

Welcome to the Palatines to America website.

Why is it called Palatines to America? Who were the Palatines? The simple answer is they were Germans, but as always, it is much more complex. This English word was attached to Germans by the English Queen Anne in 1708 and has remained as the descriptive word for the early emigrants.

To examine the historical context of the word we need to forget 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany that was forged by Bismarck in 1871 and look back to the Holy Roman Empire, when the ruler of a select area was called "Pfalzgraf" or Count Palatine. This Count ruled his country and represented it in the Emperor's court.

The tribal culture under the Romans had evolved into a multitude of small independent jurisdictional entities, variously ruled by Counts, Dukes, Abbots, Princes and Kings. As each ruler waged war for more land, his subjects were impoverished by the requirement to pay more taxes, more rent for their land and furnish labor and soldiers. The desire to emigrate to a new land was the result of poverty made worse by the extremely harsh winters when the cold was so severe that grapevines froze, wolves came into the villages looking for food and it was reported that birds dropped dead in flight.

The loss of crops, added to the perpetual poverty, made these farmers eager to listen to a way to improve their lives, and emigration was one answer. When Queen Anne offered aid in England, the response overwhelmed their host. The first group was led by the minister, Joshua Kochertal and the tide had begun. Hordes headed down the Rhine River, joined by the multitudes from the Kocher, Moselle, Neckar, Lahn, Main Rivers and other tributaries to arrive at Rotterdam to await transportation to England.

Queen Anne called all these German "Palatines" and so they remained for a century: "Poor Palatines," Poor Protestant Palatines. " The "Poor Palatines" who overwhelmed facilities in England numbered about 15,000, with a little over half of them from the Palatinate. The other homes were found to be in territories adjacent to the Rhine. It was this English usage that was followed in America. 'Palatines', despite the fact that it was inaccurate, became the first general term used in America to designate a German, a German immigrant.

Annette K. Burgert, a charter member of Palatines to America, was asked for her input. "The Palatines were not limited just to New York, but the term was used to denote all German-speaking immigrants, regardless of the British colony. Palatine is an English word, not a German word, and these English-speaking colonial officials used the term freely throughout all of the colonies to designate immigrants from all German-speaking regions. I can cite hundreds of colonial records in PA where the term is used, and when Palatines to America was formed the intent was to research all of these 18th century immigrants, not just the Pfälzers from the Pfalz!"

Listen to Henry Z Jones, Jr.: "One of the discoveries in my finding over 500 of the 847 New York Palatine families in their German homes is the fact that so many emigrants originated in areas outside the boundaries of what we think of today as the Palatinate. Many New York settlers were found in Neuwied, Isenburg, Westerwald, Darmstadt and Nassau regions as well as the Pfalz — proving again that the term "Palatine" was more of a generic reference (meaning Germans in general) rather than the literal description of

their precise, geographic origin. ...The Pastor at Dreieichenhain, midway between Darmstadt and Frankfurt, substantiates the widespread origins of the 1709ers...'In this year many thousand families from Germany, especially from Upper and Lower Hessen, from the Pfalz, Odenwald, Westerwald, and other dominions have departed for the New America.' ”

In Vol. XIV, Pennsylvania German Society, “Ebbes fer Alle-Eber, Ebbes fer Dich” (Something for Everyone, Something for You) p. 107-129. Don Yoder has an article entitled “Palatine, Hessian, Dutchman: Three Images of the German in America.” He discusses the close spiritual ties between the British and German Protestants, causing the English term “Palatine” to come into use.

The term was used this way until about 1820. The emigrants were referred to as “Palatines” in New York, Pennsylvania, Carolina and elsewhere. The early council minutes of the province of Pennsylvania contain many references to “Palatines” and the “Palatine question.” The Philadelphia newspapers listing arrivals of emigrant ships also spoke of the newly arrived settlers as “Palatines.”

In 1754 Benjamin Franklin made a much-quoted statement referring to the emigrants as ‘Palatine boors’ asking rhetorically why they should be allowed to settle among us in such large numbers that they force out the English language.

Ernie Thode’s article, “Who Was a Palatine” appeared in “Pages from the Past, No. 4” in 1983. It is recommended reading for those who wish to learn about the Palatines whose name the organization bears. He states that Palatines became a generic term for Germans. Of the 1727-1775 arrivals found in Strassburger and Hinke’s “Pennsylvania German Pioneers” usually lumped together as “Palatines,” the more than sixty-five thousand Germans listed in the colonial time period, some were from the Palatinate with large contingents from Baden, Württemberg, Hesse-Darmstadt, the Odenwald, Westerwald, Alsace, Switzerland, Nassau and others from smaller counties, domains, church territories and duchies.

Thus began the emigration flow of the Germanic peoples to America from the Rhineland Valley with all of the river’s tributaries leading to the Rhine. In England the people continued to be known as Palatines. When the emigrants arrived in America, the English record keepers, ship Captains, newspaper editors, local officials, all continued to use the term, “Palatines” in reference to German natives until about 1820.

The founders of the **Society** were Palatine descendants who chose to honor their ancestors by naming the society **Palatines to America**. The charter members banded together to share their experiences and to help others locate their village of origin.