

Hottel-Keller Reunions

Summer always brings announcements in local newspapers of family reunions in Shenandoah County that include many familiar Valley names. An article in the Shenandoah Herald on August 28, 1925 tells us about a reunion held by one of the most prolific families in the county, who continue to hold family reunions today. Titled 'Fifth Reunion of Valley Family – Hottel-Keller-Fravel Hosts Gather at Fishers Hill – Come From Different States'. Here's the story:

“Had the hardy pioneers who first settled this section of the Shenandoah Valley hailed from Scotland, it would have been the ‘Clan Hottel-Keller-Fravel’ which gathered by the hundreds at Fisher’s Hill yesterday for the fifth reunion of this well-known Valley family. However, being descendants of the sturdy race which trekked into Shenandoah from Pennsylvania, these scions of the first settlers designate the gathering as a ‘family reunion.’

“And in truth it was. Just one big family, tracing ancestry to the same roots of the family tree, and gathered on the historic battleground to become better acquainted with each other, reminiscence over the days of youth and childhood, and to form a more compact union of those whose relationship intertwines”.

“From the far South, the middle West, the East and far West, members of the families came, and scarce a profession, a commercial activity or other honorable vocation in life but what was represented. Men who had risen to be leaders in the sections from whence they came, found congeniality with those who have been content to play less important parts in life, and the judge, the educator and the tiller of the soil met on common ground”.

The invocation was given by the Rev. Benjamin Hottel from Cooperstown, PA and addresses given by the Rev. W.L. Hunton, J.K. Hottel of Spartanburg, SC and Rev. Benjamin Hottel, of Cooperstown, PA. A report was given by the family’s historian and a business session was conducted. Officers elected included M.H. Hottel, President, P.S. Rhodes, first vice-president, W.J. Keller, second vice-president, H.A. Funkhouser, secretary, D.H. Keller, treasurer and an executive committee comprised of J.C. Hottel, Lester Saum, Howard Rosenberger, Mrs. F.L. Cooley, Mrs. Eli Spitzer and Mrs. Charles Coffman.

In the 21st Century, the Hottel-Keller reunion is held the first weekend in August, with activities this year at the Toms Brook firehall and at the Hottel-Keller Homestead on Back Road. You too can visit their Shenandoah Germanic Heritage Museum at the Homestead. They’re in the phone book under Hottel-Keller Memorial.

This moment from the past was presented by the Shenandoah County Historical Society.