

CHAPTER 5

WALDENSIAN CONTRIBUTIONS AND LEGACY TO MORMON SOCIETY

The manuscript censuses for 1860, 1870 and 1880 list "farmer" as the vocation most often reported by the Waldense emigrants in Deseret. But this term is not very descriptive. In the early days, practically everyone farmed to keep body and soul together. What they could not grow or make themselves, they normally did without. "It is our duty first, to develop the agricultural resources of this country," Brigham Young told his followers. "Let others seek the minerals and we will cultivate the soil." **1**

Most of the Waldensian families gathered waste wheat and subsisted on that during their first few winters in Ogden. The experiences of the Widow Stalle probably best illustrate the effort required in pioneer days to provide food, shelter and clothing for the family. Margaret Stalle Barker writes:

When Mother and Dan couldn't glean wheat anymore, they went to work and dug a dugout in a side of a hill. They covered the dug-out with willows, bullrushes and dirt and had a piece of canvas for a window. Of course, it was rather dark inside. They had no furniture and for a bedstead they stuck forked sticks in the ground and made holes in the walls in which to rest the ends and one side of the bed. They [used] bullrushes and straw [for a mattress.] My brother Dan borrowed an ox of Cardon's and a saw. [He] saw[ed] the tree trunk into suitable lengths and [by] splitting it in two and putting legs into the rounded side, he made three stools and a table. Mr. Cardon raised some flax and hemp and managed to divide [it in] two grades; of the roughest he made ropes and himself a loom. Mother spun the rest and together they wove cloth for the bedticks and underwear. Mother worked all day and continued to work spinning all night. We had no candles but we gathered sunflowers and while mother spun we lighted them one by one in the fireplace for her. **2**

The most effective means of bringing cash or products into the pioneer home that could not be gotten otherwise was to engage in some kind of home industry. For example, wheat could not be grown in Virgin where Marianne Gardiol Durant had gone to settle; but fruit grew there in abundance. So the settlers learned to dry fruit in their homes and then take it north, where the growing season was brief and fruit was always in short supply. There they traded it for wheat and the other products they needed.

Susette Stalle Cardon became an expert in growing and preserving dried fruit, especially strawberries. A few years after she settled in Arizona, she was contacted by the Home Economics Department of the University of Arizona asking for samples of her dried berries. To their knowledge no one else had ever attained the degree of success Susette did in drying and preserving straw-berries. **3** Another Waldensian, Daniel

Justet, Jr., had a fine orchard in Escalante and "sold hundreds of pounds of dried fruits." 4

Desiring that the saints become self sufficient, Brigham Young encouraged home industry. Silk production was among many industries that he attempted to establish in Zion. Seeds for mulberry trees and silk worms were imported from Italy and France as early as 1865. Governor Young had twenty-five to thirty acres of mulberry trees under cultivation on the church farm at Forest Dale (just south of the Salt Lake City boundary) and superintended the construction of a cocoonery north of the Beehive House at the city center. Seven hundred pounds of cocoons were raised in six weeks and President Young's early success may have encouraged silk production throughout the territory. 5

The Waldensian saints were familiar with the silk culture for it was carried on in their native land. Many had worked in the industry and knew how to care for silk worms and spin silk. While laboring on a silk farm, Pauline Combe Malan had experienced what she believed was a prophetic dream foreshadowing her conversion to the restored church. 6

Two Waldensian families produced silk before President Young encouraged others to try. The Michael Beus family raised and spun silk and were among the first to raise flax and make linen 7 in that area. "Sister Marianne Combe Beus, an Italian Lady, has an acre of mulberry trees, keeps worms, has knit silk stocking, and has nearly enough silk to weave two silk dresses,"8 reported President Jane S. Richards of the Ogden Relief Society in the spring of 1875 when that society initiated the industry.

At the age of nine, Susanne Goudin Cardon had found employment in the silk industry in Italy. She earned 10 cents a day for picking leaves from the mulberry trees to feed the silk worms. At twelve, she learned to reel silk. "To the Italian origin of Paul and Susanne Cardon, Cache Valley owes its mulberry trees and attempts at silk culture," 9 a granddaughter claimed. Kate B. Carter wrote:

They were quick to see the similarity of conditions in Cache Valley and their native northern Italy, and as they were both familiar with all of the branches of silk culture they decided to try it here. Mr. Cardon sent to France for mulberry seeds. These were planted and the trees grew well and were the first ones to be grown in northern Utah. When they were large enough to produce leaves, Mr. Cardon sent to France for eggs of the silk worms. These eggs were hatched by putting them in a bag and keeping the bag warm by hanging them around their necks. These worms grew and other were raised and when the supply was sufficient they began to reel silk. Mr. Cardon made the reel and Mrs. Cardon did the reeling. It was the twisted reed and was much better than the flat silk. The silk was sent to Salt Lake to be woven and was found to be of such high quality that President Brigham Young called Susanne on a mission to Salt Lake City to

teach others to reel silk. She left a year-old baby and six other small children and spent three months in Salt Lake City, without pay, in this work. **10**

The first mention in the Ogden Relief Society records of silk production was on January 6, 1869. Bishop Chauncy W. West advised the sisters to set aside land for the culture of silk. A committee was organized to visit the people and encourage them to raise silk. Mary Ann Pons Harris served on this committee. **11** Some, including David Roman, responded to the call by planting mulberry trees. At one point he had about 6,000 trees under cultivation. **12**

Several Waldensian women were among those who participated in this Relief Society effort to establish a flourishing silk industry in Weber County. For a time Lydia Pons Farley, her sister Mary Ann Pons Harris and their widowed mother "raised silk rather extensively and reeled it to be knitted or woven into different articles." **13**

Perhaps the amount of time, effort and space required for the care and feeding of the worms discouraged participants in the industry. Louis Harris reported that when they were small the worms required little space, but as they grew they were moved from room to room until they occupied nearly the whole house.

We hardly had rooms to sleep in and very little time for sleep as they had ravenous appetites, eating continuously for the whole six weeks of their existence. They were fed the last thing at night, which would be about 11 or 12 o'clock, and at daylight in the morning. The mulberry trees were almost stripped of leaves and small branches by the time they were ready to spin. **14**

The home production of silk probably proved too demanding an avocation for the average pioneer woman with many responsibilities and a large family to care for. It appears that a great deal of effort was required in order to produce a few silk stockings and handkerchiefs. These products probably did not yield enough income to make the venture profitable and the silk industry in Utah died out after a few years. However, its advent had enabled the Waldensian saints to demonstrate a unique facet of their Italian culture.

The Waldensians employed other native talents and abilities in their everyday tasks. Max Dean Bonnett, great grandson of John James Bonnett records:

Jacque Robert and his Mother Susanne [Roman] came to Provo on November 18, 1899. They walked to where they thought my Great Grandfather lived and when they saw a man shucking corn in a homemade basket his mother said, "That is James Bonnett, no one else would have a basket like that." He helped them get settled [in Provo]. **15**

Many of the biographies and life sketches of the Waldensian emigrants indicate that they had a talent for singing and enjoyed entertaining family and friends with native songs. Several of the women were skilled in dramatization. Members of the Justet family had a talent for imitating others and often did shows together.

Prophetic dreams aided several throughout their lives as in the following examples taken from the lives of James Bertoch and Susette Stalle Cardon. Bertoch writes:

H.D. Spence and I were taking care of Toronto's cattle during the year 1870-871. It was a hard winter and there had been severe snow storms which drove the cattle into the hollow of the mountains. The snow on the level was up to our knees. We hunted the cattle for several days, but there were still twenty head we could not find. We did not know where in the mountains to look for them. That night I had a dream or vision. An Indian as straight as an arrow came from the hollow where the cattle were. He said, "Your cattle are in the hollow of Porter's Canyon and if you don't get them in two or three shirips (days) they will all be dead."

When the Indian told me this I could see plainly just where they were. The following morning when H.D. Spence came I said, "Come Spence, we will find them today. An Indian showed me last night just where they are." We went and found the cattle snowed in, in the hollow. We had to break trail with the horses and lead. . . them back one at a time. **16**

A granddaughter of Susette Stalle Cardon wrote that her grand-mother seemed to have an insight into many things:

I remember the summer after I had been away teaching school, that she came out to the milkhouse where I was tending the milk, and said to me, "You are what you call it--begaged (engaged)," and when I replied in the affirmative she said, "I knew it! I dreamed it!" **17**

The Waldensian emigrants lent their talents and abilities to the needs of the community and in so doing strengthened the fabric of Mormon society. Peter Chatelaine was a miller. Daniel Justet, Sr. was the rock mason who built fireplaces and laid the foundations of many of the first homes in St Thomas. **18** John Daniel Malan, Sr. was a born mechanic and carpenter. "He developed a crude machine by which corn could readily be shelled. He assisted in the construction of the Ogden bench canal by building flumes. . . [and] had a saw mill in Ogden Canyon." **19** The Cardon Family helped to establish the city of Logan, with various members serving in public office. John Paul Cardon participated in the Civil War. **20** The Beus family became one of the leading agricultural families in Weber County. Assets of "Beus and Sons" totaled almost \$4,000 by 1876, **21** according to Weber County tax assessment rolls.

John Lazear's pioneering effort helped to establish the community of Pine Valley in Arizona. **22** David Roman and John James Bonnett were accomplished linguists who gave great service to their communities. Bonnett acted "as an interpreter all over Utah County for friends, neighbors, at court trials and in many business transactions." **23**

Pioneering in Deseret went far beyond farming and home industry and the use of native talents to improve circumstances and meet the challenges of everyday life. Stephen Malan summed up the experience in these words:

We participated in most of the improvements and changes [of our age]; both of the natural and human element. . . such as building our first tabernacle, opening roads through canyons, [digging] irrigation canals, checking the advance of soldiery. . . [fighting] crickets and grass hoppers. . . [We have witnessed] advancements in arts and science and machinery. [We have seen the construction of] a network of railroads, magnificent public structures, mansions and frame cottages. [We have made] this once forsaken barren [wilderness] the home of a thriving and dense population. **24**

Were second generation Waldensians as committed to their Mormon faith as their emigrant fathers and mothers? Evidence seems to indicate that many were but some were not. Careful assessment of the second generation through the use of family group sheets and a check of Waldensian surnames in the current membership files of the Historian's office indicates that some descendants probably did not remain in the church. The surnames of Pons **25** and Rivoir no longer appear on current membership records.

A study of religious persistence based on the number of live endowments taken out by the children of the Italian converts was made by the author. Endowments are "special blessings given worthy and faithful saints" **26** in Mormon temples. They are called endowments because Mormons believe that "in and through them recipients are endowed with power from on high. . . These sacred ordinances are administered for the living and on a proxy basis for the dead." **27** Seventy-one family group sheets revealed that of 335 second generation descendants, 188 (56%) were endowed in their own lifetime. One hundred and seven were endowed after death and no information was given for forty.

Evidently approximately 147 second generation Waldensians who reached adulthood did not take out their own endowments, a practice generally engaged in by devout Mormons. These figures indicate that perhaps as many as one-third of the second generation Waldensian Mormons could not be classified among the devout, had fallen into inactivity, or possibly, had left the L.D.S. Church. **28**

In some families, the unique heritage of their Waldensian ancestors was all but forgotten. In Ogden, the daughters of Lydia Pons Farley maintained their mother had

descended from French aristocracy, and Barthelemy Pons had been a wealthy landowner living in Piedmont, Italy, but that the family was most certainly French, not Italian. **29** To this day, some Farley descendants adamantly deny any Italian blood, though they have pedigree charts identifying their Pons ancestors as Waldensians, living in the Protestant valleys of Piedmont and extending back into the 1600s.

Perhaps this desire not to be identified with Italians (which the author also found in the descendants of other Waldensian families) is rooted in a common prejudice against southern European immigrants. It is permissible to be of Northern European extraction--or a "WASP," but many resent being classified as a "Wop." Philip F. Notarianni's "Italianita in Utah: the Immigrant Experience" indicates that prejudice against the Italian emigrant in Utah surfaced shortly after World War I and culminated in the 920s. **30** Though society has come a long way in welcoming minorities into the melting pot, attitudes and stereotypes of the past still color our thinking.

Most probably, the Mormon Waldensians were of French extraction as they bore French names and lived in a closed community where they generally contracted endogamous marriages. As their homes were located on the border of modern-day France and Italy in a region where sovereignty shifted many times throughout the centuries, it is difficult to decide whether to consider them French or Italian. Perhaps it is enough to remember that their uniqueness as an ethnic enclave lies not in national origin but in their singular religious heritage.

Descendants of many Vaudois families seemed not to have been bothered by the question of whether their Waldensian ancestors were French or Italian. The family of Henry Barker and Marguerite Stalle were among the foremost promoters of the Waldensian heritage in Utah. Marguerite, who was only seven when she came from Italy, did not have an opportunity to attend school in her youth. However, she placed such a high value on education that she attended school with her children. She sat in the back of the classroom, followed the lessons and attempted to learn as much as possible. Perhaps their mother's example encouraged all seven of her children to graduate from college. Henry Barker became the principal of Mound Fort School in Ogden. James Louis Barker earned his doctorate and was professor of languages at the University of Utah and at BYU. **31**

The Barker family was one of many second generation Waldensian families to become prominent in Utah. John Paul Cardon with his two Waldensian wives raised nineteen children. He served as Marshall of Logan City. In 1870 church officials asked Cardon to build a large hotel or rooming house which could be used by people who came to Logan to do temple work. He and his family ran "Cache Valley House" for many years. A son reported that the family was

instructed to listen through a thin partitioned wall to the plans of the U.S. Deputies who were trying to track down and punish polygamy offenders. Many

plans were revealed this way and many saints were warned in time to save them from being caught. My father has told [us] that many times he went out the back door of a home, after warning the saints, just as the deputies came in the front. They continued to do this work for about ten years. When the deputies became suspicious of father he went into the north-west to work on the railroad, taking part of the older family with him. **32**

John Paul Cardon served a mission to Switzerland in 1899. Upon his death in 1915 his grandchildren numbered over one hundred. His son Joseph Emanuel typified many of his descendants. Joseph was born October 28, 1872. He graduated from Brigham Young College, taught school and went on a mission to the northern states. Upon his return he served as a member of the Cache Stake Sunday School Board, Deputy City Recorder, Bishop of Logan First Ward and then Stake President for many years. **33** Some of John Paul Cardon's daughters intermarried with some of the most prominent families in Utah. **34**

Mormon society was a fluid society and it became more so in the late 1870's and 1880's. The immigrants that had married into polygamy frequently were forced to move to avoid being arrested for cohabitation. Persecution against plural marriage became so intense that Louis Philippe Cardon traveled to Salt Lake City to ask President Brigham Young what course of action to take to protect himself from arrest.

President Young arose from his chair, smote the palm of one hand with the fist of the other and said, "Brother Cardon, it is about time for the Saints to move to Arizona, as I have been thinking. Be here in a week with your wife and belongings. The Company will be ready to leave." **35**

This was the first of several moves the Louis Philippe Cardon family would make over the next decade. They moved first to George Lake Camp on the Little Colorado, in Arizona. From there they moved to Tenney's Camp where they practiced the United Order. Next they moved to Taylor, Arizona which they hoped would be their permanent home. Finally in 1885, President John Taylor advised Louis Philippe and his family to move to Old Mexico. They remained there until the Mexican Revolution forced them to leave in 1912. **36**

Throughout this period family members continued to fill responsible positions in the church. Joseph S. Cardon, son of Louis Philippe and Susette, was a member of the High Council of Juarez Stake and a Counselor to the Bishop of Dublan Ward. Ernest Elmer Cardon served as the first Counselor in the Bishopric of the Turlock Ward, San Joaquin Stake. As the children of the second generation matured and took their place in Mormon society, the two-thirds that remained devout were called to leadership positions in the areas where they settled. **37**

In Weber County, James Richard Beus (the son of James Beus and Clarinda

Hall) became bishop of Hooper Ward. Lawrence M. Malan served as county clerk and Stake Patriarch of Mount Ogden Stake. Clarence Walter Malan served as second counselor to the bishop of Ogden's 48th Ward (Ben Lomond Stake.) In Salt Lake County, Dean Tracy Malan became Bishop of the Copperton Ward in the West Jordan Stake. **38** From this sampling it is evident that many second generation Waldensians played a prominent role in church affairs and made valuable contributions to many different western communities.

Two Waldensian descendants, Archibald Bennett and Dr. James L. Barker, were instrumental in securing permission from the Moderator of the Waldensian Church September, 1947, to microfilm all the surviving parish and civil records in the Protestant valleys in Italy. (Few such records exist before the seventeenth century because the 1600s were a period of heavy persecutions. Many villages and churches were burned and the Registers of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths of the Vaudois parishes were destroyed.) The task of filming was completed in September of the following year. These records were then carefully searched, family relationships established and temple work done for the dead. One hundred years after the arrival of the first Mormon missionaries in Piedmont, Italy, Waldensian records were having a dramatic impact on Mormondom's vast genealogical research program as the "Piedmont Project" became the forerunner of the L.D.S. church-wide name extraction program. **39** Descendants of the Mormon Waldensians organized in an effort to complete the translation of these records. The Piedmont Family Organization was very much involved in this task.

The author has identified over two hundred young men and women bearing Waldensian surnames who have served L.D.S. missions in all parts of the world. This represents only a small percentage of missionaries of Waldensian descent as it is impossible to identify those who have lost their characteristic surnames by marriage. A study of four generations of the decedents of Winthrop and Lydia Pons Farley through their eldest son, Theodore Farley, which was made by the author in 1982, indicates that most of the decedents surveyed considered themselves "very active" in the Mormon Church today. In many instances, both husband and wife held leadership positions. Ninety percent of these decedents had been married or sealed in the temple and many had fulfilled L.D.S. missions.

In conclusion, ethnic diversity provided the fabric of the Great Basin Kingdom. Though a thread of prejudice sometimes flawed the pattern, ethnicity added depth and breadth overall. A few years in the "Mormon Colonies" in Ogden appears to have ensured the Italian convert an easy transition into communities throughout the western frontier. The Vaudois families differed in talents, skills and native abilities, but these differences tended to enrich the settlements with the diversity needed to sustain life in pioneer Utah. While the children of some Waldense emigrants fell into inactivity, the children of others became leaders in the Mormon Church and the rich heritage brought to Zion by the original Mormon Waldensians became a significant part of the historical legacy of Utah and the surrounding areas and of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

NOTES

1. Milton R. Hunter, Utah in Her Western Setting (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1944) p. 486.
2. Margaret Stalle Barker History, p.7.
3. Susette Cardon Stalle.
4. Bradbury, Daniel Bertoch, Jr., p. 6.
5. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, pp. 227-228. See also Norma B. Winn, ed., An Enduring Legacy, (Salt Lake City: DUP, 1985) pp. 250-251.
6. Madeleine Malan Farley records, "When Mother was fifteen years of age in the spring of 1820, she went with her father down into the plains of Piedmont to take charge of silk worms on the silk farm for a man that made sericulture [sic] his business. Each had a cot in the large and spacious hall where they were tending the silk worms. One day, about a week before the silk season was over, she had been reading the Scriptures--about the life of Christ and His Apostles and the Gospel as they taught it. At night after retiring to her cot, she lay there pondering upon what she had read and wishing that she had been living in those days when the whole space of the hall became as light as noon day. She arose in a sitting position as she felt a Heavenly Influence pervading the room. Feeling this influence, she began singing a sacred hymn when twelve personages, dressed in white robes, appeared and formed in a semi-circle by her cot and joined in the singing. At its conclusion, they and the light vanished. This left a vivid impression in her mind and a foreshadowing of things to come. When she returned home, she related the vision to her mother who, besides referring to other passages concerning the latter days, read from the "Acts of the Apostles, the 17th and 18th verses: ". . . in the last days. . . your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. . ." p. 2.
7. J.R. Beus, p. 24.
8. Louise B. Pearce, ed., An Enduring Legacy (Salt Lake City, DUP, 1985) p. 250. Hereafter Enduring Legacy.
9. Hickman, Susanne Goudin Cardon History, p. 5, p. 11.
10. Carter, Kate B., Heart Throbs of the West, vol.3 (Salt Lake City: DUP, 1941-48) p. 131

11. Pearce, Enduring Legacy, p. 250. See also, Journal History of the Church, 29 July, 1866 and 30 March, 1868. Historical Depart. Archives. Other general sources that discuss the silk industry in Utah include Brigham Young's Journal of Discourses 12:199-200, 6: 172 and Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, p. 227-228, 254 & 347.
12. Ibid., Enduring Legacy p. 253.
13. Ibid., p. 252
14. Ibid., p. 253.
15. Max Dean Bonnett, "Notes of John James Bonnett" Typescript in possession of author.
16. James Bertoch Account.
17. Susette Stalle Cardon History.
18. Stevenson, Daniel Justet, Sr.
19. John Daniel Malan life sketch from the Elwood I. Barker family collection.
20. Rebecca Cardon Hickman, "History of John Paul Cardon, 1838-1915." Typescript in possession of author.
21. Assessment Roll of Weber County, 1873. Listings of Beus family members, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
22. Demming, The Lazears.
23. Mae B. Nielsen, Notes on John James Bonnett in possession of author.
24. Stephen Malan, Autobiography.
25. There are some Pons families of Dutch extraction who are active in the church today. However, the author could not find any descendants of John Daniel or David Pons. Family group sheets of second generation Waldensians.
26. Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966) p. 226-227. See also Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 2, pp. 252-257 and Doctrine and Covenants, 95:8-9; 124:25-41; Luke 24:59.
27. Ibid.

28. Family group sheets of second generation Waldensians. Notes compiled for these sheets are in possession of the author.
29. This is a tradition which has existed in the Farley family for four generations. It was verified by Eva Farley Clayton of Salt Lake City and Lucille Farley Collins of Logan.
30. Papanikolas, Peoples of Utah, p. 323.
31. Elwood I. Barker interviews.
32. Hickman, Susanne Goudin Cardon History, p. 11.
33. Archibald F. Bennett, "The Vaudois of the Alpine Valleys, and their Contribution to Utah and Latter-Day Saint History." A paper presented to Professor Gustive O. Larson, Brigham Young University, Winter Quarter, 1962. In possession of author. (Note that the sampling of Vaudois decendants who became leaders in the L.D.S. Church was taken exclusively from this study.)
34. Ibid.
35. Edith Cardon Thatcher, "Louis Philip Cardon and Susette Stalle Cardon." Unpublished life sketch from the Louis Cardon family collection. Typescript in possession of the author. See also Karl E. Young, The Long Hot Summer of 1912 (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1967).
36. Ibid.
37. Bennett, "Vaudois of the Alpine Valleys"
38. Ibid.
39. Notes on the Piedmont Project, compiled by the author from an interview with Genealogical Library personnel and material aquired from Hugh T. Law.