



Waldensian Heritage Museum

208 Rodoret Street South Valdesese, NC 28690



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waldensianheritagemuseum.com

828-874-1111

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The story of the Waldenses is a story of strength and perseverance. In 1173, a wealthy merchant of Lyon, France known as Peter Waldo became troubled about his own salvation. He sought to read and interpret the Bible for himself, and felt led to live out its teaching as it was written. Waldo and his followers went about spreading the Gospel with the open Bible. Their zealous preachings were met with opposition from the established Roman Church, which led to them being declared heretics and persecuted for several centuries. After suffering hundreds of years of persecution, King Charles Albert granted the Waldenses their civil freedoms on February 17th, 1848. Following this decree, the Waldenses quickly outgrew the Cottian Alps of Italy which they had always called home. This resulted in migration to several areas in Europe, North America, and South America.

The first group of Waldenses to emigrate to Burke County, North Carolina numbered 29 and reached the area on May 29, 1893. Several other groups would join these first settlers throughout that first year and help to establish the Town of Valdesese. In 1897, the settlers began work on a Romanesque-style church that would resemble those found back in the valleys of Italy. The Waldensian Presbyterian Church sanctuary was completed and dedicated two years later on July 4, 1899.

In 1947, recognizing the need to preserve the history of their ancestors, church members officially started the Waldensian Heritage Museum in Tron Hall on the church campus. The number of artifacts being donated continued to grow, and soon it was evident a new building was needed to properly display the history. In 1974, the original museum building was built across from the church, and in 2006 an addition was built to help tell the story of the Waldenses.

Today the Waldensian Heritage Museum is home to 12,000 square feet of display space dedicated to preserving and promoting the cultural heritage, the genealogical records, and the religious devotion of the Waldenses. In 2022, the Waldensian Heritage Foundation was formed to help further the mission of the museum and its activities. After careful review, it was determined that an update to our genealogical records is needed at this time. Our last genealogy campaign took place in 1990 when the Genealogy Committee of Waldensian Presbyterian Church gathered information from descendants of the original settlers. Since that time, many families have visited the Waldensian Heritage Museum to update their family tree on our digital program, but no official campaign has been completed. At this time, we would like to ask those who are descended from the Waldenses of Italy to please complete the attached genealogy form and return it to the Waldensian Heritage Museum by November 1, 2024. You can return your form by mail to:

Waldensian Heritage Museum
Post Office Box 111
Valdesese, NC 28690

The information you provide will allow us to update our records and provide more accurate information to those wishing to learn more about their family history.

If you have any questions or concerns, or to learn more about this project, please feel free to contact us by phone at 828-874-1111, or by e-mail at director@waldensianheritagemuseum.com.

Thank you for your help in preserving the history of the Waldenses.