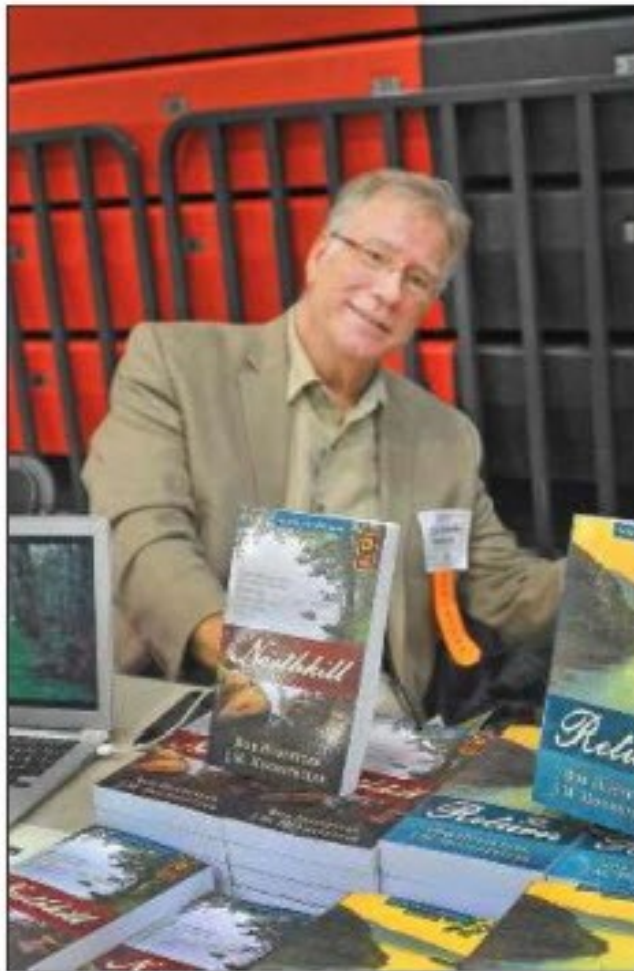
"I have become very interested in genealogy," said Graber. "This event happens every five years. During that time people do research and they bring their findings here. Everyone here is contributing to the big story."

The event has stations set up for guests to visit, and morning sessions are conducted where people can participate in to further their understanding of the family history.

One popular session was "Expanding the Hochstetler family tree through DNA" given by Darwin Martin, an analytical chemist from Brownstone, Pennsylvania, that taught people how to use DNA as a means to help solve riddles in family trees.

"We all have our ancestors' DNA inside of us," said Martin. "The more you go back, the more people you are related to. When we compare these DNA signatures from people from around the world, we find that we share 99.99 percent of DNA with each other."

Visit www.jhfa.net to learn more about Jacob Hochstetler.



Dan Starcher, The-Daily-Record.com

Author Bob Hostetler wrote a book about the life of his ancestor, Jacob Hochstetler, whose family moved to the United States in 1738.

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