

HISTORY and HERITAGE
of the
**WALDENSIAN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**



Valdese, North Carolina

1893-1993







THE FIRST ONE HUNDRED YEARS
1893-1993



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**The Reverend John Pons
1907-1909 and 1918-1925**



Rev. Pons was born in Massello, Italy on November 18, 1877. His parents were Barthélemy Pons and Marie, née Pons. He was educated at the college of Torre Pellice, the Waldensian Seminary of Florence, Italy, and the University of Genoa, Italy, where he received the degree of Bachelor of Divinity.

Before coming to America, he served as pastor of three churches. His first church was at Rodoretto, and then he spent six months at Rio Marina, Elba, and two years at the

church of La Maddalena, Sardinia.

Rev. Pons arrived in Valdeese on January 21, 1907, and while here he met and married Lydia Jacumin, daughter of Jean Jacques Jacumin and Virginie, née Peyronel. Shortly after their marriage on October 28, 1909, Rev. and Mrs. Pons left for Scranton, Pennsylvania where he preached for four months. In 1910, he went to Brooklyn, New York to become pastor of the Rockaway Avenue Presbyterian Church, and later he moved to Rochester, New York to help build a new church there. With his determination and aggressiveness, Rev. Pons dedicated himself to the work of evangelization and persuaded the authorities of the church to erect the first Italian Presbyterian Church in Rochester. The work began in 1911.

In 1918, Rev. Pons returned to Valdeese to become again the pastor of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church, a position he held until 1925. At the same time, he served as professor of foreign languages at Rutherford College, where he continued his duties for fourteen years.

Even after his active pastorate, Rev. Pons served as French pastor of the church and conducted monthly services in French for the benefit of the older Waldensians. He could preach in English, French or Italian, and he also taught Greek and Latin.

Rev. Pons wrote *A History of the Waldenses*, which deals with the trials and tribulations of the Waldensians from the Middle Ages to 1848. It first appeared as articles in the *Morganton News Herald* in 1937. Then it was compiled into a book and presented to the session

of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church by Rev. Pons' children as part of the 75th anniversary (1893-1968), commemorating the arrival of the Waldensians in Valdese.

Rev. Pons was secretary and treasurer of the Valdese Building and Loan Association and held this position until his death. A leading Mason, he was a member of the Lovelady Lodge No. 670 and was associate patron of the order of the Eastern Star Lovelady No. 147. He entered the Royal Arch and Commandery and was buried with Masonic honors. He was also a member of the Waldensian society of Le Phare des Alpes.

Rev. John Pons and Lydia Jacumin Pons were parents of five children: Arnaldo Albert, Edward, Evelyn Marie, Walter, and Marguerite Albertine. He died in Valdese, North Carolina on November 11, 1944 and was buried in the Waldensian Church Cemetery.

Pastor Émile Henri Tron 1913-1916

Pastor Tron was born on June 16, 1884 in Ciamp-La-Salse, Massello, Italy. He was educated at the College of Torre Pellice, the Waldensian Theological Seminary in Italy, and in Edinburgh, Scotland.

He married Laura Vigliano of Genoa, Italy. They sailed for America and arrived December 10, 1913 to accept the pastorate of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church. Pastor Tron was joyfully received by the colonists of Valdese, North Carolina due to their having been without a regular pastor for four years. Many accomplishments were made during his ministry, including the renovations of the church, the renewal of the observance of the Waldensian Emancipation of February 17, and the adoption of the latest regulations of the Mother Church.

Pastor and Mrs. Tron left Valdese in April 1916 to respond to Italy's call to the military service in World War I. Upon his arrival there, however, his services were not required in the army.

Pastor Tron accepted the pastorate of the Waldensian Church of

