

Strategy for Organizing Your Notary Records Results

Once you have finished searching the PDF files for the surname you are researching and have copied and pasted all the acts mentioning people with that surname—with all the various spellings of the name—you are ready to analyze the details you have found and organize the people into families.

If you have not yet searched the PDF files of the Notary Records and made the surname folder and file(s), please do this now.

STEP 1 - On your computer, open the **surname folder** and then choose the **locality file** of the community most likely to include your direct ancestors.

For example, if you were researching the **Janavel** family, open first the folder **JANAVEL** and then, within that folder, the file, **JANAVEL – Luserna**. That will bring up your file of all the acts from the volumes in the Luserna series that contained the name Janavel.

STEP 2 - Skim through *every* act in your surname file, highlighting **in bold**, *in every act*, the *full name of every person with the surname* you are researching—*everyone* with that surname.

Your entire focus for now is on the surname, not on your direct ancestors. That comes soon.

STEP 3 - When you finish highlighting everyone with that surname in the entire file for that community, start at the end of the file and this time work backwards toward the beginning of the file. This time, **look for the name of the specific direct ancestor you are seeking**. In most cases, not everyone with the same name will be the same person (your ancestor), of course. But for now you are trying to highlight everyone with that same name so you can then determine which acts refer to your own specific ancestor and which refer to someone else with the same name.

As you skim backwards through the file, add *italics* to every person with the same name as your own ancestor; that is, to the **bold** you added to that name in Step 2, you now have everyone with the same full name as your ancestor in **bold** and *italics*, like this: ***Giosuè Gianavello***. This makes the names stand out on your computer screen, making it easier for you to spot them as you continue your analysis.

STEP 4 - When you have finished Step 3, return to the end of your surname file—to the acts with the latest date (about 1709 for the Notary Records). This time as you work through the file (towards the earliest acts), *try to identify which acts refer to your own direct ancestor*. If you are quite certain that a person named in an act is in fact your own ancestor, **put that name in color**—maybe red.

For example, if you find a will of a person who seems to be your ancestor, you would want to **put his or her name in the color** you have selected; **if the child who is your known ancestor is named in the will, put that child's name in the same color** as well. If your ancestor's wife is also named—**the mother of the child who is also your direct ancestor—put her name in the color**, too. But do not add color to any other persons named in the act. We suggest that you use the color to show only your own direct ancestors—not their brothers and sisters, cousins, or others.

STEP 5 - When you have worked through the entire file for that surname in that community and have all your new apparent ancestors highlighted in color, you are ready to begin putting the people into tentative families. Work through the file one more time, working again from the end (with the *most recent* dates) backwards to the beginning of the file, **making a sketch pedigree of your new ancestry**.

Put the name of the ancestor you were seeking—the one you found as you finished working through the Parish Registers—at the bottom of a sheet of paper (or a pedigree chart if you have or want to purchase one). Then add that person's parents above him or her on the sketch pedigree chart you are creating; and then the parents of the father, then of his father, and so on until you have sketched your direct ancestry backwards through the entire file.

This gives you a visual glimpse of your new ancestral line. You should then add to your pedigree chart the **other children** of each set of your new direct ancestors. If the parents of the wife/mother in any generation are named, add them, too—and put them in the same color you have chosen. Do this until you reach the top of the file.

STEP 6 - When you have sketched the pedigree of your family through the Notary Records—for this community (you will want to search the surrounding communities for additional acts that shed light on your new ancestry)—then begin making **sketch family group records** (or enter the details onto a printed family group record if you prefer).

It is recommended that you NOT add these families to your computer program yet; for now, these are considered *tentative* new ancestors!

You should end up with a sketch family group record for each family of your new ancestry.

STEP 7 - As you worked through the records, you may have noticed occasional acts that indicate how long a couple had been married, or perhaps even the year of their marriage; or an act indicating how old a person was. Such details are very helpful in helping you estimate dates for your new ancestral families.

For help in how to estimate unknown dates, go to the How to Estimate Unknown Dates section.

STEP 8 - When your new ancestral families are identified in this way, with dates (exact or estimated), if you have found no acts suggesting that these may NOT be your ancestors, you are ready to add these new ancestors to your genealogy program.

STEP 9 - Choose another ancestral Waldensian surname—you should normally gain a new one with each new family you identify—and begin your search again through the records for that surname.