

Who are the Palatines?

300 YEARS CELEBRATION

1710-2010

by Sarah Timmerman Israel

300 years ago the Palatines came to America. They were the people who lived along the Rhine River in the modern country of Germany. Many having come from the Palatinate area, the name “Palatine” became a name for any Germanic speaking immigrant at that time. 300 years ago Germany was a cluster of different principalities under the Holy Roman Empire. It was an area where the hundred year’s war was fought and also the thirty year’s war. French and Germans as well as the English all wanted to claim this fertile land. Many of these Palatines were Protestant, with no chance for a better life for themselves and their children. On top of the wars they suffered starvation due to a very cold year which froze vegetation even in the summer. They were destitute for help. Queen Ann of England heard about the problems of these people and invited them to come to England and she offered them the chance for land in the New World. They came down the Rhine to Holland and over to England. They traveled in little boats to Holland. The Catholic Elector found out about all of his people leaving the area and forced many to return. Never the less many people made it to Holland and England one way or another.

Queen Ann soon realized that there were thousands of people living on the edge of the River Thames. There were so many that even the poor living in England started to complain that their lively hood was in jeopardy and they could not find work. Queen Ann moved many of these Palatine people onto ships and sent them to Northern England and Ireland. Some settled there but many wanted to go to the new world—America. Queen Ann devised a program to get rid of these people living on the edge of the River Thames. The British Navy needed tar and masts for the ships and getting the tar from the Scandinavian countries was very costly. Since there were pine trees in America, if she could send these Palatines to America they could send tar to England for free. Ships were made ready and loaded with indentured people that would have to pay the English for their passage by working seven years getting tar from the trees in America. England would win all around by getting rid of these people and acquiring tar for the English ships and people would work for free. England would have settlements in this area of the new world and stop the French and Dutch from acquiring all the land.

The ships were loaded past capacity with these Palatines. Many died crossing the ocean but many made it. When they arrived in New York the Dutch would not let them land because of the diseases on the ships. They landed on NUTT Island –later called Governors Island and there they were processed. There were also many Palatines that had paid for their passage on these ships and were not indentured and were able to travel where they wanted. Many free Palatines stayed in the New York area. Many of the younger children of indentured Palatines were separated from their families and sent as indentured servants to families in the New York area.

After they arrived these Palatines were sent up the Hudson River to camps—East and West Camp. East Camp was located on the eastern side of the Hudson River and on Livingston Manor. West Camp was located on the west side of the Hudson near

Saugerties. The English had promised these people land and food and homes to live in while collecting tar for the English. Soon the overseers of the program found out that the tar that was needed for the English Navy's ships was not the tar that the trees in New York produced. England soon lost interest in these people. Money for food and supplies stopped coming. The land they were promised disappeared and they were living in the same sort of existence that they had in Europe. The Palatines were left on their own to survive when the Tar Project was considered a failure by the British in late fall 1712.

Many of the Palatines had heard about Schoharie Valley and thought that this was the Promised Land. They decided to find this place and settle there. People set out from West Camp over the steep hills to this valley called Schoharie. They traveled in deep snow dragging their sparse belongings. They found the valley and built huts and started meager living. Thanks go to the local Indians who helped them through the first winter. These Palatine people had no implements to clear the land of trees and vegetation to be able to plant seeds to grow. With the help of the local Indians they learned how to clear the land and plant crops. These Palatine people were very ingenious and since they had nowhere to go they were forced to succeed. Within a couple of years they were tracking over the mountains to Albany to sell their produce and to acquire the items needed to augment their lives. The Palatines had established dorfs and had set up communities when an English agent came to talk to them. They did not understand the language and sent the man away—little did they know that he had come to have them sign papers for the land. When he got back to Albany the Dutch patroons decided to buy this land. The following year the Dutch patroons went to Schoharie to claim the land they bought and chased the Palatines off the land. Conrad Weiser and a couple others went to England to see the King to see if they could be treated better and claim the land in the Schoharie Valley. Conrad Weiser and the men that accompanied him were cast into the Tower of London. There, he and his group stayed for six months and then were let go and came back to America. He again went to Schoharie and convinced a large group of Palatines to establish a settlement in Pennsylvania-(thus Pennsylvania Dutch). William Penn greeted them well but requested that the Palatine names be changed to English names, (an example of name change-Zimmerman became Carpenter). Others stayed and rented the land while another group traveled over the hills to the Mohawk Valley. The Governor of the Colony of New York at that time was William Burnet and he offered them land patents in Stone Arabia and Burnettsfield, along the Mohawk River. He wanted these settlers to be along the frontier as a buffer against the French who were causing problems for the British. The French wanted all of the fur trade for themselves. The English knew that the Palatines would fight to keep their new homes on the frontier and asked for volunteers to fight the French in exchange for land. Many volunteered and traveled all the way to Canada to fight in many battles against the French and their Indian allies.

Homesteaders settled along the frontier and then new communities were developed, pushing the frontier further west. Fur trade with the Indians was a large industry and trading posts & taverns were established along the frontier. Soon communities were formed with taverns, mills, & blacksmiths. Settlers maintained many of the important portages along the Mohawk River. The Palatines usually had large families and as the children grew up they too wanted to homestead and they developed new communities. Gradually these Palatine children married and gained land along the

Mohawk River. Wheat became the main crop to sell and furs (mainly beaver) were traded for export to England. Sir William Johnson, Indian agent for the English granted land to homestead to the Palatines but controlled the area. For several years, there was peace and many Palatines prospered. They learned to speak English and learned the Native Mohawk language in order to trade. They built their churches – German Reformed and Lutheran. Land grants in the form of patents were acquired in the Indian Territory. Some were signed by the Indians selling the land to the white man and other sections of land were gotten in various ways to cheat the Indians of their land. White man kept coming and soon along the Mohawk River there were people from all different countries blending in to form communities. English laws caused unrest and dissatisfaction, eventually leading to the American Revolution.

The Palatines decided to form a committee of safety as did other communities to complain about the laws and treatment of their rights as citizens of the British Crown. On 21, May 1775, the Palatine District Committee of Safety met at the house of Philip W. Fox and wrote a declaration of independence, which was one year and 45 days before the Continental Congress wrote the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia. They vowed to defend their freedom “with our lives and fortunes.”

The Palatines who had homesteaded along the frontier took up arms to defend their homes and their freedom from the English and their Indians allies. They formed the militia and learned how to defend their homes. Forts were setup along the frontier-usually homesteads. Many forts were already there from the French and Indian raids. There were splits between families in the Mohawk Valley due to allegiance to England and friendship with Sir William Johnson. Some families were split by the conflict. Those who wanted independence were the Patriots and those who sided with the English were Loyalists. The American Revolution was also a civil war with often instances that brother fought against brother, father fought against son.

The English plan was to divide the colonies and end the uprising. St. Leger’s army would sweep down from Canada through the Mohawk Valley to Albany. However, the American soldiers at Fort Stanwix stopped the English from completing their plan. When the Mohawk Valley Militia heard of a siege at Ft. Stanwix, General Nicholas Herkimer called out the men (all males between the ages of 16 & 60). General Herkimer’s men numbered about 800, mostly of Palatine descent. They were ambushed in Oriskany. General Herkimer, though seriously wounded rallied the men and they were able to hold the field. There was great loss of life on both sides but the Militia did not give up. This battle was the fore runner of the win at the Battle of Saratoga and probably helped turn the war to the side of the patriots. The militia proved that a rag tag group of people could defend themselves and hold the field of battle against a much larger force.

The Palatine descendants of the ones that came for a new life in a new world fought hard and lost many lives defending the new nation against the English army. Many battles were fought along the frontier border. Many residents were kidnapped and taken to Canada to either be prisoners or be forced to join the British army to fight. It was a horrible time for the Palatines who just wanted to have freedom of religion, and a place to raise their children and live in peace. Their homes and crops were burned, their livestock were slaughtered by the enemies. Wheat was one of the main crops – which helped feed General Washington’s armies – so the barns and wheat fields were burned by the enemy. For many years these Palatines had suffered and they were determined to

keep their homes in a free America-even if it meant fighting again for the life they wanted.

After the Revolutionary War was won the Palatines were involved in establishing a government for the new nation. Many met to work on writing the Articles of the Confederation, Bill of Rights and United States Constitution as well as state government and local communities. The Palatines were always ready to help out in establishing our new nation. Bounty land was given to soldiers of the war and the Palatines homesteaded again clearing the land and building homes and communities across the country.

When the War of 1812 broke out the militia was quick to march to the Great Lakes to stop the British aggressions. Again most of the militia was made up of the Palatine descendants who were still fighting for freedom and liberty for their families. Bounty land was again given to soldiers and again the Palatines homesteaded on the new land. Eventually these Palatines and their descendants would spread across the new country clearing the land and homesteading again and again. Palatine descendant have always been ready to defend their Country and join in any and all conflicts against our Country throughout the 300 years. You will find Palatine names on the roles from each war or conflict that our Country has faced. Many fighting in the conflicts of today are the descendants of those early Palatines.

We need to honor the early Palatines that came 300 years ago. The early Palatines set the stage for all immigrants coming to America. This was the first large influx of immigration to the new world. Many other people from different countries have come to America to find a place to raise their families with the freedoms set up by our founders in our Constitution and in the Bill of Rights. America provides a place for immigrants to raise their children, educate them and have them become good citizens in a free nation. Thru the years many immigrants have come to the United States bringing their skills, their ideas, and their ideals to make this country what it is today. The United States has always been ready to help out people in various parts of the world that need assistance and has often given them a chance for a safe haven to work for a better life for themselves and their families.

The genealogical organization called Palatines to America is planning a conference to celebrate the 300 years since the early Palatines landed on the shores of America. The event will be held at the Holiday Inn in Fishkill, New York on June 17, 18, 19, 2010. A tour is planned to visit the sights of where the early Palatines settled. along the Hudson River on June 17, 2010. On June 18-19, 2010 the National Conference of PALAM will be held with guest speakers presenting programs about the Palatines and Germans who settled the area.

Later in October a village called Germantown, the first permanent settlement of the Palatines will hold a conference with guest speakers presenting programs about the settlers of the area. For additional information please contact Sarah Timmerman Israel at e-mail sarahtisrael@hotmail.com.



Inscription written by Vera De Witt

IN REVERENT MEMORY OF THE SACRIFICES MADE BY OUR FOREFATHERS,
MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WHO FOUGHT DURING THE REVOLUTION,
PARTICULARLY AT THE BATTLE OF ORISKANY, AUGUST 6, 1777.

THE ACTION AT ORISKANY MADE THE DEFEAT OF THE BRITISH GENERAL
BURGOYNE A CERTAINTY ASSURING THE ASSISTANCE OF THE FRENCH
ALLIANCE, AND FRENCH FLEET, RESULTING IN THE COMPLETE SURRENDER OF
THE BRITISH AT YORKTOWN.

ORISKANY HELPED MAKE POSSIBLE THE BIRTH OF OUR NATION.

DEDICATION: AUGUST 29 1976

Other side of stone is inscribed with the following:

We hereby in commemorating this area's participation in the American
Bicentennial do reaffirm the resolution adopted by the Palatine district committee
of Safety on May 21 1775

“That we abhor a state of slavery, we do join and unite together under all the ties
of religion, honor, justice, and love of our country never to become slaves and to
defend our freedom with our lives and fortunes.”

This resolution was the first Declaration of Independence in the province of New
York, the second in the colonies being adopted a year and forty-five days before
adopting of the Declarations of Independence by the Continental Congress at
Philadelphia and two years and seventy –eight days before the Battle of Oriskany.

Snell-Zimmerman- Timmerman Reunion

Biography and sources

Collection Newspapers and family history documents and papers and history of Snells Bush Church now held by Sarah Timmerman Israel historian for the Snell-Zimmerman-Timmerman Family Reunion

Early Eighteenth Century Palatine Emigration

A British Government Redemptioner Project to Manufacture Naval Stores by Walter Allen Knittle, Ph.D. Department of History College of the City of New York Published Philadelphia, 1937

The following books are available from the Snell-Zimmerman-Timmerman Family Reunion, Inc. .

The 18th Century Zimmerman Family of the Mohawk Valley, 1994. by David Kendall Martin

This book traces the descendants of Jacob and Margaretha Jung Zimmerman for six generations (over nearly two hundred years) from their German home village in the mid-1600's to the Mohawk Valley and beyond. It is a handsome, indexed, 8.5" x 11" hard covered book with over 300 pages heavily illustrated with photographs, maps, and signatures. Among the many related family names in the book are: Getman, Walrad, Petrie, Read, Bellinger, Smith, Fox, Failing, Van Allen, Herder, Hutchins, Dockey,

The 18th Century Snell Family of the Mohawk Valley, 1982. by David Kendall Martin

The format and contents of this book are similar to the above Zimmerman book. David Martin gives all available information on those Snells born before 1800 in Germany and New York. The various lines are carried well into the 1800's. The book is in 8.5" x 11" format, with a soft cover.

The 18th Century Failing Family of the Mohawk Valley, 1979 by David Kendall Martin

This soft cover book traces descendants of Henrich H. and Anna Maria Kunigunda Failing from 1710 to 1900. The book is rich with history, family lore,

The War Years in the Mohawk Valley 1983 by Frank C. Bellinger.

Articles describe conditions, activities, and battles during the Revolution and its aftermath.

Fifty Years With the Faith of Our Fathers. By Carolyn Timmerman Sidenius and Edith S. Timmerman. A history of our Reunion and church compiled for the Reunion's 50th Anniversary from newspaper accounts, early newsletters, and meeting and reunion minutes. It is particularly informative for new members.

American Patriots at the Battle of Oriskany. By Vera De Witt. A register of Tryon County Militia and New York volunteers in the Revolutionary War.

Palatines Along the Mohawk and Their Church in the Wilderness by Ada L F Snell
A history of the early Palatines who settled along the Mohawk River and their churches