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**History:**

The following is an attempt to describe the history not only of Rhineland-Palatinate, but of several lineal states located along the middle Rhine River, whose name comes from Celtic *renos* meaning "raging flow".

> In legend, the Palatine Hill in Rome was said to be the one on whose foot the twins Romulus and Remus were deposited when they escaped the flood of the Tiber River. It became the initial center of Rome and retained this importance for most of the life of the later Empire. The Roman emperors designated some of their local officials with the title "palatine" after the name of the hill.
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> Later empires such as the Merovingian and Carolingian used the same title, expanding it to "count palatine", which meant an official sent to report on a remote region owned by the crown. Under the later German empire of the Saxon and Salian dynasties (919-1125), a further expansion occurred -- the counts palatine were now responsible for general administration and dispensing justice.
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> The regions along the middle Rhine were originally put under imperial control by the Salian dynasty. But after 1235, Emperor Friedrich II, who, more concerned with Italy than German lands, appointed a count-palatine of the Wittelsbach family which controlled the powerful duchy of Bavaria in return for the duke's support.
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> With the decline of the monarchy after Friedrich II, administrative rights reverted to local dukes or bishops, in Saxony, Bavaria and other places, but the count palatine of lower Lotharingia who headquartered at the palace at Aachen held onto these powers and kept them for his descendants, who called themselves the Counts Palatine of the Rhine. This territory, called the Rhenish or Lower Palatinate [German, Pfalz], was gathered on both sides of the Rhine River between the Main and the Neckar, with its capital at Heidelberg until the 18th century.
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> In 1329, to resolve an internal familial dispute, the North Mark of Bavaria was detached, named the Oberpfalz [Upper Palatinate], and transferred to the Count Palatine.
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> The trend in those days was to subdivide inheritance among all the sons of a family and in this way the Palatinate was divided into four regions in 1410. This was reversed by Friedrich the Victorious (1449-1476). After this event, the Palatinate's power grew and it became the leading state in the empire, a fact which was recognized by making its ruler an hereditary elector in 1356.
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> Previously an entirely Catholic region, the Palatinate accepted Calvinism under Elector Friedrich III during the 1560's.

Elector Friedrich V's acceptance of Bohemia's offer of its crown touched off in 1618 the Thirty Years War, a complicated catastrophe from which the Palatinate never really recovered. Although the final result was centuries in coming, it meant that instead of politically leading Germany, the Palatinate became a spoil, fought over by other states and countries. Subsequent German history might have been considerably different had the Palatinate rather than Prussia held the position that the latter was to acquire for itself. Initially however, the only immediately apparent loss was that of the Upper Palatinate which was claimed by Bavaria.

During these times, a weakened Palatinate was no match for an ebullient France under Sun king Louis XIV, whose forces ravaged the region. In fact, so much international concern was there over growing French hegemony, that Britain led a coalition of powers to oppose her. These struggles became known as the War of the Palatinate (or the War of the Grand Alliance or War of the League of Augsburg, 1688-1697). One major effect was large scale emigration from 1689 to 1697, and later, giving rise, for example, in the United States to the phenomenon of the Pennsylvania Dutch.

There was a major freeze in the winter of 1708/09 in the Palatinate. On 10 January 1709 the Rhine River froze and was closed for five weeks. Wine froze into ice. Grapevines died. Cattle died in their sheds. Many Palatines traveled down the Rhine to Rotterdam in late February and March. In Rotterdam they were housed in shacks covered with reeds. The ones who made it to London were housed in 1,600 tents surrounding the city. Londoners were resentful. Other Palatines were sent to other places, such as Ireland, the Scilly Isles, the West Indies, and New York.

Queen Anne was related to the ruler of the Palatinate. On 24 March 1709 a British naturalization act was passed whereby any foreigner who would take the oaths to the British government and profess himself a Protestant would be immediately naturalized and have all the privileges of an English-born subject for one shilling.

The French returned following the Revolution of 1789 and the crowning of Napoleon Bonaparte. The result was to incorporate the Rhine west bank territories into France and the east bank territories into the essentially-puppet duchies of Baden and Hesse.

After Napoleon's defeat in 1815, the Congress of Vienna granted the majority of the east-bank lands to Bavaria and a a territory called Rheinhessen including the economically-vital cities of Mainz and Worms to Hesse-Darmstadt. Rheinhessen was at that time one of the three provinces of the Grandduchy of Hessen, the other two being Starkenburg and Oberhessen. Mainz, west of the Rhine river, was the provincial capital.

In Bavaria, which was not territorially contiguous with its new property, the territory was first known as the K&#65533;niglich Bayrischen Lande am Rhein. After 1836, it was known as the Bayrische Pfalz. After 1838 it was known variously as the Rheinpfalz (Palatinate) or Rheinbayern or simply Pfalz. This state had its capital at Speyer (SHPY-er) located west of the Rhine river.

The west-bank lands went to Prussia, and were joined to Prussia's east bank possessions to form the Prussian Rheinprovinz [Rhine Province] in 1824. Prussia annexed nearby Nassau and Meisenheim in 1866 and the Rhineland became the most prosperous area of the new German nation following its formation in 1871.

Following the First World war in 1918, the Rhine Province and the entire Rhineland region on the west bank was occupied by the Entente Powers until June 30, 1930. In 1920 the region was further cut up by adding the Westpfalz, a region of 418 square miles and over 100,000 inhabitants, including Homburg, St. Ingbert, Blieskastel, to the Saar region. It was re-militarized by Hitler's Germany on March 3, 1936. In 1937, the Birkenfeld portion of Oldenburg was



transferred to the Rhine Province.

**30 August 1946**
Rhineland-Palatinate was created by the French military government as a part of the French Occupation Zone. It comprised lands including the southern part of the Prussian province Rheinprovinz (Rhineland), part of the Prussian province Hessen-Nassau, part of Rheinhessen (Rheinhessen was a part of the free state Hessen-Darmstadt) and the Bavarian Rheinpfalz and consisted in all of 39 counties in 5 districts - Koblenz, Montabaur, Pfalz, Rheinhessen and Trier until a reorganization in the years 1968-72. (The French occupation zone included the southern part of Baden, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland and Wuerttemberg-Hohenzollern -- see map ).

**25 February 1947**
The Allied Powers declared the State of Preu&#65533;en (Prussia) dissolved.

**18 May 1947**
Elections for the first diet, and a plesbiscite over the constitution, were held.

**01 April 1949**
The French Occupation Zone was joined with the Bizone (combined British and US Zone) to form the Trizone (Trinationalzone).

**23 May 1949**
The Federal Republic of Germany was founded and Rhineland-Palatinate became a federal state. The Pfalz was to remain separate Regierungsbezirk within the state until 1968.

**1968-1972**
Counties and districts were reorganized. The number of districts was reduced to 3 -- Koblenz, Rheinhessen-Pfalz, Trier -- and the 39 counties to 25.

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Letzte &#65533;nderung/Last update: 6-Sep-2000 (DK)

Bernhard Braun, Rick Heli, Julian Isphording (contribution edited from soc.genealogy.german), Brian Keogh, Michael Koelges, W. Fred Rump, and Andreas Zinnow have contributed to this page.
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