

# THE BARD FAMILY

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## PART I

### A CHRONICLE OF THE BARDS

#### I

**T**HE American habit of assuming that certain surnames are of Scotch origin and being transplanted from Scotland to Ireland have given to the United States a distinctive people, generally described as Scotch-Irish, often leads to results that are misleading. No better example of the confusion consequent upon attempting to restrict to a small kingdom a family name common to many lands can be found than the surname Bard, Barde, Baird or Beard. Speaking of the derivation of the name from the ancient Bards, Cosmo Innes, in his essay concerning some Scotch names, says: "the historian of an extant family of the ancient name of Baird, not satisfied with such a probable connection with the Muses, claims for them kindred with Boiardo, the Italian poet. But we had Bairds, or Bards, landed men, much earlier than suits that poetic origin." The name is found in Scotland as early as the thirteenth century. Duncan Bard, Stirlingshire, and Fergus de Bard, John Bard and Nicholas Bard, Lanarkshire, are named in "The Ragman's Roll," 1296. The fact that they did homage to King Edward I, at the time of his "con-

quest" of Scotland, shows that they were men of consequence.

More than a century before Duncan Bard and Fergus de Bard swore fealty to King Edward at Berwick, Ugone di Bard, of the Valley of Aosta, in Piedmont, made allegiance to Tomaso I, of Savoy, going for this purpose in 1191 in charge of his tutor, Bonafacie di Monferrato. Ugone, his father, ranked next to the Viscount of Aosta, first lord of the valley. He was of ancient lineage and rich in lands, vineyards, villages and castles. Of his life at Castle Bard we know nothing, except that he had three sons, Ugone II, Anselmo and Guglielmo. To the youngest, Guglielmo, the father bequeathed the Signoria di Bard. This caused a burst of resentment in Ugone II, who denied his inheritance to Guglielmo and relegated the cadet to the castle of Pont S. Martino. Guglielmo rose in arms against his brother and a fraternal war ensued. The combatants harried the vale of Aosta, and even sacked and fired the inheritances of each other. Guglielmo burnt the castle of Champocher. Ugone destroyed the village and vineyard of Donnaz. Besides a son of Guglielmo was made a prisoner by Ugone. After much sanguinary and destructive warfare peace between the brothers was restored, June 19, 1214, through Oltimo, bishop of Ivrea, Ugone remaining the Lord of Bard and Guglielmo accepting Pont San Martino and Arnaz.

For a quarter of a century after the restoration of peace between the brothers Ugone di Bard pursued a life of brigandage and the Pass Bard was a place of terror. Finally, being called to order by Gottfriedo,

Viscount of Aosta, the wicked Lord of Bard turned upon the Viscount with the savage temerity of a mastiff, and in his reckless scorn of Gottofriedo's authority he refused homage to Count Amedio of Savoy, as is shown by an agreement between Count Amedio and the Viscount of Aosta. According to this document Lord Gottofriedo and his brothers promised faithful advice and assistance to the Lord Amedio and his men until such time as the Rock Bard should be taken. Neither peace nor mercy was to be extended to Signor Ugone di Bard, or to his people, until the castle had fallen and its defenders been made prisoners. In his turn, the Count of Savoy promised five hundred "marchi" of silver to Gottofriedo, should he capture the castle of Bard and make Ugone a prisoner. Being thus driven into a corner the Lord of Bard surrendered to the Count of Savoy, but refused to give himself up as a prisoner, preferring to renounce all right to home and land rather than to bend his head as a vassal. His brother Anselmo, having also incurred the wrath of his sovereign, was likewise deprived of his badly governed lands. Conquered but not tamed, the two brothers departed forever from the Valley of Aosta and were never again heard of there. It is probable that Ugone took with him his two youngest sons, Rainero and Rossetto, but his two elder sons, Marco and Aymone, refused to join their father in his revolt and received from the Count of Savoy the Signoria of Sarre, and the lands Introd-Scarriod and of Chatel Argent. The Count reserved to himself the Castle Bard.

Both brothers, Marco and Aymone, took the name

of Sarriod, and were afterwards known as Sarriod d' Introd and Sarriod de la Tour. In a collection of papers on the Val' d' Aosta, published by F. G. Frutas in 1891, is a copy of the will of Guglielmo Sarriod, signore of Chatel Argent. In this will, which was dated in 1279, he left the whole of the castle, (*totam bonum meam de Castle Argeuteo*) to Domina Leonardo, his wife, expecting her to live in it with her three sons. From this it is argued by Guiseppe Giacosa, the author of "I Castelli Valdostani," that the Castle Argent could not have been originally what it is said all castles were at that time—a tower with at most two dwelling rooms. Boasting of several living rooms, Signor Giacosa infers that it must have been amplified and enlarged considerably from its earliest form, which from unmistakable traces dates back to Roman times. In this connection he points out that while what remains standing of the Castle of Pont Martino belongs to the thirteenth century, there are about it innumerable traces showing the original construction to be of much earlier date. There is a kitchen that is very interesting of the kind, the ceiling of which is arched in a manner to form the chimney. This ceiling is made cupola shape, with a hole pierced in the center, so that if a fire was built in the middle of the hall the smoke would escape through the orifice in the ceiling. The family could thus sit around the fire without annoyance from the smoke. A similar kitchen is found in the Castle of Introd, built or at least improved in 1220, by Marco or Marquetus di Bard, to whom the Pont San Martino also belonged.

After the Duke of Savoy acquired the Castle Bard in 1238, he presented this Rock Bard, according to the document of 1244 already quoted, to his brother Tomasso di Savoya, Count of Flanders and Heinault, and it then became a State fortress. To make it worthy of its new character it was surrounded with bastions and furnished with artillery. In this condition it remained until the close of the seventeenth century. In 1704 the Fort was surprised and taken by the Duke of Fogliato, who descended from Savoy by the lesser St. Bernard to the help of the Duke of Vandomo. Nearly a century later, in 1800, Buonaparte, in his descent into the valley, found at Bard the first real obstacle in the course of a successful campaign. So strong was the Rock Bard, with its fine display of buttress and its formidable walls, that it was defended by only four hundred soldiers against an army. Against its rough grandeur Buonaparte's artillery thundered in vain. The only way to overcome the brave little garrison was to ascend Mount Albano, overlooking the fort on the north. In two days a road was cut, bridges built where needed, and the precipices protected by bulwarks. Up this improvised roadway, so hastily constructed, the infantry climbed, not without loss, leaving the artillery and transports behind. Then the attack upon the fort from this vantage ground began with disastrous effect. In the meantime Marmont had the narrow road to the fort covered with straw, and with grass tied around the wheels of the carts, he made a successful dash for safety during the night through the dangerous bit of highway dominated by the guns. After fourteen days

of resistance the gallant little garrison was compelled to surrender, but the defenders were allowed to quit the fort with military honors. By the order of Buonaparte the fortress was demolished.

The village of Bard is a long borough at the foot of Rock Bard. The river Doria Baltea flows on the south side of the valley across the commune surrounding the fortress on the north side. A stone bridge spans the stream at the end of the village, leading to the communes of Hone, Pont Bozet and Champocher. At the western end is a fairly fine palace belonging to Count Federico di Bard.

The ancient Bard family of the Val d' Aosta is extinct in the Valley. In 1744 Giacoma Fillippino Nicola bought the ancient fued of Bard—Fort Bard—for \$45,000, and was invested with the title of count. The title and estates passed to Fillippo Agostino di Gian Guiseppe in 1797.