



The Benner Family originates in recent times in the Palatine region of Germany.

Around 1709 the Benner family joined the massive Palatine migration to the "new world". Some went to America, some to Canada. Many moved to other European countries. The New Zealand Benners are mainly descended from those that ended up in Ireland.

This website is maintained by Gary Benner, who lives in Tauranga, New Zealand, and will provide a repository of family history for the Benner's and associated families.

The Palatine Migration

PALATINES: Prior to 1871, what is now Germany consisted of a number of separate states such as Wurttemberg, Prussia, Bavaria, etc., whose boundaries changed frequently as a result of war and other causes. The Palatinate was one of these states, and was located along the Rhine, roughly corresponding to the modern German state of Rhineland-Pfalz.

In 1709 several hundred Palatine families settled in Ireland. A combination of economic hardship caused by war and a severe winter led to the exodus. Queen Anne received them in England and sent some to Ireland to the estates of sympathetic Protestant landlords. They established roots, mainly in the Rathkeale area of County Limerick, Ireland, where about 1,200 of them settled on the estate of Thomas Southwell. Other colonies were set up in Old Ross and Gorey, County Wexford and in Counties Cork and Dublin. Though the Limerick Palatines spread out to other areas, particularly north Kerry and Tipperary, Rathkeale remained an important focal point.

At Killaheen the site of the old Wesleyan Chapel where the Palatines worshipped may be seen today, also some of the old Palatine houses. A most interesting item is an old Palatine well. It

consists of a trench cut into the ground deeper than the water table. The sides and the top are lined with stone and 18 stone steps lead down the clear cold water. Several such wells are to be found in the locality but some have been partly filled in for safety purposes.

At Courtmatrix, the earliest of the original colonies, the present occupiers of a house built in the Palatine style - long and low - which once longed to the Teskey family can be found with the interior which has been kept as close to its original condition as a modern lifestyle will permit. Behind the old Teskey home a carved stone cider press is still in position under an old tree, an interesting validation of the fact that the Palatines brought stone-cutting and winemaking skills with them from Germany.

The third of the parent colonies, Ballingrane, is the place where the most famous Irish Palatines lived. Barbara Heck and Philip Embury were the founders of Methodism in the USA, a denomination which now has a following of several million. Barbara Heck's old home is (1996) occupied by the family of Walter Ruttle, a Palatine descendant and a member of the Irish Palatine Association. Nearby can be found a pear tree under which John Wesley used to preach and a plaque marking the site of Philip Embury's home, long since demolished. A visit to Embury and Heck memorial church contains a horn blown by the burgermeister or Palatine leader to summon general meetings in the early days of the colony.

Castle Matrix is the home of Thomas Southwell, the landlord who brought the Palatines to Limerick. This ancient Fitzgerald castle has been completely restored and is occupied by the O'Driscoll family.

Some of the German-speaking people that came to North America did not come directly. Some Palatines spent time (from a few months to a few generations) in other countries, including Ireland.

Palatine families living in the Rathkeale area circa 1720 included: Altimes/Alton, Baker, Barkman/Bartman, Barraban, Benner, Bickerin, Bonus, Bovenizer, Bowen, Bower, Bredhour, Brough, Cave, Cole, Cooke, Corneille, Cripps, Cronsberry, Delmege, Doupe, Embury, Everett, Filme, Fitzelle, Folker, Grouse, Guier, Hartwick, Heavenor, Heck, Hibler, Hifle, Hoffman, Hoopf, Hoost, Laurence, Legear, Lodwick/Ludwig, Lowe, Lower, Lowes, Mick, Miller, Modler, Neazor, Piper, Poff, Richardt, Rodenbecker, Ruttle, Rynard, Ryner, Schmidt/Smyth, Shallas, Sheaffer, Shearman, Shimmel, Shire/Shier, Shoemaker, Shoneweiss, Shouldice, Siebert, Singer, Smeltzer, Sparling/Sparling, St. John, Steevell, Steepe, Stork/Stark, Stroud, Switzer, Teskey, Tettler/Detlor, Ushelbaugh, Young and Zigler.

Palatine families in the rest of Ireland circa 1720 included: Altimus/Altimes, Ashbagh, Baker/Becker, Barklotine, Beever, Berg/Berge, Berner/Bearney, Bisherne, Boller, Crouse, Crow/Crowe, Fock/Fought, Fugenacht, Glazier/Gleasure, Golliday, Green, Hartwick/Hartrick, Hess, Hoffman, Holbach, Hornick/Horn, Jacobus/Jacob, Jekyll/Jeakle, Johan, Kirkhover, Klein/Kline, Konig/Koning, Kough/Cooke, Lambert, Long, Ludolf/Ludolt, Meyer/Myers, Miller, Nichburne, Paul, Poole, Rapple, Real/Ruhl, Reessnagh/Rufenacht, Reuling, Rhinehart, Richardt/Richard, Rosine/Rosen, Ross/Rose, Ryling, Schmidt/Smyth, Schultz/Sultz, Sheaffer, Snitzerling, Staler, Steeble, Stengel/Stingill, Strosser, Swartz, Tyse/Twiss, Walter/Weiss, Wise,

Wentz, Wolf, Writer/Rieter, and Young.

There is an Irish Palatine Heritage Centre in Rathkeale, (near Limerick and Adare), Co. Limerick, with extensive displays of artifacts, photographs, etc. associated with the Palatine families.