



# Becoming German: The 1709 Palatine Migration to New York

*Philip Otterness*

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*Becoming German* tells the intriguing story of the largest and earliest mass movement of German-speaking immigrants to America. The so-called Palatine migration of 1709 began in the western part of the Holy Roman Empire, where perhaps as many as thirty thousand people left their homes, lured by rumors that Britain's Queen Anne would give them free passage overseas and land in America. They journeyed down the Rhine and eventually made their way to London, where they settled in refugee camps. The rumors of free passage and land proved false, but, in an attempt to clear the camps, the British government finally agreed to send about three thousand of the immigrants to New York in exchange for several years of labor. After their arrival, the Palatines refused to work as indentured servants and eventually settled in autonomous German communities near the Iroquois of central New York.

*Becoming German* tracks the Palatines' travels from Germany to London to New York City and into the frontier areas of New York. Philip Otterness demonstrates that the Palatines cannot be viewed as a cohesive "German" group until after their arrival in America; indeed, they came from dozens of distinct principalities in the Holy Roman Empire. It was only in refusing to assimilate to British colonial culture?instead maintaining separate German-speaking communities and mixing on friendly terms with Native American neighbors?that the Palatines became German in America.

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