



THE PALATINES

The "Palatines" as they were commonly known are those German speaking people who inhabited many parts of modern day Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and France. Named from the "Pfalz Graf", or Count Palatinate in English, originally a judicial position for the territories along the upper Rhine River region in south western Germany, the "Pfalz" or Palatinate was the seat of the protestant movement during the Reformation, and the territory gained many immigrants and refugees seeking religious expression or fleeing religious persecution from many parts of Germany and Europe.

Below is a series of articles dealing specifically with the Palatine Germans who came to America in 1710. Beginning with an introductory essay written by Eileen Lasher Powers in 1982, in her book "Lasher Lineage"; an extensive and detailed compilation of Lasher genealogy, and the foremost reference work for sources of Lasher genealogy to date. She gives an heartfelt and accurate description of the Palatines, their struggles and accomplishments, and of the Lashers who were among them.



"-- There is a vast amount of information available on these people who fled Germany. This is not an attempt to write a formal history, but rather to share some of the background of a historical event - the migration of the Palatines from Germany and their immigration eventually into the United States.

Sitting here in an "average" middle-class American home, it is difficult to imagine what life was like in Germany over two hundred years ago. My life is an insulated one. There has always been ample food, adequate clothing and a comfortable home, so it stretches ones imagination to understand the strength and endurance through the hardships and heartaches of those Palatine people.

Included in "Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York" Vol. 111, are some extracts from a House of Commons investigator of the "Poor Palatines now living in London" which conveys much interesting data and from which I have further extracted the following:

"From whence did they come? From Alsace, part of Lorain and Swabia, part of Archikishopric or Treves and Nanty."

"The Lower Palatinate area has been coveted by neighboring princes in all ages. The hills are covered with vines which yield the well known Rehnish wines, plains and valleys abound with corn and fruits. Forests are stocked with deer and other game. The Rhine passing through the middle of the country provides fish and improved commerce. Mountains abound with minerals; agate, jasper and gold."

"They have endured one hundred years of war - King Gustavus Adolphus burned the city of Spiers in 1633 (have read elsewhere that the Swedes took hostages back to Sweden as slaves, which may account for Swedish Lashers today..ed.). Invaded by Imperialists in 1644, by Germany in 1676 and by the Dauphin in 1688. Restored to the German Empire by the Treaty of Reswish, then destroyed by the French in 1693 who made a desert of 2,000 cities, towns and villages; destroying their vines with design to make so fatal a waste that the country might never be peopled or inhabited again. (Doesn't this sound like Atomic Bomb mentality?..ed). Vast numbers of Palatines perished in the woods and caves, among the wild beasts, through hunger, cold and nakedness."

"The poor refugees, in a short interval of peace, built cottages and cultivated the land, but again, the French invaded, carried away their cattle and robbed them of the fruits of their labor."

Together with the above difficulties, intricately woven throughout was the religious turmoil. Roman Catholics sought to wipe out Protestantism and religious liberty. There was also dissent and rivalry between the Reformed and Lutheran Churches.

There is also special irony in the fact that the last devastation promulgated by Louis XIV, was in fact, destroying part of his own empire.

To compound problems, in this once agriculturally prolific country-side, now laid to ruin, came the worst winter in a hundred years. During the winter of 1708, even the sea froze, so that carts and horses could travel on the ice. The most dedicated farmer must have been discouraged and desperate.

At this time, there was a young Lutheran Minister in the Palatinate. He was Joshua Kocherthal. Appalled at the plight of the farmers whose crops and lands were so pillaged, he went to England to plead the cause of the Palatines with the London Board of Trade and with Queen Anne.



Queen Anne's Consort, Prince George, had died in 1708. He was of German descent, so perhaps her grief and desire to lend assistance to his countrymen motivated her to listen and act favorably on behalf of the Palatines. For whatever reason, Kocherthal was successful in persuading the Queen that these industrious Germans would be valuable assets in establishing her colonies.

There is some reason to suspect Kocherthal's motives. In today's vernacular, he acted as a "press agent". It was suspected that he acquired personal gain for his efforts. No matter, for it is the result of his work which brought us here. He was successful in England and he returned to the Palatinate. There, he wrote and distributed pamphlets throughout the Rhine Valley, praising the climate and opportunities awaiting those willing to go to the New World.

In 1709 and 1710, some 30,000 people fled from the Palatinate. It took from six to eight weeks to travel down the river to Rotterdam, scrounging and begging for food as they went.

On the Rotterdam Lists, there is a Bastien Lesier and his wife, with Johan Jacob, Anna Margaret, Anna Lys, Anna Barbara, Hans Jury and five other children. They were on Capt. Brouwel's ship, in the second party to Holland, 1709.

Queen Anne sent some of her ships to Holland to transport these refugees. [Sebastian Lescher](#) and his family are among the second arrivals in England, later in 1709. The voyage from Rotterdam to

England took about eight days.

Religious and political climates were changing in England too, and in 1709, Lord Marlborough decreed there would be no Papists allowed to emigrate and that some 6,000 Catholics already there must return to Germany. (An interesting aside is that they were first given an "opportunity" to join the British Army. Apparently, even Catholics would be acceptably useful in helping England accumulate colonies, wealth and prestige.) The Catholic exodus to some small extent, eased conditions for the remaining Protestants. Encampments were set up in a number of parishes and suburbs: Walworth, Kensington, St. Catherine's, St. Olave's, Stockwell, etc. The British Government provided tents and warehouses for shelter and a bread and meat ration. This greatly disturbed the poor people of London who weren't being given like consideration, and who feared the Palatines would flood the job market, causing widespread unemployment and greater poverty. Included in the House of Commons investigation are some insights to life in these encampments "Some are employed by making toys of small value. They eat brown bread and flesh meat of the coarsest and cheapest kind, and roots and herbs Many of the younger are married each week - women wear Rosemary and men wear Laurel by their hair at the time of marriage. Adultery and fornication are abhorred by them..... When they are buried, the attendants go singing after the corpse and when they come to the grave, the coffin is opened for all to see the body - after that it is laid in the ground. They sing for sometime and then they depart. They carry grown people on a bier and children on their head."

There were several plans for dispersing these refugees "for the good of the Crown". They were invited to come to Ireland, with promises of housing and subsistence but none of the promises were kept and, though three thousand were thought to have gone there, hundreds returned to England, more destitute and in poorer health than before.

(When on the 1900 Soundex in New York City, there were Irish Lashers, born in Ireland, it seemed to indicate that some Loscher family stayed in Ireland in 1709 or 1710, and these were descended from that time. This is a wide area of research requiring further investigation.)

- [This last statement, above in parenthesis, is a presumption of the author's. However, the name "Lasher" is found quite commonly in the British Isles well before 1710, and has nothing to do with our German Lescher/Lasher family. It is these British "Lashers" who's family crest we have erroneously borrowed until recently.] -

Other plans for the Palatines were that they could establish a Colony in the British West Indies, or settle the area which is now North Carolina, or they could help William Penn develop his territory. The final decision, at least for the group, from which Sebastian Loscher came, was none of the above. Instead, it was decided to send these vinters, architects, and farmers to New York, settle them upstate, and have them make tar from pine pitch to be used by the Royal Navy.



Sebastian's family embarked aboard the ship "Medford", one of a fleet of ten ships, in January 1710. The ships were held offshore for sometime and finally they arrived in New York in June. In Rev. Kocherthal's records, there is a daughter, Maria Elisabeth, born to Bastian Loscher and wife, Maria Elisabeth, who was baptized on board the Medford on June 10, 1710. If this baptism was performed according to the German Lutheran custom of baptizing children four to six weeks after birth, it is probable that this daughter was born during the voyage. There were several thousand Palatines aboard these ships, some 680 died, and one ship was wrecked on the American Coast. It must have been a dismal arrival in New York. The health of these people was so poor they were quarantined on Nutten (now Governor's) Island for almost four months, during which 140 more succumbed to "ship's fever" an illness which was known for many years later in New York City as "Palatine Fever".

Palatine orphans were apprenticed to "respectable citizens". The demand for this inexpensive labor was so great that many other children were arbitrarily taken from their refugee parents and apprenticed also.

In the Fall of 1710, Governor Hunter, Queen Anne's appointee, established these immigrants in camps on both sides of the Hudson River, approximately one hundred miles north of New York City.



Picture, if you will, these families arriving in this Catskill Mountain wilderness area, facing winter. All were duty-bound to live by the "Grace of the Queen" and in her service. They were furnished tents, the inadequacy of which is testified to by the immediate occupation of erecting cabins. In fact, some families lived in caves that first winter. They settled in "dorfs" (villages) at West Camp (near the present day Saugerties) and at East Camp (later the Germantown, Livingston and Clermont area).

Rations again were provided by Queen Anne and distributed under Governor Hunter's supervision. His records indicate that Bastian Lescher's family, in 1710, consisted of 5 adults and 4 children. Children over the age of ten are shown as adults on this listing. On the 1711 list there were 6 over 10 years of age and 3 younger.

The land on which these Palatines were settled, was a small portion of Robert Livingston's 256,000 acres which extended from the Massachusetts border to central New York State, on both sides of the Hudson River.

When spring came in 1711, the pitch and tar operation for the Naval Stores enterprise was set up. It was doomed to failure for many reasons; while hemlock trees were abundant, the trunks did not yield pitch in quantities to fulfill the requirements for the project, and as trees were cut the workmen had to move farther and farther from the camps making progress slow and arduous. Perhaps too, the least understood reason of all might have been that these German farmers felt the basis for sustaining life was to grow things, not to destroy whole forests.

On May 30, 1711, the Palatines by armed rebellion, expressed dissatisfaction with their situation, claiming their contracts with Queen Anne were being violated, and that they were being cheated out of lands supposedly offered to them. However, they were quickly disarmed and the tar making operation continued.

Some of the Palatine men were recruited to participate in the Expedition to Canada in 1711. It appears they were promised land grants for their service. In traveling north, they were undoubtedly impressed at the vast amount of unsettled land, and when they returned they were restless to own land of their own.

Near the end of summer, 1712, Governor Hunter was having a difficult time raising the money to pay for the rations, and when it became an impossible task, he gave the Palatines permission to seek work elsewhere. However, they were to "return for service to the Queen when needed." It was at that time that many of the refugees left the Hudson Valley for the Schoharie Valley.

Also in "Ecclesiastical Records of New York" Volume 111, there are many letters from [Rev. J. F. Hager](#). He was a Palatine who, while still in London, began preaching at the encampments. He was then ordained by the English "Society for Propagating the Gospel" as Society Missionary and was sent to America on one of the ships. His mission was to convert the Palatines to the Church of England. His adversities began immediately upon landing in New York. On July 15, 1710, he wrote back to the Society that "upon landing, he found the Lutheran Minister had already made a separation persuading the Palatines, they ought to stick to that in which they were born and bred, and while Rev. Kocherthal confirmed when he arrived." Then members of the Reformed Church said, "If the Lutherans don't have to conform (to the Church of England) then why should we?" "They wanted liturgies in the German tongue that each family may be provided with one to answer according to custom." Then he said he had made 34 converts to the Church of England, and that his books were water spoiled on the trip.

On Oct. 25, 1710, Rev. Hager again wrote...."Many people died at sea and here through fever, survivors number about 2,000 - all except sick ones have been shipped upriver.

On Jan. 18, 1711 he wrote that they had gotten approval for a Palatine schoolhouse and they had received from Robert Livingston 40 boards for a schoolhouse in Queensbury, and would require 30 more board to complete.

On July 11, 1712, he wrote that in the Expedition to Canada the Palatines were "joyful in hopes of their liberty and settlement." Between July, 1711 and July, 1712, Rev. Hager wrote that he had married 101 couples and baptized 61 children.

In a letter written July 6, 1713, he says there is "great famine among the Palatines, and does hold on still, as they boil grass and children eat the leaves of trees."

Rev. Johann Fredrich Hager died between November 17, 1721 and July 20, 1722. His records have never been located, which is most unfortunate, as they would provide a great deal of missing data, especially Palatine births and marriages. His letters indicate many hardships, endured by both he and his family, during his minis-try in upstate New York.

In a Society letter written August 17, 1722 there was mentioned, "more Palatines are on their way to New York, and a German Minister is to follow them."

By 1850 there were Lashers in at least 23 counties of New York on the Federal Census Index. By 1900, they are in 47 counties and the boroughs of New York City. Also, by 1850, they are in several Midwestern states, and there were many in Pennsylvania.

The abundant good health and longevity of these Palatine ancestors is impressive. Many lived to eighty and ninety years of age. Infant mortality was high, but if a child lived to school age, barring accident or epidemic, the chances were good for a long life.

Excellent health has now been passed down through ten generations to my grandchildren. Through observation and experience, I have concluded that we Lashers, are endowed with a yen for adventure and an extraordinary energy with which to pursue it. ---"

-- Eileen Lasher Powers "Lasher Lineage", 1982 Gateway Press, Baltimore, MD, # 82-83037

The Lasher Family

(By Annie Scott Baxter, 1937 as extracted from a series of articles printed in the Enterprise and News of St. Johnsville, NY)

The Palatinate is the name applied to the two German states, which were united previously to the year 1620. They were called the Upper and Lower Palatinate and the inhabitants designated as Palatines.

Perhaps in all the world there is not s more favored region, nor an unhap-pier one, and the pages of its history are drenched with the blood of those who sought to make their homes there. Following persecution before the year 1709, thousands of these unhappy Palatines made their way to England,

where King William and Queen Anne welcomed them.

From the list of "Palatine Emigrants into England to June 20, 1709"; in the British Museum (original lists are in C. O. 388:76, D. 57-70) from which lists were taken as follows:

1st list taken at St. Catherines, May 8, 1709, 852 persons.

2nd list taken at Walworth, May 27, 1709, 1193 persons.

3rd list taken at St. Catherines, June 2, 1709, 1745 persons.

4th list taken at St. Catherines, and Deftford, June 15, 11, 1709, 1745 persons.

We find the following notation:

Sebastian Lescher

Husbandman and Vinedresser, age 40, sons (ages only are given, 20, 14, 10, 8, 6, daughters 15, 12, 4, 1 and designated by the letter L indicating that the family were of the Lutheran faith.

The family name underwent many changes during the years that have intervened, due perhaps most of all to the fact that officials and clergy used the phonetic method of spelling names. The original record in the Simmerdinger Register spells the name Lescher, and to that must be added the popular way of spelling it today, Lasher. And also the following: Leycher, Lisser, Lisjer, Litzert, Lygher, Lacher, Lazer, Lazier, Litcher, Lascher, Lesher, Lesser, Leisure, Lecher, Liser, Losser, Lyser and several more.

The story of the Palatines who eventually came into England in the reign of Queen Anne or before is a tale of suffering and persecution, but this good queen tried to find a solution to help them. She finally decided to try shipping some of them to America, and in 1709 the first immigrations were started. The historical chronicles of the time give us a good picture. "A large body of Palatines had been sent by Queen Anne to New York to engage in furnishing the English with naval stores, in consideration whereof, after the expense, should have been repaid £5 and 40 acres per family on Schoharie Creek.

They Arrived in New York through May, June, and July of 1710. The majority were placed on Robert Livingston's Manor on the Hudson [Germantown, NY], but became discontented and over seven hundred removed to the Schoharie in 1712. From the land which they were occupied, they were mostly being evicted. From 1713 – 1725 many of these Palatines removed to Pennsylvania, and some to Palatine, Stone Arabia, New York on the Mohawk River.

From "The Conditions, grievances, and oppressions of the Germans in His Majesty's province of New York in America 1720":

"In the year 1709 was her late Majesty Queen Anne most graciously pleased to send a body of between

3000 and 4000 Germans to New York under the Inspection and Care of Robert Hunter then Governor there with particular orders and instructions to settle them on lands belonging to the Crown, and such as were most proper for raising pitch, tar, and other naval stores. Before they left England they were promised 5 pounds in money per head of which they have received nothing at all. It was likewise promised that on their arrival there, each of them should receive clothes, utensils, tools, and other Conveniency's belonging to Husbandry, all which were sent with them from England for their use, but of these they received but very little. They were moreover to have a Grant of 40 acres of land to each person, but it was never performed.

On their landing at New York they were quartered in tents on the Common and divided in six companies over each of which was a Captain appointed to command them (of which number John Conrad Weiser arriv'd here in London 1718) with an allowance of 15f per annum each, but not one farthing has been hither paid them about the same time the said Govern'r without and against their consent took many children from them, bound them to several of the Inhabitants of that province till they should arrive to the age of 21 years. Particularly two Sons from Capt. Weiser one of the twelve and another of 13 years of age, by which means they were deprived of the Comfort of their Children's company and education as well as the assistance and Support they might in a small time have reasonably expected from them. In the fall of that year those that were living (then It must be observed that a great number of them were dead,) were removed to a tract of land belonging to one Mr. Livingston, where they lived in houses erected by themselves till the spring following when they were order'd to the woods to make pitch and tar and continued there near two years but as the land was improper to raise any sort o! naval stores in any Considerable quantity, their labours terra to a different account and the profits of building and improving the lands fell to a private person, they being not able to make more than near 200 barrels of pitch and tar. The small prospect they had of being on a capacity to serge the nation and the Impossibility there was of raising Corn, Cattell and other provisions for their subsistence on such ordinary and almost barren land oblig'd them to petition the aforesaid Governor that they might be put in possession, and settle on .the land Call'd Schorie which Indians had given to the late Queen Anne for their use he answer'd that the the land was theirs, he could nor would no take it from them, neither could he settle them there because it would oblige him to maintain to many Garrisons.

The said Governor thought well some time after to visit all the Villages where they were settled and view the people there who with one consent apply'd to him again, humbly praying they might go and inhabit the above promised land, upon which he in a passion stamped upon the ground and said, here is your land (meaning the almost barren Rocks) where you must live and die.

The second year (in the woods) were orders sent to detach 300 able men to serve on expedition against Canada which they did and on their return, their arms were taken from them, they were put on the Establishment of New York and New Jersey and the money received by the said Gouvernor they marched home, where they found their familys almost starv'd, no provision having been given them during their absence.

They petitioned (Coll.) Gove. Hunter for full allowance of provisions. He promised to send some, about 8 days after came message from him that he had not received any subsistence for them from England and therefore every one of them must shift for himself, but not out of the Province.

This was the latter end of the year and winter just at hand, no provision to be had, and the people bare of Cloaths. So they sought relief from the Indians and the Indians gave them permission to settle on tract of Land called *Schoharie*, which the Indians had given to Queen Anne for this very purpose. All fell to work and in two weeks cleared a way through woods 15 tules long tho nearly starving and 50 Families went to Schoharie. When almost settled, Gov. Hunter sent orders that Whoever settled on that land should be declared a Rebel. However, the remainder traveling in sledges through three feet of snow, cold, and hunger, joined the 50 first families. They made other contracts, which the people of Albany tried to break. Then Gov. Hunter called in Adam Vrooman to persuade the Indians to break the agreement. In 1717 Gov. Hunter called a meeting of these German's. He declared he would hang John Conrad Weiser ordered they must agree with "the gentlemen of Albany to whom he had sold the Land for 1500 pistoles and become their tenants or leave."

From Histories, etc. Dauphin, Cumberland, Franklin Bedford Adams and ferry Counties, Pa. by Israel Daniel Rupp, 1846 page 39:

"From 1700 to 1720 the Palatines endured many privations before they reached the western continent. In 1708 and 1709 upwards of ten thousand arrived in England and were there for some time in a starving miserable, sickly condition, lodged in warehouses; who had no subsistence but what they could get by their wives begging for them in the streets till some sort of provision was made for them by Queen Anne and then some were shipped to Ireland, others to America.

In the month of August, pursuant to an address to her majesty Queen Anne from the Lord Lieutenant and Council in Ireland, desiring as many as her majesty should think fit to send thither, three thousand were sent to Ireland, many of whom returned again to England, on account of the hard usage they received from the Commissary Who did not Pay them their subsistence (Journal House of Commons, England, Vol. XVI 594-98.) In the summer of 1710 several thousand Palatines who had been maintained at the Queen's expense in England were shipped to New York, some of whom afterwards came to Pennsylvania."

From Hudson and Mohawk p. 1617:

"The history of this branch of the Lasher family begins in West Camp, Columbia county (N. Y.) in 1710 with Sebastian Lasher of who little is known or proven...

...To continue the Hudson record a little farther, "The first positive record is the birth of his daughter Maria Elizabeth and her baptism in the church of West Camp, 1710. He Was among those willing to remain in West Camp 1724 if lands Were conveyed to him."

It will be remembered that Sebastian Lescher or Lasher was born in 1669 or thereabout and undoubtedly being 55 years old In 1724 he preferred to remain where he was then Located but it must also be born In mind that he had six children when he arrived in America and as stated had a daughter Maria Elizabeth baptized in 1710 in West Camp and there is only a record of four children listed by Hudson leaving three who undoubtedly were among those who migrated to Pennsylvania or

who may have died but of which there is also no record.

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