

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Dalmas, Jean-Pierre Auguste, House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number 4950 Villar Lane, NE (west end of Villar Lane, 0.2 mi. W. of SR 1545)

n/a  not for publication

city or town Valdese

n/a  vicinity

state North Carolina

code NC

county Burke

code 023

zip code 28690

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant

nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey A. Cross  
Signature of certifying official/Title

SHPO

3/5/02  
Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other,

(explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House  
Name of Property

Burke Co., NC  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

n/a

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

n/a

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Waldensian

Other: Craftsman Influenced

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Stone

roof Asphalt

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House  
Name of Property

Burke Co., NC  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is: n/a

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1929-1948  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Dalmas, Jean-Pierre Auguste  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House  
Name of Property

Burke Co., NC  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 26 acres

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1                                   
Zone Easting Northing  
2                                 

3                                   
Zone Easting Northing  
4                                 

See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer Martin and Sarah Woodard  
organization Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc. date January 4, 2002  
street & number 5400 Glenwood Avenue, Suite 412 telephone 919/785-9702  
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27612

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

##### Continuation Sheets

##### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

##### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

##### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Catherine Dalmas  
street & number 4950 Villar Lane, NE telephone             
city or town Valdese state NC zip code 28690

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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National Park Service

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Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House  
Burke County, NC

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The Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House stands on the north side of the town of Valdese at the west end of Villar Lane, an unimproved road that intersects with the west side of Laurel Street. The stone dwelling occupies a bucolic hilltop on a nearly twenty-six-acre tract at the eastern edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Catawba River flows from west to east a little more than one mile north of the house and approximately two-and-a-half miles west is the town of Drexel. The community of Rutherford College stands a little over two miles to the east-southeast. The substantial house—executed primarily in smooth-surfaced river rock—stands as one of the most notable dwellings of those built by Waldensian immigrants who settled in this part of Burke County beginning in the late nineteenth century. Begun in 1929 and completed in 1948, the house combines Jean-Pierre Dalmas's highly refined stone masonry skills with a whimsical idiom influenced heavily by the architecture of his homeland.

The Dalmas House was built into an embankment and is one-and-a-half stories on its east, west and north sides and two-and-a-half stories on its south elevation. The picturesque dwelling rests on a river rock and fieldstone foundation. The light frame, timber structure is veneered principally with river rock mortared with cement. Four prominent interior stone chimneys pierce the asphalt shingle, front-gabled roof. The house is overall rectangular in form with its front entrance facing east. Exterior doors occupy the east, north and west elevations. The overhanging eaves of the gabled roof are bracketed on the east and west ends. The north and south elevations display exposed roof rafters. A series of semi-elliptical design and construction elements repeat frequently on the exterior.

The well-kept yard, dotted with mature trees and shrubbery, is slightly terraced on the south side of the house. A flagstone sidewalk leads from a paved driveway on the north side of the house to the north elevation entrance. A roughly triangular raised flowerbed built of stone occupies the middle of the sidewalk where it flares out before intersecting with the driveway. Stone pathways surround the house. A large cement patio covers the yard on the west side of the house. Further evidence of the family's handiwork is seen in the west yard where a long river rock retaining wall extends from the house along the driveway. A metal railing tops the wall.

The dwelling's east-facing façade is the formal front of the house, although the more elaborate north elevation now serves as the primary entry. The east elevation features a classically inspired entrance composed of a semi-elliptical fanlight above a double-leaf door. An uncovered porch—rounded on its front, executed in river rock, and reached by a stair that extends from the sidewalk on the north side of the entrance—occupies the center of the front elevation. The space beneath the porch is used for storage. Heavy stone posts anchored on the two front corners of the porch

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act as planters; an identical post functions as a newel at the bottom of the porch steps. A set of paired six-over-one sash flanks each side of the entrance on the first floor. A flat lintel composed of vertically placed and nearly uniform stones surmounts these windows and all others on the house. The cement sills beneath all of the dwelling's windows extend to form a slight ledge and are veneered in small stones. The second floor of the façade is symmetrical with three six-over-one sash of identical size occupying the center and flanked on each end with smaller six-over-one sash. A small balcony similar in form to the porch below fronts the center window. A stone bracket helps to support each underside of the balcony. A Waldensian Church emblem composed of seven nearly round stones and crowned with a small ledge sits atop the center window's lintel. Wooden brackets with a stone atop the bottom member support the eaves of this gable end, as well as the west gable end. Two half-round, deep-set vents occur just below the apex of the gable. A batten door leading to the basement occupies the wall beneath the southernmost windows.

The more elaborate north elevation features a grand one-story, semi-circular veranda rhythmically punctuated by a series of arched openings and crowned with a solid balustrade topped by stout, elliptical river rock posts. A small balcony juts out of the front upper portion of the veranda. The first floor consists of five bays—four sets of paired six-over-one sash and an off-center single-leaf door. Two oversized gabled dormers with French doors and each fronted with small balconies and fieldstone balustrades occupy each side of the veranda on the second floor. A smaller dormer with a fixed window is nestled between the large dormers on the slope of the roof. The dormers' eaves are bracketed.

A two-tiered, bracketed, hipped-roof portico dominates the west elevation. The portico has a solid river rock balustrade except on its lower north side where steps allow for access to the paved patio. The arrangement of bays on both floors is identical to the east elevation. Storage space accessible from the south elevation occupies the lower portion of the portico. Beneath the southernmost windows is a batten garage door identical to the one on the east façade.

The south elevation displays the dwelling's full, two-and-a-half story height. From this side of the house the basement is accessible through a single-leaf door. Two sets of paired six-over-one windows flank the door. The same fenestration occurs on the level above, but two windows occupy the area directly above the basement door; a small balcony fronts the two center windows. The upper level almost mirrors the northern elevation: Two oversized gabled dormers with French doors and fronted with a small balcony with a stone balustrade interrupt the roof's overhanging eave. Stone brackets support the balcony, while molded wooden brackets decorate

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the dormers' eaves. A nearly flat-roofed carport supported with square posts, added in 1986, attaches to the house just above the bays fronting the basement. The carport extends along the entire south elevation.

The irregular floor plan is surprisingly simple and loosely based on a central passage plan. On the first floor, a wide hallway extends from the parlor located on the east end of the house to the back door. A parlor, a study, bedrooms, a bathroom, a dining room and a large kitchen occupy the first level. A dogleg stair occupies the center of the north side of the hall. A doorway divides the stair from the hall and the stair is enclosed on the first floor. No railing or balustrade is present; the stairway is simply flanked by walls.

Throughout the first floor, the walls are plasterboard and floors are carpeted over the original hardwood. First floor bedrooms, the dining room, and the study are nearly square and each each about fourteen by fourteen feet. The living room is approximately twenty by fourteen feet and the combined kitchen and family room is roughly twenty-six by fourteen feet. Each room is trimmed with a narrow crown molding, beneath which is a picture molding. Baseboards are capped with a band of molding.

Most of the interior doors, including the closet doors, are five-panel doors, arranged with two, long vertical panels above a horizontal panel below which are two shorter vertical panels. A double-width opening connects the living room and the study. A pair of French doors connects the living room with the hallway, while a single French door links the living room and dining room.

A hint of the exterior's building motif is exhibited in the original fieldstone and river rock chimneys that occupy the bedrooms, dining room, parlor and study. Although each varies slightly in the application of soldier courses of stone above the firebox openings and the arrangement of rock to create designs in the body of the chimney, all the fireplaces consist of exposed stone chimneys that extend the full height of the room. A molded concrete mantelshelf hangs above each fireplace opening. The fireplace openings are segmental arches with one flat arch exception. The fireboxes are relatively small and the width of the chimney is only around three feet. The fireplaces are also off-center in the rooms, being closer to the interior walls of the rooms. Prior to 1945 or 1946 when a central heating system was installed, these fireplaces provided the home's heat.

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An original chimney and the two fireplaces it served were removed when an interior wall was eliminated to create a larger kitchen and dining area in the northwest corner of the house. To serve this new room, one of the Dalmas brothers constructed a new chimney and fireplace on the west half of the north elevation of the house. This fireplace breaks with Jean-Pierre's plan for interior chimneys and small, relatively shallow fireboxes, but the use of local stone and the continued practice of masonry by Jean-Pierre's son illustrate a continuation of the family's architectural tradition.

The upstairs is only partially completed.<sup>1</sup> This space was rarely used before Jean-Pierre's death, but he probably intended that those spaces be finished eventually. In the years since his death, the Dalmas children expanded their living spaces by completing some of these upstairs rooms. A hallway like that on the first floor runs the length of the second floor and is flanked by four bedrooms, two on either side of the hallway, plus one bathroom. Each bedroom has closets and its own balcony accessed through French doors. Each room also had a covered opening to the chimney for a stovepipe, but these were never utilized. Some of the rooms are carpeted while some have hardwood floors.

The basement, a large open space accessible from the south, east, and west elevations and an interior stair located between the dining room and kitchen, displays more of Jean-Pierre Dalmas's stonemasonry skills. Substantial round river rock columns support the dwelling's sure posts, which in turn hold the massive wooden beams, many of which are expertly rabbeted. These columns follow the layout of the hallway above, running down the center of the basement. Larger rectangular fieldstone supports also stand in the space. These are the bases for the home's four original chimneys. Dalmas created built-in shelving units that are recessed into the basement's stone walls and trimmed with wood. This tidy space contains a workshop, washing room and storage areas.

Dalmas built two outbuildings—a chicken house and barn—which stand downhill from the house, but which are no longer on the same parcel as the dwelling. Both are owned by Villar Vintners, Inc./Waldensian Heritage Wines. The chicken house has lost its integrity with the replacement of the original wall materials and windows with imitation half-timbering and modern windows. The barn has been converted into a wine storage and processing facility with a tasting and sales room. Because of integrity issues and because the present owners do not wish to have their buildings listed, the barn and chicken house are not included in this nomination.

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<sup>1</sup> The owners did not allow access upstairs.

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Burke County, NC

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### Summary

The Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House, a two-and-a-half story fieldstone and river rock Craftsman-influenced house, occupies a bucolic hilltop north of the town of Valdese in Burke County. Dalmas and his wife Celestine Madelaine Allio came to North Carolina in 1915 as part of a wave of immigrants from the Cottian Alps in western Italy near the French border. These immigrants, known as Waldenses or Waldensians, were part of a pre-Reformation, evangelical sect persecuted by the Catholic Church for 600 years. By the early nineteenth century, persecution had ended, but their homeland had become overcrowded, so many left, seeking better opportunities for farming in various countries in North and South America. The Waldensians of Burke County were lured by industrialist Marvin Scaife who offered the group land in this western Piedmont county. Beginning in 1893, the Europeans populated the area they named Valdese. Here settlers established farms, produced wine and textiles, and operated a bakery. Architecturally, they brought with them a tradition of building in stone they practiced in the rural Alpine valleys of Europe. By the early twentieth century, they applied these traditional building methods to American forms such as the bungalow. It was in 1929, fourteen years after he moved his growing family to North Carolina that Jean-Pierre Dalmas (1878-1972) began construction of his house, a process that did not end until 1948 when his family insisted that he quit working on what his children called "Papa's Dream." The Dalmas House is nominated to the National Register for its architectural significance as an outstanding example of Waldensian masonry skills applied to a New World building form that created one of Valdese's most inspiring dwellings.

### Historical Background

Since the twelfth century a group of pre-Reformation Protestants known as the Waldensians survived religious persecution and military attacks in the valleys of the Cottian Alps along the border of Italy and France. After the group was granted political and civil liberty and assured religious tolerance in 1848, their population swelled so that by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Waldensians' narrow valleys were far too small to support their numbers. With the threat of starvation looming, the Waldensians began emigrating. Some went to France or elsewhere in Italy. Others journeyed further, to Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, New York City,

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Missouri and Utah. Despite this movement, twenty-five thousand Waldensians were still living in the valleys in 1892.<sup>1</sup>

While traveling in Europe, Marvin F. Scaife, a Pittsburgh capitalist and landowner, heard of the plight of the Waldensians. Scaife, who owned the Morganton [North Carolina] Land and Improvement Company, offered the Waldensians one hundred thousand acres in Yancey and McDowell counties for \$50,000. The group sent two scouts to North Carolina. When they found the land to be too rocky and steep, Scaife offered other tracts. Although the scouts disagreed on the quality of the land, one sent a telegram back to Italy reporting favorably on a ten thousand-acre parcel in Burke County. Even before the scouts returned, many of the Waldensians sold their land in preparation for the trip.<sup>2</sup>

In the spring of 1893, a group of twenty-nine Waldensians sailed to New York City where they boarded a train for North Carolina. On May 29, the French-speaking, Italian Protestants stepped off the train at a clearing in the Burke County forest, immediately doubling the number of Italian-born people living in North Carolina. Previous occupants and the land company had left a few small, temporary houses and a sawmill on the Waldensians' property, but the sawmill was inefficient and the land was incredibly rocky. The group named their settlement Valdese and went about the monumental task of clearing the heavily forested land, constructing shelter and planting crops amongst the stones.<sup>3</sup> As farming proved nearly impossible initially, many colonists were forced to take work in distant textile mills and coal mines, sometimes traveling as far as New York, New Jersey, or Pennsylvania. Some families sent their children to Morganton, Salisbury, Charlotte or other North Carolina cities to work as domestics.

Despite these difficulties, the colonists persevered and more settlers from Italy followed. Farming improved and "soon the stony hillsides began to burgeon and bloom." In 1899, the

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Ghigo, "The Valdese Story," *Tar Heel: The Magazine of North Carolina* (January/February 1979): 23; Fred B. Cranford, *The Waldenses of Burke County* (Morganton, N.C.: Burke County Schools, Graphics and Industrial Communications Students, 1969), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Cranford, *Waldenses*, 11-13.

<sup>3</sup> Both Waldensian and Valdese are derived from Vallenses or Valdenses, which are derived from Latin, and the French word Vaudois. These terms were used to designate the Waldensian people. Vallenses and Valdenses are from the Latin Vallis densa, meaning a shady or thick valley. The French term is from vaux, which means valley in the Waldensian's patois dialect. The term Waldensian is often said to have been derived from the surname of one of the group's twelfth century leaders, Peter Waldo, but it is likely the opposite occurred and he surname was derived from the group's name. Summarized from R.M. Stephens, *The Burning Bush* (Rushden, Northamptonshire, United Kingdom: Stanley L. Hunt, Printers, Ltd., 1954), 10.

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Waldensians dedicated their newly completed church, which was also their first public building. The community finally gained sure economic footing in 1901, when three colonists established the Waldensian Hosiery Mill after returning from a stint in a South Carolina textile mill.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, emigration continued in the Waldensian homeland. In 1900, Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas came to New York City from the Waldensian parish of Villar Pellice in the province of Torino, Italy. Celestine Madelaine Allio (1882-1979), a Waldensian shepherdess, left the region in 1901, arriving in New York in October. She was employed as a governess in private homes in New York and New Jersey when she met Jean-Pierre, who worked as a hotel waiter and rented a nightclub/boarding house on West Thirtieth Street. The couple wed in 1907, and six of the Dalmas' eight children, including a set of twins, were born in New York City.<sup>5</sup>

With the death of a son in 1913, the failure of Jean-Pierre's business and the turmoil of World War I looming in America's future, the Dalmas family left the city in 1915 and moved to Valdese. There, the family raised cows, chickens and vegetables, mostly for their own use. Like many of Valdese's men, Jean-Pierre became a stonemason and was employed on numerous local projects, including the Valdese Elementary School (NR, 1984).

At home, the family spoke French, while Jean-Pierre and Celestine Madelaine continued to speak with each other in their native patois, a variant of the Provençal language, a romance language spoken in southern France until French superceded it during the thirteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Celestine Madelaine became fluent in English, but Jean-Pierre's English was limited, and he maintained a subscription to a New York-published Italian newspaper.<sup>7</sup>

Although Jean-Pierre had purchased more than thirty acres of land from Cesar Pons in February of 1915, the family was forced to move to Rutherford College in 1918, when the Waldensian Presbyterian Church purchased the family's home for use as a manse. The family chose Rutherford College because it was the only place where a house suitable for a family with five

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<sup>4</sup> *Greensboro News*, January 17, 1932; *News and Record* (Greensboro, N.C.), May 27, 1970; Cranford, *Waldenses*, 16, 18, 29-32; Ghigo, "Valdese," 23.

<sup>5</sup> Catherine Dalmas, interview with author, Valdese, N.C., July 13, 2001; letter to author, August 20, 2001; telephone conversation with author, September 19, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Ghigo, "The Provençal Speech of the Waldensian Colonists of Valdese, North Carolina," (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1937).

<sup>7</sup> Dalmas; Elizabeth Campbell, "Everlasting Rocks: Conversations About the Rock Buildings of Valdese, North Carolina," (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1998), 123.

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children could be secured. During this period, Jean-Pierre returned to New York State for employment at a resort hotel. In 1921, the family returned to Valdese, living on a farm they rented from Jean Garrou. It was here that the last two of Dalmas' eight children were born.<sup>8</sup>

When Jean-Pierre was advised in 1929 that his lease on the Garrou farm would be discontinued, his offer to buy it was refused. Jean-Pierre decided to build a home on the acreage he had purchased from Cesar Pons in 1915. He and other local masons laid a foundation for his house and a barn using stone he and his oldest son quarried from a creek bank on their land. Jean-Pierre's son, also named Jean-Pierre, helped in the foundation construction and used his tenth grade geometry to translate his father's ideas into plans for the carpenters and laborers who built the frame of the house. Father and son also felled trees on the property and rented a sawmill to dress lumber for the house. When a local contractor delivered only half the promised load of stone for the veneer, Jean-Pierre enlisted the help of his seven children to gather stones from the Linville River. With the foundation complete, local carpenters brought the house to a livable condition and the family moved in in 1930. In 1931, Jean Pierre used leftover lumber to build a large chicken house with a stone foundation. Over the next seventeen years father and children worked to complete the house.<sup>9</sup>

At their new house, the family continued to farm and Jean-Pierre worked as a stonemason. The family, like many Waldensians, maintained a vineyard and produced their own wine. In 1903, the *Charlotte Daily Observer* noted that the Waldensians "drink their own wine, serve it on the table, but do not get drunk."<sup>10</sup> During Prohibition (1920-1933), the Dalmases and other Waldensian families were allowed to continue wine production as long as it was solely for use in their homes.<sup>11</sup>

Catherine Dalmas recalls her home being surrounded by scaffolding for years while father and children worked to cover the structure in a twelve-inch layer of rock. The pace of construction varied, based on farm tasks and the availability of stone. The Great Depression and World War II also slowed completion.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Dalmas.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> *Charlotte Daily Observer*, March 15, 1903.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Dalmas.

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Electricity was installed in 1938. A central heating system and indoor plumbing were added around 1945. Jean-Pierre was fifty when he started building his house. The house, often referred to as "Papa's Dream" by Catherine Dalmas, is still not complete. Much of the interior space upstairs remains unfinished and Jean-Pierre's vision of a balcony completely circling the house was not fully realized because he stopped work in 1948 at the urging of his family, who were concerned about his safety. Jean-Pierre died at his home in 1972.<sup>13</sup>

The four Dalmas sisters now occupy the house. In 2000, the family sold about three and one-half acres of the original parcel to Villar Vintners, Inc./Waldensian Heritage Wines. This sale included the chicken house and barn.<sup>14</sup>

#### Architectural Context

In the rugged Italian mountains, the Waldensians perfected the use of fieldstone construction. Their mortarless houses, barns, bake ovens and churches kept out the Cottian Alps' snow and wind for generations.<sup>15</sup> Homes were built into hillsides, often with a vertical orientation and sometimes with only one room per floor. Balconies provided extra space and the levels were connected by an exterior stair or the natural slope of the hill. Occasionally, an interior staircase was located in an internal hallway. The lowest level was used for storage, farming chores, and animal housing. The rectangular, gable roof houses were usually oriented with the gable end facing the slope on one side and the valley on the opposite side. The kitchen was usually located against the slope, while a parlor and smaller chamber, similar to the parlor and study at the Dalmas house, were located on the valley end of the house.<sup>16</sup>

When the Waldensians immigrated, they brought these traditional building methods to the rocky hills where they settled. According to an area newspaper, dating to 1931, "the resulting nature of the stone work shows a foreign effect," and in fact, the group created a cultural island in Burke County where the earliest buildings replicate the traditional architecture of their Alpine

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Catherine W. Bishir, Michael T. Southern and Jennifer F. Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 157-158; Campbell, 42-43.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Oliver, ed., *Cultures and Habitats*, vol. 2 of *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1240.

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homeland.<sup>17</sup> The Refour House is a pure manifestation of Waldensian building technology. The Refour family constructed the house of fieldstone into the side of an embankment soon after their arrival in Valdese in 1893. Farm animals were housed in the lower level while the family occupied the main floor and a loft. On the north elevation, the floor joists of the main level extend outside where they support a balcony that shelters the entry to the livestock quarters below. Two stone walls create an open-ended shed room on the south elevation of the house.<sup>18</sup>

In 1896, the settlers began construction of their church. The Waldensian Presbyterian Church (NR, 1984) is a stuccoed stone structure that bears a strong resemblance to the churches in the Italian Alps.<sup>19</sup> The church features a tall bell tower, buttresses and Romanesque and Gothic openings.<sup>20</sup>

Other early examples illustrate minor alterations to traditional patterns. The John H. Pascal family arrived with a second wave of immigrants in 1893. Their first house was wood sided rather than stone, but it was built into an embankment and housed farm animals on the lower level. Although the house followed many Waldensian patterns, the frame construction and the home's central gable were American.<sup>21</sup>

The Waldensians continued to use traditional stone construction well into the twentieth century, but, as illustrated by the J. H. Pascal House, they began to apply American styles of workmanship and design to their homes and public buildings. The Valdese Elementary School, also known as The Rock School, was completed in 1923. Designed by Hickory architect Quince Edward Herman, the school's complex massing and free classical detailing, typical of regional school designs, were executed in native stone by local craftsman, including Waldensian stonemasons, J.H. Pascal, Jean-Pierre Dalmas, Jean-Henri and August Pascal, Henry Perrou, Albert Bleynat, Jean Pons, Jean Barus, Etienne Bouchard and Robert Salvageot.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ida Briggs Henderson. "Waldesians Build New Homes," newspaper article dated 1931. North Carolina Collection Clipping File through 1975. North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>18</sup> Bishir, et al., 159-160.

<sup>19</sup> Bishir, et al., 158.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.; Campbell, 43-44.

<sup>21</sup> J. Randall Cotton, *Historic Burke: An Architectural Inventory of Burke County, North Carolina* (Asheville: Biltmore Press, 1987), 94.

<sup>22</sup> Bishir, et al., 158-159.

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Three bungalows and several 1930s period cottages on Laurel and Main streets exemplify the practice of utilizing Waldensian stonework in the construction of nationally popular house styles.<sup>23</sup> Today, at least forty stone or part stone houses, barns, chicken coops, well houses, stables, wine cellars and bake ovens illustrate the Waldensian building tradition.<sup>24</sup>

The Dalmas House exhibits the blending Waldensian traditions with American styles, which in this case, were combined with the eclectic designs of the builder, Jean-Pierre Dalmas. Incorporating the balconies and the hillside construction of his homeland's buildings, Dalmas used both traditional load-bearing fieldstone and non-traditional river stone veneer. He also broke with Waldensian rock building by using mortar, a material not widely available in his homeland. To this he applied Craftsman and Colonial Revival decorative elements. The house has exposed, decorative false beams and exposed raftertails borrowed from the nationally popular Craftsman style. The fanlight over the six-panel, double leaf front door are typical components of the Colonial Revival style, while six-over-one sash windows and gabled dormers are common to both Colonial Revival and Craftsman style homes.

The interior plan is also an amalgamation of American and European traditions. European homes are traditionally entered through the kitchen. The elaborate north elevation of the home features a central doorway that leads to the home's kitchen, and it is this entry that serves as the primary entrance. American homes traditionally have a formal front door that serves a living room or hallway. The Dalmas house has this formal front door on the east elevation. It is topped with a fanlight, opens to the home's formal living room, and is on axis with the central hallway. Generally in American homes, particularly in Colonial Revival homes, fireplaces, doors and windows are arranged symmetrically and stairways figure prominently in creating a grand hallway or foyer. In the Dalmas house, rooms are generally arranged symmetrically, but the fireplaces are small and are off-center in each room, being located more towards the interior sides of the rooms. The stairway is understated and is enclosed behind a doorway, probably for more efficient heating of the home, desirable in both the foothills of North Carolina and European mountains.

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<sup>23</sup> Cotton, 100; Bishir, et al., 159.

<sup>24</sup> Campbell, 132.

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UTM References

A	easting	northing
	449180	3957240
B	easting	northing
	449180	3957160
C	easting	northing
	449070	3957100
D	easting	northing
	449060	3957020
E	easting	northing
	449180	3957020
F	easting	northing
	449200	3956950
G	easting	northing
	448850	3956940
H	easting	northing
	448850	3957260

Verbal Boundary Description

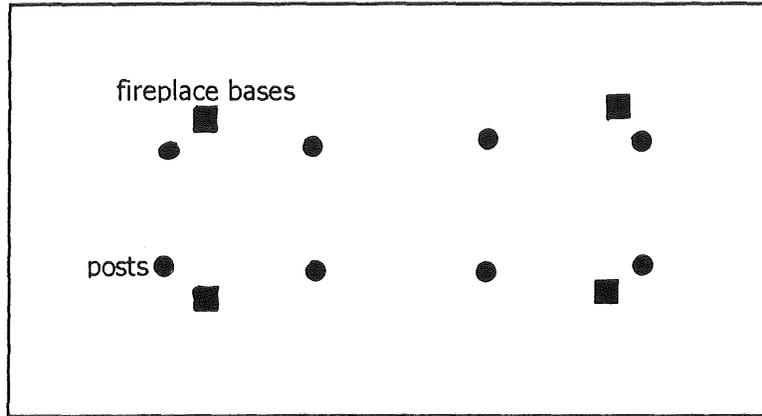
Parcel 8, Section 5, Map 76-52 from the Burke County Tax Assessor's Office, Morganton, North Carolina

Verbal Boundary Justification

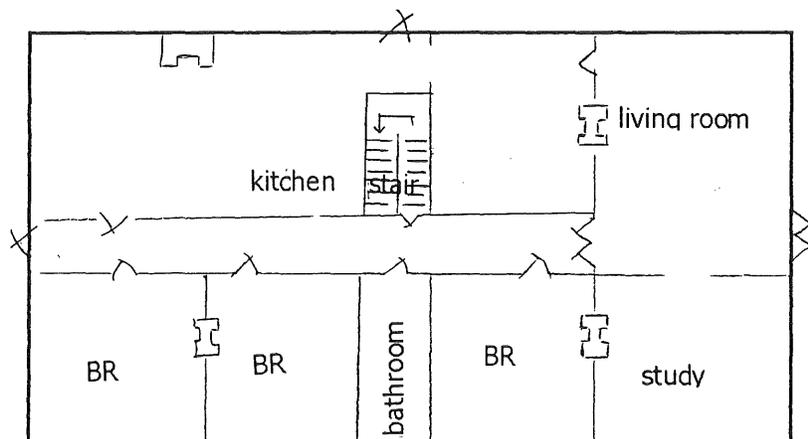
The nominated property includes the residual twenty-six acres of the original thirty-one and three-fourths acres Jean-Pierre Dalmas purchased from Cesar Pons in 1915. The acreage provides an appropriate setting for the dwelling. The adjacent outbuildings, a barn and chicken house, are excluded because they are no longer on the same parcel of land, both have been significantly altered and the owners do not wish to have their properties included in the nomination.

Jean-Pierre Auguste Dalmas House  
Valdese, Burke County, NC  
Floor plans

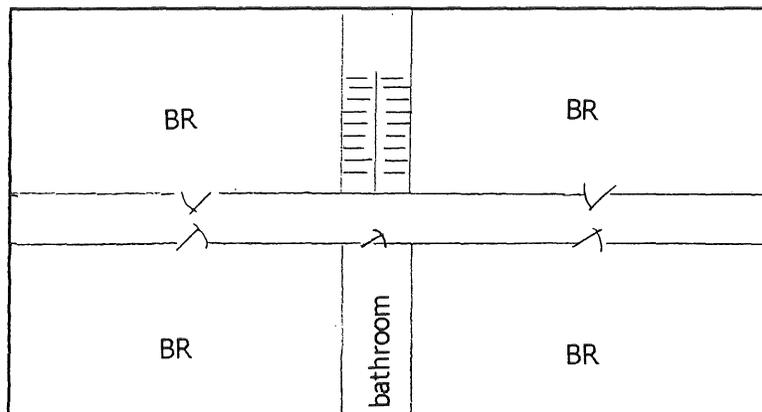
No Scale



Basement



First floor



Upper Story

North ↑



