

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Waldensian Presbyterian Church

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 104 Main Street East

N/A not for publication

city, town Valdese

N/Avicinity of

state North Carolina

code 37

county Burke

code 23

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | N/A | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Concord Presbytery

street & number P. O. Box 129

city, town Barium Springs

X vicinity of

state North Carolina 28010

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds

street & number Burke County Courthouse, 201 South Green Street

city, town Morganton

state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Burke County Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983-84 federal state county local

depository for survey records North Carolina Division of Archives & History, Western Office

city, town 13 Veterans Drive, Asheville

state North Carolina

7. Description

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Waldensian Presbyterian Church (1896-99) is located on the southeast corner of Main Street East and Rodoret Street Southeast in Valdese, North Carolina. The structure is a significant city landmark, sitting on a large elevated lot with its north, or rear, elevation facing the main commercial street in Valdese. A monument referring to the church's history is located toward the northeastern corner of the lot.

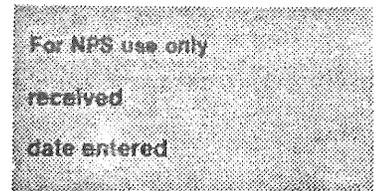
With its traditional rectangular massing, engaged bell tower, stuccoed masonry construction, and largely unornamented wall surfaces, the structure resembles the Romanesque churches of the Waldensian valleys in Northern Italy, while displaying some elements of the ecclesiastical Gothic style as practiced in America around the turn of the century. The church, which was built entirely by Waldensian settlers who first came to Valdese in 1893, has a parapet gable slate roof, Gothic-arched stained-glass windows, and a stuccoed fieldstone foundation with a prominently projecting watertable. The building was stuccoed in several stages beginning shortly after construction, and was whitewashed in 1914. The Church is currently painted grey. The structure essentially retains its original exterior appearance, while sympathetic renovations undertaken between 1946 and 1947 have somewhat altered the interior fabric. The building is in overall good condition. Tron Hall, a stylistically compatible one and one-half-story, five bay, stuccoed masonry addition, was constructed on the eastern side of the church in 1922. A second two and one-half-story masonry building with Gothic details, known as Pioneer Hall, was constructed at the eastern end of Tron Hall in 1940. A Gothic-arched brick arcade leads to a three-story buff-colored brick education and office annex erected in 1955 to the south of Pioneer Hall in the Neo-Gothic style. The entire church complex has a U-shaped plan with a courtyard on the southern side.

The southern facade of the church is dominated by a parapet gable and is anchored by square tourelles which spring from flat pilasters at the eastern and western corners of the structure. The tourelles feature pyramidal roofs ornamented with small finials, and have paved shoulders at their bases. Plain stringcourses are located beneath the roofline of each tourelle. Three narrow Gothic-arched windows with hoodmolds are located in the center of the facade at the attic level, the middle window taller than those flanking it. Tri-panel Gothic-arched Stained-glass windows with hoodmolds are on either side the narthex, which projects from the center of the facade. A protective lexon covering was installed over all the stained-glass windows in 1975. The gabled narthex is ornamented by tourelles with paved shoulders at its eastern and western corners which are diminutive imitations of those on the facade itself. The corner pilasters from which the tourelles spring are more exaggerated than those on the facade. The entrance at the center of the narthex is characterized by board-and-batten double-leaf doors with strap hinges which are recessed into a Gothic-arched enframement with a stained-glass transom. Narrow Gothic-arched stained glass windows are at the center of the eastern and western narthex walls.

The eastern and western, or side, elevations are four and five bays, respectively, and are articulated by flat pilasters and recessed triple-paneled, Gothic-arched stained-glass windows identical to those on the facade. The parapet gabled north, or rear, elevation is distinguished by the square engaged bell tower at its western corner. The tower has a pyramidal roof with a finial and features a plain stringcourse just below the roofline, flat pilasters at the corners, and a Gothic-arched louvered belfry on all

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four sides. A board-and-batten door featuring a square stained-glass window in its upper portion is set into a Gothic-arched enframing delineated by a hoodmold at the base of the tower. The door, which leads to an anteroom to the west of the apse, is topped by a wooden transom. The center of this elevation is dominated by a large Gothic-arched opening enframing the recessed rear of the apse and containing two narrow Gothic-arched stained-glass windows. A Gothic-arched stained-glass window at the eastern corner of the elevation corresponds to the anteroom on the eastern side of the apse. Three Gothic-arched windows with original stained glass define the attic level, the center window taller than those on either side. A decorative masonry circle is located beneath the gable peak.

Tron Hall, to the east of the church, is distinguished by a gable roof and five Gothic-arched stained-glass windows on its northern side. Pioneer Hall, which is attached to the eastern end of Tron Hall, has a stepped-parapet gable ornamented by a finial on its northern side. This elevation is highlighted by a tripartite Gothic stained-glass window offset by shallow paved buttresses. A door set into an English Gothic-inspired enframing is located at the western end of the elevation. The five-bay eastern wall of Pioneer Hall is characterized by shallow buttresses with paved shoulders.

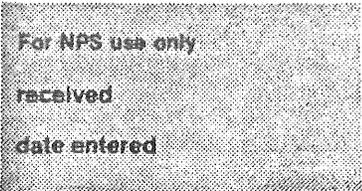
The interior of the Waldensian Church features an open rectangular plan with a choir area, chancel, abbreviated apse, and anterooms in the northern end. Access is gained through the narthex at the southern end. The interior was remodeled during 1946-47, and is distinguished by plaster walls, a plaster coved drop ceiling delineated by a wide projecting cornice molding, and indirect soffit lighting. Additional illumination is provided by eight modern Gothic-style lanterns suspended from the ceiling. The pews, which are of simple plank construction, are arranged in two rows of eleven, forming a wide center aisle and two narrower side aisles. The pews replace the originals which were arranged in three rows, the center row featuring a divider down the middle to separate men and women during the service. The entire interior floor is carpeted.

The narthex, or vestibule, features a Gothic-arched stained-glass transom over the exterior doorway which displays the Waldensian seal of a lighted candle with seven stars arched above it on a blue background. This window and all others visible in the interior of the church were manufactured by the P. J. Reeves Company of Philadelphia, and were installed during the 1946-47 renovation. Individual stained-glass windows located on the eastern and western walls of the narthex feature symbolic references to significant events in Waldensian history. None of the windows in the church contain overt religious symbols, in keeping with the Waldenses' refusal to worship images. On the northern narthex wall, double-leaf doors of tongue-and-groove construction with clear glass windows in their upper portions lead into the main body of the church. A Gothic-arched transom with clear glass installed in 1981 offsets this interior entryway.

The nave contains respectively four and five stained-glass windows set into Gothic-arched enframements on the eastern and western walls. The windows are in shades of blue and red with diamond-pattern center portions in pastel shades of green, pink, and blue.

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The upper third of each window displays the seal of individual Reformed Churches in Europe and the United States. Apostolic seals decorate the base of each window. Similar windows are on the southern wall on either side of the narthex. Recessed storage cabinets with plain double wooden doors are located below all of these windows. In the choir area at the northern end of the nave, three rows of pews on raised platforms face each other on the eastern and western walls of the church.

The raised chancel area is separated from the nave by a solid wooden rial with applied foliate detailing. A lectern with similar detailing and applied Gothic-arched moldings is on the western side of the chancel while a podium is located to the east. The communion table, also in the Gothic mode, is in front of a partition wall in the middle of the chancel which screens the organ pit. Four tiers of auditorium chairs on the eastern and western chancel walls are for choir use, as are an additional four tiers of chairs in the apse area. The shallow apse is delineated by an arch on the northern chancel wall which contains recessed lighting on its northern face. Anterooms flank the apse, and are accessible by two steps leading from the chancel to small tongue-and-groove doors set into Gothic-arched enframements. The western anteroom has a door connecting to Tron Hall on its western wall, while the eastern anteroom, at the base of the bell tower, contains a door leading to the outside on the northern wall. An attic space is accesible by a staircase behind the eastern anteroom. The attic contains three original multi-colored opaque quarreled Gothic windows on the northern wall. (The original nave windows were of similar design.)

Tron Hall, the 1922 addition to the east of the church, has a modern wood-paneled finish and five Gothic-arched windows, comparable to those in the attic, on the northern and southern walls. This room is used for meetings held by various church groups. Pioneer Hall (1940), located to the east of Tron Hall, contains classrooms on the first floor. The second story houses banquet facilities and is highlighted by an open-truss ceiling in the Gothic mode. A modern kitchen is located at the southern end of the hall. The modern education annex (1955) to the south of Pioneer Hall contains the church offices and libraries, classrooms, and a nursery.

8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900– | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates 1896–99 **Builder/Architect** Munsch

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Waldensian Presbyterian Church (1896–99) was erected by Waldensian settlers who first arrived in Valdese, North Carolina, in 1893. The rich religious and cultural heritage of the Waldenses has its origins in the Cottian Alps of Italy, where this anti-Catholic religious sect endured persecution for over 600 years. The stuccoed masonry structure, which was erected from plans drawn by a Mr. Munsch, embodies building traditions practiced in the Waldensian valleys of Northern Italy and bears a strong resemblance to the Roman churches of that region. The church serves as a symbol of unity with the Waldensian community, which has a strong cultural identity.

Criteria Assessment

(A) Associated with the immigration of Italian Waldenses to Valdese, North Carolina, the Waldensian Presbyterian Church has traditionally been the focal point of Waldensian religion and culture within the community.

(C) The Waldensian Presbyterian Church is an architecturally unique structure, deriving its overall appearance from Romanesque churches of the Piedmont region of Italy. The church represents an incorporation of Waldensian stone building traditions with elements of American ecclesiastical Gothic architecture.

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The Waldensian Presbyterian Church (1896-99) in Valdese, North Carolina, is an integral part of the Waldensian community in that city. The church, which was built by community members not long after their arrival from Northern Italy, embodies stone building traditions transplanted from their homeland. The church is, and always has been, a highly visible symbol of spiritual and cultural unity among the Waldenses who established their French-speaking enclave in the eastern portion of Burke County in 1893.

The history of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church is inextricably tied to the religious heritage of the European Waldenses. The group's religious beliefs are rooted in the twelfth century, at which time four independent reform movements began in France as a reaction against the consolidated power of the Roman Catholic Church. These groups sought to preserve Apostolic church traditions and were persecuted for their beliefs. Peter Waldo, a leader of one of the movements, settled in the Cottian Alps with his followers during the 1190s, and is considered to be the individual for whom the sect was named.¹ In 1208, the first of many crusades against the Waldenses was instituted by Pope Innocent III, resulting in thousands of deaths.² Persecution of the anti-Catholic religious sect, which was concentrated in the valleys of the Piedmont region in Northern Italy, continued for over 600 years. This situation changed on February 17, 1848, when King Charles Albert, in control of the Piedmont following the Napoleonic era, granted the Waldenses freedom of religious worship. This date, known as "Emancipation Day," is commemorated by the Waldenses every year.³

The Waldensian migration to Burke County was largely the result of a desire to alleviate overcrowded conditions in the Italian homeland. Sources indicated that the Waldenses first became interested in moving to Western North Carolina through the efforts of Marvin F. Scaife, a wealthy industrialist from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Morganton, North Carolina. In the fall of 1892, Scaife apparently offered land for sale to the group while in Rome meeting with the Reverend Buffa, pastor of the Waldensian Church. Plans for a colony in North Carolina were initiated by November, 1892, and the first group of Waldenses was ready to leave by the spring of 1893. This group arrived in Burke County on May 29, 1893, and consisted of twenty-nine people from the Piedmont regions of Prali, Faet, Ville Seche, Massella, and Rodoretto.⁴ They named their new community Valdese, which means "Valley of our Lord."

On June 8, 1893, the Valdese Corporation was formed for the purpose of developing real estate and business in the Waldensian community.⁵ The Waldenses received about 10,000 acres of land from the Morganton Land and Improvement Company on that day as well.⁶ Charles Albert Tron, the pastor who led the group to Valdese, was a key figure in early efforts to establish a permanent location for religious worship in the State of North Carolina. Immediately before he returned to Italy in July, 1893, the Waldenses

set aside a tract of land along the Morganton Road at the top of the hill of Valdese, one hundred and twenty meters long and forty-two wide, to be used for the church, manse, pastor's garden, and cemetery. The adjoining property was to be reserved for the pastor's use.⁷

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Before this land was utilized, however, the colony erected a large frame structure at the northwest corner of Massel and Faet Streets to house a temporary church, as well as a school and storeroom.⁸ The land set aside for the cemetery, which was part of the pastor's farm, was only used for the burial of two children. The congregation then secured a cemetery plot about one mile southwest of the church and purchased additional land for enlargement in 1946.⁹

In November, 1893, 178 new settlers arrived in Valdese. This group, organized by Dr. Tron upon his return to the homeland, contained many of the individuals who were later to help construct the Waldensian Presbyterian Church.¹⁰ The Waldenses endured a very difficult winter and spring in 1894, the result of infertile lands and their unfamiliarity with the English language and American business customs. The Reverend Barthélemy Soulier, who arrived in Valdese from Italy in June, 1894, worked with the Waldenses to improve their situation, instituting dissolution of the Valdese Corporation and other measures that would help the community decrease its indebtedness and become more self-sufficient.¹¹ As part of the dissolution agreement executed January 1, 1895, the Morganton Land and Improvement Company deeded the six lots set aside for a church, school, and cemetery in 1893 to the trustees of the church. The church trustees received an additional fifty-four undeveloped town lots, the sale or rental of which was to benefit the Waldensian Church.¹²

Work towards the new church building, for which \$600 had already been raised, began in April, 1895. At this early stage, activity centered around securing sand and stone for the structure as well as for enlargement of the manse. Workers were paid fifty cents for a day's labor from funds collected from supporters of the Waldensian colony, rentals of church property, and individual congregations.¹³ The fact that stone was chosen as a building material before any plans for the church were made indicates the prevalence of Waldensian stone building traditions within the sect. Actual plans for the structure were drawn by a Mr. Munsch in 1896 for a fee of \$150.¹⁴ Reverend Soulier was instrumental in obtaining the plans, believing that very detailed drawings would obviate the need for an outside contractor. Church records indicate that construction was to be headed by a chief mason who would supervise the other laborers.¹⁵ The design for an understated stuccoed stone building with rectangular massing, largely unornamented wall surfaces, and an engaged bell tower recalls the Romanesque churches of the Waldensian Valleys in Italy. The architect gave a Gothic interpretation to this basic form with his use of pointed-arch enframements around the windows and doors, an apparent allusion to the American ecclesiastical Gothic style.

Excavation began on December 14, 1896, and the cornerstone was laid February 17, 1897. The laying of the stone, which coincided with the Waldenses' traditional Emancipation Day, was commemorated with ceremonies in the wooden chapel, followed by a procession to the church site where a service was held. The Waldenses placed a number of artifacts in the stone, including copies of the New Testament in French, Italian, and English, a short history of the colony, Italian and U. S. coins, a photograph of Reverend Soulier, and the names of the 120 church members.¹⁶

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Construction began early in May, 1897, and continued with few interruptions until November of that year. The work stopped at this time due to a lack of funds. As of November, \$1,500 had been collected for the building, which Soulier had estimated would cost \$4,000.¹⁷ Work resumed in May, 1898, and continued until late October, 1898, when the building was completed. All of the manual labor was provided by Waldenses, who quarried the stone and served as masons, carpenters, and common laborers. Master masons for the project were James H. Tron, Eli Bertalot, and Henry J. Long, who worked for seventy-five cents per day. John Garrou, Sr., had the contract to slack lime, and John Guigou, Sr. was in charge of hauling rock from the quarry to the building. The carpentry work was executed by Henry Vinay, Sr. with the help of the masons. These men were assisted by at least twenty-seven others who worked for sixty cents per day. Most of these men contributed a minimum of two weeks' labor to the project, and many worked twelve hour days.¹⁸ The original stained-glass windows, removed in 1946, were manufactured in Hickory, North Carolina, and arrived in Valdese on September 8, 1898.

The church was furnished after completion through the contributions of individuals who had taken a special interest in the congregation. These included the Bigham family of East Orange, New Jersey, who donated the original pews, a Mrs. Green of Baltimore who donated the original communion table, and Mr. Snow of the Snow Lumber Company in High Point, North Carolina, who donated the original pulpit. The bell was purchased with an eighty-five dollar contribution from William Wright of the Bethany Church of Philadelphia and was hung in the steeple on September 11, 1899.¹⁹

The building was dedicated on July 4, 1899, with a ceremony led by six pastors and attended by 400 people. The service was conducted in both French and English. The congregation managed to repay all but \$100 of its construction-related debts by the end of the year. While no final cost of the building is given in the church records, the recorded expenditures indicate that it was less than the \$4,000 estimate.²⁰

Once the church building was completed, the congregation began to address other matters which reveal the increasingly important role of this institution in the community. Upon the arrival of the Reverend Filippo E. Ghigo in Valdese in 1903, the church began soliciting funds for a school to be located on a lot to the east of the chapel. At this time, the church had 134 members and an active Sunday School. While a total of \$444 was raised during this endeavor, the plans never came to fruition because Valdese became part of the public school system in 1905. In that year, the Waldensian Church conveyed the plot of land reserved for the school to the county, along with \$300 of the money collected for the proposed building.²¹

In 1914, the remaining area which had been set aside for the pastor's farm in 1893 was divided into lots, and many of the current streets in Valdese were laid out. Three lots closest to the church were retained under church ownership. The sale of the remaining lots added \$1,700 to the church treasury. Several repairs and improvements were made to the church building in 1914 as well, including the installation of a new floor and coal-burning stoves. In addition, the original ceiling was stained and both the interior and facade were whitewashed. This work was completed at a cost of \$500.²²

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By 1920, the church membership totaled 217, and 140 children were enrolled in the Sunday School. A decision was made in 1921 to reorganize the Sunday School and incorporate English into the educational program. This development indicates the increasing assimilation of the Waldensian community. During the same year, an addition was proposed to serve as classroom space. Until this time, classes had been held in the church and manse. The addition, named C. R. Tron Hall in honor of the first pastor of the church, was dedicated on January 1, 1922. Funds for the furnishings in the structure were contributed by the Women's Auxiliary, which also financed a heating system installed in the church at this time.²³

In succeeding years, the congregation's continued growth resulted in the need for a second addition to the church. Construction of a two and one-half-story addition containing classrooms and an all-purpose activities hall and kitchen began in 1939. The new building, known as Pioneer Hall in tribute to the first Waldensian settlers, was designed in a compatible Gothic mode by Wilson, North Carolina, architect Charles Benton and was executed by the Herman-Sipe Company of Hickory. Under the leadership of the Reverend Sylvan S. Poet, dedication ceremonies for the structure were held on February 17, 1940. The building was completed at a cost of \$22,709.²⁴

On June 20, 1941, a committee was named to explore the possibility of erecting a monument to honor the original settlers in Valdese. A location for the marker, designed in the Art Deco style, was chosen along East Main Street to the north of the church.²⁵ The monument was unveiled on October 27, 1943, as part of a celebration commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Waldenses' arrival in Valdese. The unveiling was attended by state and local dignitaries, including Governor Broughton and Judge Samuel J. Ervin.²⁶ During 1943, the congregation also decided to undertake an interior remodeling of the sanctuary.²⁷ This work was executed three years later according to plans drawn by Hickory architect Robert Clemmer. Changes made at this time include the installation of a new ceiling, replacement of the original doors and furniture, and the addition of choir seating on the eastern and western walls of the chancel. New stained-glass windows, manufactured by the P. J. Reeves Company of Philadelphia, were installed during the renovation as well.²⁸ The entire project cost in excess of \$50,000. A rededication ceremony was held in the newly-remodeled sanctuary in January, 1949, as part of a year-long celebration denoting the fiftieth anniversary of the completion of the building.²⁹

Between 1950 and 1955, membership in the church increased from 531 to 608, and Sunday School enrollment rose from 299 to 329. This growth necessitated the planning of an educational annex, for which ground was broken in 1954. The building, which mainly houses classroom and office space, was designed by Wilson and Associates of Charlotte. This modern buff-colored brick structure with Gothic detailing was completed at a cost of \$133,000, and was first used in January, 1955.³⁰

Throughout its history, the Waldensian Presbyterian Church service has undergone many changes which reflect a synthesis of American and Waldensian cultures. On July 9, 1895,

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the Waldenses, who had been supported in America by the Congregational Church, united with the Presbyterian Church of the United States and became part of the Concord Presbytery. This action was based on the fact that the Presbyterian form of church government most closely resembled that of the Waldenses, and the Congregational Church was not represented in North Carolina.³¹ Due to its distinctive cultural elements, the Waldensian Church occupies a unique place in the Presbyterian Synod. In 1905 and 1914, the Waldenses adopted regulations issued by the Mother Church in Italy which affected the nature of the service. The 1914 regulations are of particular note, calling for silent individual confession of sin, singing after confession, and the taking of collections at the seats rather than at the door.³² By 1921, men and women were no longer separated during the service and in 1922, a monthly service in English was initiated. French, the predominant language used during the service, was completely phased out in 1941.³³ The church adopted the Apostle Creed as part of its service in 1944, upsetting some of the older congregation members because the Church of Italy opposes the liturgical form of worship.³⁴ Other tenets of the Waldensian Church include a belief in religious liberty and freedom of conscience and worship, and a belief in the Christian experience as taught in the Gospels.³⁵ The Waldenses also do not use any overt religious symbols or images in their churches or as part of their service. Significant historical events commemorated by the congregation include "Emancipation Day," first celebrated under the Reverend Emile E. Tron on February 17, 1914, in memory of the 1848 edict granting the Waldenses freedom of worship in Italy, and the "Glorious Return," marked by a Sunday service in August each year recalling the Waldenses' return to their homeland in 1689 after three years of exile in Switzerland.³⁶

Music has always played an important role in the Waldensian service, and in 1909 an all-French choir was organized. When the monthly English service began, the choir incorporated English songs into their repertoire.³⁷ Other groups active in the church include the Women's Auxiliary and numerous other service and educational organizations. The Waldensian Presbyterian Church currently has about 600 members and is served by the Reverend Paul Felker. The church continues to be an integral part of the social and cultural life of Valdeese, essentially retaining its historic integrity until the present day.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ Reverend John Pons, A History of the Waldenses (Valdese, N. C.: Privately Published, 1968), pp. 1-2.

² George B. Watts, The Waldenses in the New World (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1941), p. 5.

³ Burke County Historical Society, The Heritage of Burke County: 1981 (Morganton N. C.: Burke County Historical Society, 1981), p. 51.

⁴ Watts, pp. 79-85.

⁵ Watts, p. 88.

⁶ Burke County Register of Deeds, Book X p. 348.

⁷ Watts, pp. 93-94. Dr. Watts' book contains a thorough discussion of the records of the colony, entitled "Livre des Procès Verbox et des Documents se referant à la Fondation de la Valdese Corporation, 1893-1894." These records were continued in French by succeeding pastors until English was used in 1923, and they along with issues of "Le Témoin," the official publication of the Waldensian Church, and reports made by the congregation to the Synod of North Carolina, provide an extremely detailed account of all the significant activities undertaken during the early years of the colony. Watts also relied upon newspaper articles, personal interviews, and correspondence with members of the Waldensian community for his information.

⁸ Watts, p. 97.

⁹ Mrs. Louis Philip Guigou, "The Cemetery" in History of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church-Valdese, N. C.: 1893-1960" (Valdese, N. C.: Unpublished, 1960), n.p.

¹⁰ Watts, pp. 98-99.

¹¹ Watts, pp. 115-17.

¹² Watts, p. 118.

¹³ Watts, p. 115 and p. 123.

¹⁴ Watts, p. 125. The identity of the architect is given in the church records, but additional information about him is not known. No original plans for the building have been located.

¹⁵ Watts, p. 126.

¹⁶ Watts, p. 127.

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Significance

Item number

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¹⁷Guigou, "Building and Equipment," n. p. This information comes from recollections about the Waldenses recorded by Antoine Grill, one of the men who arrived in Valdese during November, 1893.

¹⁸Guigou, "Building and Equipment," n.p.

¹⁹Watts, p. 131.

²⁰Watts, p. 138.

²¹Watts, p. 145.

²²Guigou, "The Sunday School," n.p.

²³Guigou, "The Sunday School," n.p.

²⁴George B. Watts, The Waldenses of Valdese (Charlotte, N. C.: Heritage Printers, 1965), p. 110.

²⁵Guigou, "50th Year Celebration," n.p.

²⁶Guigou, "1943," n.p.

²⁷Plans for the renovation are in the possession of the church.

²⁸Guigou, "Dedication Service at the Waldensian Church," n.p.

²⁹Guigou, "Building and Equipment," n.p. and "1955," n.p. and Mrs. Louise Phillip Guigou, "The Choir," in "Historical Sketch of the Waldenses and the Waldensian Presbyterian Church, Valdese, N. C." (Valdese, N. C.: Unpublished, n.d.), n.p.

³⁰Guigou, "Building and Equipment," n.p. and "1955," n.p. See also "The Choir," in document referred to in fn. 29 above.

³¹Waldenses in the New World, p. 123.

³²Waldenses in the New World, p. 146.

³³"Waldensian Museum, Valdese, North Carolina" (Valdese, N. C.: Pamphlet, n.d.), pp. 3-4.

³⁴Waldenses of Valdese, p. 112.

³⁵"Waldensian Musuem," p. 2 and Waldenses in the New World, p. 145.

³⁶"Waldensian Museum," p. 4.

³⁷Guigou, "The Choir," n.p.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2.3
Quadrangle name Valdese

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

| | | | |
|---|------|-------------|---------------|
| A | 1 7 | 4 4 9 1 5 0 | 3 9 5 5 3 8 0 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| C | | | |
| E | | | |
| G | | | |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| B | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| D | | | |
| F | | | |
| H | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property includes the lot defined as Lot #1, Block 3, Map 74-40 in the Burke County Tax Supervisor's Office, approximately 400' by 250', and includes the nominated church building and later additions.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| | | | | | |
|-------|-----|------|--------|-----|------|
| state | N/A | code | county | N/A | code |
| state | | code | county | | code |

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dana E. Mintzer, Preservation Consultant

organization N. C. Division of Archives & History date May 8, 1984

street & number 13 Veterans Drive telephone (704) 298-5024

city or town Asheville state North Carolina 28805

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. Price, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer date July 12, 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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Cranford, Fred. The Waldenses of Burke County. Morganton, N. C.: Burke County Cultural Heritage Project, 1969.

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INTERVIEWS:

Mrs. Catherine Cole, April 25, 1984. Mrs. Cole, associated with the Waldensian Museum, was most helpful in providing information about the Waldensian community and the history of the church.-

