WHO ARE WE? PALATINES!

Just who were the Palatines and why was this organization given the name "Palatines to America" some 30 years ago? Although the time-honored legend is that a few of the founding members were from the Pfalz and decided arbitrarily that all members should have the name "Palatine," this has wandered from historical facts.

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 1710ers... "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."

Annette Burgert 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!

Later, the society membership was broadened to include later German-speaking immigrants, as well. Even so, many of the members who have 19th century ancestry often trace back to an earlier 18th century ancestor as their research progresses."


He discusses the close spiritual ties between the British and German Protestants, causing the English term "Palatine" to come into use. Queen Anne of England referred to the "poor Palatines," "poor Protestant Palatines" and the term appeared in the many broadsides, pamphlets, etc. printed at the time. All this in spite of the fact that the multitudes that poured down the Rhine River and across to England came from all of the many governmental entities along the way. "It was this English usage which 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."

"The term was used this way until the middle of the 18th Century. 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, #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 ca 68,872 Germans listed in the colonial time period were from the Palatinate with large contingents from Baden, Wurttemberg, Hesse-Darmstadt, Alsace, Switzerland, Nassau and others from smaller counties, domains, church territories, etc. making up the rest."

If you were a German immigrant, you would very probably be called a Palatine until the middle of the nineteenth century, thus Palatines to America.

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