

## What to Look For in the Waldensian Notary Records

The **Parish Registers** are basically a log or roster of births/christenings, marriages, and deaths/burials. The **Notary Records**, in contrast, contain a variety of types of acts, as previously noted—wills, division of the resulting inheritances among the heirs, marriage settlements (dowry arrangements), establishment of guardians for minor children, land transactions, town councils, and so on. These are similar to the documents in our legal records today.

In these records about the town councils we can see traces of the ancient, universal tradition of early spring rites. At these ancient annual celebrations, the authority of the king or leader was acknowledged. In the feudal system, that became an acknowledgement of loyalty to the lord who controlled the area. Over time, this tradition was modified in southwestern France to involve the election of village representatives. These men were charged with handling all interactions with the higher authorities. In the case of the Waldensian Valleys, this meant dealing with the Duke of Savoy and his representatives.

The town council records list the mayor (“syndaco”), the town councilors, the tax assessor, and the heads of families. In this period, the mayor and other officers were elected for a one-year term, but of course a person could be elected to additional terms. Men with experience and good judgment were sought for, as the people depended on these leaders to deal with the Duke and his agents, who were often treacherous. In each town, at least one of these councils was devoted to allocating the tax load for the year. The duke imposed the amount to be paid, and it was up to the leaders in each community to determine how to raise the required amount. The burden was heavy, and in times of oppression, records deal with those unable to meet these obligations. The plight of widows to meet these obligations was especially tragic; they often had to sell part of their children’s future inheritance in order to pay their share of the tax. It was much to their advantage—and that of their children—to remarry if they could.

The heads of families seem not to be listed in any particular order, except that a prior mayor, councilor, or revered senior member of the community seems often to be listed among the first. It appears that the youngest married man was named last. Not all married men were necessarily mentioned at all periods. At times, it appears that a sort of clan arrangement was used, with one person representing his multi-generation family.

Do not overlook these town council acts just because they are primarily lists of names. If you find a town council record with, for example, two or more men with the same name as your ancestor, you know to be cautious in jumping to conclusions about any other act with a man of that name—he may or may not be your ancestor.

Let us look at some actual abstracts of the notary records to help you learn what sorts of things they reveal:

## Example 1

Because elsewhere on this site we review the historical novel, *Rora* by Huggins, about the famous Waldensian captain, **Giosuè Janavel (Italian: Gianavello)**, his family (and their ancestry) seem to be a logical example to start with. Notice how much more we can learn about his family than can be learned from the parish registers (which only resumed some 19 years after he died and therefore could only include later generations).

In the novel, Huggins (the author) said that tradition disagrees about the name of the captain's wife, and he therefore chose to call her Angela, based on a French source. But the notary records—several of them, in fact—provide the exact name of the captain's wife—and their children and ancestors—much more factual information than Huggins supposed possible.

Rather than repeat the Notary acts about the family already included in the review of that novel, please read the first 4 acts that illuminate the captain's family and also the comments about what we learn about his family—**an excellent example of how the Notary Records help us find our Waldensian ancestors.**

Now that you have reviewed those first 4 acts pertaining to the Janavel family, let us look at some of the additional Notary acts—there are even more acts than these mentioning them—that help us identify these family members.

### Important Notes:

- Our English rendition of the act is not a literal translation of the act, but it instead conveys the key meaning of the act.
- The full source citation is provided so that if you want to read the original abstract in Italian, you can quickly find the abstract on this site (how to access them is explained in the next section).
- *We use the French form of surnames in these English renditions, conforming to the Waldensian Church request that genealogists use the French form of surnames to readily distinguish Waldensian from Catholic families of the same name.*
- In the source citations, “FHL film” refers to the microfilm roll number of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, in case you wish to read the original act, rather than only the abstract of the act that we post on this site.

**NOTE:** *The notary records were microfilmed before the State Archives in Torino re-numbered their collection, so the Family History Library film numbers refer to volume numbers that are different from the newer numbers we use with the abstracts on this site. But you can readily find the proper microfilm number if you use the year given with the abstract on this site.*

If you have not yet read the first 4 acts that are included in the review of the novel, *Rora*, please read them now.

To keep this Example from becoming too long, for the remaining acts, only the English rendition and the source (town, volume number, page, and date) are given:

**5** - Quittance naming **Catterina DURAND-RUET daughter of deceased Bartholomeo and wife of Giosuè JANAVEL of Luserna**; and Daniele ALBAREE, mayor.  
*Villar Pellice volume 198 [new numeration] book 2 page 172R, 8 Oct 1670 (FHL film 1,958,894)*

**6** - Purchase naming **Giacomo JANAVEL-GIGNOUS son of deceased Gioanni of Luserna**; his wife Catterina ARMAND-LEURAT daughter of deceased Francesco and of Maddalena-his **half-brother Giosuè JANAVEL son of said deceased Gioanni and of deceased Catterina (who was the said Giacomo's step-mother)**; and siblings **Catterina (wife of said Giosuè JANAVEL)** and Gioanni **RUET**.  
*Luserna volume 216 [new numeration] page 120, 17 August 1640; (the Luserna series not microfilmed)*

**7** - Marriage settlement and division of inheritance naming **siblings Margarita (wife six years of Giuseppe GARNIER of Luserna), Giacomo, Giosuè, and Giuseppe GIGNOUS-JANAVEL children of deceased Gioanni of Luserna; deceased Margarita CAIRUS daughter of deceased Daniele, 1<sup>st</sup> wife of said Gioanni GIGNOUS-JANAVEL and mother of said Giacomo; Catterina – 2<sup>nd</sup> wife of said Gioanni and mother of Giosuè and Giuseppe [Margarita's mother is not identified in this particular act]**.  
*Luserna volume 216 [new numeration] pages 42 & 44, 18 May 1639; no FHL film*

**8** - Two quittances naming **brothers Giosuè and Giacomo JANAVEL sons of deceased Gioanni of Luserna**; siblings **Catterina (widow of Pierre CHABRIOL of Torre Pellice and now wife of said Giosuè)** and Gioanni **DURAND-RUET children of deceased Bartholomeo of Rorata**; brothers **Michele and Bartholomeo CHABRIOL, sons of said deceased Pierre and of said Catterina RUET**; Gioanni DURAND son of deceased Giacomo, mayor of Rorata, and Bartholomeo SARVAGEOT, town councilor; and Giuseppe CHABRIOL son of deceased Pietro of Torre, guardian of said Michele and Bartholomeo.  
*Luserna volume 216 [new numeration] pages 193 & 194R, 28 Jun 1641; the Luserna series was not microfilmed*

**9** - Ceding of rights naming Chiafreda SERENO daughter of deceased Pietro and widow of Antonio ELENA-MASSA son of deceased Cristoforo; and **Cattarina DURAND-REVEL [sic; notary error for RUET] daughter of deceased Bartholomeo of Rorata and wife of Giosuè GIGNOUX-JANAVEL**.  
*Luserna San Giovanni volume 36 [new numeration] year 1666 page 57, 11 Jun 1666 (FHL film 1,900,995)*

**10** - Will of **Praiseworthy Giovanni DURAND-RUET son of deceased Bartholomeo**, naming his 2 wives and daughters, with their named guardians charged to seek the advice of **his brother-in-law Giosuè JANAVEL**. [Long will—body of the *abstract* of the will takes 17 typed lines; calling him *praiseworthy* indicates that he had previously served the town well, probably on the town council and perhaps also as mayor.]  
*Rorata volume 135 [new numeration] year 1664 page 5, 1 May 1663 (FHL film 1,958,658)*

Now consider what we have learned about the Captain's family from these 6 additional notary records:

- That his wife, **Catterina DURAND-RUET**, was still alive on 8 Oct 1670. (She obviously was not burned at the stake in May 1655, as the novel declares.
- The names of his half-brother (and the brother's wife); the 1<sup>st</sup> name of the Captain's mother, **Catterina**.
- His siblings; his sister's husband and how long she had been married; his father **Gioanni**, and his step-mother (mother of the Captain's half-brother); confirming 1<sup>st</sup> name of Captain's mother (his father's 2<sup>nd</sup> wife).
- Confirmation of his father's name; his own wife, her 1<sup>st</sup> husband, and her 2 sons by her 1<sup>st</sup> husband. The confirmation of the Captain's full surname, **GIGNOUS-JANAVEL**, and that he and his father were **from Luserna, not Rorà**.

Because many have wondered if any of Captain Janavel's children left descendants, following are the Notary acts proving that at least one of them did:

**1 - Will of Maria JANAVEL daughter of deceased Giosuè, naming her deceased husband Stefano BONNET son of deceased Abram of Val Chisone; and their children Gioanna and Gioanni.**

*Villar Pellice vol 210 bk 2 yr 1703 pg 91, 29 Sep 1703*

**2 - Will of Stefano BONNET son of deceased Abramo of Pratogelato, naming his wife Maria daughter of deceased Giosuè JANAVEL; and their children Gioanna (age 25), Giosuè, Gioanni and Abramo.**

*Villar Pellice vol 210 bk 1 yr 1699 pg 38, 2 Jan 1691 [sic]*

**3 - Ratification naming sisters Margarita (widow of Bartholomeo "DELLA TORRE") and Maria (widow of Stefano BONNET) daughters of deceased Giosuè JANAVEL of Luserna but who resided at Geneva; Giuseppe DONNAUD son of deceased Giuseppe; and his son-in-law Giosuè BONNET son of said Maria and deceased Stefano.**

*Villar Pellice vol 209 bk 3 yr 1698 pg 93, 29 Oct 1698*

**4 - Acknowledgment of payment of marriage settlement naming Maria GIGNOUX-JANAVEL daughter of Giosuè (emigrated) and Catterina, and wife of Stefano BONNET son of deceased Abramo of Chambons.**

*Villar Pellice vol 197 bk 3 pg 63, 2 Jan 1668*

**5 - Inventory of the reclaimed inheritance of Giosuè BONNET son of deceased Stefano (who died in 1691), in his name and for his brother Gioanni [French: Jean].**

*Senato di Pinerolo mazzo 97, Villar Pellice pg 73, 3 Oct 1697*

**6 - Quittance naming siblings Gioanna (wife of Antonio DURAND-CANTON son of deceased Bartholomeo of Rora), deceased Giosuè, deceased Abram, and Gioanni BONNET children of deceased Stefano (whose will was dated 2 Jan 1691) son of deceased Abram.**

*Villar Pellice vol 211 bk 2 yr 1708 pg 19, 16 Feb 1709*

**7 - Will of Antoine DURAND-CANTON son of deceased Bartholomeo, naming his wife Jeanne BONNET daughter of deceased Steffano [Italian form of Estienne] of Pragelato; her brother Jean; and their [surviving] children Catherine, Marie, Barthélemy ("absent from the state 16 years and feared dead"), Jeanne (2nd), Marguerite, Jean, and Anne.**

*Luserna San Giovanni vol 264 pg 1177, 25 Sep 1731*

Note what we learn from these 7 notary acts:

- The **Captain's daughter Maria had married Stefano BONNET son of deceased Abram of Val Chisone** by 1703, and they had had at least 4 **children: Gioanna, Giosue, Gianni, and Abramo**. These 4 were still alive in 1691 and at least 2 of them were still alive at least as late as 1703.
- The daughter **Gioanna was aged 25** when her father made his will **in 1691**; and her brother Giosuè had married a daughter (unnamed in these acts) of Giuseppe DONEAUD son of another deceased Giuseppe.
- **Maria and her sister Margarita** were both still living in 1698, both as widows.
- Their **daughter Gioanna had married Antonio DURAND-CANTON by 1709**, by which time; however, her **brothers Gosuè and Abram were deceased**, though her **brother Gianni was still living**.

## Example 2

We will consider only two of the many documents involving the **Durand-Canton family**, mentioned already in the above notary records above about the **Janavel** family, as well as in some of the other types of records discussed on this site.

So that this section does not become too long, each example is presented only with the English meaning, but the source of the act is given so that you can easily find the abstract in the Italian on this site. (The next section will indicate how to access them easily.)

**1 - Quittance, 6 May 1673, Rorata [name of the village of Rorà before the Exile], at the house of Bartolomeo Durando-Cantone.**

**Catterina Tourn, daughter of deceased Antonio and wife of Bartolomeo Durand-Canton (son of deceased Gioanne), acknowledges having received from her brothers Ludovico and Daniele Tourn, sons of deceased Antonio, the sum of 40 ducal lire, as established in the will of their father...dated 19 September 1662**

*Rorata volume 135, page 39*

**2 - Quittance, 15 May 1673, Rorata, at the house of Bartolomeo Durando-Cantone.**

**Bartolomeo Durand-Canton (son of deceased Gioanne) declares having received from deceased Giacomo Mirot and his wife Susanna Pavarin the sum of 500 florins on account of the marriage settlement act made by deceased Bartolomeo Pavarin for his daughter**

**Gioanna Pavarin, mother of this Bartolomeo Durand-Canton and wife of the deceased Gioanne Durand-Canton**

*Rorata volume 135, page 41*

From these two acts, we learn several new facts about this family:

- The name of Bartolomeo Durando-Canton's **wife (Catterina Tourn)**, as well as the **name of her father (Antonio, deceased)** and her brothers (Ludovico and Daniele); and the name of **his own father Gioanne Durand-Canton (deceased)**.
- The name of **Bartolomeo Durand-Canton's mother (Gioanna Pavarin)**, as well as of **her father (Bartolomeo Pavarin)**; and confirmation of the name of his father (Gioanne).
- **Antonio Tourn, Bartolomeo Durand-Canton's father-in-law**, made his **will on 19 September 1662**; with this detail, we should be able to find that will.

We have thus extended this Durand-Canton pedigree one generation on the paternal side and two on the maternal side—from just two acts. These families appear in many more acts, which permit us to identify several siblings, their spouses, and even more ancestors.

The above examples about the Janavel and Durand-Canton families show how the **Notary Records** permit us to extend our Waldensian ancestry and just how much we can learn about our ancestors from these records.