

MORRIS AREA GENEALOGY SOCIETY

General Meeting

October 8, 2001

The meeting was called to order and moderated by Bo Holly, Vice President and Program Chair. Treasurer Janet Meissner reported a balance on hand of \$ 3169.65 and no significant outstanding bills.

Bo announced that the speaker for the September 11th meeting, which was canceled due to the attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, has been rescheduled for the February 2002 meeting.

Bo introduced Mr. Stephen Conti who was the speaker for the evening. His topic was the Waldensians: their history and genealogy. His presentation was in the form of a slide show with commentary.

The Waldensians trace their origin to an 11th or 12th century movement within the Roman Catholic Church by a devote man of Lyons, France known by a variety of names but most often as Waldo (Valdo). His movement was originally one of support for the poor of Lyons but was soon deemed heretical by the Church. The Waldensians were severely persecuted and driven from their homes in the mountain valleys of what is now northwestern Italy into exile elsewhere in Europe.

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685/86 the Waldensians decided to return to their home area where their mother church remains to this day. There are 11 towns with 16 parishes. The churches are very plain and do not display a crucifix as do Catholic churches. Waldensian records before this date are in the hands of the Catholic Church since they were documents of the Inquisition. After 1689 the Waldensians maintained their own archives. All these archives have been filmed by the LDS library, which makes Waldensian research possible.

The first Waldensians in North America arrived on Staten Island in 1666. In the 1850s and 1860s there were Mormon conversions which took some Waldensians to Utah. Soon after this there was a large emigration to Argentina and Uruguay there are strong Waldensian communities to this date. Then in 1893 a group of Waldensians moved to North Carolina and founded the community of Valdese.

The Waldensians were closely associated with the Huguenots in the Middle Ages. Later with the Presbyterian Church since the liturgies were very similar. In Italy today the Baptist and Methodist churches, which are very small, have associated themselves with the Waldensians to form what is referred to as the BMW churches (with apologies to the automaker).

At one time there was a Waldensian Church in Manhattan but as the membership declined it closed.

This was an informative program and Mr. Conti invited those with access to Cablevision in Morris County to view his Family Historian program on Mondays at 8 PM.

Leroy M. May
Recording Secretary