



Marthe

Marie

Tourn

Cardon

1799-1873

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## MARTHE MARIE TOURN CARDON

In attempting to write something of the character traits and life story of Marthe [pronounced Marta] Marie I have learned that there is no journal or autobiography of hers extant. I assume she never wrote them which would have been a far more common occurrence than that they were written and lost. It was rare for women to write the story of their lives and even more rare for someone else to write about them except for perhaps a mention in a child or relative's history.

We, then, must resort to being detectives to try to learn a bit here and another small fragment of information there to piece together the personality and strengths of Marthe Marie. On the records of the ship, John M Wood, which brought her to America, she is listed as "Marie." She was named for her mother, Marthe Marie Malan. At sometime after she arrived in America she probably began to be called Mary because her name on her tombstone reads Mary M. Tourn Cardon. In a patriarchal blessing given, July 18, 1865, by C H Hyde, when she would have been sixty-eight years old, her name was also written "Mary." Even so, as most of us have always thought of her as Marthe Marie Tourn, I will continue to call her that in this short biography.

Some dates and facts reported about her vary, but the discrepancies, for the most part are not great. The first difference is in her birth date. The date given by her daughter, Marie Madeleine, also known as Mary Magdalaine, which agrees with that given on her tombstone was May 15, 1797, at Rora Pra del Tour, Angrogna Valley, Lucerne, Italy. However, film 193433 in the Family History Library gives her birth as May 24, 1799 in Rora Parish, Piemonte, Italy.<sup>1</sup> Also I have seen and have a copy of the original parish record in beautiful old handwriting in the Waldensian archives in Torre Pelice and the May 24, 1799, date is recorded. It means she was more than

two years older than her husband. This is indicated as true on the immigration record where their ages in March of 1854 are given as fifty-three and fifty-six. [Perhaps she lost track of the years and added one.]

Her parent's names were Jean Barthelemy Tourn and Marthe Marie Malan, and she probably lived in Rora all of her young life because she was both born and married there. As far as can be ascertained we do not have records of her siblings. She alone is listed as a child of her parents. Hers was a life lived in harsh circumstances, filled with work, but dedicated to God and family. When she was a young woman, Philippe Cardon, of Prarustin, Piedmont, became acquainted with her and they were married in her own village on the first of February in 1821. Some thirty-six years later, on March 27, 1857, their eternal sealing took place in the Endowment House.

Philippe had been taught gospel truths from the Bible, and he and Marthe Marie carried this practice into their own family, for their daughter tells us, "I well remember the time when all our family would gather around my mother and father each night, just before retiring, and listen to him read a chapter in whole or in part from the Bible. After he had read he would review what he had read and explain to us little ones many good principles. Among other things which he taught us were the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments."<sup>2</sup> It is said that the Cardons carried a Bible, nearly three hundred years old, "over Alpine passes, across the Atlantic Ocean, carted through wind and rain and dust thousands of miles into the land of Zion. [With it came an Italian version of the Book of Mormon which had been prepared for these people under the direction of Lorenzo Snow.]"<sup>3</sup> Where this Bible is today is unknown. What a treasure it would be to locate it if it still exists! [A Cardon Bible, in French, dated 1844, with initials PC is said to be in the Sons of Utah Pioneers Library, Emigration Canyon this date August 12, 1995.]

Marthe Marie and her husband were members of the Vaudois faith, which was an early Protestant religion. Their many persecutions, their life in the Piedmont region in what is now northern Italy, near the border of modern France has been well documented. Suffice it to say that they were dedicated Christians who loved the Lord and his commandments as they understood them and tried through much sacrifice to teach of Christ to their children and to live his commandments.

Again from their daughter we learn their families had been driven to "the mountains at the time of the religious war, when they could not come down on the plains for fear of being murdered by the Romans, [Roman Catholics] who were ready to kill any and all of the Vaudois." Speaking of her forbears "---though they were good and honest people, yet they had no opportunity to educate their children for several generations; but in 1836 my father had accumulated means enough to purchase a large vineyard and orchard down in the valley of Piedmont. He was one of the first Vaudois allowed to settle near the Romans, so he left his home at Bullcosta on the mountains where he had raised part of his family, three sons and three daughters. I was but a small girl when my father moved down into the valley of Piedmont, Italy. [At that time] I was the youngest of six children. Father built us a good comfortable home there."<sup>4</sup>

Claire Cardon Sullivan, youngest child of their youngest son Thomas who [died June 1995] was their last living granddaughter, living in Heber, told me when I interviewed her in February 1993, at age 97, that her grandparents never learned English and their grandchildren did not know them well because they could not speak their language. I have been curious about which language they spoke. Quoting Marie again, "The humble mountaineers could speak neither English, French or Italian. They had lived apart on the mountains so long that they had developed a dialect of their own. Thus it was almost impossible for the Elders to make themselves understood. It was my good fortune to be able to speak both French and Italian. I could also speak and understand the dialect of the mountaineers. I therefore was

selected to travel with the Elders on their journeys and act as interpreter."<sup>5</sup> This dialect was given the name of Patois pronounced [Pa twah] and was probably the language spoken by Marthe Marie throughout her life,

They were the parents of nine children--four girls and five boys. We know Marthe Marie experienced one of life's saddest losses twice. Her little son, Barthelmi, died at age four in August 1831 and ten years later, there was a repetition of the same sorrowful event when her young daughter, Louise, died at about the same age.

Perhaps an insight into her compassion as well as that of Philippe's comes from the account given by Marie of Marie's dream concerning the future coming of the Mormon missionaries. Marie tells of being a child of six or seven, having the dream in which she was a young woman rather than a child and saw three men, who told her of the restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith the Prophet, of her family's future acceptance of it and their subsequent emigration to America. In her dream they gave her two small books to read and admonished her to study them.

Following the dream Marie gives more insights about her parents when she writes, "When I realized what had been said to me and what I had seen I became frightened. I took my clothes in my arms and ran downstairs to where my mother was preparing breakfast for our family and hired man. As I came in she saw that I looked pale. She asked me if I was sick. I said 'no.' Just at the instant I was not able to talk. My mother told me to sit on a chair and she would soon see to me and learn what was wrong. Soon my father came in and my mother called his attention to me. She knew that if I was not sick that something had happened which caused me to look so strange. My father took me up, dressed me, and questioned me until I had told him all I had seen and heard."<sup>6</sup>

At this time I calculate Marthe Marie had seven children living in the home, as Barthelemi had already passed away. Two were younger than Marie, one being a baby. What mother cannot imagine the climate of confusion and hurry which must have been pressing Marthe Marie to prepare that breakfast? Yet she was aware and took notice of one child's dilemma and persevered until Marie was consoled and cared for.

We also have an account from her daughter of the tragic day when the comfortable home her husband Philippe had built for the family burned. We see the fortitude and quick responsive action of Marthe Marie. "I well remember one Sunday, most of the family had gone to meeting. Those remaining at home were my mother, the baby, my oldest sister, who was lying in bed sick and myself. I was then very small.

"My mother was busy cooking dinner as she was expecting my father and others of the family soon to return from meeting. She went outside the kitchen and looking up observed flames of fire upstairs. Suddenly the house was almost enwrapped with flames. Mother rushed upstairs where my sister lay helpless. She grasped her in her arms with part of the bed clothes and placed her out in the snow. [This surely would have required an adrenalin rush because at this time Anne would have been at least fifteen or sixteen years old and very heavy for her mother to carry downstairs.] She put the baby and I in the cradle and placed us away from all danger of the fire.

"The neighbors being at the meeting there was no one to assist in extinguishing the flames. Before help came the walls of the building were all that remained. Furniture, clothing, woodwork, doors, windows, etc., were all in ashes and debris.

"This misfortune occurred in the dead of winter. Fifteen inches of snow covered the ground. -- There we were in the snow. We had nothing. The granary with its contents was burned to the ground. We smaller ones were crying with cold."<sup>7</sup> Imagination is

all we have to detail the hours of that day and the days that followed to picture the distress of this large homeless family.

In the conference of October 1849 Lorenzo Snow was called to open a new mission in Italy. His companion was Joseph Toronto and later T B H Stenhouse was also called to the Italian mission with them. Supposedly these are the three missionaries that father Philippe met and brought to his home to meet and teach his family. To quote Elder Snow about his reason for making the Piedmont his main area of focus in the mission, "Now, with a heart full of gratitude, I find that an opening is presented in the valleys of Piedmont, when all other parts of Italy are closed against our efforts. I believe that the Lord has there hidden up a people amid the Alpine mountains, and it is the voice of the Spirit that I shall commence something of importance in that part of this dark nation."<sup>8</sup>

Philippe had heard of the missionaries from one of his hired men and on the very day he first heard he had enough interest to leave his work, hurry home where Marthe Marie was astonished to see him mid-day. He quickly changed into his Sunday clothes and began the long walk to find the missionaries. He walked that afternoon and all night and the next morning and arrived in time to hear Elder Lorenzo Snow preach. He invited them to his home and to make it their headquarters. They went with him to the mountains and Marie's dream was partially fulfilled when they stood before her as she was seated in a meadow, reading while keeping watch over some milk cows. She recognized them from her dream.

Her father also had, according to one family tradition, on the night previous to meeting the missionaries, a dream of two of them bringing a book to him concerning the gospel. According to this version when he had returned home in the "middle of the morning, his surprised wife asked, "Why are you home at this hour?" And he replied, "I can see two strangers coming up the mountains bringing us a message

concerning the gospel. I must dress in my best clothes and go down to welcome them."<sup>9</sup>

I'm sure the family all knew of these harbingers, and it must have been with excitement that Marthe Marie and her daughter finished their supper work that evening before going into the other room where her husband and four sons were talking to the Elders. Marthe Marie, Philippe and four of their children were baptized in 1852. The Malan family and the Cardons were the first two families to be baptized into the church. They seemed to be close friends as well as relatives. As mentioned Marthe Marie's mother was Marthe Marie Malan, and several of the Malans acted as godparents when her children were baptized. Her fifth son was named Philippe after his father, but in America, as many immigrants did, he added "Louis" to his name. "His descendants said they heard him say he was named for his godfather Louis Malan, and for his father Philippe."<sup>10</sup>

They held Sunday meetings at their home--sometimes forty or fifty or more were present. These were mountaineers who had arisen at two or three in the morning and walked for hours to hear the Elders teach. I'm sure that Marthe Marie had much to do with baking bread in their big oven and cooking meat for so many so that none would go away hungry before their long walk home.

After doing what they could as a family to convert some of their friends and neighbors, they were told in a directive from the church issued in 1853 to "Come to Zion." What were her feelings? It meant leaving her oldest daughter, Anne, whose husband was adamant against her having any part of Mormonism. It meant leaving the graves of her two little ones; relinquishing the only way of life she had ever known for a frightening unknown. Perhaps it was easier not knowing what enormous trials lay ahead. Surely they could not imagine the challenges not knowing English would bring, nor how dire would be the effects of disease along the way. Just before

leaving, however, they were given individual blessings by the Elders, in which they were promised that, if they lived the commandments, every one of their family would reach the end of their journey preserved and in good health. What a comfort to a mother to hold that promise close through all the perils of cholera, accidents of travel and near encounters with death!

Their journey, beginning on February 8, 1854, has often been described and it was a rigorous one. They traveled by carriage, railway, regular coach and a coach placed on sleds, drawn by sixteen mules up the steep mountain through ice and snow. Continuing by rail and steamer they finally reached Liverpool where they waited for their ship, the John M Wood, to be completed. Their journey across the Atlantic took almost two months.

Arriving in New Orleans May 2, 1854, they had to travel both the Mississippi and Missouri rivers by steamer. At Westport, now a part of Kansas City, Missouri, they prepared and began their pioneer travel overland with ox teams. Leaving in early May, as part of the Robert L Campbell company, it took almost six months to reach Salt Lake City on October 28, 1854. They had walked for more than 1300 miles in the final phase of their nine month journey.

They first settled in Ogden at Bingham's fort. In the fall of 1859 Philippe and Marthe Marie were called by Brigham Young to help settle Cache Valley. Here Philippe busied himself with his stone mason work, building his own home on the courthouse block near the corner of First West and Second North<sup>11</sup>, building fireplaces in almost every home in the valley and helping with the building of the temple.

Marthe Marie had her involvement with her children although mostly they were branching out into their own families--even the youngest, Thomas, joined the army as a bugler at age sixteen. She was adept at beautiful handwork and along with

many of the other pioneer women grew silk worms and wove beautiful silk fabrics. This entailed, many hours spent growing, harvesting and feeding mulberry leaves to the voracious worms. "They also knew how to produce flax and hemp and weave cloth for sheets, bed ticks and underwear."<sup>12</sup> I imagine she also spent a great deal of her time being a "lady farmer" as she was called in the birth records of some of her children.<sup>13</sup>

Probably very similar to their oven in Italy "Marthe Marie and Philippe had an outdoor fireplace, a baking oven, where once a week they baked bread for the family. They liked to bake torchettes, a twisted crusty loaf. Her grandchildren gathered at their home on baking day."<sup>14</sup>

In spite of these activities was there not a modicum or more of loneliness in their isolation from grandchildren and neighbors because of the language barrier? One of Philippe's best friends was the father of Rebecca Ballard Cardon. She said neither could speak the other's language, yet they were great friends. That's commendable, yet poignant, because there would be much missed in a friendship where no words could be exchanged. It is most likely that Marthe Marie felt the same limitation many times and thought how different her life would have been if she had remained in the Piedmont. Nevertheless, for her sacrifice of not spending life in her homeland, the blessings she enjoyed by coming to Zion were a precious recompense.

Her death came on January 15, 1873, when she was 74 years old. We have no eye-witness account, but only know that on her gravestone are the words, "Died in full faith of a Glorious Resurrection." Her patriarchal blessing promised, "You shall be the means of redeeming your father's household." According to Joseph F. Smith, after this life, good women like Marthe Marie, "will be fully authorized and empowered to preach the gospel and minister to the women while the elders and

prophets are preaching it to the men."<sup>15</sup> Perhaps that is her part in redeeming her father's household and may be the heart of her work in the spirit world.

Marthe Marie Tourn Cardon lived life to its full measure. The lives of her children brought honor to her. She endured faithfully to the end with charity, patience and grace. May we all be enriched by observing her faith and commitment to her covenants.

1. **CARDONS! 1799- 1986, Genevieve Johnson/Edna Taylor, page 15.**
2. **Autobiography of Marie Madaline Cardon Guild, page 2, copied by DJS, April 8, 1909 by order of Mrs. Charles Guild, via Edna Taylor.**
3. **Philippe Cardon, Pioneer Father - Utah 1854, by his granddaughters, Ella Vida Cardon Adams and Blondel Cardon Porter Smith, written in 1960, page 1.**
4. **History of Mary Magdelaine Cardon Guild, page 3, Piedmont, Uinta County, Wyoming, January 12, 1903, version from Rebecca Ballard Cardon, via Edna Taylor.**
5. **Same as #1 endnote, page 5.**
6. **Ibid page 9**
7. **Ibid, page 9.**

8. The Italian Mission, Lorenzo Snow, Prepared from excerpts of letters of Lorenzo Snow in 1974 by Dan C. Jorgensen, President of the Italy North Mission, page 10.
9. Same as #3 endnote, page 2.
10. Same as #1 endnote, page 20.
11. Same as #3 endnote, page 10
12. Marthe Marie Tourn Cardon by Mary Harris
13. Same as #1 endnote, page 16, 17.
14. Ibid page 2
15. Gospel Doctrine, Joseph F. Smith, Sermon at the funeral of Mary Freeze, pages 459-461.

A PATRIARCH BLESSING BY C. H. HYDE, UPON THE HEAD OF MARY  
CARDON, A DAUGHTER OF BARTHOLOMEW AND MARY MARTHA  
TOURN, BORN MAY 15, 1797 AT ITALY

Mary, in the name of Jesus, I place my hands upon your head to seal a  
Father's Blessing upon you for the eye of the Lord has been over thee for good.

Thou shalt have the visions and revelations of God and the Father has given  
his angels charge over you and you shall be a mother in Israel, and shall partake  
of all the glories of Zion and shall accomplish the desires of your heart.

Thou art of Ephraim and a lawful heir to the fullness of the Priesthood and  
with thy companion, a great kingdom upon the earth, and you shall partake of all  
the glories of Zion and you shall be the means of redeeming your father's  
household.

These blessings I seal upon your head with crowns of glory forever and  
ever. Amen.