

This excerpt from the 1st Edition of American Boyers 1915, by Dr. Charles C. Boyer provides a history of the Boyers as researched by Dr. Boyer and others. Some links are provided in this history to other useful pieces of information.

INTRODUCTION

In the year 58 B.C., Julius Caesar conquered the Helvetians and their allies, among whom were the Celtic Boii of Cisalpine Gaul. These Boii (See Section 28, Book I, Caesar's Commentaries) had won the admiration of the great conqueror, and he allowed them to settle in the land of the Aedui, other allies of the Helvetians. "They later migrated to Bohemia, to which and to Bavaria they gave their name" (See page 166, Vol. IX, The Century Dictionary and Cyclopaedia). "The Bavarians take their name from the Boii, a Celtic tribe who inhabited the districts which, when conquered by the Romans, became the Roman provinces of Vindelicia and Noricum. After the fall of the Western Empire this territory was overrun by various Germanic tribes who formed themselves into a confederation like that of the Franks and Marcomanni and called themselves Boiarii. The confederacy of the Boiarii was made tributary first to the Ostrogoths and then to the Franks. Finally the sovereignty over them was assumed by Charlemagne, and on the death of that monarch the kings of the Franks and Germans governed it by their lieutenants, who bore the title of margrave, afterward converted into that of a duke, and latterly (1623) into that of elector." (See "Bavaria," Vol. II, The Americana).

The descendants of these Boiarii have become intimately identified with the land and history of Germany, France, England, etc. In Austria the name is spelled Boiari; in Germany it is Bayer, Baier, Beyer, Beier, Byer, etc.; in France it is most often Boyer; in England Bowyer. It is interesting to know that Normandy furnished William the Conqueror a number of Boyer soldiers for the battle of Hastings (1066) and that those who thus became a part of England became distinguished enough to furnish a dozen or more coats of arms. Religious persecution beginning in the 16th Century under the Bourbons and ending in wholesale emigration caused many French Huguenots to flee to Holland, Switzerland, England, etc. Thus it came about that some Boyers were in the army of William of Orange in the battle of the Boyne (1690) in Ireland. Those who settled in Ireland, and perhaps Scotland, spell the name with an "s," namely Boyers, and are generally Presbyterian. The Boyers have a large place in the history of France. "Several branches belong to the nobility. Many have been distinguished as ministers, soldiers, [physicians, statesmen, etc.] A notable example was the late Cardinal Jean Pierre Boyer (1829-1896), Archbishop of Bourges. Prince Lucien Bonaparte, a brother of the great Napoleon, incurred the latter's displeasure by marrying a beautiful girl named Boyer. Many of this name were Huguenots." (See Stapleton's Memorials of the Huguenots in America, page 54). The Boyer historian has examined many city directories in Germany, France, England, and other European countries, and finds many Boyers in all the important walks of life.

The Boyers began to come to America as early as 1648. In that year Alexander Boyer, a Huguenot, was Deputy Commissary of the Colony. He was a man of great prominence (See Stapleton's Memorials). For half a century very few came. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) by Louis XIV, it is estimated, caused 500,000 Huguenots to leave France, many of them coming through Holland and England to different parts of America. Some of them settled at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; some at Port Royal, Nova Scotia; some at Charleston, SC; some in Virginia, where indeed we find a few English Bowyers soon after John Smith's arrival; some in Boston, MA; some in Rhode Island, and elsewhere; and many in

Pennsylvania. Those who came to Pennsylvania were mostly from Palatinate Bavaria, on the river Rhine. (See Vol. 17, Second Series, Pennsylvania Archives, for ship lists. and Dr. Stapleton's. Memorials, for naturalized Boyers in the different counties of Pennsylvania) These Pennsylvania Boyers, as we learn from Rupp's Histories, were closely related. They have identified themselves with every state in the Union. Large numbers live in Canada.

The Palatinates who settled in America spoke German very like the Germans of Nuremberg, Bavaria, today, but with large admixtures of the Dutch language of Holland. This unique form of speech has become known as "Pennsylvania Dutch" probably because it was in Pennsylvania that so large a majority of these Palatinates settled. The fact that the Pennsylvania Boyers soon very generally gave up the Germanic spelling of their name for the French spelling shows the feeling with which, in spite of the religious and political evils which had exiled them to America, they still felt the French blood in their veins.

The influence of the German Reformation on the Palatinates is seen in the fact that nearly all of the Pennsylvania Boyers were Lutherans. Some of them were Mennonites, Baptists, etc. The Huguenot immigrants generally allied themselves with the Reformed Church; the English Bowyers of the Southern States, with the Church of England and the Methodists, while those who settled in Canada and the far West or the far South commonly held to the Catholic Church.

The number of Boyers who served the cause of American independence from England is astonishing, as the Pennsylvania Archives and Colonial records show. The roster of Revolutionary soldiers can found in the 1st Edition of American Boyers, pages 14-19. **[Too be scanned and linked here]**

Among the interesting facts of the Boyer history is the use of "coats of arms," of which there are more than a dozen, some of them French, others English, and still others German. A full study of these arms would involve us deeply in "Heraldry," for which this introduction is hardly meant. But we must try to set forth in the very, briefest way the general significance of at least three coats of arms.

(1) The crest adopted by the Association of American Boyers early in the development of their Reunions is a French type. The upper third of the shield is silver white, signifying light, brightness, joy. The rest of the shield is sky blue, the complement of white, signifying hope, fidelity. The repetition of these qualities in the smaller shield imbedded in a star is very emphatic. The star evidently signifies the strong desire to live in light, night as well as day. The French lily, "Fleur-de-lis," within the star-embedded shield, evidently shows the intimate connection of the Boyers d'Eguilles with the throne. The whole scheme is one of dignity and recognized loyalty. **[Add footnote mark to footnote]**

(2) The German crest belongs to the family of Frederick Bayer (Chapter 45) who settled in York County, Pennsylvania, having come from the neighborhood of Leipsic; Germany. It is a large watch-dog at rest in a big heart. The meaning is very evident. This family had served some lord or king faithfully in his fortress or palace that the lord or king trusted the man or family absolutely -- with a big heart. A book on German Heraldry probably contains the record and explanation of this particular crest.

(3) An English coat of arms, a reprint of which Attorney Otis Bowyer, (Chapter I) of Baird, Texas, sent the writer -- one of a dozen or more on record -- consists of a drawn bow and a startled stag. The French Boyers who came into England with the Norman Conquest were evidently archers of reputation, who had done noteworthy service and who had thus been permitted to record their honor.

Footnote: The description of the crest adopted by the Association of American Boyers and belonging to the Boyer d'Eguilles of France is found on page 317, Plate 45, of "The Nouveau Traite Historique et Archeologique de la Vraie et Parfaite Science des Armories," published 1856. This volume is to be found in the State Library at Harrisburg. Pa. and in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, whose building is located on Spruce Street, Philadelphia. Pa **[Add link to image of referenced page]**