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Leader2

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2009

Art in the city: Graffiti artist hit the streets and pick the perfect theme for Limerick >>P3

Green Light Go Local band Walter Mitty and the Realist launch their new album >>P6

Maria and the maestro Maria McGarry is set to play Beethoven's masterpieces >>P4

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Austin Bovenizer, of the Irish Palatine Association in Rathkeale, with a replica of a beam from the townhall in Assenheim, Germany in which are carved the names of some families who emigrated from Germany to Ireland 300 years ago

This week 300 years ago, a group of some of Europe's first refugees came to our shores. These people left the Palatine region of Germany in 1709 to set up new communities through out the west of Ireland. To mark this anniversary the Irish Palatine Association is holding special talks and events in Rathkeale which will bring together people from around the world

See page 2

Ten days to celebrate 300 years

■ With a series of talks and programmes starting this Friday, the Irish Palatine Society is honour their unique history

Norma Prendiville

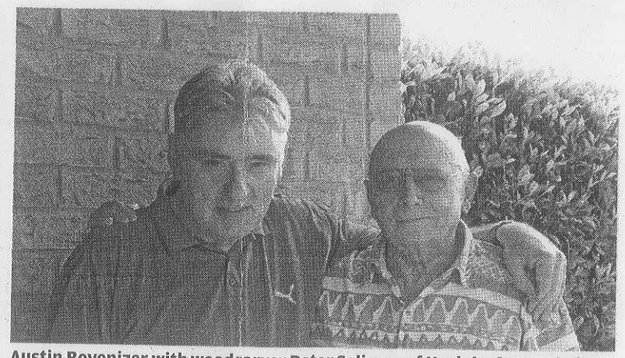
THE story of the Irish Palatines is both a national and an international one. But, in the 300 years since the first of the families from the German Palatinate region settled in Ireland, their story has also become a very identifiable and intrinsic part of the story of Limerick.

It is no accident that Limerick and more specifically Rathkeale is the centre of a series of events to mark the 300th anniversary of this most unusual of immigrations. Rathkeale, after all, was one of the first settlements – and remains, after three centuries, one of the most enduring. Rathkeale was also the place from which the Irish Palatines went out to spread the word of the new dispensation of Methodism.

And it is in Rathkeale that the Irish Palatine Association was born, some 20 or so years ago – and where the Irish Palatine Museum, which records the story of the Palatines, is located.

Beginning this Friday, there will be a "gathering in| of those of Irish Palatine descent – with people coming from Canada, the US, Australia, England and Ireland meeting up with German Palatines - to trace and commemorate their unique history. And the 10-day programme, which has been drawn up by the Irish Palatine Association will include visits to Palatine settlements in and around Rathkeale and Glenosheen, lectures, musical evenings, an organ recital, and visits to Kerry and Clare. In addition, there will be a major symposium this Saturday in UL, chaired by Prof Gearoid O'Tuathaigh of NUI Galway which will expand hugely on the many-sided aspects of Palatine history.

Palatine Centre Rathkeale where



Austin Bovenizer with woodcarver Peter Selinger of Hochdorf-Assenheim, who despite serious illness, completed work on the beam in time for the 300th anniversary celebrations of the arrival of the Palatines in Rathkeale

'They were initially hated by the Irish because they were seen as English settlers but as time passed, feelings changed and the Palatines came to be respected'

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Initially, the intention was that they would integrate with the Anglican faith but following visits by John Wesley, the great Methodist preacher and some of his disciples, many Palatines enthusiastically took to Methodism. By the latter half of the 18th century, led by Barbara Heck and Philip Embury of Ballingrane, Irish Palatines were ready to travel on to the New World where they established their new faith, first in New York and later in Canada. It was to grow into a church which today numbers 27 million people.

In Limerick, the Palatines continued to deepen their roots.Their husbandry skills made them model farmers and they also demonstrated skills in making linen and cider. As time passed, some of the names became more Anglicised in their spelling - but as the centuries passed, the numbers also dwindled.

For all that, the Irish Palatines remain a distinctive grouping within present-day Irish society – and a grouping with a very unique interna-

Palatines Tercentenary

Patrick J. O'Connor

Patrick O'Connor

BEGINNING on Friday, September 4, 2009 the tercentenary of the Irish Palatines comes to be celebrated in Rathkeale. The seeing eye will be cast retrospectively, because beginning on September 4, 1709 the first contingent of Palatine refugees from Germany found temporary accommodation in Dublin. Altogether, a total of 821 families or 3,073 persons registered landfall in Ireland in early September 1709, and presented the authorities with a sizable problem of disposal.

Thus begins a remarkable story, which for this writer proved captivating, and came to be freighted as 'People Make Places', a book launched by the President of Ireland, Patrick J. Hillery, in Rathkeale on 20th October 1989.

One of the great boons of the Irish Palatine story is the documentation which sustains it, so that an explanatory narrative may be forged around the topical heads 'Rhineland to Ireland', 'strangers in a strange land', ;a people set apart', 'identity in transition', 'at home in the green land', and 'pathways to decline'.

Another feature is the sheer tractability of the story, the family names that mark the Palatine people out, and for much of the 300 years of occupancy in Ireland their social and spatial apartness. Add to that the places that betoken a Palatine presence, either transitory or long-lived.

A little village named Palatine graces north county Carlow, and recalls eighteenth-century settlement on the Burton estate; the central

The only significant outlier in 1720 was on the Ram estate in Co. Wexford where 35 families were settled at Gorey and Old Ross. There, however, rapid dissolution followed on from the 1798 rebellion in Wexford, which was contested with all the atrocity of a civil war. From the parent Co. Limerick colonies on the other hand, the most arresting feature to be noted was dispersion to secondary colonies in the eighteenth century. One of the earliest colonising drives occurred onto the Bury estate around Pallaskenry or Newmarket, as it was known in the 1740s. Castletownarra in north Tipperary also attracted migration from the Rathkeale parent colonies.

More sustained colonisation onto the Blennerhassett estate around Ballmacelligott, Co. Kerry, came with active landlord sponsorship, and onto the Leslie estate about Tarbert.

In the 1760s the Oliver estate in south east Limerick proved a notable drawing card, where the Palatines settled in the three colonies of Glenosheen, Ballyorgan and Ballyriggin. In the 1770s there was movement onto the Barker estate in the parish of Kilcooly on the Tipperary-Kilkenny borderland. Finally, also in the expansive 1770s movement occurred onto the Quin estate about Adare, where Palatine farming families found scope to match ambition. This effectively ended multi-family colonisation drives from the Rathkeale

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It is no accident that Limerick and more specifically Rathkeale is the centre of a series of events to mark the 300th anniversary of this most unusual of immigrations. Rathkeale, after all, was one of the first settlements – and remains, after three centuries, one of the most enduring. Rathkeale was also the place from which the Irish Palatines went out to spread the word of the new dispensation of Methodism.

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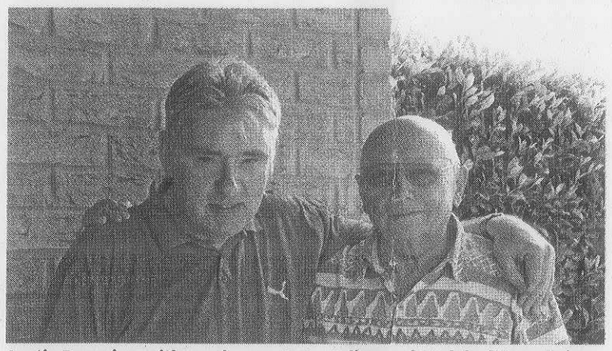
The Irish chapter of that history began, says Austin Bovenizer, chairman of the Irish Palatine Association, with the unusually cold winter of 1708/1709 which was followed by spring floods. At the time, England was interested in settling Protestants in its new American colony and William Penn, whose name lives on in Pennsylvania, was travelling Europe with the consent of Queen Anne seeking those willing to go.

Palatine Centre Rathkeale where

Austin Bovenizer, of the Irish Palatine Association in Rathkeale, with a replica of a beam from the townhall in Assenheim, Germany in which are carved the names of some of the Palatine families



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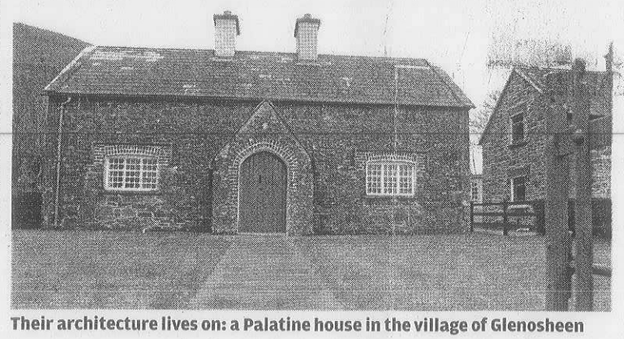

Their architecture lives on: a Palatine house in the village of Glenosheen

Out of desperation, many from the Rheinland areas, began to leave, Austin explains. "Many had to leave in the night because they didn't have permission from their landlords." Huge numbers died en route to Rotterdam, some stopped along the way or turned back and those who completed the journey found the promise of travel to the New World an empty one. The list of the willing was already full. "They assumed everything would be in readiness for them but they were wrong," says Austin. Faced with a dilemma, Queen Anne gave permission for several thousand people to be given free passage to London – where another human dilemma shortly emerged. What was to be done with these thousands of Europe's first refugees – who found themselves in a new, and sometimes hostile environment, not knowing the language?

A partial solution was found when a group of Irish landlords became interested and offered to take 500 families - a move which was also in their own interests as it would involve settling Protestant tenants on their lands and thus strengthen their own position in Ireland. In the event, 821 families made the journey across England to Ireland - in specially built carts. It was a very difficult journey, Austin explains, and many did not survive. Billeted initially in Collins Barracks in Dublin, the scattering of families then began - to Limerick, Kerry, Wexford, Tipperary.

'Many had to leave in the night because they didn't have permission from their landlords'

In Rathkeale, landlord Thomas Southwell, keen to start a linen industry, initially took in ten families, the first of whom settled in Courtmatrix. Other families followed and Palatine colonies were established in Killeheen and Ballingrane. Later, colonies were also established in Glenosheen and Ballyorgan.

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For all that, the Irish Palatines remain a distinctive grouping within present-day Irish society – and a grouping with a very unique international network linked to several continents.

Dr Pat O'Connor of UL has been foremost in tracing the story of the Irish Palatines in his book "People make places" but he has also traced the international connections in subsequent books such as "All Worlds Possible - the domain of the Millers of Coolybrown." Dr O'Connor will be the guest speaker this Friday at the welcoming dinner for the 300th anniversary celebrations in Rathkeale House Hotel.

The Rev Dudley Levistone Cooney has also produced an excellent, short, history of the Irish Palatines which is available at the Irish Palatine Museum in Rathkeale.

The full programme of events for the 300th anniversary can be viewed on www.irishpalatineassociation.ie

■ **Many of the events are open and free to interested members of the public.**

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A little village named Palatine graces north county Carlow, and recalls eighteenth-century settlement on the Burton estate; the central open space of Killough, Co. Down, is known as 'Palatine Square' and goes back verifiably to Palatine occupancy in 1720; and the townland of Rathpalatine in west Limerick may be traced to the same evidence of early Palatine colonisation. By 1720 much of the dust of the early colonisation phase had settled. A muster of that year reveals the enumeration of a total of 185 families. Of these, 104 had settled on Sir Thomas Southwell's estate about Rathkeale in the townlands of Courtmatrix, Killeheen and Ballingrane, while part of Castlematrix, where the landlord himself resided, was also reserved for the same purpose. Thus the nuclear area of Irish Palatine settlement declares at a relatively early date, a pattern which persisted through time. It is appropriate therefore that Rathkeale should be the commemorative hub of tercentenary events.

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outlier in 1720 was on the Ram estate in Co. Wexford where 35 families were settled at Gorey and Old Ross. There, however, rapid dissolution followed on from the 1798 rebellion in Wexford, which was contested with all the atrocity of a civil war. From the parent Co. Limerick colonies on the other hand, the most arresting feature to be noted was dispersion to secondary colonies in the eighteenth century. One of the earliest colonising drives occurred onto the Bury estate around Pallaskenry or Newmarket, as it was known in the 1740s. Castletownarra in north Tipperary also attracted migration from the Rathkeale parent colonies.

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Upon writing 'People Make Places' in 1989, I was conscious that twenty years hence a commemorative occasion would arise to merit signal marking by Palatine makers of Irish places. They had cast places in their own image and intimate locales held the convolutions of their own minds.

In putting together a ten-day commemorative programme (September 4-13), the Irish Palatine Association, founded in 1989, merits warmest commendation for coming up to meet with a formidable challenge.

It is fitting to pay tribute, in particular, to the leadership given by founding chairman, Austin Bovenizer, and his team of fellow directors and committee members.