

# The Misleading 1666 Will of Giacomo Avondet

*By Ron Malan*

Several PFO families have Avondet ancestry—the Bouchards, Cardons, Clapiers, and Rivoires all feature at least one Avondet descent. It's a large, complex clan and, like other families from the Upper Valleys, there are far more notary records early and late in the 1600s than in the middle half of that century.

The gaps in the records complicate the research task and make each of the surviving records crucial to the proper identification of family groups.

Most if not all of the PFO families with Avondet ancestry descend from a Giacomo Avondet, who made his will 9 Jul 1666. He names his wife Marta and their children Maria, Anna, Margarita (wife of Giovanni PASQUET son of deceased Michele), Susanna, and Gioanni.

We naturally would suppose that list included all of his children who were still alive at that date.

And yet other acts, put together, prove that his will failed to mention at least one other son.

An acknowledgment of the payment of a marriage settlement (dowry) dated 13 Mar 1671 names siblings Margarita (wife “10 years” of Giovanni PASQUET-PAGNON son of deceased Michele) and Bartholomeo AVONDET children of deceased Giacomo. That Margarita in the will and Margarita in the settlement are the same person, with the same husband, is evident; the fact that one act gives his compound surname and the other gives only part of his surname isn't crucial, for that occurs frequently in these records.

Further, a marriage settlement dated 10 Mar 1670 names siblings Maria (wife “3 years” of Agostino FORNERON son of deceased Gioanni of San Bartholomeo) and Bartholomeo AVONDET children of deceased Giacomo of Inverso Porte “but residing at Prarostino.” Other records corroborate that this is the same Maria daughter of Giacomo named in his 1666 will.

And another marriage settlement, this one dated 3 Feb 1677, names siblings Susanna (wife “3 years” of Samuel BOUC son of Gioanni of Prarostino) and Bartholomeo AVONDET children of deceased Bartholomeo. Again, other acts confirm that this is the same family.

The fact that the brother Bartholomeo—*not named in* the will—is mentioned but the brother Gioanni—*in* the will but not in the marriage acts—means either that he was dead by 1670 or else that he was the younger of the two brothers (the older brother, after the death of their father, would represent the family in legal agreements, such as marriage settlements).

But the fact that Bartholomeo is *not* named in the will is intriguing. The other records, complete with the number of years the daughters had been married—not too common in the notary records—conclusively show that Bartholomeo belongs in this family and dismiss any possibility that the records are speaking of different generations with the same names.

The following possible explanations come to mind:

1. The notary may have simply erred in inadvertently omitting Bartholomeo from the list of children. In practice, the notaries jotted notes in their own shorthand on whatever scrap of paper was at hand. Later, at a time and place more convenient, he made the formal record. Part of his note may have torn away, or he may have been distracted while he was transcribing the act from his rough notes.
2. Bartholomeo may have been “emancipated” by the time of the will, the act of emancipation not having been preserved for some reason. Such acts do appear in the records. Basically, a father was the “patriarch” of his family as long as he lived, regardless of how old his sons became; unless he emancipated one or more of his sons, they were under his direction. In such a case, the “emancipated” son(s) would have received their inheritance already and therefore might not be listed in the will.

If this was the case for this family, this means Bartholomeo was older than the Gioanni named in the will. And because this Giacomo was son of a Gioanni, it also means there was an earlier Gioanni, older than Bartholomeo, who died before the second Gioanni was born—because of the firm Waldensian naming pattern. To learn about that pattern, click [HERE](#).

3. The father Giacomo and his son Bartholomeo may have had a serious disagreement of some sort, with the father refusing to name him in the will. In this case, after the father’s death, a brother (or guardian) would have had to represent the family in the marriage settlements, regardless of a previous grievance. A girl couldn’t give herself away in marriage, nor (in most circumstances) could her mother do so, at least not alone.

At any rate, the preponderance of the evidence—a genealogist’s basic guideline—is that Bartholomeo is indeed a son in this family and, by the time of these marriage-related acts regarding his sisters, he was the oldest surviving male in the family.

*Sources—Notary Records: San Secondo volume 123 page 267, 8 July 1666, will; volume 125 page 36, 13 March 1671, payment of Margarita’s marriage settlement; volume 124 page 406R, 10 April 1670, Maria’s marriage settlement; and volume 128 page 298R, 3 February 1677, Susanna’s marriage settlement.*