

## A Tale of Two Daniels, Waldensians

The Floods and Jaymeses of Huntingdon Co., Pa., and their ancestors have been through thick and thin. A tax record dating from 1573 from the French Dauphiné (the Floods and the Jaymeses appear to have been ethnically French) in the western Alps lists a Flot and some Jaymeses as landowners in the hamlet of Laval. A century later, between 1674 and 1685, a married couple, Jean Jayme and Maedeleine Flot, lived in the same hamlet. After 1699, Floods and Jaymeses lived in the neighboring villages of Rohrbach, Wembach and Hahn in southwest Germany. Two centuries later, in 1851, my ancestor Jean Jayme immigrated to Pennsylvania, perhaps with a Jean-Moyse Flott. Later my grandfather's sister Ella Jaymes married a George Flood. Why have the Floods and the Jaymeses lived together, intermarried and moved from the Alps to Germany and then later to Pennsylvania going on 500 years? The answer is easy--both families were Waldensians, a Catholic sect condemned as heretics by the Church that was persecuted in Europe for centuries and that stuck together like peas in a pod.

The Waldensian movement, called the Poor of Lyons, was founded in the late 12th century in Lyons, France, by a wealthy merchant named Waldus. The latter, hearing the words of Matt. 19: 21, distributed his wealth to the poor, adopted the life of a mendicant, started to preach and attracted a following. The Waldensians, or Vaudois as they came to be known, attacked the worldliness of the Church and provoked opposition. Banned in 1184, the Waldensians were forced to appoint their own ministers who celebrated the Eucharist once a year. Waldus himself commissioned a translation of the New Testament into Provençal,



Above the Flott inn, Wembach Germany  
Lower Left the Rambaud home, Rohrbach Germany

a language spoken in the south of France and in northern Spain and Italy. The Waldensians grew rapidly, spreading throughout much of Europe. In 1209, Pope Innocent III launched a crusade against them, and many were burned at the stake as heretics.

The earliest evidence of the involvement of a Flood in the travails of the Waldensians came more than two centuries later, in 1487, when Pope Innocent VIII instituted another crusade against the group. Among four Waldensian leaders who fought the actions of inquisitor Cattaneo--eviction from homes, confiscation of property and the burning at the stake of several--was a Daniel Flote who represented Pragela parish, the same parish where Laval was located and where a Flot would show up on the tax rolls some eighty years later. Was that Daniel Flote a direct ancestor of the Daniel Flott who immigrated with other Waldensians to Chambersburg in 1830? It's impossible to know without a complete genealogy. But, in my opinion, the two Daniels were likely related. We know that the Waldensians stuck together and used first names from one generation to another.

And to finish the story about the first Daniel in the Alps... When the Waldensians learned of the death of French King Charles VIII, they appealed to Louis XII who supported them in their dealings with Pope Alexander VI. Louis XII ordered that Waldensian properties be returned to their owners, but to little effect. Daniel Flote and his three fellow leaders undertook legal proceedings which also led to nothing. Eventually, however, the Waldensians prevailed, having been restored to their pre-1487 status and cleared of the accusation of heresy.