

## GRANDMOTHER SUSETTE STALE CARDON – A CHURCH PATRIOT

This information is from an article written by her nephew, Dr. James L. Barker. Head of Modern Language Department, University of Utah, as collected by Isabelle C. Hilton, and with added facts from my memory

The Vaudois were driven by the Catholics to various parts of France, Switzerland, and Germany, to take final refuge in the high Alpine valleys known as the Piedmont:

Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered Saints whose homes  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;  
Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old  
Forget not; in Thy book record their groans, etc.

From the Twelfth Century on they were known as Vaudois or Waldeneese. From their retreat they sent out preachers two by two, at first openly, and then disguised as tinkers and various other ways. They preached reformed doctrines. The movement came to have numerous adherents throughout Western Europe. But they were constantly pursued as heretics; Whole armies, and even two crusades were directed against them. At one time two cities were burned, and sixty thousand souls perished. The movement was stamped out everywhere, except in these Alpine Valleys. Here they resisted the combined armies of Savoy and France until there were less than three hundred of them left, and they were threatened with extermination. Still they would not surrender their faith, and were saved by a rupture between the Savoy leader and Louis XIV. They were subject to unjust taxation, kidnapping, (especially their children), imprisoned, put to death, and even burned, and until as late as 1848 (except during the period of the French Revolution and Napoleon) the law forbade them entrance to any of the Universities, or any of the professions, and rendered invalid any title to land outside their mountain valleys. Hence the valleys became very greatly overpopulated, but they owned their own homes and lived in independent poverty. In 1848 they were permitted to enjoy civil and political rights, but were still restricted in their religious worship.

The Vaudois are still remote from the beaten lines of travel. Today one must travel thirty miles southwest of Turin, and then climb the Valley of the Alps to reach them. Quoting directly from James Barker: "It seems strange that one year after the beginning of toleration in these valleys, Apostle Lorenzo Snow and others should have been called at the October Conference in 1849 to be among the first group of missionaries starting from the Great Salt Lake Valley, to be missionaries to Italy." And it is still

more significant, I think, that as soon as they arrived there, two of these missionaries, Elders Stenhouse and Toronto, should be sent to these Valleys of the Piedmont where grandmother and her people lived, also grandfather Cardon, whom she married after arriving in Utah. At that time Apostle Snow, writing to President Richards of the European Mission said, "I believe that the Lord has there, ( in the Valleys of the Piedmont ) hidden up a people amid the Alpine mountains, and it is the voice of the Spirit that I shall commence some thing of importance in that part of this dark nation." In his biography he further writes; "When the anathemas of Rome shook the world and princes fell from their thrones, they dared to brave the mandates of the Pope, and the armies of the mighty."

The first convert to the gospel in Italy was Daniel Malan, a relative of grandmother's. He was baptized in 1851. At that time Jean Pierre Stale', and his wife, Jeanne Marie Gaudin Stale' were living at Prarustin. They were both representatives of old Vaudois families. There were written documents which are still preserved, pertaining to the Stale' families as far back as 1232, and one of their churches as well as one of their generals, bears the name of Gaudin.

When the missionaries reached the valleys, there were about twenty-one thousand Protestants and five thousand Catholics. A provincial dialect and French were generally spoken. Some understood Italian but few spoke it. Grandfather Cardon spoke it, but he was naturally a linguist, speaking readily the provincial tongue, as well as French, and later English and Spanish. Grandmother could understand, but not speak it.

While most of the people were quite poor, Jean Pierre Stale, being unusually thrifty and prosperous, was considered well to-do. He had two homes on one southern sunny slope of a beautiful Alpine valley where they cultivated grapes, figs and other fruits; the other was some distance away, and that distance was almost straight up to the rugged fastness of their mountain retreat. It was here the Stales' brought their sheep and goats in the summertime. Susette, being the oldest child took the responsibility of one place while her father cared for the other, thus learning at an early age to be reliable, as well as active and efficient.

Speaking of her home life she told us that while the lower place was warm in the summer, the winters, even there were very severe, and their homes were built somewhat similar to those of Bethlehem, at the time of the Savior, with the stables adjoining, only here the stable is below and the living compartment above (perhaps to conserve space as well as warmth). There was a thatch to protect from inclement weather. At first the thought rather shocks our sense of cleanliness, but when we consider how scrupulously clean both animals and stables were kept it could easily be more sanitary than some of our own methods. Knowing grandmother's ways, I am convinced it was, but it wouldn't do for us to try it.

They lived almost solely upon their own products, which consisted of milk, meat and cheese from their herds, fruits, grains, and the chestnut. The chestnut was of inestimable value to them. They not only ate it as a nut, but they ground it into flour and meal, used the oil for butter, and also to burn for light, and the hulls for fuel, besides feeding them to the cattle in winter. Wine was a common drink in that country, and those who were inclined were addicted to drunkenness. She said her bread was much better and sweeter than that used here. Her father made it. He baked it in large quantities in big ovens, and baked only two or three times a year. They used both rye and wheat flour. Her pets were her cows, and she cleaned and cared for them almost as carefully as some of her American sisters do their lapdogs.

She had a long way to go to church. There she learned her catechism so well that she could quote long passages from it in her old age. The only school was the Sunday School. The Bible was the text, and she was well versed in it. After she came to Utah, President Taylor gave her a hymnbook written in French, and she obtained a French Book of Mormon. She prized these books very highly, and in her later years, she spent a great deal of time reading them. She said she could understand the Bible so much better after reading the Book of Mormon.

When the missionaries came, she would go wherever she heard of a meeting being held, no matter how far away, or what the obstacle. Opposition grew with the success of the Elders. Property of those who joined the church was destroyed, and the Elders mistreated. One night she was at a meeting six miles from home. When it was dismissed a mob was waiting to do violence to the Elders. She, and some of her companions, kept themselves between the mob and the Elders, until they managed to slip away in the darkness. The angered mob threatened them, and emphasized their threats with bricks and rocks. Later in 1855, F.D. Richards and two other missionaries were hiding from the mob in the high passes of the mountains. They had been three days without food when they came to the Stale' home and asked for something to eat. Susette ran out and milked the goats that they might be relieved from their famished condition, while her mother prepared a meal for them. Susette and her mother did their laundry and knitted sox for them as they had done for other Elders. When they were ready to leave Brother Richards told the mother that the family should go to Zion. She thanked him for his good will, but didn't think it would be realized. There was so much bitterness that they could not dispose of their property. Their wheat had been stolen. It was decided that Susette and her cousin Madalain Gaudin, a young girl who later married grandfather's brother, Paul Cardon, should go, and they left for Liverpool to embark for the United States. When the company was ready to leave, Brother Richards, who realized it would perhaps be the last

opportunity for the Saints to leave Italy, had them wait and sent word for the Elders to have the whole family “where the girl milked the goats” brought out. Her brother Daniel was, or had been drafted into the army, and it took his father what time he had working day and night, to get the papers for his release, so when they joined Susette they had nothing but their clothing. She had been gone about two weeks.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1855, Jean Pierre Stale, his wife, and four children: Susette, 18; Daniel, 16; Mary, 11; and Margaret, 5; sailed from Liverpool on the ship, John Boyd. A number of other families from Italy and about 500 Saints from Scandinavia and Great Britain were on the boat. The company was in the charge of Canute Peterson. Immediately afterwards the Italian Mission was closed, not to be reopened for forty years, and some of these same Cardons, if not the first, were among the first to reopen the mission again.

They arrived in New York on February 15, 1856, and went from there to Florence (Winter Quarters) Nebraska, by rail, stopping at Chicago and St. Louis on the route. At Florence they were delayed for three months while waiting for handcarts to be completed. When these were completed, they went to Iowa City to join the first handcart company to cross the plains. These handcarts were rather primitive in construction, with wheels of solid pieces of wood, shafts about five feet long with crosspieces, one of which served as a handle. The whole clumsy thing weighed about sixty pounds, and each cart was intended to carry about one hundred pounds. The dry hot summer made the wheels rickety, and wheels and axels broke. Loads had to be lightened so clothing, their only possessions, had to be thrown out from time to time. She told me many times that they would wear one set of new clothes until they became dirty, and then would throw them away. An English group that was following them picked up the clothes and when she arrived in Salt Lake she recognized a number of the clothes that had been left on the plains. When they entered the valley they were little better clothed than when they entered the world.

The operation of handcarts was a new thing and, as with everything else in the experimental stage, a good many unnecessary hardships were added to the naturally arduous task. She told us that she had heard people who came over with the handcarts say that they sang, danced, and played games, but that she didn't believe that there had been any dancing in this first company, certainly not in their group. When they camped, and were not too weary, they spent a social evening among themselves, reminiscing, talking of the Gospel, and singing. She learned to sing, “Come, Come Ye Saints” in English. It was her favorite hymn. She told me that many evenings after camp was made they would chop the ground around their beds, to be sure that there were no rattlesnakes.

Their greatest difficulty, however, was caused from the fact that they could not speak English, and the others could not speak French. Perhaps some of the distressing incidents of the journey were due to not being able to understand, or to be understood.

The father had not been well when they left Winter Quarters (Florence) and he kept getting worse until he became so weak that he could no longer pull the handcart. That was left to Susette and her brother Dan, who was not very sturdy or used to heavy work to help out. When their provisions became limited and had to be rationed, father Stale' would not eat his share, in order that the others might have more. At last he could walk no more, and had to ride in one of the wagons. The second morning as his wife helped him into the wagon, he told her that we would never reach the valley, but that she and her children would, and they would never want for the necessities of life. She knew that he was nearing the end. The man in charge of their division seemed to think that he could walk if he wanted to, and also that she too was shirking: at any rate, for some reason she couldn't understand, he struck her several times with his black whip. That night when they stopped to camp, and she went again to see him, he was dead. The body was wrapped in a sheet, placed between layers of sagebrush, and buried on the banks of the Platte, August 17. Grandmother told me that they built a bonfire over the grave, so that coyotes or wandering Indians wouldn't disturb it. The forlorn little group plodded on toward the land of the setting sun that, rather paradoxically, was to them a land of dawning light. They reached Salt Lake City September 20, 1856.

A new country, a strange people, with strange customs, the language handicap, and no means of resource, presented a problem that the newly made widow had never faced before, but the resourceful eldest daughter again rose bravely to the situation. It meant just another experience in her eventful life. The Cardons from Ogden met them and took the mother; the brother, Daniel; and the baby girl, and helped them to get established in a dugout. The second girl, Mary, went to work for a family, and Susette went to work in the city to provide means that would supply the needs that could not otherwise be provided for.

She found that all who lived in Zion, even though they belonged to the church were not Saints, and were not averse to taking advantage of a girl, who to them appeared dumb, because she could not speak the language of the country. By the way, she had had little opportunity to come in contact with it, as on the journey across the plains, each nationality had kept practically within its own group. Fortunately for her, her ability to understand was keen, and came to her aid long before she dared to attempt speaking it, and before those with whom she had cast her lot realized it, they disclosed plans before her that they didn't intend she

should know. She succeeded in getting herself located where she received better treatment, and loved her employers. But wages were low and material expensive, so that it took long hours and hard work to pay for a cheap dress at the prevailing ample proportions of a dollar a yard. Also, it didn't pour balm on her aching back and blistered hands to see the English girls who had come over in her company, wearing the dresses she had been forced to throw away. It made her indignant with them, but she said nothing. This and other incidents, together with the death of the father, and the treatment of the mother tried the faith of her sixteen-year old brother. He never forgot it, and it seemed he never forgave, or if he did he at least lost his religious enthusiasm, and simply remained neutral, although the wife he subsequently married was an energetic church worker.

Susette's trials only made her faith and religion dearer. The 24<sup>th</sup> of July was sacred to her, and took precedence over every other anniversary. In 1857 at Logan, she married Louis Philip Cardon who had come to Utah four years earlier, from Prarustin, Piedmont Italy. Their first two children, Joseph Samuel, and Emanuel Philip, were born in Ogden, the daughter, Mary Catherine, was born in Logan. They later moved to Oxford Idaho where my father, Louis Paul was born 17 March 1868, also a sister, Isabelle Susette, who died when about two years of age. From there grandfather was called to help settle what was known as Bishop George Lake's Camp on the Little Colorado. Next they were called to Woodruff. In both these places they lived the United Order, another experience that called for fortitude. Then they went to Taylor. These places were in Arizona.

From here, his first wife, grandfather, and the two older boys went to Mexico. My father, then seventeen years old, helped him move down there, but didn't like Mexico for a home, and so for awhile, after he got grandfather established, he returned to Taylor, and grandmother remained with him. When he was called in 1897, to Colonia Dublan, Mexico to teach, she went with him, and from then on she lived with or near him for the rest of her life.

She was very industrious and thrifty. Her family of three boys and one girl never wanted for good clothing, though sometimes, when they were small, with the help of her youngest boy, she had to gather the wool to make them from thorns and bushes where someone else's sheep had gone through, spin it by hand with a little stick shaped somewhat like a guinea pig, and then knit it or weave it with the same "electric power." She did wonderful coloring with just wild plants and indigo. These homespun clothes were very beautiful and durable. Some of the pieces she showed were good after 50 years. She took very good care of her clothes. I used to love to spend an afternoon with her and the girls while she showed us

her things, telling us that this was 50, that 35 and another “only” 25 years of age. She showed me one fur piece that had come through the Customs a quarter of century earlier. She wore these “quaint” (to us) costumes until she died. I remember particularly a beautiful black silk with tiny sprays of flowers on it made in the style of 50 years before, that she used for special occasions. On some people they would look dowdy, but grandmother always looked distinguished and dainty, like something out of a miniature. Her little poke bonnets were very becoming too. It seems that “boughten” clothes of those days were made to last much better than now.

While she always had meats, vegetables and various kinds of fruits preserved, the strawberry was her specialty. In Idaho she made a great deal of money during the short berry season, serving strawberries and cream to the public. In this connection is related another incident that illustrates her character or disposition. While she was always sympathetic with those less fortunate, than herself, unless they were lazy, she could never tolerate a drone, either male or female. At one time when she was selling quantities of strawberries from a piece of ground a little larger than the area covered by her house, and also giving to those whom she thought deserving, a woman who had a husband and a number of large boys with the same opportunities that she had, but whose lot was barren of anything living or growing, sent a child over to see if Sister Cardon would please give her some strawberries, “she hadn’t tasted any this year.” Grandmother simply said, “Tell your mother I find myself that way many times.” She didn’t send the berries. She also had her berry patches in Mexico. When she came out of Mexico she still had strawberries, dried forty years before that she had taken from the Idaho patch; they were delicious too. The Economic Department of the University of Arizona asked for a sample of them. They said they had never known of dried strawberries, much less of their being preserved to that age, in a moth infested country like Mexico or Arizona. A special treat of my childhood was some strawberry jam on one of her pancakes, which she used to give us when we ran errands for her.

She also had chickens and a cow, which she tended herself, and it seemed like she could make more butter from a pint of skimmed milk, than most folks could make from that much cream. When we were driven from Mexico during the Madero Revolution, she had five or six thousand dollars worth of stock in the Union Mercantile, and community store, and though one of the greatest trials of her life must have been to have been suddenly reduced from easy independence to dependence, for even the price of a spool of thread, she never complained, or mentioned what she had left behind, thus differing not only from Lot’s wife, but from many of the rest of us who came out, and sometimes had to draw largely on imagination to tell of all we had to leave behind.