



VALDESE COMPREHENSIVE ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

Final Report

Completed by
Audrey Thomas, Survey Specialist
North Carolina State Historic
Preservation Office
Western Regional Office

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Contents

- INTRODUCTION..... 2**
- PURPOSE..... 3**
- METHODOLOGY 4**
- HISTORIC CONTEXT 5**
 - Pre-Waldensian Settlement in Burke County (Before 1893)..... 5**
 - The Waldensian Settlement Era (1893-1900) 5**
 - Industrial Growth (1901-1918) 10**
 - Post-World War I through World War II (1919-1945)..... 14**
 - Post-World War II (1946-1975)..... 23**
 - The Past 50 Years (After 1975)..... 35**
- SURVEY FINDINGS..... 37**
 - Survey Update..... 37**
 - Blockface and D/N/A Records..... 41**
 - Results of the Comprehensive Architectural Survey 42**
 - Overview of Traditional Waldensian Architecture, as adapted to Western North Carolina..... 44
 - Property Types in Valdese: Industrial Resources 51
 - Property Types in Valdese: Commercial Resources 54
 - Property Types in Valdese: Religious Resources 59
 - Property Types in Valdese: Institutional Resources 62
 - Property Types in Valdese: Residential Resources..... 66
 - North Carolina Study List Recommendations 76**
 - Future Research 77**
- BIBLIOGRAPHY 80**

INTRODUCTION

Valdese, North Carolina, was founded in 1893 by a group of Waldensian immigrants from the Cottian Alps on the border of Italy and France. Originating in the twelfth century, this religious sect practiced voluntary poverty, a strict adherence to the Bible, and lay preaching. The Catholic Church declared the faith heretical in the thirteenth century. After several centuries of persecution, King Carlo Alberto granted the Waldensians legal freedom in 1848 with the Edict of Emancipation.¹

Along with this freedom, the Waldensians saw an increase in population. Antoine Grill, who immigrated to North Carolina, described the situation in the Waldensian valleys: “There is very little land available that is suitable for erecting more buildings on account of the danger of avalanches. And, outside the village, there is hardly a family in all the community that can claim a whole acre of land in one place. Most fields contain as little as one-fifteenth of an acre, so, in or out of the house, people have to use their elbows to keep their own.”² This overcrowding spurred migration movements to South Africa, South America, and the United States.³ Dr. Charles Albert Tron led one group, settling the largest North American colony in Burke County in western North Carolina.⁴ The town sits seven miles east of the county seat of Morganton among the hills between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Piedmont.

After initial struggles throughout much of the first decade of the colony’s existence, Valdese began to thrive after the turn of the century with the introduction of the textile business. Its founding in the late 1890s coincided with a period of mill expansion in western North Carolina; the growing use of steam and electric power allowed those mills to be constructed near the railroad instead of near waterways.⁵ The town soon became an industrial center in Burke County, a status it maintained throughout the twentieth century.

Valdese is the only town in North Carolina established by Waldensians. Even as it has grown into the second largest town in Burke County, its connections to its Waldensian past are preserved in the built environment. In 2021, Valdese consisted of approximately 7.9 square miles and was home to about 4,600 residents.⁶

¹ For a more detailed description of the Waldensian history in Europe, see: “Chapter 1: Waldensian History—Faith of our Fathers,” in *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 3-12, (Valdese, NC: Waldensian Presbyterian Church, 1993), <https://ia904705.us.archive.org/14/items/historyheritage00vald/historyheritage00vald.pdf> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

² George B. Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese* (Charlotte, NC: Heritage Printers, 1965), 16.

³ Ashley Nicole Tickle, “From the Alps to Appalachia: the evolution of the Waldensians,” M. A. thesis, (University of Iowa, 2015), 18, <https://doi.org/10.17077/etd.cy1eajdn> (accessed Sept 4., 2023); *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 11.

⁴ George B. Watts, *The Waldenses In The New World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1941), 79.

⁵ Catherine W. Bishir, Michael T. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1999), 43.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, “American Community Survey 5-year estimates,” Census Reporter, <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US3769520-valdese-nc/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

PURPOSE

In 1984, Randall Cotton conducted a countywide architectural survey of Burke County, which resulted in the publication of *Historic Burke: An Architectural Sites Inventory of Burke County* in 1987. This was the first architectural survey to include Valdese, and it documented residential, industrial, commercial, and institutional resources built from ca. 1893 to ca. 1948. Cotton recorded 14 individual buildings, one object, and five “blockfaces” in Valdese.⁷ As a result of the survey, the Waldensian Presbyterian Church (BK0018), the Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House (BK0065), the John H. Pascal House (BK0094), and the Refour House (BK0095) were added to the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office’s (HPO’s) Study List. The church and Valdese Elementary School (BK0017, study-listed in 1980) were added to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1984.

Historic preservation activity has been limited in Valdese since the 1987 survey. No other resource has been added to the State’s Study List since 1984, and there have been no Determinations of Eligibility through the Environmental Review process. The Dalmas House was added to the NRHP in 2002.

This survey was the first comprehensive architectural survey of the town of Valdese and identified, documented, and evaluated extant historic resources within its town limits. The survey updated the existing records created by Mr. Cotton. Previously unsurveyed resources were also documented, providing extended coverage for resources constructed between ca. 1948 and ca. 1975. This survey also identified and documented the Berrytown community, a small African American neighborhood in unincorporated Burke County, located between Valdese and Drexel. While Berrytown falls outside the town limits of Valdese, incorporating this area in the municipal survey allowed the surveyor to include a historic residential community that was home to Black people who worked and shopped in Valdese, as it appears few African Americans have lived within the municipal limits at any point in Valdese’s history.

⁷ Prior to 2008, the HPO used blockface files to document groups of buildings under one Survey Site Number. In Valdese, five blockface forms were used to document: 1) a small group of architecturally similar but geographically scattered buildings, 2) a small group of buildings along a single roadway, 3) a large group of buildings along several roads, 4) the neighborhood between Main Street and the railroad tracks, and 5) the downtown commercial area.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this municipal survey is to identify, document, and evaluate a representative sample of industrial, commercial, religious, institutional, and residential buildings built prior to 1975 within the town limits of Valdese. In January 2018, Annie McDonald, Preservation Specialist for the HPO's Western Office, examined the town and determined the scope of work for the survey, estimating that 337 resources should be surveyed. An updated windshield survey was conducted by HPO Survey Specialist Lisa Buckley in March 2019 to narrow the scope of the project. The 2019 scoping map, which selected 190 resources for individual documentation, served as the basis for this survey. In total, 224 individual resources were surveyed, including older survey files that were updated. In addition, five blockface files were updated using the District/Neighborhood/Area (D/N/A) form, and four D/N/A files were created.⁸

The Valdese survey was completed in four phases, as described below:

1. The first phase constituted planning and initial research completed in February and March of 2020. At this stage, existing survey material was reviewed, online research was begun, and a working bibliography was started.
2. The second phase involved remote fieldwork completed intermittently between the Spring and Fall of 2020. After a meeting between Morrissa Angi and Madeleine Epley, both with the Town of Valdese, and Annie McDonald and Audrey Thomas of the HPO, a public meeting was set for April 2, 2020; however, the COVID-19 pandemic restricted public gatherings, and the meeting did not take place. Due to travel restrictions, online resources, including Google Street View and the Burke County GIS system, were used to simulate traditional fieldwork. During this phase, research continued via accessible library books and online resources.
3. After a long break necessitated by COVID-19 and other projects assigned in the interim, the Valdese survey was resumed in 2022. The third phase of the project entailed three trips to Valdese during the Spring and Summer of 2022. During this period, photographs were taken, and earlier remote survey was verified and updated as needed. Interior site visits were completed at select properties and on-site research conducted at the Burke County Public Library in Morganton and at the Waldensian Heritage Museum in Valdese.
4. During phase three and extending into the Fall and Winter of 2022, the database for the Valdese survey was completed and paper files were created for survey products. The Valdese Study List was presented to the National Register Advisory Committee in October 2022. The final report was written over the course of 2023.

Survey products include paper survey files, database records, and digital photographs for each resource documented, as well as this final report, which details the history of Valdese and the findings of the survey. The report is not an exhaustive history of Valdese or its architectural heritage, but it contributes to the understanding of the town and its extant architectural fabric. Resources consulted include local histories, deeds, newspapers, Sanborn maps, and historic photographs, as well as residents with knowledge of the town and its development. The research,

⁸ A D/N/A/ form records “distinguishable, defensible historic entities such as platted neighborhoods or small commercial districts,” per the HPO's Architectural Survey Manual, *Practical Advice for Recording Historic Resources* (2022 ed.).

fieldwork, and final report were completed by Audrey Thomas, the Architectural Survey Specialist located in the Western Office of the HPO.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Pre-Waldensian Settlement in Burke County (Before 1893)

Prior to European settlement, the Catawba and Cherokee occupied the land that would become Burke County. Early trading paths created access to the region for European explorers; however, European settlement did not take hold until after the French and Indian War in the mid-1700s. Migrants, largely from eastern North Carolina, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, increased in the post-war period until the American Revolution.⁹ Burke County was established in 1777, though its boundaries shifted as other surrounding counties were formed, reaching its current 500 square miles in 1834.¹⁰

In this period, land was plentiful and cheap, and land speculation became an early commercial enterprise. Most county residents throughout the antebellum period relied on agriculture, though there were small distilleries, gristmills, tobacco factories, and gold mining endeavors, as well.¹¹ The Western North Carolina Railroad, introduced to Burke County in 1860, became a major supply line, facilitating a cheap and easy way to move large products into and out of the county. The railroad did not reach Morganton, the county's only village from its founding through the Civil War, until 1869.¹² The railroad stimulated the growth of small towns and villages, as well as industry, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.¹³

The Waldensian Settlement Era (1893-1900)

THE FIRST YEARS

In 1887, the Morganton Land and Improvement Company was organized in Morganton. Pittsburgh industrialist Marvin Scaife settled in the town and became the company's president in 1889. During that year, Scaife sailed to Europe and, while there, connected with representatives of the Waldensian Church. Following this meeting, Waldensians Jean Bounous and Louis Richard visited western North Carolina on behalf of prospective colonists for a possible new

⁹ Edward William Phifer Jr., *Burke County, a Brief History* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources Division of Archives and History, 1979), 9-13.

¹⁰ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County* (Morganton, NC: Burke County Historical Society, 1981), 4.

¹¹ Phifer, *Burke County*, 54, 75, 79.

¹² Phifer, *Burke County*, 94; Maxine Cooper McCall, *What Mean These Stones?: A Centennial Celebration of Valdese, North Carolina* (Valdese, NC: Historic Valdese Foundation, 1993), 24-25; Bill Sharpe, "Burke: Corridor of History," *The State* 22, no. 24 (1955): 21, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/931941> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹³ Western Piedmont Council of Governments, *Burke County Land Development Plan*, 1978, 5, <https://archive.org/details/burkecountylandd1978west/page/n3/mode/2up> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

settlement.¹⁴ An 1896 pamphlet published by the Morganton Land and Improvement Company may indicate how the land was marketed to the Waldensians. The pamphlet described “fertile soil, hospitable people, ... vast mineral wealth, great forests,” calling the area “an ideal spot for a home, and ... inviting field for investment.”¹⁵ After assessing land in Yancey, McDowell, and Burke Counties, Bounous and Richard selected 10,000 acres as the location for a new colony. The land spanned one-and-a-half miles along the railroad, as well as six or seven miles south of the railroad to South Mountain.¹⁶ Describing the site, Jean Bounous said: “It's no Canaan, but it will grow tobacco, wheat, corn, oats, and the vine. If you dream of wealth in the New World, you should not go. But if there are those of you who are not afraid of work – hard work – you can have a farm the size of this whole valley.”¹⁷

The first 29 Waldensian immigrants arrived in Burke County on May 29, 1893. The train stopped near what is now Italy Street.¹⁸ The settlers spent their first night in the “Brick House,” a frame house with a brick chimney that previously belonged to a local farmer. Aside from this house, the new colony consisted of only a few small temporary frame houses around the railroad tracks, a few farmhouses farther away, and a sawmill.¹⁹

In order to prepare for a subsequent group of 200 immigrants arriving in the fall of 1893, the first group began clearing the land, constructing shelters, and planting crops to sustain the community through its first winter.²⁰ The colony operated a sawmill, which furnished the lumber, shingles, and boards needed to build several houses, and the Colony Building, a two-story multi-purpose building that would serve as a church, school, and storeroom.²¹ The second group arrived in November 1893 and included members of the Garrou, Grill, Jacumin, Leger, Pascal, Perrou, Ribet, and Vinay families.²²

Over the next year, the new colony struggled. The first group of settlers did not have enough time to properly prepare for the newcomers and only erected a few buildings before their arrival. At first, many families stayed together in the Colony Building. As more housing was assembled, families commonly shared small residences.²³ The hastily built lodging of undried lumber – commonly referred to as “sawmill shacks” – was not weathertight, making it insufficient for Burke County’s climate, especially during the harsh winter of 1893-1894.²⁴ Reverend Barthélemy Soulier described his experience this way: “Between one board and the next one could see daylight almost everywhere ... One can imagine what comfort we could have in the

¹⁴ Phifer, *Burke County*, 55-57.

¹⁵ William Carson Ervin, *Catawba Valley and Highlands, Burke County, Western North Carolina* (Morganton, NC: Morganton Land and Improvement Company, 1896), 1, <https://archive.org/details/catawbavalleyhig00ervi/mode/2up> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁶ Phifer, *Burke County*, 57.

¹⁷ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 40.

¹⁸ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 38-39; *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 14.

¹⁹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 23.

²⁰ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 45; Jennifer Martin and Sarah Woodard, “Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2002), Section 8, <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/nr/BK0065.pdf> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²¹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 36.

²² Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 52.

²³ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 48, 55; “The Patriarch of the Waldensians,” *The State* 17, no. 49 (1950): 4, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/827808?item=827817> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁴ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 36, 41, 52.

winter with the west wind!”²⁵ The crop yield over the first summer was also poor, and starvation was a threat. Francis Garrou later remembered this harsh reality: “Our first business for several months after locating in Valdese was starving to death.”²⁶

In the first months of Valdese’s existence, the colony operated as a cooperative endeavor where land, crops, and property were shared and divided evenly among the residents. The Valdese Corporation held all real estate and operated the sawmill.²⁷ However, the cooperative structure soon caused issues, and, in a 1939 letter, Rev. Soulier wrote that in November 1894 the colony was a “veritable hornets’ nest and panic had begun.”²⁸ This was due to the cooperative design of the colony, the vast amount of land and debt owed by the colony, and the inefficiency of communal work.²⁹ In 1894 or 1895, the Valdese Corporation was dissolved, and the size of the colony reduced to about 5,000 acres.³⁰ Individuals purchased their own land, and some moved closer to town. After this reorganization, many farms consisted of 40 to 60 acres. In July 1895, the *Morganton Herald* wrote that the Waldensian colony had “begun to prosper from the moment they abandoned their corporate existence.”³¹

AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY, & COMMERCE

Growth was slow in the colony’s first decade. The Waldensian colonists envisioned an agricultural existence in Burke County; however, Valdese’s terrain was rocky and infertile, and the colonists did not have the knowledge or tools to efficiently cultivate large-scale farms in their new environment.³² At the request of the colonists, the North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station sent horticulturalist Professor Wilbur F. Massey to the town to assess the colonist’s situation and provide advice on what crops to plant and appropriate farming methods. Due to the language barrier, the Station printed a special bulletin that discussed the best methods, crops, manures, and fertilizers for their land. The bulletin was printed in French to provide immediate assistance, as well as English to provide corresponding phrases and help the colonists become accustomed to the language of their new home.³³

Though agricultural success in Valdese was mixed, most residents continued to farm throughout the first decade of the colony’s existence. Within a few years, most farmers had 15-20 acres

²⁵ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 52.

²⁶ Francis Ghigo, “The Valdese Story,” *Tar Heel* 7, no. 1 (1979), 23, Clipping found in BK0065 Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House Survey File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

²⁷ Tickle, “From the Alps to Appalachia,” 25; *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 203-204.

²⁸ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 57.

²⁹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 25; Tickle, “From the Alps to Appalachia,” 27.

³⁰ The date is given as 1894 in Tickle, “From the Alps to Appalachia,” 18. The date is given as 1895 in *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 204-206.

³¹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 59, 65.

³² Edward W. Phifer Jr., *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, (Morganton, NC: Privately Published, 1977), 221; Ida Briggs Henderson, “Waldensians Build New Homes,” (1931), 26, Clipping found in BK0065 Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House Survey File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

³³ North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, *Eighteenth annual report of the North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station*, Raleigh, NC: Board of Agriculture, 1896, xxxvi, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/annual-report-of-the-north-carolina-agricultural-experiment-station-1895/2820507?item=2850872> (accessed March 6, 2024).

under cultivation and were growing corn, wheat, oats, vegetables, and potatoes. They also often raised poultry and grew grapes for wine.³⁴ Frank Refour spoke of the early years in a 1971 *Morganton News Herald* article: “It was hard. At first we could not sell our food because we needed it to eat. We did sell a few eggs and I well remember the first time I took vegetables to market in Morganton.”³⁵

Commercial and industrial endeavors remained limited in Valdese’s first decade. Hippolyte Salvageot operated a general store under the Valdese Corporation,³⁶ and a post office opened in 1893.³⁷ Originally, the colony expected the sawmill operation to help pay off the purchase of the colony’s land.³⁸ After struggling during the years of the Valdese Corporation, the mill reopened under private management after the Corporation’s dissolution. It employed five-to-six men and eventually produced enough lumber for the colonists and surplus sales.³⁹

The steam-powered sawmill constituted the main industry. However, interest in other industry began in the first few years. In 1894, John Meier, the superintendent of the Oats Hosiery Mill in Charlotte, contracted with the Valdese Corporation to open a hosiery mill. It opened in a repurposed barn just south of the railroad track; however, it lasted only about a year before Meier dismantled it and moved from Valdese.⁴⁰ There is evidence of disagreement about the economic future of the town largely along generational lines. Older residents of the community, who envisioned an agricultural settlement, vetoed the opening of a furniture factory, while the younger population rejected a canning factory, as they felt the mediocre agricultural success of Valdese would not sustain the business.⁴¹

In 1897, Soulier wrote in *L’Echo des Vallees Vaudoises* that it was “almost impossible to find an opportunity for earning money in this part of the country.”⁴² Over the next two-to-three decades, many left Valdese to pursue employment opportunities, though they often returned. John Henry Pascal worked in coal mines for several years before returning to Italy and, eventually, Valdese in 1902.⁴³ A 1915 article in *The Western Sentinel* noted a number of Waldensians found employment in New York, and several used their wages to purchase farmland near Valdese.⁴⁴ Staying nearby, John Refour tended the orchards at the Moses Cone Estate in Blowing Rock,⁴⁵ Jean Jacques Jacumin worked at the Biltmore Estate dairy in Asheville, and Francis Tron worked

³⁴ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 222.

³⁵ “He Remembers Early Waldensia,” *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC) (August 25, 1971), Clipping found in BK0095 Refour House Survey File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

³⁶ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 269.

³⁷ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 170.

³⁸ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 52.

³⁹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 55, 63.

⁴⁰ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 46-47, 62; “Hosiery Mill at Valdese With John Meier in Charge,” *Marion Record*, April 20, 1894, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068693/1894-04-20/ed-1/seq-2/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023). Based on an early map of Valdese, this mill was likely located south of the railroad tracks and between Praley St. SW. and Rodoret St. S. “Map of Valdese,” 1895, in Scrapbook: Homes of Early Settlers, Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, NC.

⁴¹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 73.

⁴² Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 72.

⁴³ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 17, 93, 257, 335-336, 435.

⁴⁴ H. E. C. Bryant, “Waldensian Colony in County of Burke,” *The Western Sentinel* (Winston Salem, NC), October 22, 1915, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/80473543/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

⁴⁵ Bryant, “Waldensian Colony in County of Burke.”

at the State Hospital in Morganton. Several colonists also followed Meier to mills in Newton, North Carolina, and Manning, South Carolina, where they learned about the hosiery business.⁴⁶ Some women gained employment as domestic servants, such as Jean Jacques Leger's daughter, who worked for John Meier in Charlotte, prior to his move to Valdese.⁴⁷

WALDENSIAN HERITAGE

Many of the earliest building endeavors stem from Waldensian beliefs and traditions. In the dissolution agreement of the Valdese Corporation, the Morganton Land and Improvement Company provided six lots for a church, school, and cemetery, as well as 54 undeveloped town lots. At first, the colonists held their religious services in the Colony Building; by 1895, efforts began in earnest to build a designated church. After fundraising, construction began in 1896 using native stone stacked in the architectural tradition used in the Waldensian valleys of Italy. The church was completed and dedicated in 1899.⁴⁸ The church (BK0018, NR 1984) sits on a hill overlooking the railroad, which was the main artery through the town.

Because the Waldensian faith emphasizes the right of laypeople to read scripture, there was a strong emphasis on education in the community. Initially, Waldensian children attended a county school at the Big Hill Chapel, also called Bollinger's Chapel, a Methodist Church roughly a mile south of downtown Valdese. However, due to the language barrier, the settlers established a new school in Valdese in the second story of the Colony Building.⁴⁹ This school also provided English lessons to the adults. In 1905, a six-room frame schoolhouse was erected near the church.⁵⁰

The Waldensians retained many cultural traditions, including winemaking and bread-baking, in Valdese. The new settlers cultivated vineyards and built outdoor bake ovens. In Italy, the most common bake ovens were communal and used by an entire village or a large group of families.⁵¹ The colonists added an oven within their first month in Valdese; it was centrally located on Rodoret Street. Jacques Tron, Albert Pons, and Jean Refour built the stone portion of the oven, while Pierre Tron completed the carpentry work.⁵² Over the next decade or so, several more ovens were constructed throughout Valdese (BK0264, SL 2022; BK0482, SL 2022; and on the grounds of BK0094, SL 1984).

⁴⁶ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 17, 93, 257, 335, 435.

⁴⁷ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 45.

⁴⁸ Dana E. Mintzer, "Waldensian Presbyterian Church," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1984), Section 8, <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/nr/BK0018.pdf> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023). This architectural tradition is discussed further in the Survey Findings section of this report.

⁴⁹ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 137.

⁵⁰ Tickle, "From the Alps to Appalachia," 47-48.

⁵¹ Aline Pons, "Memorie di pane: Il forno di Villa di Prali," *La Beidana: Cultura e Storia Nelle Valli Valdesi* (November 2014): 66, provided to author by L'archivio Fotografico, Fondazione Centro Culturale Valdese, translated using Google Translate; Teofilo G. Pons, "Forni banali," *Vita Montanara e Folklore Nelle Valli Valdesi* (1992): 195, provided to author by L'archivio Fotografico, Fondazione Centro Culturale Valdese, translated using Google Translate.

⁵² McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 47. McCall writes the Community Oven was built on the site of the Sala House (BK0600). In *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, page 16, the oven is said to have been located across the street, on the site of the US Post Office (BK0599).

Industrial Growth (1901-1918)

After steady improvements throughout the 1890s, Valdese was stable and healthy by the turn of the century. In 1906, Valdese contained three stores, about 40 houses accommodating 45 families, and a population of 300.⁵³

AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY, & COMMERCE

In June 1899, the *Wilson News* reported that the colony's crops were excellent, and the residents were in good health. A July 1899 *Daily Concord Standard* article further praised the town's agricultural improvements, noting crops such as wheat, corn, potatoes, grape vines, and orchards of peaches, plums, pears, and cherry trees.⁵⁴ Waldensian farmers were adapting to the farming conditions in Valdese, and farms were yielding more successful crops. Various accounts through the 1900s and 1910s report families growing corn, wheat, oats, vegetables, potatoes, barley, sorghum, and poultry. Most families grew about an acre of grapes, producing 400-600 gallons of wine per year.⁵⁵ In 1916, Frank and John Refour credited their agricultural success with the cultivation of soybeans, terracing, and deep ploughing.⁵⁶

One large farm belonged to Barthelemy and Jeanne Pons Bounous. The pair came to Valdese in 1902 and obtained a 50-acre lot originally belonging to Daniel Bounous known as Crouset Lucerne Farm (BK0491).⁵⁷ Some larger farms, including the Bounous farm, were able to hire farm hands. The Bounous family employed Alphonzo Reece, a Black man who lived on the property.⁵⁸

The sawmill operation continued, and, after a decade of experience, the business ran more smoothly and made larger profits selling excess lumber.⁵⁹ However, the 1901 opening of the Waldensian Hosiery Mill was the most important industrial development of the era. This mill kickstarted industrialization in Valdese and led to Valdese's hosiery industry becoming an important asset to Burke County's economy throughout much of the twentieth century. John "Bobo" Garrou, Francis Garrou, and Antoine Grill founded the operation after working in hosiery mills in Manning, South Carolina, for several years. The group purchased four acres of land along the railroad from the Waldensian Presbyterian Church. The Garrous mortgaged their farms to finance the machinery and supplies, and W. C. Ervin of Morganton provided a loan of

⁵³ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 85.

⁵⁴ "Success of the Waldensian Colony," *Daily Concord Standard*, July 31, 1899, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068267/1899-07-31/ed-1/seq-2/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023); "State Items," *The Wilson News*, June 22, 1899, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn92073947/1899-06-22/ed-1/seq-8/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

⁵⁵ Phifer, *Burke County*, 82.

⁵⁶ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 222.

⁵⁷ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 105.

⁵⁸ *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 220.

⁵⁹ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 52.

\$1,500 to jumpstart the endeavor.⁶⁰ The business employed about 20 people, working on 12 Boss knitting machines, eight ribbing machines, and four looping machines. Initially, the mill's daily output was about 80-100 dozen pairs of stockings,⁶¹ which were sold to Newton Hosiery Mills in Newton, North Carolina, for dyeing and finishing.⁶²

The mill struggled for several years, largely due to Valdese's lack of reliable railroad transportation. With no depot, train deliveries were inconsistent, only stopping sometimes to roll cases of yarn down the embankment to the mill.⁶³ Wages were slim, and most workers also maintained farms and gardens to supplement their income.⁶⁴ However, Valdese gained a railroad depot in 1903, which provided regular, trustworthy shipments for the fledgling mill. Soon, the Waldensian Hosiery Mill opened its first small dyeing and finishing plant, and the mill added ten knitting machines in 1905.⁶⁵ In 1916, the Waldensian Hosiery Mill had grown to employ around 100 people,⁶⁶ and a box plant was added in 1916.⁶⁷

Bobo's oldest son, John Louis Garrou, left Valdese to study hosiery production in New Hampshire before returning to manage the Waldensian Hosiery Mill in 1909. He promoted the creation of a cotton mill in Valdese to provide a reliable source of high-quality yarn for the hosiery mill.⁶⁸ Along with the financial aid and support of several wealthy Morganton men, this led to the incorporation of the Valdese Manufacturing Company in 1913. The Waldensian Presbyterian Church sold ten acres of land along the railroad to a Mr. Upchurch of Morganton. This location, adjacent to the Waldensian Hosiery Mill, became the site of the new cotton mill. Unlike the steam-powered hosiery mill, the Valdese Manufacturing Company utilized both steam and electric power for its 5,000-spindle factory. During World War I, the Valdese Manufacturing Company operated both day and night to match demand, and an 8,000-spindle unit was added to the operation in 1919.⁶⁹

With the growing success of these two enterprises throughout the 1910s, the textile business began to dominate economic life in Valdese. Several other mills were established during this period, like Banner Knitting Mills, which opened in east Valdese in 1913. Just north of the Waldensian Hosiery Mill, the Waldensian Swiss Embroidery Mill (BK0280, NR 2023) opened in 1917. The company produced lace and embroidery, though it went out of business due to lack of demand in 1924. Francis Garrou also organized the Liberty Hosiery Mill in 1917. This small mill provided employment for 14 Waldensians living near High Peak south of town. It quickly ceased operations as well but was purchased by J. G. Bynum Berry of Valdese, who continued the mill

⁶⁰ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 106; "Waldensian, Pilot and Valdese Develop Successful Plants," *E.S.C. Quarterly* Vol. 11, 1-2 (1953), 32, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/e.s.c.-quarterly-1953-winter-spring-v.11-no.1-2/4239182?item=4248826> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

⁶¹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 80.

⁶² "Waldensian, Pilot and Valdese Develop Successful Plants," 32.

⁶³ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 81.

⁶⁴ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 435.

⁶⁵ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 106.

⁶⁶ North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Thirtieth Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina*, Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Printing Co, 1916, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/annual-report-of-the-department-of-labor-and-printing-of-the-state-of-north-carolina-1916/1951463?item=1962704> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

⁶⁷ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 105.

⁶⁸ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 106-107.

⁶⁹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 88.

until 1939.⁷⁰ Several Waldensian men, including Francis and John Louis Garrou, also became involved in the hosiery industry outside of Valdese, launching the Vaudois Hosiery Mill in 1913 and the Garrou Knitting Mill in 1917, both in Morganton.⁷¹ In 1915, the *Hickory Democrat* wrote that Valdese was “attracting Nation-wide attention by its enterprise, industry, and adaptability.”⁷²

Though textiles dominated Valdese’s industrial sector, other industrial activities were occurring in the first two decades of the twentieth century. A small roller mill organized by some Waldensian farmers around the turn of the century lasted a few years. In 1908, Fred Meytre erected a water-powered grist mill at McGaillard Creek Falls just north of town. Another roller mill, operated by James Powell, stood at the corner of Massel and Praley Streets, before being moved to Powell’s farm south of the railroad tracks (likely near BK0622).⁷³

The largest non-textile industrial effort was the Waldensian Baking Company. John Peter Rostan and his brother-in-law Filippo Ghigo operated a small bakery in New York City in the early 1900s. The two men moved to Valdese and, after purchasing land from the Waldensian Presbyterian Church and several months of construction, the partners opened a new bakery in a stone and brick building at the corner of Colombo Street and what would soon become US Highway 70. The bakery offered macaroni and bread, baked in brick ovens using no mechanical equipment or electricity.⁷⁴ While the Valdese market was limited, Rostan advertised the bread in Morganton and other surrounding areas, where he found more success. Flour restrictions during World War I forced the bakery to close; however, Ghigo and Rostan reopened after the War.⁷⁵

By the mid-1910s, residents were starting other businesses as well. Notable endeavors include the Mont Viso Insurance Company (established 1915)⁷⁶ and the Valdese Credit Union (established 1917). Both companies were organized by Waldensians. The credit union was Valdese’s first banking institution and later merged with Northwestern Bank in 1941. In addition, the Valdese Co-operative Store was formed in 1917.⁷⁷ This business, located in a stone commercial building, provided customers with groceries, clothing, hardware, furniture, and a meat market run by Auguste Pascal.⁷⁸

As Valdese grew and stabilized, non-Waldensians began to move to the town, fueling the creation of new industry and commercial opportunities. Some of the common family names of these newcomers included Abee, Benfield, Berry, Hauss, Lowdermilk, McGaillard, and Powell. Some of the earliest transplants, James Marshall and Minnie Brinkley, purchased a general store

⁷⁰ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 89, 94, 103.

⁷¹ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 246.

⁷² “State Soon to Have Macaroni Factory,” *Hickory Democrat*, August 31, 1915, <https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068409/1915-08-31/ed-1/seq-1/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

⁷³ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 85.

⁷⁴ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 91-92; Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 379; Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 234.

⁷⁵ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 109; “Waldensian Bakers,” *The State* 13, no. 2 (1945): 18, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/917965?item=917971> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

⁷⁶ *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 228.

⁷⁷ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 53.

⁷⁸ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 334; P. W. Wager, “They Show Us How,” *Roanoke-Chowan Times*, February 4, 1926, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068181/1926-02-04/ed-1/seq-3/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

in Valdese in early 1916, moving to town from Glen Alpine later that year.⁷⁹ J. M. Brinkley and two sons opened Brinkley & Sons Lumber Company, which would later split into Brinkley Lumber Company and Brinkley Hardware Company after J. M.'s death.⁸⁰

WALDENSIAN HERITAGE

Despite the new citizens, the town's Waldensian culture remained strong. Waldensian stonework, outdoor bake ovens, and vineyards all signaled the heritage of the community. Cultural practices, like bread baking and winemaking, also continued. Members of the Le Phare des Alpes (LPDA) (BK0618), a mutual aid organization created in 1909 to assist members and their families in the event of sickness or death, spoke the patois and built bocce courts on the clubhouse grounds.⁸¹ Bocce courts were also found on Main Street W., between Faet Street SW. and Rodoret Street S.⁸² The courenta, a Waldensian folk dance, was practiced.⁸³ In other ways, Valdese was acclimating and was much like other small towns. During World War I, residents showed their patriotism by partaking in wheatless and meatless days and planting "victory gardens."⁸⁴ Some volunteered for military service, like Albert Francis Garrou, who served in the American Expeditionary Forces.⁸⁵

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND BERRYTOWN

Aside from Alphonzo Reece, no references were found to any Black residents of Valdese in the colony's first several decades. The population of African Americans within the town limits appears to have been very low, perhaps due to the late date of the town's founding as well as the general trend of outmigration of the county's nonwhite residents.⁸⁶ However, several small Black communities existed beyond the town limits. Berrytown (BK0664), which was included in this survey, sits about three miles northwest of Valdese between Valdese and Drexel. While it is unclear when exactly this community formed, some of the family names of early residents include Berry, Bradshaw, and Connelly. In 1915, Reverend Clarence Bethy organized the Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, which would become the center of the small neighborhood during the twentieth century. Children attended the Drexel Colored School (later called East Drexel), a two-room frame building; for high school, students went to the only Black high school in the county – Olive Hill High School in Morganton.⁸⁷

⁷⁹ JAP, "Glen Alpine News," *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), February 10, 1916, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/63293936/> (accessed March 6, 2024).

⁸⁰ Jim Brinkley (grandson of J. M. and Minnie Brinkley), e-mail conversation with author, between August 8, 2022 and August 16, 2022.

⁸¹ Tickle, "From the Alps to Appalachia," 38; Rob Murray, Le Phare des Alpes President, site visit with author, May 2022.

⁸² Caption of Bocce Photo, Photo Album, Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, NC.

⁸³ *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 224; Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 53.

⁸⁴ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 338.

⁸⁵ Marjorie W. Young, ed., *Textile Leaders of the South* (Columbia, S.C.: James R. Young, 1963), 71.

⁸⁶ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 351.

⁸⁷ "Our Legacy: Past, Present, and Future of the Berrytown Community," February 2014, in the Churches – Baptist – Mount Zion vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC.

Post-World War I through World War II (1919-1945)

After World War I, the 1920s were generally a stable and prosperous time both nationally and locally. Valdese was incorporated in 1920, and the decade brought major improvements, including the introduction of electricity and phone lines.⁸⁸ There was also road construction and paving projects. US 70, a major east-west thoroughfare from Morehead City, North Carolina, to Tennessee, ran through downtown Valdese. It was completed in 1921⁸⁹ and hard surfaced in 1929.⁹⁰

In 1930, the first official population data recorded 1,816 residents of Valdese; by the end of the decade, the population of the town was 2,615 – a 44 percent increase. In comparison, the other townships in Burke County received the following population increases in the same period: Drexel (13 percent), Rhodhiss (-2.5 percent), Glen Alpine (26 percent), Morganton (28 percent), and Hildebran (45 percent).⁹¹ In addition to this large population influx, commuting mill employees significantly increased the daytime population of the town.⁹² Despite the Great Depression, significant improvements continued to be made in Valdese, including the installation of water and sewer lines in the early 1930s.⁹³ The non-profit Valdese General Hospital was established in 1939.⁹⁴ A 1937 headline in *The State* described the significant development of Valdese during this period: “The State’s Fastest Growing Town – City of Thrift and Progress.”⁹⁵

The 1929 stock market crash did not immediately affect Burke County as much as other larger, urban areas. However, the Depression did have a significant impact on Burke County’s businesses and industrial workers. There were layoffs, reduced wages, and reduced working hours. Due to the agricultural nature of Burke County, many workers already grew their own food, or had access to land on which to grow food, which helped ease the financial pressure of the time.⁹⁶

The New Deal programs instituted by President Franklin Roosevelt aided the citizens of Burke County through a few improvement projects. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) funded

⁸⁸ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 157.

⁸⁹ Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 49-51.

⁹⁰ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 349; “Contract Let for Road to Valdese,” *The Concord Daily Tribune*, October 25, 1925, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn92073201/1925-10-24/ed-1/seq-4/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

⁹¹ The Town of Rhodhiss occupies area in both Burke County and Caldwell County. This percentage represents the entire town of Rhodhiss, though the section of town located in Burke saw a population increase of about 16 percent, as opposed to the 2.5 percent decline overall. United States Department of Commerce, *Sixteenth Census of the United States 1940 Population Volume I Number of Inhabitants*, Washington, DC: GPO, 1942, page 775, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1940/population-volume-1/33973538v1ch07.pdf> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

⁹² McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 6.

⁹³ “Special Section Valdese: The State’s Fastest Growing Town - City of Thrift and Progress,” *The State* 4, no. 39 (1937): 24, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/918923?item=919053> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

⁹⁴ Tickle, “From the Alps to Appalachia,” 38.

⁹⁵ “Special Section Valdese,” 23.

⁹⁶ Phifer, *Burke County*, 139-140.

Valdese Library's first book collection,⁹⁷ as well as the paving of streets between the railway and Main Street.⁹⁸ The WPA also erected the Francis Garrou High School Gymnasium (BK0457) in 1938.⁹⁹

In 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) established Camp Dyer at Enola, roughly 12 miles south of Valdese.¹⁰⁰ Though it is not known if any men from Valdese worked at Camp Dyer, it is possible they worked for the CCC there or elsewhere. Another project born from the New Deal was the creation of the Blue Ridge Parkway. According to Catherine Bishir, Michael Southern, and Jennifer Martin's *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, local tradition states that Waldensian stonemasons contributed to the stonework along the highway.¹⁰¹ No clear information was found during the survey to corroborate this claim; however, a 1996-1997 Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) report states that most of the masonry on the Parkway was completed by "skilled foreign-born masons" under the supervision of an Italian immigrant from Virginia, David Vecillio, and a Spanish immigrant, Joe Troitino.¹⁰²

The 1920s and 1930s saw some of the most monumental building projects in Valdese. In the 1910s and 1920s, the influx of residents stressed the relatively small school facilities and, in 1922, property was acquired from Albert Tron on Connelly Street (now Main Street) in downtown Valdese. Residents pitched in to construct a new Valdese Elementary School (BK0017, NR 1984), which was completed in 1923 for about \$75,000. The school, consisting of 22 classrooms and a large auditorium, was initially too large for the small town. However, with continued population increases, all rooms were eventually occupied. In 1938, the Francis Garrou High School (BK0273) was built just north of the elementary school to accommodate the growing student body.¹⁰³

Also built in 1938, the Francis Garrou Memorial Hall Community Center (BK0619) was a modern recreational center sponsored by the industrial companies of Valdese; most of the funds came from the officials and employees of the Waldensian and Pilot Hosiery Mills. It housed a gymnasium, library, basketball courts, bowling alley, swimming pool, and other facilities. Described in *Valdese News* as "one of the greatest undertakings in Valdese and perhaps in Burke County," it was quite an impressive offering for a town the size of Valdese.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ Gale H. Benfield, "Historical facts about the Valdese Public Library," 2008, NC Digital Collections, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/historical-facts-about-the-valdese-public-library/935966> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

⁹⁸ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 109.

⁹⁹ T. L. O'Briant, "Valdese Construction Work is Maintaining Rapid Pace," *The Charlotte News*, March 7, 1938, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/617195797/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁰⁰ Phifer, *Burke County*, 140.

¹⁰¹ Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 158.

¹⁰² Historic American Engineering Record, *Blue Ridge Parkway HAER No. NC-42*, National Park Service, Washington, DC: 1996-1997, 122,

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/nc/nc0400/nc0478/data/nc0478data.pdf> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁰³ Dana E. Mintzer, "Valdese Elementary School," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1984), Section 8, <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/nr/BK0017.pdf> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁰⁴ "Francis Garrou Memorial Hall is Rec. Center," *Valdese News*, December 8, 1938, in Scrapbook, Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, NC.

The Community Center became the main recreational center for residents in the twentieth century. Other recreational and entertainment opportunities in Valdese during the 1920s and 1930s included a swimming pool on the east side of town¹⁰⁵ (no longer extant, near BK0535) and the Colonial Theater (at BK0572), which opened in downtown Valdese in 1931.¹⁰⁶ Baseball was another popular form of entertainment. During the 1930s, local mill leaders supported the Valdese Textiles, providing competitive salaries and year-round local mill employment for players.¹⁰⁷ Hiking was also a common pastime, particularly at McGailliard Falls and Mineral Springs Mountain. Improved roadways and increasing car ownership eased travel, and people frequented Clearwater Beach and Brown Mountain Beach for swimming, hiking, and picnics.¹⁰⁸ Several business leaders of Valdese and Morganton also established a private golf club, opening Mimosas Hills Golf Course in 1930.¹⁰⁹

Valdese residents also started several social organizations around this time. Valdese Boy Scout Troop No. 1 (later changed to No. 192) was created in 1931. Sponsored by the Waldensian Presbyterian Church, the troop now meets at a church-owned property at the corner of Carolina Street and Massel Avenue (BK0620).¹¹⁰ At the Waldensian Presbyterian Church, the 1920s saw the institution of the Ladies Auxiliary, and the 1930s saw the formation of the first men's organization.¹¹¹ In the early 1930s, the Masonic Lodge was established, and the Lovelady Chapter No. 147 of the Eastern Star moved from Morganton to Valdese. The Lions Club was organized in 1936, followed by the Pilot Club in 1939.¹¹²

As with World War I, the community took part in the war effort for World War II. While some men fought in the war overseas, others at home also pitched in. There were rations for many items, including coffee, sugar, meat, and gasoline, and children collected recyclables. Men who did not serve could act as wardens, patrolling streets during blackouts.¹¹³ Residents sent packages to servicemen, as well as supplies to relatives in the Waldensian valleys.¹¹⁴ Phyllis Jacumin specifically remembered packages sent to Mrs. Edward Micol's brother, who still lived overseas.¹¹⁵

AGRICULTURE

During the 1920s, Burke County remained largely agrarian.¹¹⁶ Between World War I and World War II, there were still many farms in Valdese and its outskirts operated by Waldensians like

¹⁰⁵ "Contract Let for Road to Valdese."

¹⁰⁶ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 108.

¹⁰⁷ R. G. (Hank) Utley and Scott Verner, *The Independent Carolina Baseball League, 1936-1938* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1999), 7-8, 76, 169.

¹⁰⁸ *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 222-223; Phyllis Jacumin, site visit with author, July 20, 2022.

¹⁰⁹ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 350.

¹¹⁰ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 176.

¹¹¹ *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 70.

¹¹² Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 109.

¹¹³ Carol Ann Perrou Brown, "The War Effort in Valdese," in *Burke County Tales*, ed. R. T. Lasley (Conover, NC: Hometown Memories Publishing Company, 1995), 122.

¹¹⁴ *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 83.

¹¹⁵ Phyllis Jacumin, site visit with author, July 20, 2022.

¹¹⁶ Phifer, *Burke County*, 139.

Henri P. Martinat, Fred Peyronal, and Auguste and Henrietta Pascal (BK0463).¹¹⁷ Northwest of town, John Henry and Marie Marguerite Bounous Pascal grew wheat, corn, and vineyards at their farm, which they called “La Bienvenue” (now the site of BK0473).¹¹⁸ On the east side of town, the Bleynt family maintained a farm (BK0536) that included grapevines, fruit trees, ducks, cows, horses, and chickens, while the Refour family grew wheat, corn, and soybeans, in addition to their vineyards (BK0095, SL 1984).¹¹⁹ Edward Phifer noted that, in the 1910s, there was little to no dairying in Valdese, which was unique for the county.¹²⁰ However, at least by the 1930s, there were several farmers in Valdese offering the community milk and butter; these included Henry Martinat, John Henry Pascal, Fred Peyronel, Albert Tron, Henry Vinay, and Henriette Martinat Pascal (widow of Auguste Pascal, who died in 1926).¹²¹

Many farms in Burke County, including the Bleynt and Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas farms (BK0065, NR 2002), operated mostly on a home-use basis, though farming families may have sold some surplus when possible. Many people produced some of their own food while also engaging in other types of work. Recognizing this, the Valdese Manufacturing Company provided a cow pasture for its employees’ use.¹²² Albert Bleynt, Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas, and John Henry Pascal also worked as stonemasons.¹²³ The ability to sustain a farm and engage in other labor became easier by the mid-twentieth century, as industry flourished and agricultural technology improved.¹²⁴

COMMERCE

While commercial development was slow during the first two-to-three decades of the town’s existence, commercial activity and construction began to expand in the 1920s and 1930s. Advertisements and articles in area newspapers give insight into the types of businesses Valdese supported, including several grocery stores, People’s Drug Store, Ribet Brothers Garage, J. Francis Tron Insurance, and a furniture company called Kirksey & Company.¹²⁵ In the 1930s,

¹¹⁷ *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 220.

¹¹⁸ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 335.

¹¹⁹ Meredith Bleynt, Edward Bleynt Jr., and Wilma Bleynt Jones, site visit with author, July 21, 2022; BK0095 Refour House Survey File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

¹²⁰ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 222.

¹²¹ *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 219; “Dairy Grades Announced in Burke County,” *Hickory Daily Record*, January 15, 1938, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1005232760/> (accessed March 6, 2024).

¹²² *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 59.

¹²³ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 222; Randall Cotton identified John H. Pascal (of BK0094) as a stonemason during the 1984 survey. A compiled list of Waldensian stonemasons prepared by John Bleynt also indicated that John Henry Pascal of Bienvenue in northwest Valdese was a stonemason. See John Bleynt, “Waldensian Stone Masons,” found in Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, NC.

¹²⁴ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 223-224.

¹²⁵ “Ribet Bros. Have A Modern Garage,” March 27, 1924, in the Valdese – Businesses, Services, & Industries vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC; “Kirksey and Company,” Advertisement in *The Rutherford Rectangle*, December 10, 1928, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/2014236921/1928-12-10/ed-1/seq-5/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023); Advertisements in *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), January 3, 1929, in Scrapbook, Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, NC; “We Will Be In Our New Home In July,” Advertisement in *The Rutherford Rectangle*, May 28, 1929, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/2014236921/1929-05-28/ed-1/seq-2/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

the Valdese Printing Company (est. 1930), Valdese Savings and Loan (est. 1933), Pons Insurance Agency (est. 1933), *Valdese News* (est. 1938), and Northwestern Bank (est. 1939, site of BK0566) all began operations. Other businesses included Benlee's (BK0570), the Valdese Food Shop, the B. and B. Market (BK0577), and the City Market.¹²⁶ To support the growing business sector, a Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1930,¹²⁷ and a Valdese Merchants Association organized around 1935.¹²⁸ However, some businesses did not survive the decade, like the Valdese Building and Loan, which closed by 1938.¹²⁹

Prior to the 1920s, Massell Street, just north of and parallel to the railroad tracks, acted as the community's main commercial hub. In 1920, the road housed the Powel Grist Mill, the Cline Theater, a barbershop, a restaurant, the Community Building, Perry Bumgarner's Meat Market, and the railroad depot.¹³⁰ In 1931, commercial activity on Massell Street included several freestanding stores, a warehouse, and a post office. Throughout the 1930s and 40s, there were no new buildings in this area, and the only ones lost were J. M. Brinkley's planing mill and a warehouse. At this time, there was also a small commercial node on Colombo Street, between Connelly Street and the railroad tracks, near the main industrial district and the Valdese Elementary School.¹³¹

In the 1920s, commercial activity began to shift to Connelly Street (now Main Street), which was paved in 1929.¹³² By 1931, the street offered a filling station, a cleaning and pressing business, a drug store, two movie theaters, three automobile repair shops, and the Valdese Co-operative Store. At this time, most of these businesses were freestanding and scattered from Rodoret to Church Streets.¹³³

Much of the commercial construction of the 1920s and 1930s was in today's downtown core between Faet and Italy Streets. Previously, this was farmland owned by the Tron/Tise and Guigou families. It appears that most of the downtown buildings during this period were erected by these families. Madeline Tron Tise started the "Colonial" businesses (at BK0572) around 1926. L. P., John D., Henry E., and Leon Guigou added at least four buildings (BK0576-BK0579) between the late 1920s and mid-1930s, including a Post Office (BK0576) and Belk-Broome (BK0578).¹³⁴

¹²⁶ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 96, 107-108, 131-132; "Northwestern Bank Opened Branch At Valdese Monday; Business Good," *Journal-Patriot* (North Wilkesboro, NC), November 23, 1939, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn85042127/1939-11-23/ed-1/seq-5/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹²⁷ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 109.

¹²⁸ "What's Going on in North Carolina?: Civic and Municipal," *The State* 3, no. 26 (1935): 13, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/911524?item=911525> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹²⁹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 96.

¹³⁰ "Valdese 1920," Map in McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 246. The Community Building is labelled as the Meeting House on this map.

¹³¹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Morganton, Burke County, NC, Sanborn Map Company, 1931, Map, ProQuest (accessed Sept. 4, 2023); Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Morganton, Burke County, NC, Sanborn Map Company, 1931-1950, Map, ProQuest (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹³² Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 349.

¹³³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1931.

¹³⁴ "Then & Now Walking Tour Downtown Valdese," Town of Valdese, Valdese Main Street Program, https://static.townofvaldese.com/public/media/uploads/then_&_now_tour_for_web.pdf (accessed Sept. 4, 2023); Burke County, North Carolina, Deed Books 7: 404 (John Garrou and Catherine Guigou Garrou to L. P., John D.,

The early 1940s continued this growth, especially on the east end of downtown, and most of the buildings in the downtown core were extant by the mid-1940s. The Waldensian Market (BK0582), a new Post Office (BK0583), Major Electric (BK0584), and another commercial building (BK0585) were all constructed ca. 1940, while another Post Office (BK0586) was constructed in 1950 just north of Main Street on Rodoret Street. All but the Waldensian Market appear to have been owned or initially operated by various members of the Guigou family.¹³⁵

Scattered freestanding construction continued through the end of World War II. On the west side of town, BK0554 and BK0552 were erected on West Main Street. A group of storefronts (now demolished) was also built on the south side of Main Street roughly from Colombo Street to Waldo Street.

INDUSTRY

Stimulated by World War I, North Carolina was a major center for industrial mills by the beginning of the 1920s. The state was a leading producer of cotton goods, and the textile industry in western North Carolina, where there was an abundant labor supply, was growing.¹³⁶ These trends are evident in Valdese, which was a fast-growing industrial community. Several new endeavors were established during the decade. The Valdese Shoe Corporation was organized in 1923, though it moved to Statesville after about four years.¹³⁷ Francis Garrou, H. Clot, and A. M. Kistler also founded the Burke Novelty Manufacturing Company of Valdese that same year.¹³⁸ In 1920, the name of the Banner Knitting Mills was changed to Martinat Hosiery Mill after two Martinat brothers bought out their cofounder, C. J. Seeley. Under their management, the plant was electrified, and new machinery introduced to increase capacity.¹³⁹ Waldensian industrial leaders also opened new industries outside Valdese, such as Garrou Knitting Mills in 1922, which was then merged with Morganton Full-Fashioned.¹⁴⁰

Henry, and Leon Garrou, 1931); 22: 89 (John Garrou and Catherine Guigou Garrou to L. P., John D., Henry, and Leon Garrou, 1935).

¹³⁵ “Then & Now Walking Tour Downtown Valdese”; Burke County, North Carolina, Deed Books 44: 486 (John Garrou and Catherine Guigou Garrou to Robert Walsh, Clyde M. Baird, and James B. Harris, 1941); 62: 215 (John Garrou and Catherine Guigou Garrou to Alexis Garrou, 1943); 214:11 (Katherine Guigou to Arnolando Pons and Walter Pons, 1961); 391: 273 (L. Philip Guigou to John Harvey Guigou and Louise Guigou, et al, 1971); “Valdese Opens Post Office,” *The Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1951, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/618288384> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹³⁶ Richard Griffin, “North Carolina Cotton Manufacturers, 1808-1960” in *Textile Leaders of the South*, ed. Marjorie W. Young, 473; Wade H. Harris, “Abundant American Labor South’s Great Asset,” and “Chapter 1: Cotton Mills,” in North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Printing of the State of North Carolina*, Raleigh, NC: Mitchell Printing Company, 1926, ix-x, 1-2, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/report-of-the-department-of-labor-and-printing-of-the-state-of-north-carolina-1925-1926/1956520?item=2102661> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹³⁷ Phifer, *Burke County*, 84.

¹³⁸ “New Corporations,” *News-Record* (Marshall, NC), May 18, 1923, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn92074087/1923-05-18/ed-1/seq-3/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹³⁹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 89.

¹⁴⁰ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 246.

Despite the growth seen in Valdese, the textile industry suffered a statewide decline in the 1920s,¹⁴¹ which perhaps influenced the closure of the Waldensian Swiss Embroidery Mill in 1924.¹⁴² This downward turn was exacerbated by the Great Depression. By the early 1930s, nearly a quarter of North Carolinians were unemployed.¹⁴³ Industrial development slowed, and Burke County mill workers saw reduced wages, lay-offs, and shortened working hours.¹⁴⁴ In 1932, *The News Herald* reported that the Valdese Manufacturing Company cut wages 10 percent, noting it was the “first cut of the season.”¹⁴⁵

Job loss, pay cuts, and unsafe working conditions experienced by many textile workers, as well as discontent at the perceived favoring of mill owners in the passage of the 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act, led to increased union membership across the South and the nationwide General Textile Strike of 1934. In North Carolina, 65,000 textile mill employees participated in the September strike.¹⁴⁶ There may have been some strike participation in Valdese.

Contemporary newspaper coverage indicates that workers at Valdese Weavers (BK0280, NR 2023) refused to work, though the workers insisted that they were not striking, but instead said they feared violence. A few days later, *The Charlotte Observer* reported that striking employees blocked the entrance to the mill and prevented the delivery of several yarn shipments. The Valdese Manufacturing Company also ceased operations temporarily as a “flying squadron” – a caravan of striking mill workers – came into the county.¹⁴⁷

From many accounts, Valdese mills generally produced pleasant working conditions for their employees. Francis Garrou, who had interests in Waldensian Hosiery, Valdese Manufacturing Company, Pauline Knitting Mill, Pilot Full Fashioned, and others in the region, has been praised for his concern about the welfare of his employees and for sustaining healthful and comfortable workplaces.¹⁴⁸ In 1937, *The News Herald* wrote that even through the turbulent 1930s, mills associated with Garrou “continued to maintain the most amicable relationship” between employer and employees.¹⁴⁹ Highlighting his prominence in town, Valdese plants and retail businesses closed for the day of his funeral in 1937.¹⁵⁰ He also was very active in Valdese’s growth, including making contributions to the construction of the Valdese Elementary School and the High School gymnasium.¹⁵¹ Francis Garrou’s nephew, Albert Garrou, was similarly

¹⁴¹ Griffin, “North Carolina Cotton Manufacturers, 1808-1960,” 473.

¹⁴² Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 246.

¹⁴³ B. J. Davis, “Textile Strike of 1934,” *NCPedia*, <https://www.ncpedia.org/textiles/strike-1934> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁴⁴ Phifer, *Burke County*, 139-140.

¹⁴⁵ “Local News Briefs,” *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), February 13, 1932, in Scrapbook, Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, NC.

¹⁴⁶ Davis, “Textile Strike of 1934”; Jonathan Murray, “Textile Strike of 1934,” *North Carolina History Project*, <https://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/textile-strike-of-1934/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁴⁷ “Two Burke Mills Remain Closed, Two Re-Open, As Strike Influence Spreads,” Sept. 7, 1934, in the Union – Strikes vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC; “Efforts to Settle Mill Strike Fail,” *The Charlotte Observer*, Sept. 13, 1934, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/617335518/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁴⁸ Young, ed., *Textile Leaders of the South*, 73, 751; Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 198.

¹⁴⁹ “Valdese,” *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), February 27, 1937, in the Valdese – History vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC.

¹⁵⁰ “Garrou Rites Will Be Held Friday 2:30,” *Hickory Daily Record*, February 25, 1937, in Scrapbook, Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, NC.

¹⁵¹ Young, ed., *Textile Leaders of the South*, 73.

beloved in Valdese. Mr. Albert, as he was affectionately known, provided his employees with many benefits, including a pension plan that aimed to put his employees mentally at ease. He also helped with the organization of the Francis Garrou Memorial Hall Community Center, named for his uncle, after his uncle's death.¹⁵²

For the most part, industries in Valdese survived the Great Depression relatively intact. In 1932, the Waldensian Hosiery Mill, which had been operating on a part-time basis for several months, had gained enough business to open full-time with both day and night shifts.¹⁵³ A 1934 article noted Valdese was home to a cotton mill, two hosiery plants, a weaving plant, a wood-carving company, and the Waldensian Baking Company – “the largest individual baking company in the state and one of the largest in the country.”¹⁵⁴ Several new businesses opened in the mid-late 1930s. Shuford Interests from Hickory opened Valdese Weavers in the former Waldensian Swiss Embroidery Mill.¹⁵⁵ The John Massey Company (BK0622) began manufacturing children's hose in 1938 in the former Art Wood Carving Company building.¹⁵⁶ The Francis-Louise Full Fashion Mills (BK0453) opened for business in 1938 in a newly constructed plant on the west end of Valdese. The 1930s also saw the operation of Dolly Hosiery Mill (BK0454) and the Wright Machine Shop, which repaired mill machinery. Liberty Hosiery, however, closed in 1939.¹⁵⁷

Perhaps the most notable development in Valdese's industrial sector in the 1920s and 1930s is the rapid expansion of already established industries, namely the Waldensian Hosiery Mill (BK0284), the Valdese Manufacturing Company (BK0276), and the Waldensian Baking Company (BK0279).

Waldensian Hosiery experienced immense growth, opening and absorbing several new plants during this period. In 1920, Albert Garrou and Ben Pons headed the newly instituted Pauline Knitting Mill, which then merged with Waldensian Hosiery in 1928 as the knitting department. While the business started in a rented space, the owners soon built a new plant on Oak Street (BK0283). In 1935, Blackstone Hosiery Mills, partly owned by the Waldensian Hosiery Mill, opened near the Pauline Mill. Pineburr Mill opened in the building that previously housed the Valdese Shoe Corporation (BK0652, SL 2023) in southeast Valdese. The operation functioned as the full-fashioned department of Waldensian Hosiery.¹⁵⁸ Waldensian interests also established the Pilot Full Fashioned Mill in 1927, with 50 employees.¹⁵⁹ This mill absorbed Pineburr in 1952.¹⁶⁰ In 1935, both Waldensian Hosiery and Pilot Full Fashioned were planning additions that would lead to hiring several hundred workers.¹⁶¹ In just over a decade, Waldensian more than

¹⁵² Young, ed., *Textile Leaders of the South*, 71, 751.

¹⁵³ “The Upward Trend,” *Brevard News* (NC), Sept. 1, 1932, <https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn92074063/1932-09-01/ed-1/seq-2/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁵⁴ “Special Section Valdese,” 23.

¹⁵⁵ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 246.

¹⁵⁶ “What's Going on in North Carolina?: Business,” *The State* 5, no. 42 (1938): 15, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/926475?item=926539> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁵⁷ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 94, 103, 108.

¹⁵⁸ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 99, 103, 108.

¹⁵⁹ Young, ed., *Textile Leaders of the South*, 71.

¹⁶⁰ “Waldensian, Pilot and Valdese Develop Successful Plants,” 32.

¹⁶¹ “What's Going on in North Carolina?: Industrial,” *The State* 3, no. 31 (1935): 13, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/912313> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

tripled its 1925-1926 workforce of 135¹⁶² by employing 485 workers in 1937. Following an even larger escalation, Pilot employed 700 workers by that year.¹⁶³ In the 1940s, Pilot Full Fashioned was deemed the “largest and most important unit of the Valdese textile field.”¹⁶⁴

Between the end of World War I and the late 1930s, the Valdese Manufacturing Company, managed by Francis Garrou, tripled its capacity and was known for its high-quality carded knitting yarn.¹⁶⁵ In 1937, it employed 200.¹⁶⁶

Though the Waldensian Bakery closed during World War I, John Rostan and Filippo Ghigo reopened their bakery with a modern industrial dough mixer in 1919.¹⁶⁷ The bakery expanded during the 1920s, gaining more employees, as well as Silvio Martinat as a partner in 1922 and Earl B. Searcy, who succeeded Ghigo as a partner, in 1925.¹⁶⁸ As roadways improved, the business’s distribution area expanded. The bakery purchased a truck in the mid-1920s to make deliveries easier and opened branches in Hickory, Lenoir, and Morganton. In 1930, the bakery also became a member of the Quality Bakers of American Cooperative, producing and distributing Sunbeam baked foods. By the end of the decade, the bakery had outgrown its original building and constructed a large modern bakery on E. Main Street in 1929.¹⁶⁹ By 1940, the bakery utilized 35 trucks and employed 140 people.¹⁷⁰

During World War II, many industries experienced labor shortages; however, most industry continued to profit.¹⁷¹ In 1943, for instance, Pilot Full Fashioned maintained 750 employees.¹⁷² Just after the war, in 1946, Pilot Full Fashioned opened a sales office in New York and added a plant in Lenoir in 1947.¹⁷³ Some businesses suffered, however, such as the Waldensian Bakery, which struggled to obtain ingredients and labor. Despite this, the company retained more than 100 employees and 33 trucks in Valdese in 1945.¹⁷⁴ By 1944, Valdese was home to 11 manufacturing firms, including the baking company, a sawmill, three cotton textile mills, and six knitting mills.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶² North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Printing*, 80-81.

¹⁶³ “Special Section Valdese,” 26.

¹⁶⁴ “50th Anniversary Celebration,” *The State* 11, no. 23 (1943): 3, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/986206> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁶⁵ Young, ed., *Textile Leaders of the South*, 71.

¹⁶⁶ “Special Section Valdese,” 26.

¹⁶⁷ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 109.

¹⁶⁸ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 235.

¹⁶⁹ “A Short History of Waldensian Bakeries Incorporated,” Undated Pamphlet found in BK0279 Waldensian Baking Company Survey File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

¹⁷⁰ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 93.

¹⁷¹ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 354-355.

¹⁷² “50th Anniversary Celebration,” *The State*, 3.

¹⁷³ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 105.

¹⁷⁴ “Waldensian Bakers,” 20.

¹⁷⁵ NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources, *North Carolina Directory of Manufacturing Firms*, Raleigh: Division of Statistics NC Department of Labor, 1944. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/north-carolina-directory-of-manufacturing-firms-1944/2309841?item=2325858> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

WALDENSIAN HERITAGE

Across the state, articles were frequently written about the Waldensians, their history, and Valdeese. Responses from several members of the community indicated a desire to be seen as fully American, rather than foreign. In 1926, Rev. Pons said, “We are grateful to America for giving us freedom from all that had oppressed us; for permitting us to worship in our own way; for protecting us under her great democratic government. We are grateful for all this and therefore we are trying to become good Americans.” Another Waldensian is quoted: “Forget that we are not Americans, my friend, even as you are American. We do not like to be forever reminded that we are ‘foreigners’ ... Think of our future instead. Do we not have a great future?”¹⁷⁶

The Waldensians were quickly acclimating to their new home, and many became naturalized citizens.¹⁷⁷ English began replacing the French services at the Waldensian Presbyterian Church in the 1920s and 1930s and, by the 1940s, all services were in English.¹⁷⁸ Further, as native-born Americans migrated to the community, the concentration of residents with Waldensian heritage was lessening; by 1950, it was estimated about half the Valdeese population was of Waldensian descent.¹⁷⁹ In addition to the Waldensian Presbyterian Church, by the late-1930s, other religious denominations had organized a variety of churches, including the First Baptist Church (1920), First United Methodist Church (1929), Valdeese First Christian Church (early 1930s), Church of God Valdeese (1931), and Mount Calvary Baptist (1938). The First Baptist Church was connected to the Valdeese Manufacturing Company, while the First United Methodist Church grew out of a Sunday School meeting at the Pauline Mill.¹⁸⁰

Post-World War II (1946-1975)

After its rapid population growth in the 1930s, Valdeese’s population experienced moderate steady growth in the post-World War II period, increasing between 4 and 9 percent during every decade between 1940 and 1980. Part of this population increase may be attributable to annexations that occurred in every decade of the period. Comparatively, the other Burke County towns saw their populations fluctuate more heavily, growing in some decades and losing population in others, aside from Rhodhiss, which saw steady population decline throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. Lovelady Township saw much larger population increases, ranging between 9 and 42 percent in all decades except the 1960s, which saw a 5 percent decline.¹⁸¹ It is likely that many of those residing in the Township still worked in or frequented

¹⁷⁶ Johnston Avery, “Waldensian Colony at Valdeese Thrives Richly on Worn Out Hill Land,” *The Sunday Citizen*, 1926, Clipping found in BK0065 Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House Survey File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

¹⁷⁷ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 53.

¹⁷⁸ Tickle, “From the Alps to Appalachia,” 19.

¹⁷⁹ “The Patriarch of the Waldensians,” 22.

¹⁸⁰ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 132.

¹⁸¹ United States Department of Commerce, *Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States 1950 Volume I Number of Inhabitants*, Washington, DC: GPO, 1952, page 33-12, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/population-volume-1/vol-01-36.pdf> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023); United States Department of Commerce, *Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States 1960 Volume I*

Valdese. At one point in the 1970s, around 6,000 people were employed in the town, despite the population of residents being a little over 3,000.¹⁸²

Shortly after World War II, a 1947 article in *The State* described the town: “Valdese seems to be enjoying quite a boom. New theatre is being built, also several new business buildings and residences. Mills are running full blast. Parking meters have been installed.”¹⁸³ A 1951 article notes the town had a record construction year, while, in 1955, the median income for Valdese families was high for the state.¹⁸⁴

Residents enjoyed upgraded amenities throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1951, the community gained a new Post Office (BK0586).¹⁸⁵ After the Valdese Public Library was established in the 1930s, it moved between churches, private homes, and the Southern Bell Telephone Building before finding a permanent home in 1954 in a building (BK0611) erected by Brinkley Lumber Company.¹⁸⁶ The Valdese General Hospital expanded, reaching 74 beds by 1957¹⁸⁷ and adding a new 120-bed hospital unit in 1961.¹⁸⁸

The period also saw an uptick in church attendance,¹⁸⁹ coinciding with an increase in church construction. As congregations began to outgrow their earlier sanctuaries, they began to build larger churches, like the 1956 First Methodist Church (BK0612), the 1957 Church of God Valdese (BK0456), and the 1965 Valdese First Baptist Church (BK0475).

The Community Center continued to be a primary source of recreation for Valdese citizens. It saw several rounds of improvements and expansions, including a basement addition with bowling lanes in 1960, and a pool enlargement and interior renovations in 1969.¹⁹⁰ Both the American Legion Post 234 (BK0462), locally called “the Hut,” and Berrytown’s American

Number of Inhabitants, Washington, DC: GPO, 1961, page 35-15, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1960/population-volume-1/06586188v1p35ch2.pdf> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023); United States Department of Commerce, *1970 Census of Population Volume 1 Characteristics of the Population*, Washington, DC: GPO, 1973, page 35-21, https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-01.pdf (accessed Sept. 4, 2023); United States Department of Commerce, *1980 Census of Population Volume 1 Characteristics of the Population*, Washington, DC: GPO, 1982, page 35-13, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1980/volume-1/north-carolina/1980a_ncabc-01.pdf (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁸² Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 57.

¹⁸³ Carl Goerch, “Just One Thing After Another,” *The State* 15, no. 16 (1947): 23, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/951332> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁸⁴ “What’s Going on In North Carolina,” *The State* 18, no. 34 (1951): 15, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/879989?item=880022> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023); Paul Pleasants, “Horation Algertown,” *The State* 22, no. 24 (1955): 15, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/931941?item=931988> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁸⁵ “Valdese Opens Post Office.”

¹⁸⁶ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 186.

¹⁸⁷ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 130-131.

¹⁸⁸ Phifer, *Burke County*, 44.

¹⁸⁹ *History and Heritage of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church*, 93.

¹⁹⁰ “Valdese Rec Center Had A Good Year,” *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), February 6, 1961, in the Valdese – Valdese Community Center vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC; “Community Center Pool is Dedicated,” *Valdese News*, August 27, 1969, in the Valdese – Valdese Community Center vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC.

Legion (BK0666) acted as community hubs and held dances.¹⁹¹ Other popular hangouts included the Valdese Sandwich Shop, known as the “Rat Hole,” which Harlon O’Quinn opened in 1945, and the Tastee-Freez (BK0559), which opened in the early 1960s.¹⁹² The Berrytown neighborhood (BK0664) also had its own ballfield, which was located on Enon Road (now Lighthouse Ministries, 1728 Enon Rd).¹⁹³

The Colonial Theater operated until 1969. Residents Wanda Childers Drum and Wilma Bleynat remembered weekend trips to the theater. However, Bruce Hawkins, who grew up in Berrytown, recalled having to go to the movies in Morganton, because Valdese’s theater did not offer a balcony to accommodate Black patrons during the era of racial segregation.¹⁹⁴ In addition to discrimination experienced at the theater, Hawkins also remembered having to order food at the back door of popular Valdese restaurants Castle’s Café and the Alamogordo, where Black customers could not eat inside.¹⁹⁵

In Valdese, the Black population was small. According to the 1960 city directory, there were no African Americans living in the Valdese town limits. By 1980, the US Census recorded only 20 Black residents of Valdese.¹⁹⁶ However, Burke County’s Black population did participate in daily life in Valdese. Bruce Hawkins remembered going to Valdese for an annual carnival. In 1954, a local Valdese baseball team elected to include Black players, and Hawkins remembered his father playing baseball on a field behind Valdese Elementary School. As there were no businesses in Berrytown, aside from two small white-owned shops nearby on Enon Road, residents also went to Valdese for commercial activity, such as shopping for groceries at the A&P, clothing at Forest Clothing, Belk, and Roses, and miscellaneous items at the hardware store. There do not appear to have been any Black-owned businesses in town. For Black-owned businesses, including, as Hawkins remembered, a funeral parlor and a barber shop, Berrytown residents visited Morganton.¹⁹⁷

The 1960 directory noted all employees who worked in Valdese, regardless of their home address. The African Americans listed as employees at businesses in Valdese lived in either Berrytown or Morganton.¹⁹⁸ At this time, common jobs held by African Americans in Valdese

¹⁹¹ Wanda Childers Drum, phone interview with author, August 17, 2022; Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

¹⁹² Meredith Bleynat, Edward Bleynat Jr., and Wilma Bleynat Jones, site visit with author, July 21, 2022; “Then & Now Walking Tour Downtown Valdese.”

¹⁹³ Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

¹⁹⁴ Meredith Bleynat, Edward Bleynat Jr., and Wilma Bleynat Jones, site visit with author, July 21, 2022; Wanda Childers Drum, phone interview with author, August 17, 2022; Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

¹⁹⁵ Gwen Veazy, “Marching toward equality,” *Burke County Notebook*, February 14, 2021, in the Desegregation vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC. Neither restaurant was surveyed during this project. The Alamogordo (1950-1974, building no longer extant) sat near 1101 Main Street E., and it appears Castle’s Café (sometimes spelled Cassel’s) occupied the extant building at 625 Main Street E.

¹⁹⁶ Chas. W. Miller, *Miller’s Valdese, North Carolina City Directory 1960-1961* (Asheville, NC: Southern Directory Company), <https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/24924?ln=en> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).; United States Department of Commerce, *1980 Census of Population Volume 1 General Population Characteristics*, Washington, DC: GPO, 1982, page 35-18, https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980a_ncABC-02.pdf (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

¹⁹⁷ Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

¹⁹⁸ Chas. W. Miller, *Miller’s Valdese, North Carolina City Directory 1960-1961* (Asheville, NC: Southern Directory Company), <https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/24924?ln=en> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

included janitors or cooks at businesses such as the Colonial Theatre, the Colonial Motel, the Waldensian Bakery, Castle's Café, the Ribet Motel and Restaurant, and the Alamogordo. Men also worked at the Valdese Cleaners and Dyers, the City Motor Company, the Perrou Service Station, and City Ready Mix.¹⁹⁹ Women more often worked as maids at locations such as the Valdese Cleaners and Dyers, the Dress Shop, and the Colonial Motel, as well as domestic workers in private homes.²⁰⁰

The 1950s and 1960s brought major social and political changes across the country. The 1954 decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. Despite this ruling, the next decade was met with statewide efforts to evade and stall desegregation in North Carolina through political and legal tactics. The 1955 Pupil Assignment Act hindered integration efforts by using vague language for school assignments to be in "the best interest of the child" and created a system in which challenging those assignments would be expensive and time-consuming.²⁰¹ In 1957, schools in Greensboro, Charlotte, and Winston-Salem were the first in North Carolina to desegregate. Desegregation continued slowly, and only 1,865 Black students (less than 0.5 percent of Black students statewide) were attending previously all-white schools by the 1963-1964 school year.²⁰² However, Title XI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and stricter compliance guidelines in the school year of 1966-1967 threatened federal funding for schools that remained racially segregated. This led to integration rates steadily rising in North Carolina schools after 1966.²⁰³

In 1924, African American students in Burke County attended either one of 12 elementary schools scattered throughout the county or the only high school for Black students, Olive Hill High School, located in Morganton. By 1963, there were only three elementary schools left for African American children – in Willow Tree, Corpening, and Drexel.²⁰⁴ Berrytown residents attended elementary school at the three-room Drexel Colored School and traveled by bus to Morganton to attend Olive Hill High School.²⁰⁵ It appears the earliest desegregation efforts in Burke County occurred in the city of Morganton, led by a group of seven African American mothers frustrated by the lack of movement on integration efforts. This led to a pilot integration program in the city in 1963, though a full desegregation plan was not approved until October

¹⁹⁹ Veazy, "Marching toward equality"; Chas. W. Miller, *Miller's Valdese, North Carolina City Directory 1960-1961*.

²⁰⁰ Chas. W. Miller, *Miller's Valdese, North Carolina City Directory 1960-1961*; Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

²⁰¹ Ransome E. Holcombe, "A Desegregation Study of Public Schools in North Carolina," PhD Diss., (East Tennessee State University, 1985): 64, <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/2733> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁰² Holcombe, "A Desegregation Study," 89, 105.

²⁰³ Holcombe, "A Desegregation Study," 122-123.

²⁰⁴ "Integration," February 2015, PowerPoint slides found in the Integration vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC.

²⁰⁵ Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

1965.²⁰⁶ The Burke County school system desegregated in 1965, as well.²⁰⁷ Upon desegregation, Berrytown residents attended school in Drexel, and Black students in Connelly Springs were sent to Valdese.²⁰⁸ While some Black teachers transferred to positions in the desegregated school system, many lost their jobs.²⁰⁹

The Reverend W. Flemon McIntosh remembered that violence wasn't as prevalent in Morganton as some other communities during school desegregation. However, confrontations from white parents and students alike included heckling, taunting, bullying, telephone threats, and burning crosses.²¹⁰ In Valdese, Bruce Hawkins remembered only minor issues and recalled school desegregation being largely a smooth process.²¹¹

In 1974, Valdese High School closed, and town students were transferred to East Burke High School in Connelly Springs. A new Valdese Elementary opened in the 1960s, leaving only a few remaining grades at the 1922-1923 Valdese Elementary School (BK0017, NR 1984).²¹²

WALDENSIAN HERITAGE

Given the increase in the non-Waldensian population of Valdese, residents of Waldensian descent were overrepresented in industry leadership.²¹³ The Waldensian Presbyterian Church and Valdese Elementary School still displayed the architectural heritage of the immigrant generation, the LPDA still provided bocce courts, and there was a revival of interest in the courenta.²¹⁴ The erection of a Waldensian monument to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the town's settlement was approved in 1943.²¹⁵ In 1947, the formation of the Waldensian Heritage Museum began with the start of the historical collection at the Waldensian Presbyterian Church. The museum gained its own stucco building in 1973.²¹⁶ In 1967, the Old Colony Players began performing Fred Cranford's outdoor drama entitled "From This Day Forward" about the experiences of Valdese's first settlers.²¹⁷ These developments may have been inspired by the success of post-war tourism

²⁰⁶ Michael Ervin, "A Powder Keg that Could Very Easily Explode": Race, Paternalism, and Protest in Morganton, North Carolina," B. A. thesis, (University of North Carolina Asheville, 2012), 20-21, 25, http://toto.lib.unca.edu/sr_papers/history_sr/srhistory_2012/ervin_michael.pdf (accessed Sept. 4, 2023); Tammie Gerkin, "Children of the Struggle," *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), February 23, 2017, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/984605852/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁰⁷ "Kimzey Leads Integration Workshop," *Winston-Salem Journal*, August 23, 1966, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/936224386/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁰⁸ Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

²⁰⁹ "Integration," February 2015.

²¹⁰ Sharon McBrayer, "Seven mothers shared one goal: a better education," *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), March 6, 2005, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/984849214/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023). In his 2012 thesis, Michael Ervin notes that the absence of major violence or resistance does not indicate a lack of racial tension. Ervin, "A Powder Keg that Could Very Easily Explode."

²¹¹ Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

²¹² McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 150-152.

²¹³ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 54.

²¹⁴ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 117.

²¹⁵ "Waldensian Monument Approved," *Person County Times*, June 3, 1943, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn96086016/1943-06-03/ed-1/seq-1/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²¹⁶ Tickle, "From the Alps to Appalachia," 51.

²¹⁷ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 357.

efforts in other communities in the region, such as Cherokee and Boone, both of which implemented their own outdoor drama productions in the 1950s.²¹⁸

In other ways, Valdese looked much the same as other small towns in western North Carolina. Daily markers of Waldensian heritage were less noticeable with the gradual disappearance of the older language and vineyards.²¹⁹ The 1893 Colony Building was torn down in 1959.²²⁰ In a 1970 article, H. G. Jones noted that it was the first year no full-blooded Waldensian children were enrolled in Valdese schools.²²¹

COMMERCE

By 1950, Massell Street's commercial offerings consisted of one store, one restaurant, a lodge (formerly a post office), and a hotel (formerly a dwelling). Commercial activity in this area saw a decline over the next three decades, as most buildings, including the railway station, were demolished between 1950 and 1979.²²² Most of these buildings made way for a parking lot utilized by Alba-Waldensian. The few commercial buildings on Colombo Street were also demolished between 1950 and 1977; parking lots for the surrounding industry and a ca. 1994 McDonald's now occupy the space.²²³

Despite these demolitions, Valdese supported a variety of commercial businesses in the 1960s and 1970s, including earlier businesses, such as Belk-Broome, Pons Insurance and Valdese Building and Loan, the Waldensian Market, the Style Shop, Kirksey and Company, Major Electric, Brinkley Hardware, Brinkley Lumber, the City Market and Grocery, and the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P). Other businesses operating in the 1950s and 1960s included Tastee Freez (opening in the early 1960s at BK0559), Gareen Jewelers (1950s, BK0568, succeeded by Lareen Jewelers in the 1960s), the Gold Shop (operating in the 1960s at BK0570), Better Homes Furnishing (operating in the 1960s at BK0562), and Sav-A-Center (operating at BK0564 beginning in the 1960s). The A&P, which had earlier been located at BK0585, also gained a new freestanding building in the 1950s (BK0556).²²⁴

Other commercial businesses were scattered throughout Valdese, away from the primary downtown commercial center. Most notable are various neighborhood grocery stores, several of which were owned and operated by the Walsh family. Robert Walsh worked at J. M. Brinkley's store and the Valdese Food Shoppe before opening his own Walsh's Market (BK0537) in east

²¹⁸ Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 79.

²¹⁹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 135.

²²⁰ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 53-54.

²²¹ H.G. Jones, "History of Waldensians is Fascinating," *Telegram* (Rocky Mount, NC), May 28, 1970, found in Valdese Front Matter File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

²²² Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Morganton, Burke County, NC, Sanborn Map Company, 1931-1950; NCDOT Historical Aerial Imagery Index, m1517_0164_t.jpg, November 15, 1979, State of North Carolina DOT, Esri, <https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=91e02b76dce4470ebd7ec240ad202a04> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²²³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Morganton, Burke County, NC, Sanborn Map Company, 1931-1950; NCDOT Historical Aerial Imagery Index, m1453_0066_t.jpg, March 27, 1979, State of North Carolina DOT, Esri, <https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=91e02b76dce4470ebd7ec240ad202a04> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²²⁴ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 134; Chas. W. Miller, *Miller's Valdese, North Carolina City Directory 1960-1961*; "Then & Now Walking Tour Downtown Valdese."

Valdese.²²⁵ Robert Walsh's son, Ralph David, opened another Walsh's Market (BK0623) in the early 1960s in southwest Valdese. Robert's grandson would later open a store in nearby Hildebran.²²⁶ The G & L Supermarket (BK0635), run by Grover and Thelma Walsh, was situated in south Valdese in a neighborhood called Crow Hill. After Grover's death in 1967, the store was run by Archie Gragg. This market sits in a small commercial node at the corner of Praley Street SW. and Pine Burr Avenue SW., along with a ca. 1960 laundromat and beauty shop (BK0636), and two ca. 1945 attached commercial buildings (BK0632 and BK0633). Other neighborhood groceries included one in south Valdese, run first by Gilmer and Darold Powell and later by Charles Luico Sain (BK0658), and Little Man's Superette, operated by Frank Cline, in the mill village where many workers at Valdese Manufacturing Company lived (BK0474).²²⁷

Most downtown buildings between Faet and Italy Streets were in place by 1950. In the next few decades, construction continued farther down Main Street. Between 1946 and 1956, motor vehicles in Burke County more than doubled.²²⁸ Increasing automobile usage impacted the design of new buildings. Many commercial buildings from the 1950s and 1960s required more space for parking lots to cater to their increasingly mobile clientele. Previously open space, the block of Main Street W. between Praley Street NW. and Faet Street NW. was developed between 1959 and 1970. The block contains three free-standing buildings surrounded by parking lots. Two also have drive-thru windows. Comparatively, the block to the east is of a similar size and was developed between 1926 and 1948. It contains ten stores and minimal parking. Some businesses tried to adapt to the changing preferences of their customer base. For example, Lester "Fat" Cline opened the Alamogordo Café on US 70 in 1950. His business evolved over the years, eventually becoming a drive-in, before several other reiterations.²²⁹

Automobile dealerships, service shops, and filling stations all supported the growing automotive industry. Many of these businesses were already operating in Valdese before World War II. Some early examples included a filling station at the corner of Laurel Street NE. and Main Street E., and Smile Oil Company, which sat in front of the ca. 1957 A&P Building (BK0556) on Main Street W. (both filling stations now demolished). A small concentration of automobile-oriented businesses also opened along Italy Street NE., between Main Street E. and Guigou Avenue. These businesses included a ca. 1939 Auto Sales and Service building (BK0588), a ca. 1940 Auto Sales and Service Garage building (BK0589), and the ca. 1941 Valdese Esso Servicenter (BK0590). On the east side of town, Earl Franklin Motors operated out of a ca. 1948 building (BK0545), at least in the 1960s. T. O. Pritchard's Valdese Gulf Service (BK0553) operated on the west side of town in the 1950s and 1960s, as well.²³⁰

New demands of the era impacted other businesses, too. For instance, growing demand for paved parking lots provided business to City Ready Mix, established by Carl A. Brinkley west of

²²⁵ Ken Sipes, "42 Years Of Meat Cutting," *Valdese News*, March 25, 1970, in the Valdese – Newspaper Articles – 1970s vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC; "Noted Valdese grocer, 84, dies," *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), October 19, 1979, in the Valdese – Newspaper Articles – 1970s vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC.

²²⁶ "Ralph D. Walsh," Legacy.com, <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/morganton/name/ralph-walsh-obituary?id=25959483> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²²⁷ Chas. W. Miller, *Miller's Valdese, North Carolina City Directory 1960-1961*.

²²⁸ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 355.

²²⁹ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 110-111.

²³⁰ Chas. W. Miller, *Miller's Valdese, North Carolina City Directory 1960-1961*.

Valdese (1389 US 70 W., unsurveyed).²³¹ The Colonial Court Motel (at BK0285) opened around 1952 on US 70 W. This was a new business type in Valdese and was described as one of western NC's "newest and most modern tourist courts."²³²

Valdese offered all the day-to-day necessities for its residents. However, larger cities nearby like Morganton and Hickory drew people for other shopping opportunities. Wanda Childers Drum remembered going to neighboring towns if she needed, for example, a party dress.²³³ These trips were made ever easier by improving roads and growing car ownership. While Interstate 40, expanded through Burke County in 1960-1961,²³⁴ allowed easy access for Valdese residents travelling to other areas, it also likely had some impact on development and business in town. Jim Brinkley, the grandson of J. M. Brinkley, attributed the closing of the Colonial Motel, on his grandfather's former property, to traffic being diverted from Valdese after I-40 construction.²³⁵

Burke County experienced an economic decline and increase in unemployment during the national economic recession of the mid-1970s.²³⁶ While not enough evidence was found to indicate a trend, some business closures and relocations could have been impacted by the introduction of I-40 or the economic recession of the early 1970s. The Valdese Sandwich Shop and the Alamogordo, for instance, both closed in the early 1970s.²³⁷ Brinkley Lumber Company moved from Valdese in 1975; the company relocated to a larger tract with railroad siding on a heavily trafficked intersection in Rutherford College.²³⁸ In the mid-1970s, several downtown storefronts were also vacated, including Belk-Broome, though three were reoccupied shortly after.²³⁹

According to William Schubert, co-chairman of the Citizens for Community Progress (CCP) in Valdese, the downtown district was "a little rundown at the heels" by the mid-1970s.²⁴⁰ The Colonial Theater had been abandoned, some buildings had grown a little shabby, and most were nondescript.²⁴¹ Worried about the future of the town, the CCP began revitalization and

²³¹ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 356; Burke County, North Carolina, Deed Book 338:129 (Carl A. and Mildred G. Brinkley to City Ready Mix Company, Inc., 1986).

²³² "Valdese, NC," *The Duplin Times* (Warsaw, NC), August 21, 1952, <https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn92074110/1952-08-21/ed-1/seq-6/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²³³ Wanda Childers Drum, phone interview with author, August 17, 2022.

²³⁴ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 356.

²³⁵ Jim Brinkley, e-mail conversation with author, between August 8, 2022 and August 16, 2022.

²³⁶ Department of Community Development, *Burke County Housing Survey and Analysis*, (1976), 41, <https://archive.org/details/burkecountylandd1978west/page/n3/mode/2up> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²³⁷ McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 111.

²³⁸ Jim Brinkley, e-mail conversation with author, between August 8, 2022 and August 16, 2022.

²³⁹ "Valdese Rejuvenation Adds Quaintness and Vitality," *Chamber of Commerce News*, December 1978, in the Valdese – Newspaper Articles – 1970s vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC; "Valuable lessons from Valdese," August 15, 1978, in the Valdese – Newspaper Articles – 1970s vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC.

²⁴⁰ "Downtown Revitalization Is Underway," *Valdese News*, March 11, 1976, in the Valdese – Newspaper Articles – 1970s vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC.

²⁴¹ Nancy Brower, "An Unsentimental Look Changes the Face of Valdese," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, December 5, 1976, in the Valdese – Newspaper Articles – 1970s vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC.

beautification efforts, proposing storefront, sidewalk, and lighting renovations, as well as the addition of a downtown park, mall, motel, and other amenities.²⁴²

The proposed storefront designs by Folger-Olson and Associates (Morganton) referenced the European heritage of the town, filtered through a lens of 1970s nostalgia. Schubert explained: “We did want to create an Old-World theme that would take advantage of the heritage of the Waldenses.”²⁴³ The first block completed in this project was the City Motor Company block (now demolished), south of the Valdese Elementary School. The renovation included new brick and concrete sidewalks, decorative streetlamps, and storefront façade updates.²⁴⁴ While the entire project was never fully realized, by the end of 1978, about half of the downtown storefronts had received façade treatments; sidewalks, benches, and lighting were installed; and garden areas were added to Main Street. Around this time, money was also invested in renovations to the Town Hall and Fire Department (BK0597) and Community Center (BK0619).²⁴⁵

INDUSTRY

Industrial expansion continued in the post-war period, and industries continued to grow their output and facilities. In the late 1940s, Waldensian Hosiery Mills doubled the men’s seamless department and opened a seamless plant in Lenoir.²⁴⁶ A January 1951 article indicated that 1950 had seen an all-time high in building in Valdese, with much of this development stemming from industrial endeavors. Construction projects in the early 1950s included new finishing rooms for Pilot Full Fashioned Mills, a box factory (BK0662) opened by Waldensian Hosiery Mills, and a garage for the Waldensian Baking Company.²⁴⁷

The Valdese Manufacturing Company exemplifies this explosive growth. The company doubled the mill’s dyeing capacity after building one of the nation’s largest dye plants in the early 1950s, made possible by Valdese’s water and sewer improvements.²⁴⁸ While the plant employed between 201 and 250 people in 1944, by 1953, the company employed 350 and earned annual sales of around \$6 million.²⁴⁹ By 1965, the company employed 500.²⁵⁰ In the late 1960s, the Valdese Manufacturing Company continued to expand, erecting a \$2.5 million 200,000 square-foot cotton mill.²⁵¹

Amenities like the improved water and sewer system provided the impetus for ads enticing industry to the region, such as one in 1955 touting the town’s “electric power, water and labor

²⁴² “Downtown Revitalization Is Underway”; Ted Hall, “Future looking bright in Valdese,” *The News Herald*, December 20, 1976, in the Valdese – Newspaper Articles – 1970s vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC; “Valuable lessons from Valdese.”

²⁴³ “Valuable lessons from Valdese.”

²⁴⁴ Hall, “Future looking bright in Valdese.”

²⁴⁵ “Valdese Rejuvenation Adds Quaintness and Vitality.”

²⁴⁶ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 127.

²⁴⁷ “What’s Going on in North Carolina?” (1951): 15; Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 127.

²⁴⁸ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 57.

²⁴⁹ *North Carolina Directory of Manufacturing Firms*, 1944; “Waldensian, Pilot and Valdese Develop Successful Plants,” 35.

²⁵⁰ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 129.

²⁵¹ W. B. Wright, “Little Stories About Business,” *The State* 35, no. 18 (1968): 22, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/1098564> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

supply, unsurpassed climate.”²⁵² In 1948, C. Frank Gaddy and Leon E. Guigou opened Burkeyarns in a vacated hosiery mill (later Burke Mills, historically at the northeast corner of Main Street W. and Sterling Street NW., demolished ca. 2014). Burkeyarns advanced quickly and became a large employer of 1,600 people in the 1960s.²⁵³ In the late 1960s, Burkeyarns built a 45,000 square-foot plant, a new office, and other additions.²⁵⁴ Ten employees worked at David Baer Hosiery Mills when it opened in 1950; this operation would grow to 52 employees by the mid-1960s.²⁵⁵ Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Robinson established Robinson Hosiery Mill in 1956.²⁵⁶

These hosiery mills were introduced at a time of rapid development statewide for hosiery manufacturing.²⁵⁷ In 1953, Burke County was home to 22 hosiery mills, tied for fifth with Davidson County for the amount of hosiery firms.²⁵⁸ At the time, Valdese was described as the county’s “center of production” for hosiery products.²⁵⁹

During this period, the industrial sector saw great investment, modernization, and adaptation. Increasingly, mills were modernizing their plants and equipment and manufacturing materials beyond cotton, including rayon and other synthetic fibers.²⁶⁰ In Valdese, Burkeyarns specialized in dyed synthetic yarns,²⁶¹ and Martinat Hosiery Mills utilized both rayon and nylon.²⁶² In 1955, after a slight slump in the hosiery business, Pilot Full Fashioned premiered a successful new product made of stretch nylon.²⁶³ Pilot Full Fashioned and Valdese Manufacturing Company also both maintained research and development departments.²⁶⁴

Costs associated with modernizing and improving textile mills often led to consolidation within the industry.²⁶⁵ This may have been part of the reason for arguably the most important industrial development of the period in Valdese – the 1962 merger of Alba Hosiery (formerly, Pilot Full Fashioned) and Waldensian Hosiery to form Alba-Waldensian, Inc. (BK0284).²⁶⁶ The company continued to expand facilities, completing an addition in 1968²⁶⁷ and a finishing plant and an

²⁵² “Set Your Sites on Valdese, NC,” Advertisement in *The State* 22, no. 24 (1955): 18, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/931941?item=932000> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁵³ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 133; Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 57.

²⁵⁴ Wright, “Little Stories About Business,” 22.

²⁵⁵ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 134.

²⁵⁶ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, appendix H.

²⁵⁷ “Textiles in North Carolina,” *The E. S. C. Quarterly* 10, no. 3-4 (1952): 70,

<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/e.s.c.-quarterly-1952-summer-fall-v.10-no.3-4/4239185> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁵⁸ “State Has 56 Counties Producing Hosiery and Other Knit Goods,” *The E. S. C. Quarterly* 11, no. 1-2 (1953): 5, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/e.s.c.-quarterly-1953-winter-spring-v.11-no.1-2/4239182> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁵⁹ Sharpe, “Burke: Corridor of History,” 21.

²⁶⁰ Henry Lesesne, “NC Increases Lead as Nation's Premiere Textile State,” and Paul Kelly, “Huge Post-War Growth of N.C. Textiles; Many New Plants,” *The E. S. C. Quarterly* 10, no. 3-4 (1952): 76, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/e.s.c.-quarterly-1952-summer-fall-v.10-no.3-4/4239185> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁶¹ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 57.

²⁶² “Waldensian, Pilot and Valdese Develop Successful Plants,” 37.

²⁶³ Carol Dare, “Merely a Woman’s Opinion,” *The State* 22, no. 18 (1955): 55, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/930810> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁶⁴ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 128-129.

²⁶⁵ Griffin, “North Carolina Cotton Manufacturers, 1808-1960,” 473.

²⁶⁶ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 127.

²⁶⁷ Wright, “Little Stories About Business,” 22.

office and computer center in 1971 (BK0663).²⁶⁸ By 1968, the company operated eight mill sites, including one in Lenoir, and employed 1,700 people.²⁶⁹ Ivey Pope, a senior programmer analyst for the company, explained the importance of the business to Valdese: “Everybody in Valdese works for Alba sooner or later. It’s been a mainstay.”²⁷⁰

While not quite as prominent as the textile industry, the furniture industry made some inroads in Valdese. Perhaps the largest furniture firm in town, Crestline Furniture, was established in 1955 or 1956 with 15 employees in the reused John Massey building (BK0622). Less than a decade later, the company employed 410 workers and expanded its facility from 9,000 square feet to 140,000 square feet. Eventually the company claimed the title of the nation’s largest producer of early American upholstered furniture. The company expanded into Catawba County, as well as Mississippi.²⁷¹ In the mid-1950s, the largest employer in Burke County was Drexel Furniture Company; located a few miles west of Valdese, the company employed many residents of Valdese and Lovelady Township.²⁷²

The Waldensian Baking Company was also thriving in the post-World War II era. By the 1950s, the bakery was serving a large territory throughout North and South Carolina, adding plants in Shelby and Greenville.²⁷³ The main Valdese plant saw increasing improvements, including construction projects and modernization of machinery throughout the 1950s and 1960s. By 1965, the plant operated out of a 150,000 square-foot building and employed 470 workers; daily production exceeded the annual production of 1915.²⁷⁴

While employment data was not located for the earliest years of industry in Valdese, it appears women provided a significant amount of mill labor from at least the mid-1910s. In 1916, the Waldensian Hosiery Mill employed 35 men and 30 women, while the Valdese Manufacturing Company employed 100 women and 85 men.²⁷⁵ While this was possibly influenced by wartime conditions, the trend continued into the mid-1920s, when there was equal employment between the sexes or women outnumbered men at Waldensian Hosiery Mill, Pauline Knitting Mill, Martinat Hosiery Mill, and Valdese Manufacturing Company. Only at Valdese Weavers did male employees outnumber women.²⁷⁶ In 1953, 500 of the 800 Waldensian Hosiery Mills employees were women.²⁷⁷ A 1955 article indicated that men tended to work in the furniture mills, while women were more commonly employed in the hosiery, lingerie, and dress plants.²⁷⁸ After desegregation, Black men and women began to gain employment in local textile mills as well.

²⁶⁸ “100 Milestones of 1971: Burke,” *The State* 39, no. 15 (1972): 21,

<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/1036204> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁶⁹ BK0284 Alba-Waldensian Survey File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

²⁷⁰ Heather Howard, “Valdese losing more than jobs,” *Charlotte Observer*, March 2, 2003, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/630680312> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁷¹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 133-134; Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 57.

²⁷² Sharpe, “Burke: Corridor of History,” 21.

²⁷³ Jim Rostan (grandson of founder John P. Rostan Sr. and former executive vice president of the Waldensian Bakery), interview with author, August 2022.

²⁷⁴ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 130.

²⁷⁵ North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Thirtieth Annual Report*, 93.

²⁷⁶ North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report*, 41, 80-81.

²⁷⁷ Young, ed., *Textile Leaders of the South*, 71.

²⁷⁸ Sharpe, “Burke: Corridor of History,” 22.

Drexel Furniture Plant also became a common employer for Berrytown men.²⁷⁹ With continued technological advances providing increased agricultural efficiency, many farmers also gained employment in industry while maintaining a productive farm.²⁸⁰

It appears that local mill leaders upheld a commitment to investing in the local community. Newspaper coverage from the late 1960s indicates that major improvements to the Community Center occurred largely through the assistance of local industry.²⁸¹

Into the 1970s, most Burke County workers were still employed in the textile and furniture industries, and the county's economy remained dependent on these businesses.²⁸² While many industries in Valdese continued to expand facilities in the early 1970s,²⁸³ this period marks a shift in the economic climate of the town that was recognized by several interviewees during the survey.²⁸⁴ Multiple factors influenced this economic decline, including a national recession, a globalizing economy and increased competition, and changing fashion trends.²⁸⁵

Alba-Waldensian struggled in the first years of the 1970s, cutting top level management salaries by 38 percent in 1971,²⁸⁶ laying off 300 employees, and closing its Lenoir plant.²⁸⁷ According to Elizabeth Furr, granddaughter of Alba-Waldensian board chairman Albert Garrou and daughter of its president Louis Garrou, the severe financial losses were in part due to cheaper hosiery imports from Japan creating large pricing stresses.²⁸⁸ Simultaneously, women's hosiery was seeing a decrease in popularity, as women increasingly began wearing pants.²⁸⁹ Alba-Waldensian was able to successfully combat these issues by pursuing diversification. The company expanded its market by entering the healthcare field in 1973, applying the stretch-knitting technique used for its women's hosiery to the niche market of medical supplies. Alba-Waldensian materials were also used for men's suits, military uniforms, plus-sized wear, athletic wear, and Cadillac upholstery.²⁹⁰

²⁷⁹ Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

²⁸⁰ Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County*, 223-224.

²⁸¹ "Community Center Gets New Olympic Sized Pool," *Valdese News*, February 26, 1969, in the Valdese – Valdese Community Center vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC; "Community Center Pool is Dedicated."

²⁸² Western Piedmont Council of Governments, *Burke County Land Development Plan*, 22.

²⁸³ "100 Milestones of 1971: Burke," 21.

²⁸⁴ Phyllis Jacumin, site visit with author, July 20, 2022; Meredith Bleynat, Edward Bleynat Jr., and Wilma Bleynat Jones, site visit with author, July 21, 2022; Wanda Childers Drum, phone interview with author, August 17, 2022; Elgie McGaillard, conversation with author, Summer 2022.

²⁸⁵ Griffin, "North Carolina Cotton Manufacturers, 1808-1960," 473; Steve Matthews, "On the Run," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 27, 1984, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/622394605> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁸⁶ "S&Ls Set Records in June," *The Sentinel* (Winston Salem, NC), August 6, 1971, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/936642926/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁸⁷ Whitney Shaw, "Alba-Waldensian Makes Recovery," *The Robesonian* (Lumberton, NC), June 7, 1976, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/43326642> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁸⁸ Pandora Shaw, Isabella Shaw, and Elizabeth Furr, site visit with author, July 20, 2022.

²⁸⁹ Matthews, "On the Run."

²⁹⁰ Shaw, "Alba-Waldensian Makes Recovery"; Matthews, "On the Run."

The Past 50 Years (After 1975)

In the 1980s, the furniture and textile industries still dominated the economic life of Burke County, though companies continued to battle cheap imports and changing trends. Valdese maintained about a dozen mills, and the Waldensian Bakery remained one of the largest bakeries in the southeast United States.²⁹¹ Despite the general downturn of the textile industry, Alba-Waldensian doubled its sales between 1973 and 1983.²⁹² Valdese succeeded in attracting a new foreign textile company, Valtex, Inc., to Valdese in 1986; this was attributed to the relative success of Valdese's other industries, water and sewer amenities, and the proximity to an airport.²⁹³ The decade also saw the introduction of battery manufacturer Duracell, which opened a plant to the northeast of Valdese; this was later sold to SAFT America in 1989.²⁹⁴

Issues of foreign competition and stagnating sales were amplified in the 1990s and 2000s, leading to consolidation, bankruptcy, reorganization, and liquidation of many textile firms across the country. In North Carolina, there was a 37 percent decrease in textile and apparel plants between 1995 and 2005.²⁹⁵ In Valdese, some large companies were purchased by national and international firms during this time. Meridian Industries bought the Valdese Manufacturing Company in the mid-1990s.²⁹⁶ In 1994, the Rostan family sold the Waldensian Bakery to Coopersmith, a Sunbeam bakery conglomerate with national name recognition and resources.²⁹⁷ An Israeli-based company, Tefron, Inc., purchased Alba-Waldensian in 1999. Within five years, the manufacturing operation moved to Israel, leaving only 20 employees in Valdese.²⁹⁸ As other mills closed or moved overseas, Burke Mills (previously Burkeyarns) experienced a drop in customers for its dyed yarns for knitting and weaving. The mill closed in 2008, leaving 130 people unemployed.²⁹⁹ Robinson Hosiery Mills remained as one of the last family-owned mills in town, though much of its operation burned in 2005.³⁰⁰

²⁹¹ Eliza McCrary, "Waldensians Keep Italian Traditions Alive in Valdese," *Asheville Citizen Times*, August 16, 1982, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/203878519> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁹² Matthews, "On the Run."

²⁹³ Liz Chandler, "Construction To Start For Textile Plant," *The Charlotte Observer*, Sept. 19, 1986, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/632557276> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁹⁴ Julie Ball, "Heavy industries face expansion," *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), March 25, 1990, in the Industries vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC; Laura Zelenko, "It's Not Duracell – But It's Still Making Batteries," *The Charlotte Observer*, January 8, 1989, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/625969737/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁹⁵ Larry Clark, "When textiles was 'the King,'" July 22, 2007, in the Industries vertical file, North Carolina Room, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC.

²⁹⁶ Susan Woody, "Valdese Manufacturing, Inc. looking at new ownership," *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), December 10, 1993, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/984721564> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

²⁹⁷ Jim Rostan, interview with author, August 2022.

²⁹⁸ Howard, "Valdese losing more than jobs."

²⁹⁹ Sharon McBrayer, "Plant closure to leave 130 without jobs," *Hickory Daily Record*, Sept. 8, 2008, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/979687930/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

³⁰⁰ "Fire destroys hosiery plant," *The Herald-Sun* (Durham, NC), Sept. 23, 2005, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/795699432> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

Crestline Furniture was eventually sold to Corson Furniture and then, in 1991, to Hickory Hill, which closed in 2008. A few months later, Kellex opened in the Crestline Furniture building, continuing the furniture industry in Valdese by manufacturing institutional furniture.³⁰¹

The struggling industrial sector has had significant impacts on the rest of Valdese, including the closure of downtown businesses. The decline of the textile and furniture industry has also changed the economic base of the community. A 2014 study found that most workers are now employed in Education, Health, and Social Services, then Manufacturing. Valdese has grown slowly in recent years, with only a 0.1 percent increase in population between 2000 and 2014.³⁰²

Valdese residents continue to celebrate their Waldensian heritage with seasonal productions of the historical outdoor drama “From This Day Forward” and an annual Waldensian Festival. In the 1990s, another big endeavor celebrating this heritage, led by Jimmy Jacumin, included the construction of the Trail of Faith (BK0460). This outdoor museum chronicles the history and struggles of the Waldensians in Europe and their migration to Valdese.³⁰³

³⁰¹ Sharon McBrayer, “Kellex Corp. achieves hiring goals,” *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), February 13, 2009, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/984704604/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023); Jim Rostan, interview with author, August 2022.

³⁰² NC Small Town Main Street Program, “Valdese Downtown Retail Market Study,” 2014, 3, 5, 11, https://static.townofvaldese.com/public/media/uploads/pdfs/valdese_market_study_3-2014.pdf (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

³⁰³ Margaret Allen, “Trail of Faith tells story of Waldenses,” *The Charlotte Observer*, June 17, 1998, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/628888294> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

SURVEY FINDINGS

Survey Update

Randall Cotton's 1984 countywide architectural survey documented residential, religious, commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings within the town limits of Valdese. He included 15 individual resources and five groups of resources surveyed as blockface files. Four of the five blockfaces included primarily residential properties, and one covered the downtown business district.

Of the 15 individual resources, two have been demolished (BK0273 Francis Garrou High School and BK0283 Pauline Knitting Mill), though related resources on the grounds of each site were documented during this survey. Most of the buildings represented in the blockface files are still extant. Demolished properties within blockfaces include the Bartholomew Bounous Farm (BK0491, in blockface BK0206, burned in the 1990s), the Francis Garrou House (in blockface BK0282, razed ca. 1990), 320 Main Street W. (in blockface BK0281, Waldensian bungalow demolished ca. 1990), the John-Jacques Leger House (in blockface BK0282, demolished ca. 2019), the John Henry Pascal House (in blockface BK0275)³⁰⁴, and the Micol House (in blockface BK0275, demolished between 1993 and 2009).

Many of the extant documented buildings have been altered in some way over the past 40 years. The largest changes have come from demolition, such as those mentioned above. Several industrial properties also saw significant sections of their complexes demolished. For instance, the Valdese Manufacturing Company (BK0276) once featured two large mills and several warehouses; these were removed in the early 2010s and replaced by a large new mill in 2016.³⁰⁵ Several pieces of the earlier complex remain, including a ca. 1935 office, ca. 1940 dyehouse, ca. 1955 building, and ca. 1965 warehouse. Likewise, a ca. 1920 box manufacturing and storage building was destroyed at the Waldensian Hosiery section of Alba-Waldensian (BK0284) in 2010.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ The demolition date for the John Henry Pascal house is unclear. The property is on the border of two USGS Quad maps and no aerial imagery prior to 2009 was located for this area. The house was demolished prior to 2009.

³⁰⁵ "Meridian I," *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), April 13, 2016, https://morganton.com/news/meridian-1/image_df5db554-01cf-11e6-a1c7-5faf4785a35a.html (accessed Sept. 4, 2023); Demolition and construction can be seen using the OrthoPhotos feature on <https://gis.burkenc.org/>.

³⁰⁶ Demolition can be seen using the OrthoPhotos feature on <https://gis.burkenc.org/>.



These photos show the Valdese Manufacturing Company before the demolition of the early 2010s. It blends typical early-twentieth-century mill design of a brick exterior and square, squat brick towers with a Waldensian stone base and stucco over stone on its two-story tower. Photo by Randall Cotton.



The connection between the ca. 1940 dyehouse and the 2016 mill at the Valdese Manufacturing Company (BK0276). Photo by author.

Additions, though not as common, are evident. These include a small one-story, metal-clad addition at Valdese Weavers (BK0280, NR 2023). A ca. 2005 kitchen renovation expanded the historic footprint of the John H. Pascal House (BK0094, SL 1984); this project involved a small vestibule addition, as well.³⁰⁷ The primary elevation of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church (BK0018, NR 1984) appears unchanged since the 1984 survey. However, in 1991, the façade of the building was moved forward, and four bays were added to the east and west elevations, extending the building to the south.³⁰⁸

Material changes, namely window replacements, are the most common modifications seen on resurveyed buildings in Valdese. New windows were installed at industrial properties, like the Waldensian Baking Company (BK0279) and Waldensian Hosiery Mill (BK0284), as well as at residential properties, like the Henry and Dora Perrou House (BK0479, in blockface BK0281), William and Viola Perrou House (BK0514, in blockface BK0281), and the Emile A. Glasbrook House (BK0516, in blockface BK0206). Other material changes include new asphalt shingle roof

³⁰⁷ Wilkes Pascal, site visit with author, Summer 2022.

³⁰⁸ Date derived from cornerstone on addition to the church.

(BK0461 Henry Vinay House, in blockface BK0275) and chimney removal (Waldensian Presbyterian Church and BK0471 John Pons House, in blockface BK0275). The Waldensian Presbyterian Church Manse (BK0601, in blockface BK0282) received new windows in the gable peak, new porch posts, and vinyl siding. In addition to its new windows, the ca. 1940s office wing at the Waldensian Hosiery Mill underwent a façade update that added Classical details on the Art Deco building and a front porch obscuring the original stairs.



The ca. 1940 office wing of Waldensian Hosiery Mill (BK0284) before its exterior renovation. Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.



The results of the exterior renovation of the Waldensian Hosiery Mill (BK0284). The concrete wall conceals the original stairs. Photo by author.

Generally, even the most altered buildings are recognizable from the exterior. While interior photographs were not taken in the 1980s, the interiors of several buildings seem to be greatly altered. Interior renovations at the Waldensian Hosiery Mill include the addition of wall partitions, Classical decorations, and tile flooring. Interior photographs of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church Manse show that the space has been reconfigured as a duplex with updated kitchens and bathrooms.³⁰⁹ Both the mill and the manse are clearly altered from the exterior; several properties appear relatively intact from the exterior but have interior renovations. The

³⁰⁹ “100/100A Massel Avenue SE., Valdese, NC 28690,” Zillow, https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/100-100A-Massel-Ave-SE-Valdese-NC-28690/2070599144_zpid/ (accessed Sept 4., 2023).

only exterior change to the Henri Grill House (BK0512) appears to be a new entry door; however, on the interior, doorways have been removed in favor of open arch passages, tile floors have been added, variations in floor height have been leveled, and rooms have been finished.³¹⁰ Likewise, there is little exterior change to the Valdese Elementary School (BK0017, NR 1984); however, a complete renovation of the foyer and the auditorium updated the seating and stage and removed wainscotting. Throughout the rest of the building, the original tin ceiling has been removed or obscured in some areas. Alternative ceiling materials include a drop ceiling and square panels imitating the original tin.

There are properties that feature almost no change from their 1980s documentation. There are no major changes at the Pilot Full Fashioned Mills (part of BK0284), aside from deterioration. The Albert Garrou House (BK0277, SL 2022) retains much of its historic appearance, despite renovation and rehabilitation work around 2000. The windows were replaced, though the same material and pane configuration was used. On the interior, work was generally relegated to utility-oriented rooms in the basement, as well as a kitchen remodel, which combined the original kitchen, butler's pantry, and breakfast room.³¹¹ The ca. 1893 Pierre Tron House also appears unchanged, though it was moved between its second (BK0274) and third location (BK0541) in the mid-1990s. This facilitated the building's use at the Trail of Faith (BK0460).

While many buildings may not have seen significant alterations between the previous survey and today, some had already been substantially altered by the 1980s. For instance, the original exposed stone exterior at the Sala House (BK0600, in blockface BK0282) was stuccoed between its construction and the 1980s.³¹² Randall Cotton also noted the residence had "many modernizations."³¹³

The only commercial buildings surveyed by Randall Cotton were a part of the Valdese Commercial District (BK0278, SL 2022). Some retain much of their original detailing, like the Art Deco pilasters and brick details on Roses 5, 10, & 25c Store (BK0569) and on BK0571. Others have been noticeably altered. A stone veneer replaced the stucco façade of Benlee's (BK0570), and a new façade replaced the black and white tile of the Waldensian Market (BK0582). Other changes have improved the district's integrity. The downtown revitalization effort of the mid-1970s introduced façade treatments of faux half-timbering. It is unclear how many buildings in the downtown district received these updates; however, many stores, like BK0585 and the Style Shop (BK0576), have restored their older storefronts in recent years.³¹⁴ A few remnants of the 1970s are found at BK0560 and the Valdese Esso Station (BK0590).

³¹⁰ Mark and Jeri Boerger, site visit with author, July 20, 2022.

³¹¹ "404 Louise Avenue NE., Valdese NC," Document created by Glen Harvey (former homeowner), provided to author by Pandora Shaw and Isabella Shaw at site visit with author, July 20, 2022. A copy of this document can be found in BK0277 Albert Garrou House survey file, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

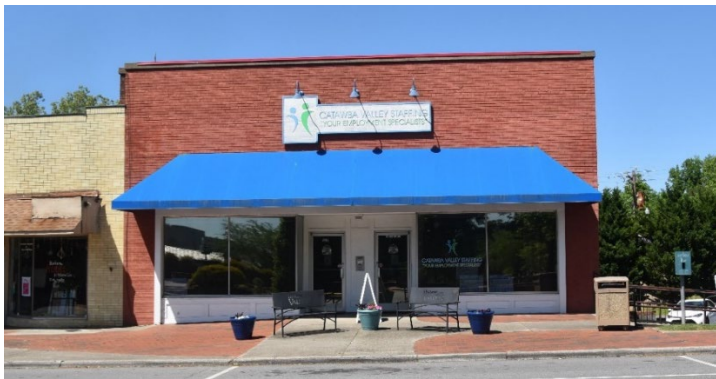
³¹² Caption of Photo of Sala House, Photo Album: Homes of Early Settlers, Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, NC.

³¹³ BK0282 Massell Avenue & St. Germain Avenue Neighborhood Survey File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

³¹⁴ "Downtown Revitalization," Town of Valdese, <https://www.townofvaldese.com/community-affairs-tourism/main-street-program/downtown-revitalization/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).



The 1970s façade treatment on BK0585. Photo from Google Map Street View, August 2012.



The rehabilitated façade of BK0585 in the downtown commercial district. Photo by author.

Blockface and D/N/A Records

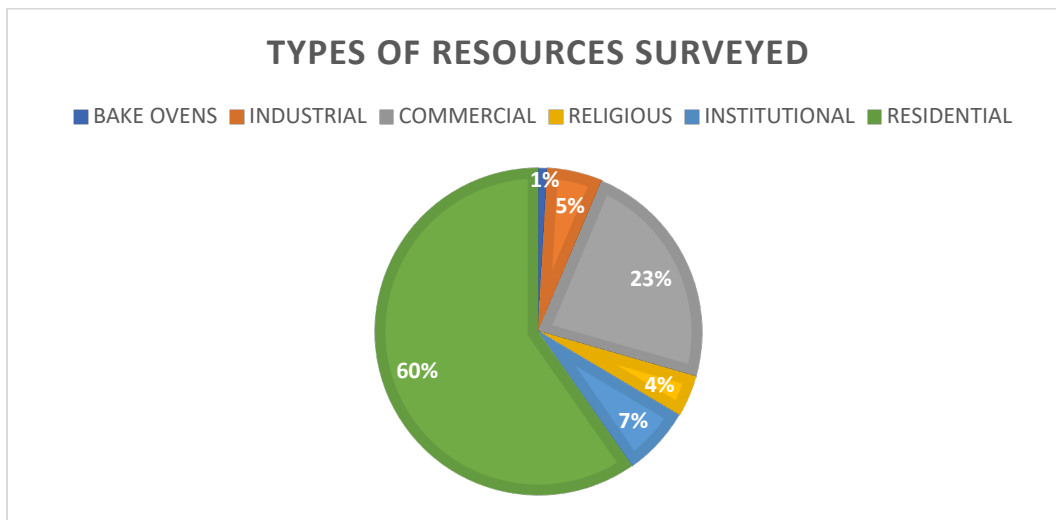
Randall Cotton surveyed five blockface files, all of which were updated during this survey using District/Neighborhood/Area (D/N/A) forms. Of the Church Street Houses (BK0275), four of the six buildings are still extant. The Massell Avenue & St. Germain Avenue neighborhood (BK0282) retains five of the seven properties documented. Of the Waldensian Bungalows (BK0281), two of the three remain. Everything surveyed within the Valdese Commercial District (BK0278, SL 2022) is extant. Within these blockface files, all extant properties were assigned individual survey site numbers (SSNs). The Laurel Street Houses blockface (BK0206), however, included a map encompassing a wide geographic range. Many of the buildings included were not photographed or described in detail in 1984. Only a portion of those buildings originally documented as BK0206 were given their own SSNs in 2022.

Several groups of buildings were newly surveyed with D/N/A records. Within these D/N/A records, not all resources were given their own SSNs. Resources individually surveyed within a D/N/A include representative examples of property types and styles, unusual or impressive examples of property types and styles, and important community landmarks. For example, the Hoy and Carolina Metcalf House (BK0477) is a typical example of a Ranch house on Praley Street NW. (BK0476), the ca. 1922 Tudor Revival-style Martinat House (BK0527) is one of the earliest and highest-style houses in the Martinat Neighborhood (BK0534), and the Berrytown American Legion (BK0666) is an important social gathering center for Berrytown (BK0664).

While most D/N/As in Valdese are primarily residential, the Alba-Waldensian Historic District (BK0660, SL 2022) is an industrial district, and the Trail of Faith (BK0460) is an open-air museum composed mostly of reconstructed buildings and objects representing the Waldensian experience in Italy and Valdese.

Results of the Comprehensive Architectural Survey

This survey documented 224 individual resources,³¹⁵ of which 221 are extant.³¹⁶ Five blockface files were updated using the D/N/A form and four new D/N/A files created.



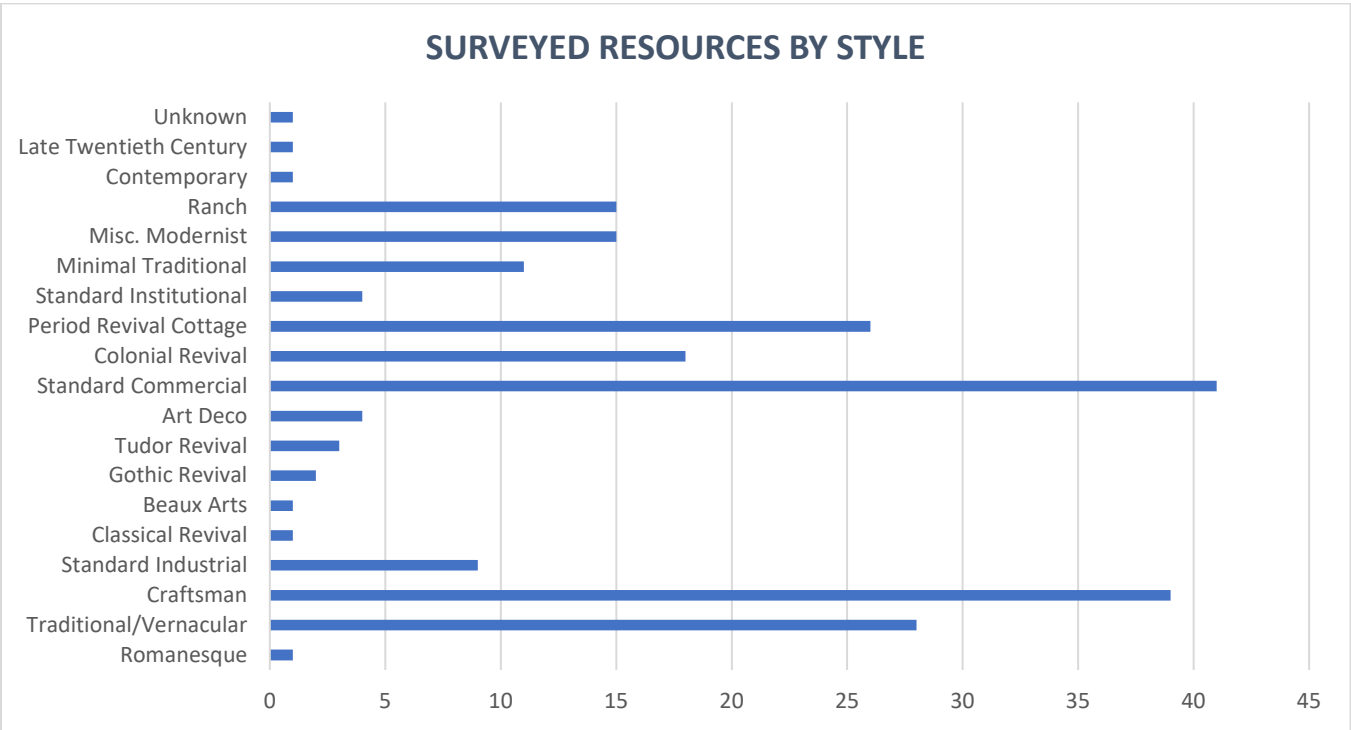
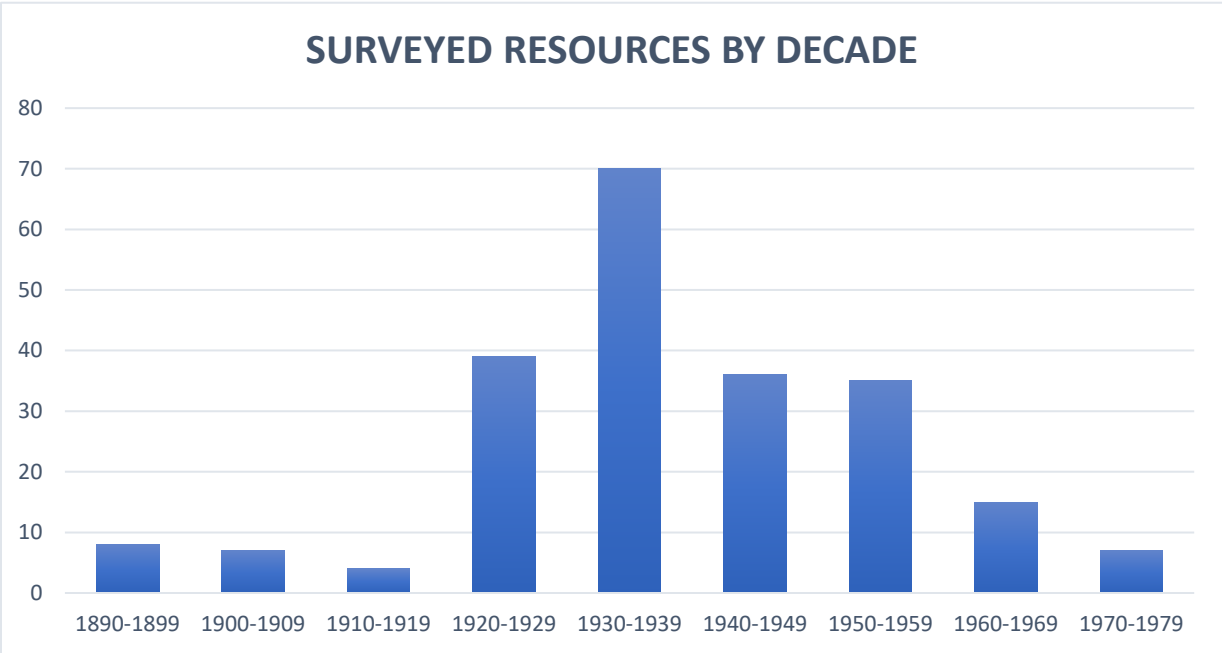
Note: This chart is representative only of properties that were surveyed individually (not in blockfaces or as D/N/As) and were extant at the time of the survey. Created by author using Microsoft Excel.

Over half of the properties surveyed individually are residential, with commercial buildings constituting roughly a quarter. Construction dates range from 1893 to 1978, with roughly 60 percent from the interwar period between World War I and World War II. D/N/A records represent a varied distribution of construction dates and sometimes include later construction outside of the historic period. For example, the majority of the buildings in the mill village (BK0474) are from the 1920s to the 1950s, but construction dates range from the 1910s to the 2000s. The D/N/A record created for the ca. 1995 Trail of Faith (BK0460) also postdates the historic period.

The architectural styles of most resources are categorized as Standard Commercial (41), Craftsman (40), Traditional/Vernacular (28), and Period Revival Cottage (26). Residential properties included in D/N/A records represent a variety of architectural styles, including traditional/vernacular houses in the mill village and Berrytown (BK0664), Period Revival Cottages on Italy Street NE. (BK0500), and Ranch houses in Sunset Acres (BK0473), Praley Street (BK0476), and Pons Park (BK0493).

³¹⁵ 225 site numbers were used during the survey, as the Pierre Tron House has been documented at two different locations with two different survey site numbers (BK0274 and BK0541).

³¹⁶ Non-extant properties: Pauline Mill (BK0283), Francis Garrou High School (BK0273), Bartholomew Bounous Farm (BK0491, in blockface BK0206).



Note: These charts are representative only of properties that were surveyed individually and were extant at the time of the survey. Many construction dates of surveyed buildings are estimates based on architectural evaluation, tax assessor/deed data, or other research. The graphs represent only the buildings surveyed, and therefore, are not representative of the entire building stock of Valdese. Created by author using Microsoft Excel.

OVERVIEW OF TRADITIONAL WALDENSIAN ARCHITECTURE, AS ADAPTED TO WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Due to the unique history of the town's settlement, Valdese demonstrates a notable architectural legacy still evident in some of the town's architecture. Some of the earliest buildings in Valdese were quickly-built frame "sawmill shacks"; however, the Waldensian settlers soon began constructing buildings using the knowledge and skills brought with them from northern Italy.

Most of the Waldensians' buildings in Italy were made of stone using a dry-stack method. This involves packing horizontally-laid stones tightly together with little to no mortar. As Burke County offered an abundance of local fieldstone, the Waldensian settlers continued this tradition in their new home. An early house that is likely the best example of pure Waldensian vernacular architecture is the 1894 Refour House (BK0095, SL 1984). The stone house is two-and-a-half stories high and built into an embankment, a common feature in the Waldensian tradition. Also typical, the lowest level housed the family's farm animals, the main floor was designated as living space, and a loft was reserved for sleeping. This arrangement conserved land in the crowded valleys and allowed the family to be close to its animals in the case of inclement weather.³¹⁷ Similarly, the original ca. 1895 John H. Pascal House (on the property of BK0094) is built into an embankment with space for animals on the ground level.³¹⁸



Exposed stone and banked construction as shown on a house in the Waldensian valleys. Photo by Catherine Bishir, June 1985. Burke County Front Matter, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

³¹⁷ Lynne Galvin, "Historic Preservation Technology Architecture Buildings by Waldensian Rock Masons," Summer 2003, found in Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, North Carolina.

³¹⁸ Elizabeth Campbell, "Everlasting Rocks: Conversations about the Rock Buildings of Valdese, North Carolina," M. A. thesis, (University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 1998), 108.



The original John H. Pascal House (at BK0094) is banked into a hillside. It originally consisted of about a third of the current building, which was later extended to the right. Photo by author.

As the Refour and Pascal families settled into life in Valdese, both families erected new houses. The ca. 1900 two-story John H. Pascal House (BK0094, SL 1984) featured stone construction, though it was not banked into a hillside. The house expanded in the 1920s, 1950s, and in 2005, and the house was stuccoed in the 1960s.³¹⁹ The stucco exterior, also seen on the ca. 1925 Refour House (on site of BK0095), is reminiscent of more formal Waldensian architectural traditions found in towns.³²⁰ Several other buildings demonstrate this tradition, including the Andrew F. Sala House (BK0600) and the John Pons House (BK0471). The Waldensian Presbyterian Church (BK0018, NR 1984) mimics the Romanesque churches of northern Italy, showcasing stuccoed masonry, unadorned wall surfaces, and engaged bell tower.³²¹



An example of a stuccoed building in the Waldensian valleys. Photo by Catherine Bishir, June 1985. Burke County Front Matter, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

³¹⁹ Campbell, “Everlasting Rocks,” 108; Wilkes Pascal, site visit with author, Summer 2022.

³²⁰ Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 159-160.

³²¹ Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 158; Mintzer, “Waldensian Presbyterian Church.”



The Sala House (BK0600) exhibits a stucco exterior, reminiscent of “formal”architecture in the Waldensian valleys. Photo by author.

By the 1920s, stonemasons in Valdese were adapting their traditional stonework methods to American house forms like the bungalow.³²² The Perrous and Bleynats built five Waldensian stone bungalows in the 1920s. Examples of this tradition can still be seen at the ca. 1921 Henry P. and Dora Perrou House (BK0479), the ca. 1922 Albert Bleynat House (BK0536), and the ca. 1933 William and Viola Perrou House (BK0514). The Albert Bleynat House combines Waldensian stonework, banked construction, and the bungalow form.³²³ Edward Bleynat, Albert’s son, explained the stonework tradition seen on the house: “He used stones picked up in his own field, the timber, mud, and sand found on his land and his knowledge of stoneworking to build this house, which is very representative of the “poor” Waldensian style of architecture.”³²⁴



The Albert Bleynat House (BK0536) exhibits an exposed stone exterior. The house originally had a recessed front porch but was enclosed soon after its construction to accommodate the growing family. Photo by author.

³²² Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 158.

³²³ Campbell, “Everlasting Rocks,” 124.

³²⁴ “Rock Houses Still Show Early Waldenses’ Skill,” *Valdese News*, found in Scrapbook, Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, North Carolina.



Traditionally, the stonework trade was passed from father to son.³²⁵ Albert Bleynat's sons, John and George, added this addition to the house in the late 1950s.³²⁶ Photo by author.

For some stonemasons, stonework was certainly an artistic endeavor. According to Edward Bleynat, his father would say of concrete block: "Stacking blocks didn't take any imagination."³²⁷ This creativity is evident at the 1929-1948 Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House (BK0065, NR 2002). The house took ample inspiration from tradition, though it exercised significant design freedom. The frame house has a fieldstone foundation and river rock veneer and is built into an embankment. Drawing from other architectural modes, it features a bungalow form and Stick-style details.³²⁸

The evolution of stonework continued throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Examples such as BK0485, BK0507, and several unsurveyed houses on Bleynat Street were made by Waldensian stonemasons, though these houses depart from traditional appearance and methods.



BK0507 was built by Waldensian stonemasons, though it departs from the traditional appearance of the Waldensian stonework. Photo by author.

³²⁵ Galvin, "Historic Preservation Technology."

³²⁶ Meredith Bleynat, Edward Bleynat Jr., and Wilma Bleynat Jones, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

³²⁷ "Rock Houses Still Show Early Waldenses' Skill."

³²⁸ Martin and Woodard, "Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House"; Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 159; Campbell, "Everlasting Rocks," 115.

Several of the Waldensian stonemasons worked professionally throughout the region and state. These men worked on buildings throughout Burke County, such as the Abernathy Memorial Methodist Church (BK0077) and the Jonas Ridge School (BK0200).³²⁹ In nearby McDowell County, Waldensians also built the Lake Tahoma Dance Hall (MC0150) and the Nebo United Methodist Church (MC0157). Farther away, Albert Pons, who lent his masonry skills to the first community oven in Valdese, worked on Duke Chapel (DH0725) in Durham and the Gimghoul Castle (OR0125) in Chapel Hill.³³⁰ There are reports of Pons working on the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Memorial Bridge in Washington, D.C., as well as designing one of the stone arch entrances at the Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.³³¹



Stonework at the Nebo United Methodist Church (MC0157). Photo by Ted Alexander, 1985. MC0157 Nebo United Methodist Church Survey File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

This architectural tradition is likely not as readily apparent as it once was in Valdese. While prominent examples still exist in the Valdese Elementary School (BK0017, NR 1984) and the Waldensian Presbyterian Church, several buildings were demolished between the 1984 survey and 2022, including a stone bungalow on Main Street E. (BK0281, demolished ca. 1990) and the stuccoed Catherine Rivoire Cole House (site of BK0611, demolished ca. 2017).

Many vestiges of the architectural legacy are tucked away, such as impressive stone outbuildings extant at the John H. Pascal House and the Albert Bleynat House, and the stone bake oven (BK0482, SL 2022) at the Albert Pons House (BK0670). Many properties still contain Waldensian stonework, though not as a prominent architectural feature, in retaining walls and foundations. Retaining walls can be seen scattered throughout neighborhoods like the Martinat Neighborhood (BK0534) and Italy Street NW. (BK0500). Individual properties in Valdese that

³²⁹ Galvin, “Historic Preservation Technology”; John Bleynat, “Waldensian Stone Masons.”

³³⁰ Bleynat, “Waldensian Stone Masons.”

³³¹ Galvin, “Historic Preservation Technology”; John Bleynat, “Waldensian Stone Masons.”

have stone retaining walls include the residential Garrou House (BK0548) and the industrial Alba-Waldensian complex (BK0660, SL 2022). Stone foundations are seen on the Francis Garrou High School Gymnasium (BK0457), the Benjamin Pons House (BK0542), and the Pineburr Mill (BK0652, SL 2023).



A stone outbuilding at the John H. Pascal property (BK0094) once served as a dwelling. Photo by author.



The oldest section of the Pineburr Mill (BK0652, SL 2023) sits on a stone foundation. Photo by author.

The designs of several newer buildings have been inspired by the Waldensian architectural tradition. The 1974 Waldensian Heritage Museum (unsurveyed, 208 Rodoret Street S.) exhibits a stucco exterior, while the 2010 Valdese Town Hall (unsurveyed, 102 Massel Avenue SW.) features a mix of stucco and exposed stonework, laid by local mason Jeff McGee in the traditional Waldensian manner.³³² According to Edward Bleynat Jr., the arched windows of the Albert Bleynat House served as the inspiration for the front archway of the Town Hall.³³³

³³² Sharon McBrayer, “Valdese town hall built for the future,” *The News Herald* (Morganton, NC), Sept. 3, 2010, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/984664687/> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

³³³ Meredith Bleynat, Edward Bleynat Jr., and Wilma Bleynat Jones, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

The Waldensian settlers also brought the tradition of outdoor communal bake ovens to Valdese. Several examples of Italian bake ovens were found during this project, and it appears common traits include a stone base, small arched oven opening, and a gable roof with an overhang.³³⁴ Valdese's first fieldstone oven, constructed in 1893, conforms to these traits.



A bake oven in Prali, Italy. Photo from “Memorie di pane: Il forno di Villa di Prali.”



The 1893 Community Oven (no longer extant) looks similar to the Prali, Italy oven. A replica is located at the Trail of Faith (BK0460). Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.

Three bake ovens built between ca. 1894 and ca. 1906 have been documented. The ca. 1894 Pierre Tron Bake Oven (BK0264, SL 2022) and the ca. 1906 Albert Pons Bake Oven (BK0482,

³³⁴ Pons, “Memorie di pane: Il forno di Villa di Prali”; Pons, “Forni banali.” Photos provided to author by L'archivio Fotografico, Fondazione Centro Culturale Valdese can be found in Burke County Front Matter, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

SL 2022) both feature the stone base and arched opening common on earlier ovens; the Pons Oven also has a front-gable roof. The Tron Oven presents an uncharacteristic brick chimney, though it is unclear if it is original or a later alteration. While none of the Italian ovens referenced share this mix of materials, other early buildings in Valdese do.³³⁵ The third oven is on the property of the John H. Pascal House (BK0094). While the design of the oven is typical, it is uncommon as it is enclosed within a blacksmith's shop; it is unclear if this was the original design or a later change.



The Albert Pons Bake Oven (BK0482, SL 2022) has a stone base, arched oven opening, and gable roof. Photo by author.

PROPERTY TYPES IN VALDESE: INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES

During this survey, 13 primary industrial resources were surveyed. Construction dates span from the ca. 1915 Valdese Weavers (BK0280, NR 2023) to the 1971 Alba-Waldensian Office Building (BK0663). Most pre-date World War II, though later industries often repurposed and expanded earlier buildings.

As is common in western North Carolina, a small industrial district abuts the commercial area downtown.³³⁶ This area includes Alba-Waldensian (BK0284), the Valdese Manufacturing Company (BK0276), and the Valdese Weavers. These early buildings are likewise all clustered along the railroad. In addition, Crestline Furniture (BK0622) sits in the vicinity on the south side of the railroad, and Pineburr Mill (BK0652, SL 2023) is located along the tracks on the east side of town. The original location of the Waldensian Baking Company (BK0279) was near Alba-Waldensian. Perhaps influenced by improving roadways, the company purchased its first delivery truck in the 1920s and, in 1929, opened a large new facility on the north side of Main Street on the east side of Valdese.³³⁷ Co-founder John P. Rostan credited improved roads with greatly assisting the growth of the company: “Our business really started growing just as soon as good roads came into general use in this part of the state.”³³⁸ In the coming decades, the proximity of mills to the rail line became less important. New industries constructed their

³³⁵ See BK0512 Henri Grill House and BK0276 Valdese Manufacturing Company for examples.

³³⁶ Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 53.

³³⁷ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 93.

³³⁸ “Waldensian Bakers,” 20.

buildings along Main Street, the major east-west thoroughfare through town running parallel to the railroad a few blocks to the north. These included Francis-Louise Full Fashion Mills (BK0453, ca. 1938), Dolly Hosiery Mill (BK0454, ca. 1940), and Pons Full Fashion Mills (BK0455, ca. 1962).

In Valdese, some of the earliest industrial buildings built prior to World War I were of frame construction. This included the Martinat Mill (unsurveyed, historically sat on the corner of Eldred Street NE. and Martinat Drive NE., demolished ca. 1990s), Pauline Mill (BK0283), and the Waldensian Hosiery Mill. While most industrial outfits moved into more substantial masonry buildings by the 1920s, and earlier frame buildings were demolished, the Pauline Mill was still extant, though vacant, during the 1980s survey (and then demolished ca. 2000). One outlier is the Waldensian Baking Company's original building of stone and brick (demolished).



The frame building of the Martinat Hosiery Mill (no longer extant) was in east Valdese. Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.



The original Waldensian Baking Company building (no longer extant) was of stone and brick. It housed the Rostan and Ghigo families on the second floor. Photo from "Waldensian Bakers," 18.

The architectural style of most of the industrial properties in Valdese, ten in total, is classified as "Standard Industrial." These buildings are generally utilitarian and largely devoid of ornamentation. Despite the wide range of construction dates for these buildings, from ca. 1915 to

ca. 1962, there are some notable architectural similarities between them. Most are clad in either running bond or common bond brick. Some retain stone foundations, evidence of their Waldensian roots, as seen at Alba-Waldensian, Valdese Weavers, and Pineburr Mill. The buildings are generally one-story, though the sloping landscape accommodates exposed basement levels at some mills, like at Pons Full Fashion and Dolly Hosiery. They are also largely asymmetrical and have parapet roofs with either stepped or flat cornices.

Those industrial buildings with a bit more architectural style follow some of these same trends. The Waldensian Baking Company and Alba-Waldensian are also brick-clad with parapet roofs. However, the Beaux Arts-style bakery retains a distinctive ornate arcaded entry. The Pilot Full Fashioned Mill within the Alba-Waldensian complex features a ca. 1935 office space that includes an Art Deco-style concrete door surround and pilaster details. The ca. 1940s office of the Waldensian Hosiery Mill also includes Art Deco brick ornamentation, a round-light door, and glass-block surround. The Alba-Waldensian complex features a 1971 Modern office building that retains high exterior integrity. It has a flat roof, large overhanging eaves, a dominant central projecting block clad in rough concrete panels, and a tall grid of windows.



The arcaded entrance of the Waldensian Baking Company (BK0279). Photo by author.

Most of the industrial buildings documented have large additions, due to industrial growth or reuse. Many additions date to the historic period or soon after, after which the industrial sector began to experience a decline. The largely utilitarian additions can impact the building's appearance, producing differing rooflines, like at Crestline Furniture and the Pilot Full Fashioned Warehouse (BK0661), and mixing exterior materials. In addition to brick, industrial additions in Valdese feature corrugated metal (Valdese Manufacturing; Francis-Louise Full Fashion; Paper Box Division (BK0662)), concrete block (Valdese Weavers), and vinyl siding (Dolly Hosiery, Francis-Louise Full Fashion). Other common material changes include window replacements, like at Valdese Manufacturing and Waldensian Baking Company. Windows at Valdese Weavers and Dolly Hosiery have been obscured with brick and a faux-stone veneer, respectively.



Vinyl cladding can be seen on the rear of the Francis-Louise Full Fashion Mill (BK0453). The building also has replacement windows and some sort of fenestration changes indicated by the change in brick. Photo by author.



Several additions, including different rooflines and exterior materials, can be seen at the Pons Full Fashion Mills (BK0455). Photo by author.

PROPERTY TYPES IN VALDESE: COMMERCIAL RESOURCES

Fifty-one commercial resources were surveyed. The earliest documented were constructed in the mid-to-late 1920s. These include the commercial building at 412 Main Street W. (BK0555, ca. 1925), the Colonial Building (BK0572, ca. 1926), the commercial building at 100 Main Street W. (BK0577, ca. 1927), the Emergency Surgery Center (BK0564, ca. 1928), and Benlee's (BK0570, ca. 1928). The newest commercial building surveyed is likely the ca. 1970 Rock Drug Store (BK0558). Most of the extant commercial resources were built in the 1930s and 1940s.

As discussed in the historic context, some of the earliest commercial buildings in Valdese lined Massel Street. Historic photographs and maps show at least a few of these buildings were frame and one- to two-stories, including the Valdese Depot, though none remain. By the 1920s, development was migrating to Connelly Street (now Main Street). Most of the buildings documented from that decade sit along Main Street between Rodoret Street and Church Street. In the 1930s and 1940s, infill development occurred in this area, and new buildings extended farther east past Laurel Street, especially in the blocks between Rodoret Street and Carolina Street. These trends generally continued in the 1950s and 1960s. Most new construction appears to have filled historically empty lots (as was the case with BK0557-BK0559), but some buildings were demolished to facilitate new buildings (Northwestern Bank built a new building at 101 Main Street W. (BK0566); Valdese Co-Op was demolished and BK0560-BK0562 were built).

Today, the layout of central Valdese conforms to the design of other towns in western North Carolina. Though the terrain outside of town necessitates curving and hilly roads, the town's heart is a grid plan with relatively straight roadways.³³⁹



The Powell Grist Mill and Cline Theater on Massell Street (neither extant). Photo from McCall, *What Mean These Stones?*, 246.

Some commercial businesses settled away from downtown. The earliest of those surveyed, the ca. 1935 Walsh's Market (BK0537), is about one-and-a-half miles east of downtown on Main Street. Two other small, freestanding neighborhood groceries (Walsh's Market, BK0623 and Sain's Market, BK0658) are found on residential streets south of the railroad tracks. A small commercial node at the corner of Praley Street SW. and Pine Burr Avenue SW. in the Crow Hill neighborhood also developed between ca. 1945 and ca. 1960.



Walsh's Market (BK0537) is in east Valdese. Photo by author.

There appears to have been substantial demolition of commercial buildings in the latter half of the twentieth century. Many of these demolished properties were located around industrial sites, and parking lots for those businesses now occupy their former locations. These include buildings along Colombo Street SW. that were demolished between 1950 and the 1980s. Another group along Massel Street was demolished in the 1970s and 1980s. A small filling station and two stores also once sat at the corner of Laurel Street NE. and Main Street E.; these lots now contain parking for the Waldensian Baking Company (BK0279). In addition, several commercial buildings located across from the Valdese Elementary School (BK0017, NR 1984) were

³³⁹ Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 53.

removed ca. 1995, and national chain businesses McDonald's and AutoZone now occupy the space.



This small gable-fronted general store is an early commercial building on Main Street. Pierre and Louise Pons Tron lived in the attached dwelling. Several houses lined Main Street, though they have all been demolished. These buildings were likely razed between the 1950 Sanborn Map and the construction of the ca. 1959 Tastee-Freez to the west. Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.

Valdese's commercial architecture does not significantly deviate from other small western North Carolina towns. Other communities rebuilt much of their commercial districts after the turn of the century, replacing frame buildings with more substantial brick architecture as their economies developed and strengthened; this occurred roughly around the time Valdese was establishing its commercial center on Connelly Street.³⁴⁰

Most of the commercial properties in Valdese, 38 in total, are classified as "Standard Commercial." These buildings represent a wide range of construction dates, though they mostly have similar forms. There are groups of attached commercial buildings, most notably in a two-block section between Faet Street and Italy Street, but freestanding commercial buildings are also common. Generally, Valdese's commercial buildings are one- or two-stories with flat brick facades of either running- or common-bond brick, large storefront display windows, and flat or stepped parapet roofs. Variations include the stacked yellow tile veneer of Major Electric (BK0584), the gable roof of the Auto Sales & Service Garage (BK0589), and the exposed concrete block and bow roof of Valdese Auto Service (BK0588). Several early Main Street buildings were constructed in the Waldensian stone tradition, including the ca. 1917 Valdese Co-operative Store (on the site of BK0560-BK0562, demolished) and the ca. 1925 commercial building at 412 Main Street W. (BK0555, possibly the earliest extant commercial building in Valdese).

Other common features on Standard Commercial buildings in Valdese include recessed entries (BK0563, BK0568, BK0579), tile bulkheads (BK0565, BK0576, BK0578), simple brick panels at the cornice (BK0554, BK0577, BK0633), and stepped pilasters (BK0578-BK0582). A few display more unusual decorative details, like the sawtooth and diamond brick patterns on BK0552 and the geometric brick detail on BK0574.

³⁴⁰ Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 53.



The 100 block of West Main Street shows a group of attached brick-clad, one-to-two-story commercial buildings. The building on the far right (BK0574) has distinctive geometric brick details and an uncommon long and low profile. Photo by author.

Several commercial buildings have a higher degree of ornamentation. There are two ca. 1935 Art Deco buildings in downtown Valdese. Both Roses 5, 10, & 25c Store (BK0569) and BK0571 have stylized concrete pilasters and recessed tile apron entryways. Roses also features curved display windows above a marble bulkhead and decorative stepped brick, while BK0571 has floral medallions and a band of sawtooth brick.



BK0571's concrete pilasters, floral medallions, and brick details are unusually decorative for Valdese's commercial architecture. It also has common characteristics such as its recessed entry and a black tile bulkhead. Photo by author.

Several documented commercial buildings have Modernist details; these buildings are from ca. 1948 to ca. 1970. They are primarily freestanding, one story in height, clad in brick, and capped by a flat roof. The ca. 1948 Earl Franklin Motors (BK0545) is the earliest documented building with Modernist elements; its prow-shaped showroom and large angled display windows are unique in Valdese. Modernist designs were often used in bank construction post-World War

II,³⁴¹ and two later examples of Modernism in Valdese are the ca. 1964 National Bank of Morganton (BK0557) and the ca. 1965 Northwestern Bank (BK0566). Both banks feature recessed gridded entries and minimal ribbon windows, though the National Bank of Morganton is a squat one-story building, and the two-story Northwestern Bank has a vertical emphasis. They also both have drive-thru windows, emphasizing changing consumer desires.



The National Bank of Morganton (BK0557) is an example of a Modernist building in Valdese. There was not a building on the site prior to the bank's construction ca. 1964. Photo by author.

The ca. 1954 Valdese Gulf Station (BK0553) deviates from the usual masonry exteriors of other Modern commercial buildings and is clad in large porcelain steel enamel panels. This building follows a functional gas station design, nationally popular from the 1930s through the 1950s. Its exterior cladding and flat roof sought to differentiate the building from its surroundings. The single rectangular floor plan with an office and service bays demonstrates its use for automobile repair.³⁴²

A major addition to the Colonial Building added a full third story ca. 1960; however, most of the surveyed commercial buildings do not have major additions, and small rear additions are largely subsidiary. Commercial buildings have undergone other common changes, however. As with industrial buildings, replacement windows are the most common exterior change. Examples can be seen at the Tise Building (BK0573), BK0546, and BK0575. Other façade alterations include modern bulkhead materials, such as stacked stone on the *Valdese News* building (BK0580) and hexagonal tile on the former Post Office (BK0583). A concrete façade now obscures or replaces the original black and white tile on the Waldensian Market (BK0582), while Sain's Market & Grocery (BK0658) has been clad in vinyl.

³⁴¹ Carol J. Dyson and Anthony Rubano, "Banking on the Future: Modernism and the Local Bank," in *Preserving the Recent Past 2*, ed. Deborah Slaton and William G. Foulks (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 2000).

³⁴² John A. Jakle, "The American Gasoline Station, 1920 to 1970," *Journal of American Culture* 1, no. 3, 529-530 (1978), <https://xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR2/jakle.pdf> (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).



The historic façade of the Waldensian Market (BK0582). Photo from “Then & Now Walking Tour Downtown Valdese.”



Current façade of the Waldensian Market (BK0582). Photo by author.

PROPERTY TYPES IN VALDESE: RELIGIOUS RESOURCES

There were nine religious buildings surveyed in Valdese, ranging in construction from 1896 to 1978. One of the earliest extant buildings built by the original religious settlers is the 1896-1899 Waldensian Presbyterian Church (BK0018, NR 1984). Erected soon after the Waldensians’ arrival in Burke County, the Waldensian Presbyterian Church closely resembles the religious architectural tradition brought with them from Italy, as described in the section on Waldensian architecture.



The Waldensian Presbyterian Church (BK0018, NR 1984). Photo by author.

Likely due to the rootedness of the early community in this religious tradition, no other churches organized in Valdese for several decades. However, with the influx of native-born Americans moving to Valdese after the turn of the century, other churches began to form. Later church buildings generally followed popular trends in religious architecture. Formed in 1920 in the mill village (BK0474), the First Baptist Church was one of the earliest congregations to establish itself in Valdese. In 1926, the congregation constructed a Gothic Revival-style church (BK0459), which was a popular choice for religious architecture at the time.³⁴³ Though much altered today, its style is still evident in the pointed arch windows. Gothic Revival detailing is also present on the ca. 1930 Valdese Methodist Church South (BK0540); this includes its stained-glass pointed arch windows, imitation buttresses, and square corner tower.



The Valdese Methodist Church South (BK0540). Photo by author.

³⁴³ Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 55.

In 1938, the Mount Calvary Baptist Church (BK0659) began in the Crow Hill neighborhood, south of the railroad tracks. The Colonial Revival-style building provides an example of another popular style of religious architecture, seen in its symmetrical form and front portico with paired columns. This style would come to typify religious architecture in Valdese, as it did in many other communities.

From the 1950s through the 1970s, churches constructed new, larger buildings and bigger parking lots to accommodate growing congregations. The prominence of the Colonial Revival style for religious construction is evident at the 1956 First Methodist Church of Valdese (BK0612) and the 1965 Valdese First Baptist Church (BK0475), which was located roughly a third of a mile away from its earlier location. Both churches feature a large two-story pedimented portico supported by Doric columns and pedimented entry doors surrounded by pilasters. The First Baptist Church is more extravagant, also featuring dentils, eave brackets, quoins, windows with prominent keystones, a large bell tower, and an octagonal chapel. Berrytown's Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church (BK0665) met in a 1921 weatherboard-clad frame church, followed by a 1946 block building. In 1978, a new building was constructed in the Colonial Revival style; its entry contains a stained-glass transom and slim pilasters.



The First Baptist Church (BK0475). Photo by author.

The (former) Church of God (BK0456), which began in a frame church on the same site, built a new church in 1957. Departing from the Colonial Revival style popular with other congregations, the church's new building displayed minimal decorative detail. It includes a front gable roof, a recessed front entry, and brick windowsills. In 1976, the congregation moved about a half a mile west to another Modernist sanctuary (BK0452). The new building features more decorative detailing, including exposed aggregate concrete panels, a slight prow overhang, and a cross-shaped stained-glass window inset on the façade.

While the (former) First Baptist Church (BK0459) has been substantially altered with incompatibly sized replacement windows and fenestration changes, most of the other churches in Valdese appear to be relatively intact from the exterior. Some of the changes that exist may be reversible, including obscured windows at the 1957 (former) Church of God and steeple additions at the Valdese Methodist Church South and the First Methodist Church of Valdese. Perhaps more drastic, the ca. 1970s rear addition at Mount Calvary Baptist Church is clearly differentiated from and subsidiary to the historic building. A less common alteration is the expansion of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church's sanctuary by adding bays to the sides of the building.



The ca. 1970s addition to the Mount Calvary Baptist Church (BK0659). Photo by author.

Geographically, the churches are scattered throughout town, though most are situated on well-trafficked roads. As the center of the original community, the Waldensian Presbyterian Church occupies a hilltop lot overlooking the railroad at the center of town. Some churches retain their original locations, such as Mount Calvary Baptist Church and Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church. Other congregations have moved, such as the First Baptist Church and the Church of God, which left earlier buildings behind in favor of larger lots to adapt to the changing needs of the parishioners.

PROPERTY TYPES IN VALDESE: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

In this survey, 15 institutional resources were surveyed. These range from education and government buildings to clubhouses and social halls. The earliest institutional building surveyed in Valdese was the 1920 Le Phare des Alpes (BK0618), while the latest was likely the 1963 Post Office (BK0599) or the ca. 1965 Boy Scouts of America Troop 202 Building (BK0535). Construction of institutional buildings proliferated in the 1950s; almost half of the surveyed resources were erected during that decade.

Many of the institutional buildings are in a condensed location in the historic core of Valdese, lining the roads between Main Street and the railroad track, or on the north side of Main Street. This is especially true of public-facing institutions or buildings from before World War II. The American Legion Post 234 (BK0462) and Lovelady Lodge (BK0549) are built farther away from downtown, though they are still on major roads, while the Pilot Club (BK0526), the Boy Scouts

of America Troop 202 Building, and the Berrytown American Legion (BK0666) are all located on primarily residential roads.

Partly due to their wide variety of uses, these resources exhibit a wide variety of styles. The earliest documented building, the 1920 Le Phare des Alpes (LPDA), notably is constructed using traditional Waldensian stonework. This stone and stucco building has a simple one-story, gable-front form and symmetrical façade; the interior is one room to accommodate its meeting space. The site highlights the club's heritage through a ca. 1970 bake oven and an altered ca. 1940 boccie court. The 1922-1923 Classical Revival-style Valdese Elementary School (BK0017, NR 1984) also exhibits Waldensian stonework, though it has more decorative detailing than the LPDA. The symmetrical façade features a prominent stair with decorative concrete spheres, a recessed entry under a curvilinear parapet gable, and incised stone panels.³⁴⁴



An undated photo of the LPDA building. Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.



While the earliest extant institutional buildings were constructed of stone, the demolished Valdese Public School (1906-1922) is an example of an early frame institutional building. Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.

The site of the former Francis Garrou High School (BK0273), constructed in 1937, as well as the 1938 High School Gymnasium (BK0457) and the ca. 1940 Teacher's Cottage (BK0458), is

³⁴⁴ Mintzer, "Valdese Elementary School."

located behind the Valdese Elementary School. This collection of buildings contains an interesting mix of architectural styles. Though now demolished, the Francis Garrou High School had what Randall Cotton called “some of the county’s best Deco-style detail,” which was seen at the school’s entrances.³⁴⁵ Concrete work and foliate metal work adorned the school; remnants of these elements are still visible on what appears to be the original entrance, which has been excised from the demolished school and moved to a new location on the grounds. While these later buildings generally diverged from the earlier stone architectural tradition, the 1938 gymnasium is built on a stone foundation; the upper level, however, is clad in brick and executed in a Modernist design, with a bow roof and minimal decorative detail. The ca. 1940 Teacher’s Cottage introduces another style to the campus. Its symmetrical façade and Classical door surrounds demonstrate the Colonial Revival style.

These architectural styles appear on other buildings in Valdese. In the 1950s, Brinkley Lumber Company built the Colonial Revival-style Valdese Public Library (BK0611). A central entrance is set in a Classical surround and is topped by a broken pediment. The 1951 American Legion Post 234 (BK0462) is a late example of Art Deco, featuring a stepped concrete capped parapet and ribbed pilasters. The ca. 1963 United States Post Office (BK0599) shows another variation of Modernist design, with its flat roof, asymmetrical façade, and stacked brick bond and concrete panel veneer.



The Valdese Public Library (BK0611). Photo by Author.

Some institutional buildings also imitate the architectural styles of their surroundings. The 1953 Lovelady Lodge sits on Main Street E. It conforms to the Standard Commercial appearance of most of the commercial architecture in Valdese. The two-story brick building has a parapet roof, recessed street-level entry, and angled display windows (now covered). The second story served as the lodge’s meeting space, which is indicated by the inscription on the concrete surround around the second-floor entrance. Similarly, the ca. 1953 Pilot Club is on a residential road. It closely resembles a Ranch house, blending into the surrounding residential development. The one-story building has a red brick veneer, a side-gable asphalt shingle roof, long form, and asymmetrical façade.

³⁴⁵ BK0273 Francis Garrou High School Survey File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.



The Pilot Club (BK0526) blends into its surroundings in a residential neighborhood. Photo by author.

Those buildings that are considered Standard Institutional are generally utilitarian and lack much ornamentation. The Boy Scouts Troop 1 Clubhouse (BK0620) and the Berrytown American Legion Post are one-story buildings with long, low forms under gable rooflines with minimal decorative detail.



The Berrytown American Legion (BK0666). Photo by author.

There is significant variation in the architectural integrity of the institutional buildings in Valdese. Some, such as the 1963 United States Post Office and both Boy Scout Huts, appear virtually intact. The Valdese Elementary School also retains good integrity from the exterior; circulation patterns on the interior remain unchanged, though some interior material has been replaced. The first-story windows of the Lovelady Lodge have been covered with a faux-stone veneer, while its second-story windows have been replaced. The 1950 (former) Post Office (BK0586) has later infill around an incompatibly sized replacement door. The LPDA was restuccoed and the Berrytown American Legion is now clad in vinyl; the LPDA also features potentially reversible interior changes such as a drop ceiling.

Both the Valdese Public Library and the Town Hall and Fire Department (BK0597) have received large additions. The addition to the Valdese Public Library left the historic façade intact; however, the Town Hall's renovation substantially impacted the building's integrity. The once two-story, two-bay brick building has received a two-story addition, as well as one-story wings on either side. In addition, the historic façade was replaced by garage doors to accommodate the fire station.

One of the most monumental institutional buildings in Valdese, the 1938 Francis Garrou Memorial Hall Community Center (BK0619), has seen significant alterations since its construction. While it once had a more ornamented façade, later additions and renovations have

obscured its historic appearance. The building now has at least one façade addition, altered fenestration patterns, and an altered mansard-like roofline.



The original façade of the Francis Garrou Memorial Hall Community Center (BK0619). Photo from “Francis Garrou Memorial Hall,” *The Charlotte Observer* (Charlotte, North Carolina), October 27, 1943, Newspapers.com (accessed January 19, 2023).

PROPERTY TYPES IN VALDESE: RESIDENTIAL RESOURCES

Residential resources made up the bulk of the properties surveyed during this project (132 resources, 60 percent of the total surveyed). Residential buildings ranged from the earliest shelters, like an 1893 “sawmill shack” (BK0541), to ca. 1970s Ranch-style houses, like the Spottswood and Margaret Neale House (BK0484). The majority of the houses documented were constructed during the period between World War I and World War II, which may correspond to the large population growth and industrial expansion that was occurring at the time.

Geographically, the residences are spread throughout Valdese. There are early houses located close to downtown, such as the ca. 1904 Catherine Leger Griset House (BK0594, located on one of the early gridded streets in Valdese’s center between Main Street and the railroad), the ca. 1904 Guigou House (BK0494, reportedly originally sat on Main Street and now is one block to the north), and the ca. 1900 Jean Ferdinand Ribet House (BK0621, located just south of the railroad tracks). Perhaps a remnant of the early organization of Valdese, there are also many early houses scattered along major roadways outside of the historic core; these include the ca. 1893 Henry Vinay House (BK0461), the ca. 1908 John Pons House (BK0471), the ca. 1895 John H. Pascal House (BK0094, SL 1984), and the ca. 1906 Albert Pons House (BK0670).

Some of the earliest buildings in Valdese have been demolished. For instance, in the neighborhood between Main Street and the railroad, documented as the Massell Avenue & St. Germain Avenue neighborhood (BK0282), the J. Francis Tron House was located at the corner of St. Germain and Faet Streets; Etienne and Madeline Pons Perrou owned a one-story frame house on the site that now holds the Valdese Public Library (BK0611); a two-story frame residence that housed Marguerite Grant and later served as the Waldensian Presbyterian Church manse sat on the site of the Waldensian Heritage Museum (unsurveyed, 208 Rodoret Street S.); and Francis Garrou’s House was razed ca. 1990, and the Valdese Town Hall (unsurveyed, 102 Massel Avenue SW.) now occupies the site. Many other early homes were razed as industrial enterprises expanded. The John Louis and Mae Lackey Garrou House, the John Pierre & Suzette

Bouchard Ribet House, and the Antoine Grill Farm all sat on property now owned by Alba-Waldensian.

Outside of the central Valdese core, the area between the railroad and I-40 was home to the John Long House, and many farms, such as those run by Henri and Judith Grill Martinat, Francois and Catherine Ribet Parise, Daniel Mourglia, and Hippolyte Salvageot. Demolition has occurred elsewhere, such as at the sites of the Alexander Vinay House on Church Road and the Madeline Tron Pons House on Curville Street off Gardiol Avenue.³⁴⁶ Most of these resources provide early examples of frame construction in Valdese, though some used the Waldensian stone building tradition, most often in outbuildings or foundations.



The two-story frame J. Francis Tron House at St. Germain Avenue and Faet Street. Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.



A banked stone outbuilding at the Jean-Pierre Ribet House. Land now owned by Alba-Waldensian. Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.

³⁴⁶ Information and photos of these properties can be found in the Scrapbooks and Photo Albums of the Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, North Carolina.



The John Long House was constructed in the mid-1890s south of the railroad in Crow Hill near the Hillcrest-Praley-Valdese Cemetery. Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.



The Henri and Judith Grill Martinat Farm in Crow Hill. The property now holds the 1997 Shepherd Hills Development. Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.

Due to the demolition of many early buildings in Valdese, the extant dwellings generally represent the development of the 1920s onward. Despite the early documented buildings in the Massell Avenue & St. Germain Avenue neighborhood and Crow Hill, these neighborhoods now consist primarily of buildings constructed between the 1920s and the 1940s with later infill. This interwar period also saw the growing development of the mill village (BK0474), Berrytown (BK0664), and the Martinat Neighborhood (BK0534). Construction continued on major roadways leading into Valdese, like Laurel Street and Church Street.

There was some housing developed or owned by mills. For instance, the Valdese Manufacturing Company (BK0276) built mill housing, equipped with running water, electricity, and garden plots.³⁴⁷ The company platted an area in the mill village in 1931, though many of the buildings there pre-date the plat.³⁴⁸ The Martinat Hosiery Mill also provided houses for workers after

³⁴⁷ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 88.

³⁴⁸ Burke County, North Carolina, Map of Valdese Manufacturing Company, Plat Book 1: 66 (1931).

1920;³⁴⁹ several houses near the site of the former mill were once owned by the company (including BK0523-BK0525).³⁵⁰ These houses are generally small, one-story vernacular dwellings with front porches, and one has minimal Craftsman details. Photos in the Waldensian Heritage Museum also indicate there was worker housing (no longer extant) located near the Waldensian Hosiery Mill (in BK0284).³⁵¹ From photographs and maps, it appears the small, one-story frame employee housing was quite close to the mill, which was common for mill housing. The area platted by the Valdese Manufacturing Company sat on a hill above the mill; though less common, this development pattern was seen as more healthful.³⁵²



Employee housing near the Waldensian Hosiery Mill. Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.



Martinat Hosiery Mill House (BK0523). Photo by author.

Development of the 1950s and 1960s often occurred as infill or along extended roads. This can be seen with the later houses on the dead end of Bouchard Avenue NE. In the mill village, most of the oldest construction occurred in the northeast corner, with later development extending

³⁴⁹ Watts, *The Waldenses of Valdese*, 89.

³⁵⁰ Burke County, North Carolina, Deed Books 80: 167 (J. C. and Pearl Brinkley to Martinat Hosiery Mills, Inc., 1947); 44: 208 (Henry F. and Bertha K. Martinat, et. al. to Martinat Hosiery Mills, 1940).

³⁵¹ “1914 Waldensian Hosiery Mills,” Photo in Photo Album: Industry, Archive Room, Waldensian Heritage Museum, Valdese, North Carolina.

³⁵² Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 53.

south and west. Similarly, USGS maps and NCDOT aerial images show the expansion of the Martinat Neighborhood as roads were extended and created in the 1950s and 1960s.

Families often developed newer houses near their older family homes. This seems to have occurred on Church Street, where Jacques Henri Bounous and wife, Ida Julia Pascal, owned a ca. 1910 house (BK0472). Two of his children, Melany Ida Grill and Louis D. Bounous, lived in nearby houses (ca. 1938 BK0466 and ca. 1947 BK0464, respectively). Similarly, the Bleynat family divided the original 40-acre Bleynat farm; one-acre parcels along Bleynat Street NE. were given to members of the family to develop.³⁵³ This is also seen in the Berrytown community, such as where a son of Gaylaine and Gaither Connelly built a house behind his parent's home. Likewise, much of the Hawkins family all lived on the same road on Bost Johnson Avenue.³⁵⁴ Other family lands were sold, such as John Henry Pascal and Marie Marguerite Bounous's farm, "La Bienvenue," which was redeveloped as Sunset Acres, a 1960s Ranch neighborhood (BK0473), after their deaths.³⁵⁵

Due to the late founding of the town, many architectural styles that were popular for residences in surrounding areas in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are absent in Valdese. No evidence of Queen Anne, Italianate, or Greek Revival architecture was found during the survey. However, the residential architecture in Valdese still exhibits a variety of styles. There are unique houses that mimic Waldensian traditions, as well as many dwellings that follow national trends, albeit generally conservatively. There seem to be some styles that were particularly favored in Valdese, namely the Craftsman and Period Revival Cottage styles.

The earliest buildings in Valdese represent a Traditional/Vernacular architectural style. Some of these demonstrate the Waldensian stonework tradition discussed previously, including the John H. Pascal House (BK0094, SL 1984), the Refour House (BK0095, SL 1984), the John Pons House (BK0471), and the Sala House (BK0600).

The 1893 Pierre Tron House (BK0541), however, is a great example of an early frame house hastily built to shelter incoming migrants. Likely the earliest extant building in Valdese, the one-room building has board and batten siding and a side-gable roof. Despite its small size, it has been enlarged over the course of its existence. A more substantial two-story Traditional/Vernacular building is the ca. 1915 Henri Grill House (BK0512). It has Waldensian stonework on its first story and brick on its second story. It retains one interior chimney and its diamond-lighted gable dormer.

³⁵³ Meredith Bleynat, Edward Bleynat Jr., and Wilma Bleynat Jones, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

³⁵⁴ Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

³⁵⁵ Burke County Historical Society, *The Heritage of Burke County*, 335.



An undated photo of the Henri Grill house (BK0512) shows its original balcony. Photo courtesy of the Waldensian Heritage Museum Archives, Valdese, NC.

Perhaps the earliest nationally popular style to take hold, the Craftsman style was dominant in residential architecture in Valdese beginning in the 1920s, as it was in much of the region.³⁵⁶ It remained popular in the 1930s before beginning to lose favor in the 1940s. Most documented Craftsman-style houses include wide front porches, three-over-one windows, and gable brackets; battered porch posts and exposed rafters were also common. An example constructed using Waldensian stonework is extant at the ca. 1921 Henry P. and Dora Perrou House (BK0479). In the 1920s, however, these attributes are mostly seen on frame examples, such as BK0529 and BK0607. Similar characteristics ornament later examples, but brick and stone appear to have been the preferred material by the 1930s. Brick examples include the Frank and Melany Grill House (BK0466) and BK0506, while BK0507 exemplifies the style completed in stone. The 1932 Joseph A. and Nelle Louise G. Hern House (BK0649) is a fairly large Craftsman house in Valdese. Mostly intact, it still retains characteristic features, including its large front porch and porte-cochere, heavy brick piers, stuccoed gables, brackets, rafters, and three-over-one windows. In Berrytown, Bost Johnson owned BK0667. Employed as a chauffeur for an affluent Black family in Morganton, Mr. Johnson was particularly wealthy by neighborhood standards,³⁵⁷ and the house is large for the era, retaining some Craftsman details including its large front porch.

³⁵⁶ Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 55.

³⁵⁷ Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.



This 1920s bungalow (BK0607) features modest but characteristic Craftsman details. It features a wide porch, battered porch posts, exposed rafters, gable brackets, and three-over-one windows. Photo by author.

In addition to the Craftsman-style house, the Period Revival Cottage was particularly prevalent in Valdese during the 1940s and 1950s. These houses almost exclusively display a stone or brick exterior, and often incorporate both materials. Most examples have a steeply pitched gable entry block with an arched entryway, a side porch (usually recessed), and an exterior chimney on the façade or side. The ca. 1936 John Laird Jacob House (BK0488), the ca. 1936 Earl B. and Mae B. Searcy House (BK0616), the 1937 Emile A. Glasbrook House (BK0516), and ca. 1937 BK0624 exhibit most of these characteristics. Other examples are present in the Italy Street NE. neighborhood and the Martinat Neighborhood.



The John Laird Jacob House (BK0488) features a characteristic entry, recessed porch, mix of stone and brick, and a prominent exterior chimney. Photo by author.

There are several slightly unusual examples of the Period Revival Cottage in Valdese. The ca. 1933 William and Viola Perrou House (BK0514) is completed in Waldensian stonework. It features an exterior stone chimney and an arched entry, as well as an uncharacteristic entry wing with a flat parapet roof. Another particularly interesting example is the ca. 1935 BK0485. The Norman Revival-style stone-clad house includes rolled eaves, a squat circular tower, and a crenelated chimney.

Though a few Ranch-style houses were erected in the 1940s, the style became prominent in the 1950s. Though the survey did not individually survey an abundance of Ranch houses, many of the D/N/A records documented Ranch houses. Berrytown (BK0664), Italy Street NE. (BK0500), the mill village (BK0474), and the Martinat Neighborhood (BK0534) all contain Ranch houses constructed either as infill development or along new and extended roads in the neighborhood. Pons Park (BK0493), Praley Street NW. (BK0476), and Sunset Acres (BK0473) all consist primarily of Ranch house development.



Praley Street NW. (BK0476) is comprised of a small group of Ranch houses just north of downtown. Photo by author.

One of the earliest Ranch houses documented individually in Valdese, BK0650 retains classic traits of the style, including a small, one-story form, red brick veneer, asymmetrical façade, and multiple window types. In the next two decades, the Ranch house generally became larger and incorporated other notable characteristics, like a front-gable wing (Hoy and Carolina Metcalf House, BK0477 and Edward and Frances Pascal House, BK0614) and an integrated carport (BK0530 and BK0640). Other interesting examples include the unique curved shape of the ca. 1965 BK0487 and the wide interior chimney at the “L” of the Miles and Georgia Hudson House (BK0509). Two surveyed properties feature a Split-Level form: the George B. and Edith R. Perrou House (BK0483) and BK0492.

Other nationally popular architectural styles were less prevalent in Valdese. Valdese only has two extant documented Tudor Revival-style houses: the ca. 1922 Martinat House (BK0527) and the ca. 1930 Rutherford House (BK0518). The Martinat House is clad in brick with stone door surrounds and faux-half timbering on gable peaks. There are a variety of window types, including fixed diamond-pane windows flanking the curved front entry door and casement windows. The Rutherford House is also brick-clad with a stone-lined arch entry and prominent stone chimney on the façade. While the house does not have faux-half timbering, dormers and gable peaks are stuccoed.

The Colonial Revival style was never as prominent in western North Carolina as in the eastern part of the state;³⁵⁸ however, it appears Valdese has relatively few examples even compared to other towns in the region. The Colonial Revival style was used on a few houses from the 1920s through the 1950s. The earliest example documented is the 1927 J. M. Brinkley House. This house mixed the Colonial Revival and Craftsman styles. The wide wrap-around porch is supported by squat Doric columns, and a pediment tops the front entry. The house also contains

³⁵⁸ Bishir, Southern, and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 55.

flat eave brackets. A much later example is the 1974 Bruce Hawkins House (BK0669). The house features Colonial Revival details, such as Doric porch columns, on a long, low Ranch house form.



The Bruce Hawkins House (BK0669) exhibits Colonial Revival details on a Ranch house form. Photo by author.

High-style examples of Colonial Revival design are seen on Louise Avenue, a short residential road north of downtown Valdese. Several of the grandest houses in the town are found here on large, forested lots, offering significant amounts of privacy. The first house on the road, built in 1937, belonged to Albert Garrou (BK0277, SL 2022). Representative of the style, a dominant two-story pedimented portico covers a pedimented entry on the façade. The interior retains original wood flooring, curved arched doorways, and dining room built-ins. John Daniel and Louise Gaydou Guigou erected their house (BK0654) on Louise Avenue in 1951. A recessed two-story porch lines the façade and is supported by square supports. The primary entrance has a broken pediment and pilasters. Interior features include a curved entry and stairway, a Colonial mantel, and paneled doors. Perhaps slightly less extravagant than the Garrou and Guigou houses, the James Vern Benfield House (BK0501) features a symmetrical five-bay façade, two interior brick chimneys, and a one-bay porch supported by Doric columns.

In the 1930s, Valdese began to see Minimal Traditional houses. This trend lasted into the 1950s. Typical examples in Valdese include the William and Camilla Glasbrook House (BK0519), BK0596, and BK0598. All three are one-story, with symmetrical or slightly asymmetrical facades, minimal decorative details, and small stoops or front porches. The Glasbrook House and BK0596 are brick examples, while BK0598 is frame. More examples of Minimal Traditional houses can be found in the mill village (BK0474), as well.

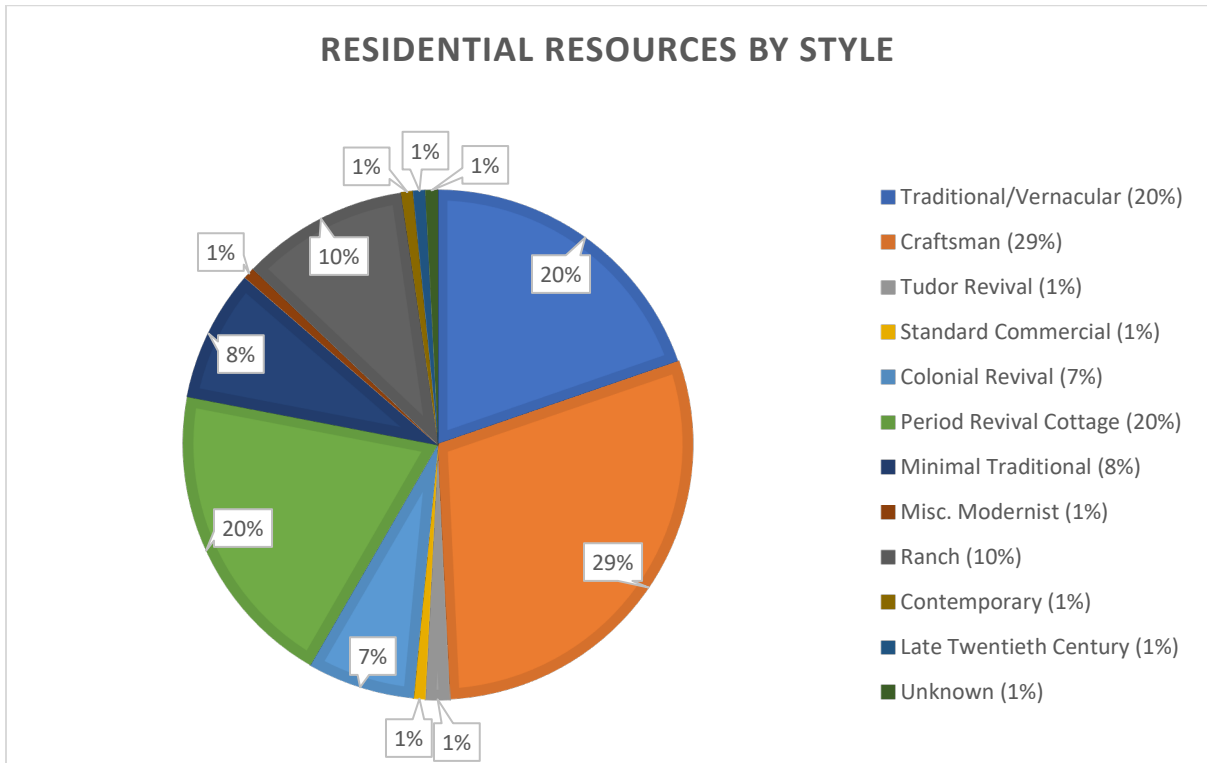
In the latter half of the twentieth century, Valdese gained a few examples of new architectural styles, though they remained atypical of the building stock. A Contemporary building (BK0503) with a low-pitched front-gable roof, asymmetrical recessed entry, and vertical siding was constructed ca. 1951 on Italy Street NE. The Modernist 1955 Edgar and Jane Lane Jr. House (BK0510) features two disjointed shed roofs, deep overhanging eaves, and an abundance of windows and doors on the façade.

Many of the residential buildings in Valdese have received some amount of renovation or update since their construction. Most common is material replacement. Window and/or door replacements are abundant and can be seen at BK0470, BK0513, BK0522, and the Lee Ribet

House (BK0638). Porch changes are also relatively common. This includes post replacements, like in the scrolled or floral metal supports on the John D. and Adele Pascal House (BK0467) and the John H. and Louise Pascal House (BK0468). Porches have also been reconfigured, as seen on the Henri Grill House (BK0512), where a second-story balcony was later replaced by a two-story porch. More often, however, porches are simply enclosed (BK0495, BK0610, and BK0613). Siding has also been replaced in whole or in part, as seen with the introduction of vinyl to the gable peaks in BK0624 and on the entire exterior of BK0647.



Typical changes to residential buildings in Valdese include enclosed porches, vinyl siding application, and replaced windows. All three can be seen on BK0504. Photo by author.



Note: This chart is representative only of properties that were surveyed individually and were extant at the time of the survey. Created by author using Microsoft Excel.

North Carolina Study List Recommendations

As a result of this survey, three individual resources and two districts were presented to the National Register Advisory Committee in October 2022 and were subsequently placed on the state's Study List.

Both the Pierre Tron Bake Oven (BK0264) and the Albert Pons Bake Oven (BK0482) were added as extant examples of the five original neighborhood ovens built in Valdese as a continuation of the bread baking tradition brought to Valdese by the Waldensian immigrants. The ovens appear to be eligible for listing under Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage, Exploration/Settlement, and/or Social History.

The other individual resource added to the Study List was the Albert Garrou House (BK0277). The house is a very substantial example of Colonial Revival architecture in Valdese and is extremely intact. In contemporary newspaper coverage, the house is described as “ultra-modern,” “one of the most beautiful and most pretentious residences in the entire Hickory area,” and having “the very latest and most advanced scientific discoveries in home-building.”³⁵⁹ The Albert Garrou House appears to be eligible for listing under Criterion C for Architecture.



The Albert Garrou House (BK0277) was added to the North Carolina Study List in October 2022. Photo by author.

The first district proposed was the Valdese Commercial District (BK0278), which is comprised of 34 buildings along East and West Main Street in downtown Valdese. Included buildings were all built between ca. 1925 and 1970. The main core was established by 1950, while development

³⁵⁹ “Albert Garrou House At Valdese Among Finest In Area; Is Ultra-Modern,” Clipping in document created by Glen Harvey (former homeowner), provided to author by Pandora Shaw and Isabella Shaw at site visit with author, July 20, 2022. A copy of this newspaper clipping can be found in BK0277 Albert Garrou House Survey File, Western Regional Office File Room, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville, NC.

continued on the edges of the district into the mid-1970s. All the buildings are one-to-three stories in height. Most have parapet rooflines and minimal detailing. Architectural styles include Standard Commercial, Art Deco, and Modern. The district is primarily commercial, though it has industrial resources and post offices, as well. Throughout the historic period, there were also residential properties scattered along Main Street, though none are extant. The Valdese Commercial District appears to be eligible for listing under Criterion A for Commerce, and possibly Criterion C for Architecture.

The second district and final resource proposed was the Alba-Waldensian Historic District (BK0660). The Alba-Waldensian Historic District consists of multiple mill buildings along Waldo Street W., St. Germain Avenue SW., and Praley Street SW. For much of the twentieth century, Valdese was the center of the textile industry in Burke County and employed roughly half of the county's hosiery workers. Two of the largest mills in Valdese were Waldensian Hosiery Mill, established in 1901, and Pilot Full Fashioned Mill, established in 1928. The buildings included within the district were historically part of these two mills, which merged operations in 1962 under the name Alba-Waldensian. After the merger, the company operated six plants in Valdese and one in Lenoir and became the largest employer in Valdese. This district represents the core of the Alba-Waldensian industry. The buildings were constructed between the ca. 1920s and 1971. The Alba-Waldensian Historic District appears to be eligible for listing under Criterion A for Industry.

Future Research

There is ample opportunity for future research in Valdese. Several buildings remained inaccessible during the survey. Though the Refour House (BK0095, SL 1984) and the Jean Ferdinand Ribet House (BK0621) were documented in 1984, updated photographs and documentation would be useful to better understand the current architectural landscape and the state of early Waldensian-influenced buildings in Valdese.

Louise Avenue NE. is home to likely the most high-style collection of historic residences in Valdese. While several houses on the roadway were photographed during the survey, including the Albert Garrou House (BK0277, SL 2022), the Leon Emanuel Guigou House (BK0653), and the John Daniel and Louise Gaydou Guigou House (BK0654), the rest were inaccessible or heavily obscured by vegetation. Attempts to contact other homeowners largely went unanswered. Due to this, documentation and evaluation of the other buildings or the roadway as a whole was difficult. Due to the architectural prominence of the houses on the road, future research may involve a closer look at this collection of buildings for a potential small residential district or, perhaps, another individual Study List candidate.

According to discussions had during the survey process, it appears there were five neighborhood bake ovens in Valdese.³⁶⁰ These likely refer to the original Community Oven, the Pierre Tron Oven, the oven at the John H. Pascal House, and the Albert Pons Oven. The fifth bake oven was not identified, though it was possibly located south of the railroad tracks. Further research may determine the location, and possible existence, of this oven.

³⁶⁰ Rob Murray (Le Phare des Alpes President), site visit with author, May 2022.

Questions also remain regarding BK0478, an early example of Waldensian stonework. While most of the early Waldensian buildings seem to have well-documented histories, the past ownership or use of this building remains unclear. The Robinson Hosiery Mill owned the property for some time and realty photos show a substantially altered interior.³⁶¹



This survey was unable to uncover the history of BK0478, a dwelling in east Valdese. Photo by author.

In addition to the Waldensian stonework tradition, this survey identified interesting brickwork on several buildings in Valdese. One example is the Emanuel A. and Romilda P. Richard House (BK0648), which features yellow brick details around the entry of the otherwise red brick house. There is also brick ornamentation on the otherwise concrete block Valdese Auto Service (BK0588) in downtown Valdese. Most of the documented brickwork, however, appears in the mill village, concentrated along Griffin Avenue NW. These houses all appear to be associated with the Griffin family. According to Jessee Deal, W. B. (Bass) Griffin (born ca. 1887) and his three sons, Oliver, Fred, and Clyde, were all bricklayers. They built many buildings throughout town, and most of the houses on Griffin Avenue.³⁶² Further research may identify other buildings the Griffin family worked on in Valdese or in the region.

³⁶¹ “119 Robinson Street SE., Valdese, NC 28690,” Zillow, https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/119-Robinson-St-SE-Valdese-NC-28690/305586992_zpid/ (accessed Sept. 4, 2023).

³⁶² Jessee Deal, Facebook conversation with author, Sept. 2022.



This house on Griffin

Avenue displays some of the distinctive brickwork seen in Valdese. Photo by author.

Though outside of the scope of this survey, which had a geographic focus on Valdese, other rural African American communities in Burke County could be explored. While the African American population of Valdese remained low, there was likely interaction between Black residents of the county and those in town, whether via school, employment, shopping, or recreation. One community identified, but not documented, was located about four miles east of Valdese, near Lindy's Furniture in Connelly Springs.³⁶³

³⁶³ Bruce Hawkins, site visit with author, July 21, 2022.

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