

CHAPTER 1

LYDIA PONS FARLEY

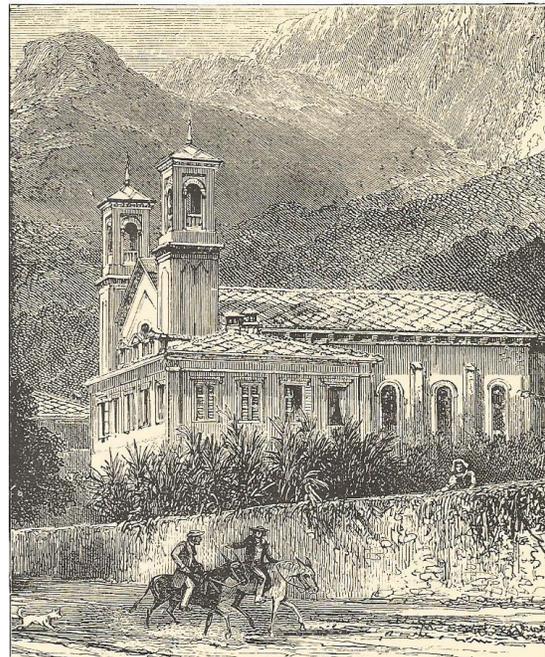
Lydia Pons was born on December 4, 1838, to Barthelemy Pons and Marie Anne Lantaret in Angrogna, Torino, a valley of Piedmont, Italy. Siblings John Daniel, David Charles, Mary Ann, and Emma emigrated along with Lydia in 1854. Her ancestors were early settlers of Angrogna. Barthelemy had served as a lieutenant in the army. He was a prosperous farmer who owned several vineyards.

Piedmont is located at the foot of the Alps, the highest and most rugged mountains in Europe. The scenes of this land embrace all the varieties of a region where the heavens and the earth seem to meet. The clouds often enwrap these mighty eminences and hide their frowning grandeur from view. At other times they are covered with snow, while at their feet the vine and fig trees are ripening their fruits.

The Angrogna and San Martino Valleys are strongly fortified by nature on account of their many difficult passes and bulwarks of insurmountable rocky precipices, as if the all-wise



The Village of Torre Pellice in 1852



The Waldensian Church of that village

Creator had designed these valleys to establish, protect and preserve thousands of righteous souls who would not condescend to bow the knee to Baal. In these mountains are mines of

gold, silver, brass and iron. The streams abound with a variety of fish; forests for the silk worms entwining their cocoons; and the soil yields everything which is necessary for the protection and preservation of human life.

The people of this area were known as the Vaudois in French, Valdese in Italian, or Waldenses in English, the oldest Protestant community in the world. Some Waldensian historians have asserted these people go back in unbroken succession to the Apostles and were, in fact, descended from those refugees from Italy and Southeastern France who, after St. Paul had preached the gospel in Italy, abandoned their beautiful country and fled to the wild mountains of Piedmont to escape religious persecution, where they have handed down the gospel from father to son in the same purity and simplicity as was preached by St. Paul. It has been proven that this band of faithful were in the valleys of Piedmont more than four centuries before the appearance of Luther and Calvin. Their church has never been reformed. Their religious teachings are in strict harmony with the Ten Commandments and are very similar to the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon) church.

The Waldenses were hated by Popes of some Monarchs because of the doctrines taught by them which were opposed to tenets of the Roman Church. There has perhaps never been another sect in the history of the world which has undergone the bitter persecutions and endured the merciless, inhuman and barbarous treatment as that suffered by these humble people. It may be said that all the fury and rage against the early Christians could not exceed the cruelty of the papists to the Waldenses, such as being herded into disease infested dungeons, nailed to trees by the feet – heads down, burning at the stake, and burying alive.

Protestants in Europe protested against these outrages and came to the aid of these people with material assistance. Great sums of money were contributed by English people for the establishment of schools and hospitals. Even Milton, the great English Poet, wielded his nimble pen in defense of the much persecuted Waldenses. He wrote numerous letters to Protestant rulers of Europe, pleading their cause, and wrote a sonnet in honor of these courageous people.

After the French Revolution, Piedmont came under the French control. The Waldenses appealed to Napoleon for assistance and protection. He was very sympathetic and proclaimed liberty of conscience and civil equality for all citizens, and peace was enjoyed for a short time. After the fall of Napoleon, Victor Emanuel I took possession of Piedmont and immediately placed the Waldenses under severe restrictions. Later they were again granted freedom of conscience and worship and their missionary work was started in earnest throughout Italy. Then on April 24, 1655, there was a great Piedmont Easter massacre, too horrible to describe, followed by a three-month War. This was brought to an end through the intervention of Protestant Ambassadors of Switzerland, Holland and England. Many fled from the Waldensian valleys and took refuge in these countries.

In spite of persecutions, the Waldenses in widely scattered countries of Europe did not entirely disappear, but left in all countries deeply planted seeds which produced an abundant

harvest in the days of Luther and Calvin. They have stood fast to their faith, enduring 33 wars, persecutions and poverty, an instance not to be found among the other nations of the earth.

As to the character of the Waldenses, it appears from the testimony of even their adversaries that they were highly moral, peaceable, affectionate and pious, in spite of being the objects of the hatred of so many generations. As to their manners and lives, they were without reproach, striving with all their power to keep God's commandments and practicing brotherly love. They were men of good will, beloved by their neighbors, careful to keep their promises and pay their debts, making sure none of their own people were in want, and were very liberal with their means to strangers and poor travelers. They were known for their total abstinence from blasphemy and swearing of any sort. These habits, founded on a strong religious faith, were supported by a rigid church discipline.

It was here in the valleys of Piedmont that the L.D.S. Missionaries found the descendants of these faithful souls. On March 25, 1850, Lorenzo Snow left New York for Europe to establish a mission in Italy. He left England on July 23, for the valleys of Piedmont, passing through Turin and arriving at LaTour where he made his headquarters. With him were Elders Thos. B. H. Stenhouse, Jabez Woodard and Joseph Toronto. It is recorded that Lorenzo Snow was deeply impressed to go to this particular area for he felt there was a great work to be done there. When the elders introduced Mormonism to the Waldenses, many immediately accepted it because its principles were so near like their own beliefs. They came into the church in whole groups.

As soon as Barthelemy Pons heard the elders explain the gospel he exclaimed, "This is the church for me; I know it is the true church." He and his family were among the very first converts in Angrogna, and were among the first saints to emigrate to America. On March 17, 1851, Barthelemy Pons was baptized and confirmed by Elder Jabez Woodard. Not long after, he baptized his wife and eligible children. He was ordained an Elder by Jabez Woodard, September 7, 1851. On February 7, 1854, he, his wife and five children left their comfortable home in beautiful Italy and traveled to England from where they sailed on the ship John M. Wood, March 12, 1854, for America. Lydia was 15 years of age at that time.

Shortly after sailing from Liverpool they encountered unusually strong winds. The ship struck a sand bar, thereby delaying the voyage three days. It was necessary for two other ships to pull the vessel off the sand bar. While crossing the ocean one of the sailors dropped a red hot chain into a barrel of tar, setting the ship on fire. After a great deal of worry, commotion and hard work, the blaze was extinguished. Another bit of excitement came with the birth of twins to a Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Poulter.

A lively spirit was kept up on board by the saints, meetings being held every night by the branches in some part of the ship, and they had interesting lectures delivered by Elders Woodard and McDonald. The ship's captain, officers, and cabin passengers were invited to join in the meetings. The anniversary of the church was kept on April 6, with fasting and prayer.

After sailing the ocean for forty six days and nights, the ship arrived at the Balize on April 28, 1854, where it waited a short time for a tug boat. Proceeding up the river, the company landed at New Orleans on May 2, and started the following day on board the steamboat Josiah Lawrence for St. Louis, Missouri. In due time the immigrants arrived safely at the outfitting place near Kansas City, and there made preparations to cross the plains to the Salt Lake Valley.

It was at this time that a cholera epidemic broke out among the immigrants; Lydia and her father were both stricken. Lydia soon recovered, but she never forgot how terribly ill she had been and how she burned with fever. Her father's dying words were, "Be sure to go on to Zion and you will be blessed."

With barely enough money left with which to buy their oxen and other provisions, the Pons family started once more toward their new home with the Robert Campbell Company in August, 1854. Before reaching Camp Carney one John Daniel was accidently shot in the arm and blood poison soon developed. With sadness in their hearts the family were obliged to leave the brother behind while they traveled on. When he grew stronger he walked from Camp Carney back to Council Bluffs where he was cared for by Brother F. A. Brown. The following year he arrived in Utah.

Along the way another brother, David, fell ill from drinking impure water. He lay for weeks unable to rise from his bed. Thus the burden fell to Lydia to drive a yoke of very unruly oxen. Each time they came to a stream she had to wade through the water, urging the slow animals along. Sometimes the water was waist deep. While crossing the Platt River, she and her mother had to lower themselves into the cold, uncertain water and lead the oxen through so that their course would be straight. Soon after this, one of the oxen died and a cow was given the family to use in its stead.

In November of 1854, a little more than nine months after leaving Italy, the little family arrived in the Salt Lake Valley. They went on to Ogden with other members of the company, and settled at Mount Fort. They had come from near wealth to direst poverty. Their home consisted of a one room house with only the bare necessities, and there they endured many hardships. For days at a time they never tasted bread. Often for weeks they lived on bran biscuits, pig weed and dandelion greens which had been boiled in water with a little flour thickening to make them more nourishing. Once Joseph Harris, a nephew of Martin Harris who was a witness to the Book of Mormon, gave them a sack of white flour which was a luxury indeed.

The first wheat and other crops which the family planted were destroyed by crickets. They accepted any kind of work that could be obtained and survived another year. When they were finally able to harvest their first wheat, they, along with their neighbors, found it necessary to grind it in a little coffee mill. The multitude of hardships endured by this fatherless family in a strange country can easily be imagined. Among other handicaps was the fact that they could speak and understand very little English.

Barthelemy Pons had been a lieutenant in the army. His wife and children remembered how handsome he had looked in his uniform, and how proud they were of him. The uniform, one of their few prized possessions left, now had to be sold for its beautiful material to procure money to send for the brother who had been left behind.

For one year Lydia worked for the Wells Chase family for her board. She often recalled that they always had white flour biscuits and she was told to feed the leftovers to the chickens, but instead she would hide them in her apron and watch for an opportunity to run home with them to help feed her hungry family. When she told her mother how she got them she said, "Oh well, God knows we need them more than the chickens do; there are plenty of bugs and worms for them."

Lydia was a beautiful young girl with olive skin, coal black hair and dark brown eyes that fairly sparkled as she talked. It was no wonder that Winthrop Farley fell in love with this winsome little girl with her French dialect. On March 8, 1857 at the age of 18 she married Winthrop in the Endowment House. He was a slender man, rather handsome, with dark hair and eyes and a kind, gentle disposition. He was a wheel-right, carpenter and blacksmith. He constructed the first threshing machine in Ogden. Until he was able to build a house for her, they occupied a one-room dugout where Lydia cooked over a fireplace.



Adell, Adaline and Edward Farley

Lydia had an abundance of French pride, but she was never too proud to work. While her babies were small she often took them to the field with her while she gleaned wheat. She

would then carry it home, grind it and make bread for the family. To supplement the family income while the children were still young, she washed and ironed the stiff bosomed shirts and collars for some of Ogden's proudest and richest menfolk.

Through the years, Lydia Pons Farley had many joys and sorrows. She endured the hardships of many polygamist wives, she being the third of five wives. She bore 13 children but Lydia and Emma both died young. Her home and family were her life. Her church also was always an important part of her life. She taught the principles of the gospel to her children and had each child baptized at the age of eight.

Among the hardships of Lydia's married life was the coming of the Manifesto which forced her husband to flee to Arizona and then to Manassa, Colorado. She turned the front part of her home into a little neighborhood store to help support her family, and bravely bore the burdens and great responsibility of rearing her children alone with unceasing love and patience. In later years, her children and grandchildren, all of whom adored her, loved to gather around her and listen to her native songs. They would then take turns trying to imitate her, and how she would laugh at some of the humorous pronunciations of her French words.



Her children: Standing, left to right, Adeline Farley Greenwell, Israel, David K., D. Francis and Olive E. Farley Rhine, Seated: Jessie, Lafayette, Theodore, mother Lydia Pons and Edward. Photo taken about 1900.

Lydia never lost her French accent nor her strong sense of pride, both in her home and personal appearance. Before her morning work was begun, her hair was always neatly combed and waved just right, with a touch of face powder on her face. A pair of gold dangling earrings in her pierced ears was an important part of her attire. It could be said that she was always a little aristocrat even in humble surroundings.

Lydia's sister, Mary Ann, married Joseph Harris, and whenever Joseph's father, Martin Harris Sr. came to visit from Cache County, he always stopped in at Lydia and Winthrop's home. Lydia often told of the many meals she prepared for him. Always the conversation at the



Winthrop Farley

Lydia Pons Farley

dinner table led to his experiences with the Prophet Joseph Smith. He repeatedly bore his testimony as to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, saying that he had handled the gold plates and had heard the voice of God declaring that the book was true.



Olive Eugenia Farley Rine



Drucilla Farley Loomis Tierney



Adell Farley Mercer

Eva's note: "These are my father's sisters who were missing from the family group picture. Aren't they beautiful women?"

Winthrop died as a result of an accident in Manassa, Colorado on September 18, 1892. Lydia continued to manage the little store on Jefferson Avenue for a number of years until she could work no longer. Her husband had left her a house and tidy bank account so she was able to live comfortably until she passed away at the home of her daughter, Adeline Greenwell, in

Ogden, Utah, on July 29, 1916. Each of his other wives were also well provided for. Lydia was buried in the Ogden City Cemetery.

Written by Eva Farley Clayton, daughter of Theodore Farley, granddaughter of Lydia Pons.



Eva Farley about 1920