

## WHENCE OUR ANCESTORS CAME

A large proportion of the inhabitants of Berks county are the descendants of a people once inhabiting a strip of land on both sides of the Rhine, extending southward from near Cologne, above Mannheim and having an area of less than 3,500 square mile. This territory was divided into Bavarian Palatinate and Palatinate of the Rhine, or the Pfalz. It is from this latter division that most of our forefathers emigrated. The capital was Heidelberg. During the Thirty Years' War, the territory was laid waste and the greater part of the population destroyed. Before that event the yeomanry of Germany were in a state of great prosperity. Their houses were comfortable, their barns capacious, their stables well stocked with horses and cattle, their crops were plenteous, and many had considerable sums of money safely stored away for a rainy day; but this war changed the exposed sections almost to a wilderness, especially the Palatinate.

During the War of the Spanish Succession, raging from 1701 to 1713, the Palatinate was repeatedly overrun by hostile armies and the land again laid waste. Who would not have despaired of ever being freed from the horrors of war, or the tramp of invading armies? Now with a sad and solemn tread the remnant of the Palatines turned their faces toward other and distant lands, leaving the flower of their youth lie dead on the field of battle. With the courage of desperation, the spirit of liberty rose within them. They loved their stricken country, but freedom came first. Many of them scattered to other parts of Germany, some went beyond and sought homes in Holland, but the majority immigrated to England, where they received the sympathies of Queen Anne.

[*"A Concise History of the Balthasers,"* by Francis W. Balthaser, 1924, Source #19]