

# Finding the Ancestral Home of a Palatine Forefather: The Case of Martin Zerbe

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To determine the parentage of one's immigrant ancestor, it is helpful to ascertain the city, town or village of origin of the family. The churchbooks and other records of the region then may be checked for references to the immigrant and his forebears.

The author, in his attempt to pinpoint the home in Germany of every Palatine who arrived in colonial New York in 1710, has followed a pattern of genealogical research which has proved successful in locating family origins. Many hitherto unplaced immigrants have been discovered in Germany by this method: the Bel-lingers, Rohrbachs, Rickerts, Fiedlers, Hagedornis, Kuhns and Salbachs, to name just a few. Basically, the author's *modus operandi* is as follows:

- 1) Study pertinent church and civil records of all areas in this country where the immigrant resided for mention of his village of origin. The Kocherthal records<sup>1</sup> and the membership and marriage records of the New York City Dutch Reformed<sup>2</sup> and Lutheran<sup>3</sup> churches are the prime sources of such data for the 1709-10 group.
- 2) Study surviving *European* passenger lists and census of immigrants, noting near whom your ancestor appeared on the unalphabetized, original mss.<sup>4</sup> Find out all possible information on the origins of his "neighbors" on the lists. People listed together were often relatives and/or neighbors back home.
- 3) Try to find out the origin of those with the same surname as the immigrant, considering all possible spelling variations.
- 4) Find the origins of the immigrant's immediate neighbors in *American* church and civil records. The Hunter Subsistence Lists<sup>5</sup>, Livingston Papers<sup>6</sup>, and the Simmendinger Register<sup>7</sup> are most helpful in locating 1709-10 Palatines in this regard—again, in their original, unalphabetized state!

As a case in point, by these steps the author was able to locate the village of origin of the Palatine Martin Zerbe, who later settled in Tulpehocken, Pennsylvania. There was no mention of Martin Zerbe's German home in the obvious