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# British Motives in the Settlement of German Palatines in Colonial New York

## **Abstract**

In 1710, a group of German Palatine refugees landed in the New World courtesy of Britain's Queen Anne. While British propaganda boasted charitable and religious motives behind the Palatine relocation to America—particularly in light of the Catholic-Protestant feud gripping Europe at that time—the historical record paints an alternative picture. Based on the evidence, the move was predominantly an act of convenience and profit to the Crown. Britain had a need to remove excess poor from its midst, make its northerly Colonies profitable, and ensure Colonial security in the face of Iroquois threat. England viewed the Palatines as an ethnically homogenous people whom they could exploit to meet these economic and security needs.

## **Keywords**

Palatine, British Colonial economics, Colonial New York, British Colonial security, Queen Anne, religious tolerance, Mohawk, Iroquois, pine tar, Protestant, forced labor

## Introduction

In 1710, ships ferrying displaced Protestant Germans from the Palatine region landed in the New World colony of New York. In the years prior, this group had fled as refugees from the economic and spiritual displacement of the War of the Spanish Succession, which had pitted a Protestant alliance under Queen Anne of England against Louis XIV's Catholic realm.<sup>1</sup> These German Palatines, for "many years a French conquest," deprived of their means of sustenance through wartime requisitions and alienated from their Catholic leader who was "no friend to their religion," fled to England as a place of refuge.<sup>2</sup> After lengthy deliberations, roughly three thousand of these refugees would arrive in New York from England during the spring of 1710.<sup>3</sup> Upon arrival, they were settled on the frontier to begin work making pine tar out of New York's vast forests.<sup>4</sup> In light of this Crown initiative, motive must be considered in relation to England's investment of effort and funds into this relocation project. Some would argue that this move was one of charitable assistance to fellow Protestants, helping them establish a better life away from the deprivation and religious alienation of Europe.<sup>5</sup> It is the contention of this study, however, that England saw in the Palatines an ethnically homogenous people whom they could exploit in the New World to meet the Crown's economic and security needs.

## Historiography and Methods

This study will focus primarily upon the immigration of Palatines to New York, recognizing those entering the Southern and lower Middle Colonies, as well as those who stayed in England, as beyond its scope. Considering them at any length would be peripheral to the main inquiry of this study because these mass immigrations occurred in a context distinct from that of the New York Palatines. The question of British motive for settling the Palatines on the frontier of Colonial New York will be answered through the use of relevant primary material and secondary documentation. The primary material is limited mostly to the opinions of those in authority over the resettlement since the Palatines' own fiscal and

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<sup>1</sup> H. T. Dickinson, "The Poor Palatines and the Parties" *The English Historical Review* 82, no. 324 (July 1967): 465.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Bishop of Worcester to the Clergy of his Diocese, 1709, in *The History of the Reign of Queen Anne, Digested into Annals: Year the Eighth*, (London, UK: T. Ward, 1710), 44-45.

<sup>3</sup> Sanford H. Cobb, *The Story of the Palatines: An Episode in Colonial History*, (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Otterness, "The New York Naval Stores Project and the Transformation of the Poor Palatines, 1710-1712" *New York History* 75, no. 2 (April 1994): 134.

<sup>5</sup> A. Joan Lucas, "The Palatines" *The Loyalist Gazette* 46, no. 2 (2008): 22.

social state precluded much writing during this immigration. This weakness in the historical record, however, is not a serious shortfall to this study because it primarily discusses official motive rather than the Palatines' own deliberations.

Historiographically, there have been generally two schools on this subject, both of which have roots within contemporary interpretation. During the 1709-1710 transaction, primary documentation demonstrates a heavy presence of Pietistic sentiment over the matter. In the acceptance and relocation of the Palatines, Queen Anne was portrayed as a benevolent benefactor who risked loss to fulfill her duty to protect other Protestants.<sup>6</sup> The government even cast the event in terms such that collections through the Church of England were made for "the better employment and settlement of the said poor Palatines."<sup>7</sup> This view was countered by a different perspective which claimed that the employment of these displaced people would be one of financial and practical use. This view was tellingly held by Dutch enterprises which, "well considering the advantage [the British] are like to have by it, are now inviting them into their own country."<sup>8</sup>

In modern scholarship, a similar divide has occurred. Palatine historical specialist A. Joan Lucas has argued that Britain had humanitarian reasons in mind from the start, inviting the Palatines to relocate because they "[knew] their hardships."<sup>9</sup> Such an approach downplays political and economic motives in this decision. On the other side, scholars such as British political historian H. T. Dickinson see a motive for New World exploitation taking a prominent role.<sup>10</sup> Historian Philip Otterness holds an opinion emphasizing exploitation rather than charity, as well.<sup>11</sup> Overall, there has been a general trend toward viewing the Palatines' relocation to America as predominantly a move of convenience, not piety. A gap in the research exists, however, regarding the direct study of Britain's economic and security goals as they pertained to the Palatine settlers in New York. It is the purpose of this study to further the exploitation paradigm through a study of British Colonial motive.

### **Palatine Expectations**

To demonstrate that British motives were something other than a humanitarian pursuit of the Palatines' well-being, the Palatines' own clear desires and expectations in putting themselves at the bidding of the British must first be

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<sup>6</sup> Lord Bishop of Worcester to the Clergy of his Diocese, 47.

<sup>7</sup> "St James's," June 23, 1709, in *The History of the Reign of Queen Anne, Digested into Annals: Year the Eighth*, (London, UK: T. Ward, 1710), 41.

<sup>8</sup> Lord Bishop of Worcester to the Clergy of his Diocese, 45-46.

<sup>9</sup> "The Palatines," 22.

<sup>10</sup> "The Poor Palatines and the Parties," 483.

<sup>11</sup> "The New York Naval Stores Project and the Transformation of the Poor Palatines, 1710-1712," 134.

understood. These Germans' reasons for leaving their native country were rooted in both religious intolerance and economic decimation.<sup>12</sup> They had become a destitute people, rightly dubbed the "poor Palatines" by most British observers.<sup>13</sup> Despite this humble state, the Palatines overall were looking for three main benefits in British help.

First, the Palatines sought an opportunity to rise out of their poverty and experience decent standards of living. Contemporary Englishmen pointed to Colonial propaganda to explain the Palatines' willingness to migrate to Britain, demonstrating what this people group hoped to gain from collaboration.<sup>14</sup> Eighteenth century chronicler John Oldmixon made the following observation regarding the Palatines' motive for throwing in their lot with Britain:

[T]hese foreigners came into this design to go and settle in the English Colonies [because] it was a very good [opportunity] for themselves...The most reasonable conjecture is, that William Penn...being Proprietor of Pennsylvania, had such an inviting account of that country drawn up and dispers'd them to come into a scheme for their transporting themselves to that, and other English settlements in America."<sup>15</sup>

An analysis of Penn's 1681 pamphlet to which Oldmixon alludes reveals that it was a hope of "a Foreign Plantation [in which] their Industry...is worth more than if they stayed at home," to the effect that "an extraordinary profit" might be obtained, which drew the Palatines into alliance with Britain.<sup>16</sup> It has been argued that Queen Anne had purposely orchestrated a campaign of propaganda to cater to Palatine dreams of land and freedom in order to persuade them to oblige her designs to publicly demonstrate compassion and empathy toward fellow Protestants in the midst of war.<sup>17</sup> Such promises of "a good and

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<sup>12</sup> John Oldmixon, *The History of England: During the Reigns of King William and Queen Mary, Queen Ann, King George I*, (London, UK: Rochard Ford, and Richard Hett, 1735), 425.

<sup>13</sup> Lord Bishop of Worcester to the Clergy of his Diocese, 46.

<sup>14</sup> "The Poor Palatines and the Parties," 466.

<sup>15</sup> *The History of England*, 425.

<sup>16</sup> William Penn, *Some Account of the Province of Pennsylvania in America: Lately Granted Under the Great Seal of England to William Penn, &c. Together with the Privileges and Powers Necessary to the Well-Governing Thereof*. (London, UK: Benjamin Clark, Bookseller, 1681) accessed October 6, 2017, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~original13/penns-pamphlet.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> "The New York Naval Stores Project and the Transformation of the Poor Palatines, 1710-1712," 135.

fruitful land,” rather than the rocky wastes necessary to support tar pines, were what drew this impoverished people group into British orbit.<sup>18</sup>

A second benefit the German refugees expected was an ability to escape feudalism and peasantry. Penn’s pamphlet, which was so influential upon the Palatine mind, declares that “the People and Governor have a Legislative Power, so that no Law can be made or Money raised, but by the People’s consent.”<sup>19</sup> Further, Joshua Kocherthal’s “Golden Book” which, according to A. Joan Lucas, heavily influenced the Palatine decision stressed that the British Colonies were “completely freed from all obligations, compulsory labor, serfdom, and all other burdens.”<sup>20</sup> Additionally illustrative of this expectation was the Palatines’ absolute unwillingness to settle in Ireland during their brief residence in England. This was due to their refusal to work as Irish Serfs.<sup>21</sup> Once in New York, their attitude—“[T]hey will not listen to tar making”—further substantiated that these people had entrusted themselves to the British with the understanding that they would be employed in Colonial free labor.<sup>22</sup> They directly asserted, “We came to America to establish our families [and to] secure lands for our children.”<sup>23</sup> These evidences clearly communicated to the English, who were not blind to these desires, that they would be opposing the wishes of the Palatine refugees under their charge if they chose to set them to anything but free labor.

Lastly, these Germans yearned for religious tolerance. This group’s inability as Protestants to thrive under their Catholic Elector in Germany was well established at that time.<sup>24</sup> To this end, religious leaders such as Joshua Kocherthal proclaimed that British Colonial governance would bring religious “freedom of conscience.”<sup>25</sup> Historian Alan Taylor notes that these Protestants were a diverse mix of “Lutherans, Reformed, Moravians, Baptists, and Pietists of many stripes,” all of which resented the “religious conformity” demanded them by their ruler, Duke William of Newburg.<sup>26</sup> As it turned out, this was the only Palatine expectation that was not directly infringed upon by the Crown.

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<sup>18</sup> *Some Account of the Province of Pennsylvania*; Philip Otterness, *Becoming German: The 1709 Palatine Migration to New York*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 88.

<sup>19</sup> *Some Account of the Province of Pennsylvania*.

<sup>20</sup> “The Palatines,” 22; Rosalind J. Beiler, “German-Speaking Immigrants in the British Atlantic World, 1680-1730,” in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Major Problems in American Colonial History*, 3rd ed. (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2013), 176.

<sup>21</sup> *Becoming German*, 67.

<sup>22</sup> John Cast to Governor Hunter, March 27, 1711, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York: Procured in Holland, England, and France*, Vol. 5. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1853) 214.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> “German-Speaking Immigrants in the British Atlantic World, 1680-1730,” 176.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-6

<sup>26</sup> Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America*, (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2001), 317-318.

### British Motives, Incentives, and Palatine Reactions

The British had an understanding of Palatine expectations. They realized that the reason the Palatines had left their home country was their need to rise above destitution and discrimination.<sup>27</sup> Before the final decision had been made to relegate these refugees to tar plantation labor, they had learned by the ill-fated Ireland experience that these people expected self-determination.<sup>28</sup> If they aimed to assist the Palatines in a charitable and straightforward manner, their attitude would be demonstrably geared toward these needs for the good of the Palatines. If, however, they opposed these essentials by imposing their own program, their reasons for transporting them to America must be considered exploitative and self-serving. The latter case is supported by the evidence. Britain transported these immigrants to America for homeland economic stability, ethnically homogenous gang labor, and Colonial security, all of which flew in the face of what the Palatines had anticipated.

A first motive for the British shipment of Palatines to America that did not reflect a focus on Palatine needs was to rid Britain's European labor market of unwanted workers while still enjoying the propaganda value of having accepted their religious allies in the midst of Queen Anne's War of Spanish Succession which pitted Protestants against Catholics. The value of such a move apart from its economic repercussions was immense. Rhetoric surrounding the war was cast in terms of tyrannical Popery versus liberating Protestant forces.<sup>29</sup> If England could remove a population of persecuted Protestants from under the very nose of Louis XIV's armies in a highly visible effort and appear to be assisting this people group in bettering their temporal and spiritual situation, Queen Anne's regime would mortify its French enemy and inspire her allies.

In order to legalize this action, however, Parliament needed to alter laws to allow the flood of German refugees to enter Britain. The Tories were vehemently opposed, viewing the act as one which would saturate Britain's economy with even more unwanted labor than it already had.<sup>30</sup> They complained "that this Bill of General Naturalization [of foreign Protestants] will be very prejudicial to the Trade and Manufacturers of this Nation, and may be of ill Consequence."<sup>31</sup> Conversely, majority leadership, along with the Queen, prioritized its effect on international opinion, considering the acceptance of fellow Protestants as

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<sup>27</sup> Lord Bishop of Worcester to the Clergy of his Diocese, 45.

<sup>28</sup> *Becoming German*, 67.

<sup>29</sup> Kirsten L. Cooper. "Inventing a French Tyrant: Crisis Propaganda, and the Origins of Fenelon's Ideal King." (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2013), 19-20.

<sup>30</sup> "The Poor Palatines and the Parties," 464.

<sup>31</sup> "Foreign Protestants Nat[uralization] Bill," *House of Lords Journal* 18, no. 15 (March 1709), accessed September 16, 2017, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol18/pp667-668>.

dependent refugees worth the risk and eventually a means of profit.<sup>32</sup> Once throngs of thousands of refugees became encamped in London, however, historian Philip Otterness notes that their care became overwhelming, having “become too much of a good thing.”<sup>33</sup> What seemed to contemporaries as “half [of] Germany” had taken advantage of the Crown’s liberal Protestant Naturalization Act during the spring of 1709.<sup>34</sup> The Anglican establishment soon began searching for willing benefactors to assist in the care of this unemployed, destitute multitude.<sup>35</sup> Attempts made by British foreign representative James Dayrolle to stem this flow met with little success.<sup>36</sup> Tory members of Parliament established that it was in England’s own “economic self-interest” that these refugees be curtailed.<sup>37</sup>

The reason for the backlash was due to the fact that Britain had already been grappling with the problem of overpopulation and resultant poverty for nearly two hundred years.<sup>38</sup> In partial solution, the Crown had resorted to resettling its excess population, often consisting of “unwanted” social groups, in the Colonies as a way to relieve the population at home and enhance the British island’s internal economy.<sup>39</sup> In the late 1680s, English leadership concluded that “80,000 soldiers, seamen, and vagrants existed in England,” and that a full fifty percent of England’s total population was guilty of “decreasing the wealth” of England’s economy as a financial liability.<sup>40</sup> Contemporaries bemoaned British poor laws as the cause of an “increase of the poor,” negatively affecting the country.<sup>41</sup> A sudden influx of Palatines would only exacerbate the situation. Thus, the British purposed to be rid of them via whatever utilitarian manner possible through exportation to the Colonies.

While this was ultimately what the Palatines desired, this motive demonstrated an English ambivalence toward these people’s needs. Discussion focused upon where to go with them. Plans to send them to slave away their lives on Jamaican plantations, where white labor was wanted to offset black slave labor and increase production, were considered as a possible solution but ultimately discarded due to the supposed inability of Germans to survive in the tropical climate.<sup>42</sup> Deliberations also settled temporarily upon a South Carolina settlement

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.; Lord Bishop of Worcester to the Clergy of his Diocese, 47.

<sup>33</sup> *Becoming German*, 50.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Lord Bishop of Worcester to the Clergy of his Diocese, 45.

<sup>36</sup> “The poor Palatines and the Parties,” 468.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 483.

<sup>38</sup> Rachel Christian, “Empire of Outcasts” *History Today* 65, no. 9 (September, 2015): 42.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> David Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society, 1650-1750*, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 41.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>42</sup> *Becoming German*, 69.



scheme, but a trial settlement—which deceived Palatine volunteers with false hopes of “free land in America”—failed miserably when over three hundred of the six hundred men died on the voyage and more succumbed to Native attack before even arriving at the remote settlement.<sup>43</sup> Despairing at the thought of failure in removing these refugees from Britain, New York was finally identified as a place to relieve the Mother Country of her economic liability of destitute refugees.<sup>44</sup> Thus, it may be concluded from these deliberations and justifications that Britain’s motive for sending the Palatines to America was not one of munificence, but one of self-interested utility.

A second facet which was out of line with Palatine interests was Britain’s desire to make its northerly American Colonies profitable. The Chesapeake had, since the middle of the previous century, been a suitably profitable holding for the Crown through its staple production of tobacco.<sup>45</sup> In the same manner, the Colonies of the deep South and the Caribbean, through their staple production of rice and sugar on expansive plantations, deserved their place as gems in the British Crown.<sup>46</sup> The northerly Middle and New England Colonies, however, were of a different nature. These served more as subsistence-style havens for ethnic and religious minorities than as regions geared toward economic production.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the climate precluded the mass production of commodities competitive enough for overseas demand.<sup>48</sup> As the British Empire became more trans-Atlantic in orientation, trade took center stage with the market for naval provisions assuming a new importance.<sup>49</sup> In this newly-enriched atmosphere of exchange, the northern Colonies’ inability to provide reciprocal trade goods became increasingly contrasted with its disproportional consumption of overseas commodities.<sup>50</sup>

The British saw that this combined problem of a trade imbalance and need for naval stores could be remedied by the exploitation of their Palatine dependents to produce pine tar for export and naval use. The vibrant shipping culture of Colonial New York would experience a major boost if naval tar could be produced to assist Britain’s shipping crews, as well as provide a valuable staple export to make the Middle Colonies internationally profitable.<sup>51</sup> An ethnically homogenous labor force working exclusively upon this design would prospectively replicate the South Carolinian model in which racial slave labor had

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>45</sup> *American Colonies*, 133-4.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 205, 237.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 174-175.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-176.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

“secured an early foothold in the Atlantic economy by rendering naval stores out of longleaf pine” and selling this “vital strategic commodity.”<sup>52</sup> It was not only the English who identified this opportunity. The Dutch had noticed and envied the concept of ethnic gang labor, copying England’s strategy by attempting to draw Palatine refugees to the Netherlands.<sup>53</sup> British deliberations demonstrate that England regarded this people group to be “servants of the Crown”—a dreaded concept to Palatines expecting self-determination.<sup>54</sup>

From the very beginning, New York officials were of the understanding that the Palatines were sent over to work for the Crown as tar manufacturers rather than as free laborers.<sup>55</sup> Officials noted that this design had been set in stone in the highest echelons of the British command.<sup>56</sup> When the tar production plans demonstrated their inability to succeed in New York, these men bemoaned that the governor “could not have given his consent to [allowing the Palatines to find work and fulfill their initial expectations] without disobeying the Queen’s instructions, which are positive for settling them in a body and subsisting them, until they could subsist on the product of their labor.”<sup>57</sup> Even the “product of their labor” was not to be equivocated with free labor since this reference alludes to additional work during this commodity’s off-season, rather than free labor apart from tar plantation servitude.<sup>58</sup>

This imperative to support the Crown rather than Palatine intentions was so strong that land preparation along the Mohawk River—which New York officials had originally planned as the ideal settlement for the Palatines and which would have fit Palatine desires perfectly—was abandoned in favor of more meager land suitable only for pine tar production along the Hudson River frontier.<sup>59</sup> This type of occupation was diametrically contrary to what the Palatines had clearly expected, signifying that the motive of the British government was one of self-interest rather than of the benevolence the Crown’s

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<sup>52</sup> Max S. Edelson, “Clearing Swamps, Harvesting Forests: Trees and the Making of a Plantation Landscape in the Colonial South Carolina Lowcountry,” *Agricultural History* 81, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 391-392.

<sup>53</sup> Lord Bishop of Worcester to the Clergy of his Diocese, 45-46.

<sup>54</sup> “The New York Naval Stores Project and the Transformation of the Poor Palatines, 1710-1712,” 134.

<sup>55</sup> Governor Hunter to the Lords of Trade, July 24, 1710, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York: Procured in Holland, England, and France*, Vol. 5. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1853) 167.

<sup>56</sup> Perry, Keill, and Du Pre to the Lords of Trade, December 11, 1711, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York: Procured in Holland, England, and France*, Vol. 5. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1853) 291.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Becoming German*, 97.

<sup>59</sup> Governor Hunter to the Lords of Trade, July 24, 1710, 167; *Becoming German*, 96.

regime had attempted to publicly portray.<sup>60</sup> The German settlers at first despaired of being driven to a desolate, infertile New York frontier to do this work, asking their comrades, as related by Colonial official John Cast, such despondent questions as, “What is to be done in [this situation] but to have patience.”<sup>61</sup> As time went by, resistance simmered. Secretary Clarke, reporting to the British Lords of Trade, noted the following:

These people had taken a resolution neither to work in making pitch and tar nor to remain on the land they are settled upon for that purpose, but even by force if they could not otherwise effect it, to remove to the Schoharie and that they had actually hindered the surveyors from laying out more lots to them...his excellency was forced to send for a detachment...from the garrison of Albany.<sup>62</sup>

Misunderstandings between officials in Britain and the overseers of the project compounded this resistance. The former were impatient with the labor-intensive process of producing naval stores and demanded material proof that would “convince the world of the solidity of the project,” without understanding, as the latter did, that such results would be slow in coming.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, petitions from the Palatines for the recognition of land holdings on the Schoharie increased through the Palatine immigrants’ agent, Johannes Wilhelm Schefs.<sup>64</sup> Initially, these were rebuffed and the people were ordered as part of an unfree pool of labor to “remain on the Lands where I settled them at first...for the ends proposed by those who sent them Vis. The manufacture of naval stores.”<sup>65</sup> In identity, these people had become what they had been in Germany: a marginalized group which, as demonstrated by the New York Colonial governor’s habit of relegating them to the same type of exclusion as Indians in censuses, was

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<sup>60</sup> Lord Bishop of Worcester to the Clergy of his Diocese, 45.

<sup>61</sup> John Cast to Governor Hunter, 214.

<sup>62</sup> Secretary Clarke to the Lords of Trade, May 30, 1711, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York: Procured in Holland, England, and France*, Vol. 5. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1853) 239-240.

<sup>63</sup> Governor Hunter to the Lords of Trade, October 31, 1712, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York: Procured in Holland, England, and France*, Vol. 5. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1853) 248.

<sup>64</sup> Johannes Wilhelm Schefs, Petition, Nov 1, 1720, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York: Procured in Holland, England, and France*, Vol. 5. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1853) 274-275.

<sup>65</sup> Brigadier Hunter to Secretary Popple, July 26, 1720, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York: Procured in Holland, England, and France*, Vol. 5. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1853) 552.

unable to fulfill what even this governor recognized as their “hopes of their liberty and settlement.”<sup>66</sup>

Eventually, with rising investment and minimal results, the naval stores project failed.<sup>67</sup> It was only after the ultimate failure of this naval stores scheme had been established that the Palatine immigrants were allowed to leave their servitude and begin to fulfill their dreams.<sup>68</sup> Through all of this it is clear that the British were following a system of exploitation and convenience in their transportation of the Palatines to America to make naval stores rather than seeking their fellow Protestants’ best interest.

Finally, the Crown had a third self-serving motive in transporting these immigrants to America: the use of this people group as a buffer against New York’s Iroquois Five Nations—more specifically, the Mohawk.<sup>69</sup> Over a twenty year period, shortly before the arrival of the Palatines, the Iroquois alliance had come under attack by French-aligned Native tribes.<sup>70</sup> These northerly tribes, supplied by France’s trade guns and ammunition, gained multiple victories and ultimately the upper hand over the Iroquois.<sup>71</sup> In 1701, the Iroquois settled the conflict by signing a peace with this Native alliance.<sup>72</sup> Being situated between the French bloc of Native alliances and the British Atlantic seaboard settlements, the Iroquois were a key strategic people group to both European powers.<sup>73</sup>

With the peace treaty, the Iroquois were free to turn from the North and West to the South and East—to the frontier of New York and her neighboring Colonies. Because of tensions with France, which would lead to Queen Anne’s War the following year, there was even the danger that Louis XIV would incite the Iroquois nations to attack these English Colonies.<sup>74</sup> Even though the Mohawk were a relatively friendly and neutral tribe, the danger that this tribe could be swayed by its alliance with the other Five Nations Iroquois to turn on the Colony was real.<sup>75</sup> For example, in 1689, the French—still on good terms with the Iroquois—conducted a joint raid near Albany, capturing almost eighty settlers.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Becoming German*, 107.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-112.

<sup>68</sup> “The Palatines,” 23.

<sup>69</sup> *Becoming German*, 71, 115.

<sup>70</sup> *American Colonies*, 381

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 380-381

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>73</sup> *Becoming German*, 115-116.

<sup>74</sup> *American Colonies*, 291-2.

<sup>75</sup> *Becoming German*, 116.

<sup>76</sup> Sam Sewall to the Governor and Council of Connecticut, March 24, 1689-90, in James Pinney Baxter, ed., *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, vol. 5, (Portland, ME: The Main Historical Society, 1897), 64.

From early on, this region had been considered “the dam, which should it, through neglect, be broken down by the weight of the enemy, we dread to think of the inundation of calamities that would quickly follow thereupon.”<sup>77</sup> A safeguard against Iroquois attack was of top priority. The future of the colony as a place attractive to European investment both in trade and in emigration rested partially and influentially upon the security of that investment against Native attack. The use of a marginalized buffer population to prevent more respected immigrants from feeling the pressure of an ever-present Native threat would be an ideal way of securing the Colonies’ foothold and future as a relatively safe trans-Atlantic investment risk.

When faced with an unwanted population of Palatines, the British concluded that they could be utilized as a buffer zone against this threat of a frontier raid.<sup>78</sup> A 1709 official report of England’s Board of Trade to the Treasurer of Great Britain purported that in addition to being suited to the production of naval stores, the Palatines would be “a good barrier between Her Majesty’s Subjects and the French and their Indians in those parts, and in process of time by intermarrying with the neighboring Indians (as the French do) they may be capable of rendering very great service to her majesty’s subjects there.”<sup>79</sup>

In disregard to the security and wellbeing of the Palatines whom the Crown claimed to protect, British officials planned to set them in a position to safeguard English subjects to their own detriment. This concept was further developed by orders for the Palatines to remain neutral in case of an Indian war.<sup>80</sup> Thus, not only were the Palatines sentenced to become the first line of defense against a joint French-Indian attack, but they were also relegated—as British subjects good enough to exploit and control in peacetime, but not British enough to trust in war—to a hopeless position in no-man’s-land between the combatants. Otterness notes, “Although the Germans would become British subjects through denization, they would be lesser subjects, expendable in case of attack.”<sup>81</sup>

The German settlers initially got along tolerably well with their Mohawk neighbors, some of whom had converted to Protestantism.<sup>82</sup> In becoming a buffer population, the Palatine settlers were able to receive from their Native neighbors what even their supposed saviors—the British—refused to provide them. Over the course of the first two years of life on the Hudson River Valley tar plantations, the Palatines’ inability to access sufficient land for their sustenance and their

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Board of Trade to the Honorable Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain, August 30, 1709, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York: Procured in Holland, England, and France*, Vol. 5. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1853) 88.

<sup>80</sup> *The Story of the Palatines*, 97.

<sup>81</sup> *Becoming German*, 71.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 116.

tenuous reliance upon British subsidized food given their poverty, left them deprived and needy as they faced the winter of 1712.<sup>83</sup> In desperation, they turned to the Natives, citing British prohibition of settlement outside of the tar plantations as the reason for their distress, and requested that the Mohawks consider their “miserable condition” and allow them access to land in the Schoharie region of New York.<sup>84</sup> This plainly illustrates a British attitude of ambivalence toward the welfare and intentions of the Palatines and a desire to use them expendably to the Crown’s advantage.

### **Interpretation and Conclusion**

It has been demonstrated that the Palatines had clear expectations in their response to Queen Anne’s propaganda concerning New World opportunities: freedom of conscience, ownership of productive land, and self-determination. While the British claimed the ability to provide all three, only Protestant freedom of conscience was granted in light of British ulterior motives. Under the smoke screen of “be[ing] helpful” to fellow Protestants in order to assist them in establishing a better life and fulfilling their dreams that had been stifled in Germany, British self-interest dictated the decision to send the Palatines to the frontier of New York.<sup>85</sup> This maneuver was not without precedent.

In their historical dealings with the New Netherlands settlement which eventually became New York, the British followed a similar methodology. Initially, when it was expedient to do so, the British tolerated this New World colony because of its shared Protestant heritage.<sup>86</sup> However, once it became more advantageous to do without Dutch competition, the British took advantage of New Netherland’s false sense of security, conquering the colony for the British Empire.<sup>87</sup> In the same manner, while riding on the propaganda value of helping Protestant Palatines, the British allowed three primary motives to hinder their willingness to respect the aspirations they had fostered in the Palatines. British resolve to remove excess poor from its midst, make its northerly Colonies profitable, and ensure the security of New York against Native attack motivated Queen Anne to transport the Palatines to New York. While the historiographical school which recognizes British altruism explicates the direction of Queen Anne’s propaganda, England predominantly saw in the Palatines an ethnically homogenous people whom they could exploit in the New World to meet the Crown’s economic and security needs.

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<sup>83</sup> Perry, Keill, and Du Pre to the Lords of Trade, 291.

<sup>84</sup> *Becoming German*, 119.

<sup>85</sup> Lord Bishop of Worcester to the Clergy of his Diocese, 45.

<sup>86</sup> *American Colonies*, 246.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 259-260.

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