How to Search for Your Ancestors in the Inheritance Claims Files

The abstracts of the **Claims Records** on this site use the PDF format. That is the simplest and most accurate way to make them available. It does not require you to use a particular word processing or database program. All you need is a web browser and the free Adobe Reader application. If you have already used the recommended search strategy for the Notary Records, you will find this section to be familiar.

At this point in your search, *your focus should be on the surname* you have chosen to research, rather than on the **specific ancestor** you seek.

Before beginning to search these files, you should have completed the following:

- Decided (a) which Waldensian **surname** you are searching, (b) which **community** your ancestor lived in, and therefore **which set** of Claims Records you wish **to search first** (usually, the set where he or she lived).

- Listed as **many ways to spell** the surname as you can find or think of. For help, see the **Waldensian Names List**.

- Decided which **consecutive "key letters" in the surname** to use as you search—letters that are always found together in all (or almost all) of the spellings of the surname, but letters that are not found together in very many other Italian words. (You can adjust this "search term" as you go if it is finding too many other words or is missing other spellings of the surname). If you are unable to find any combination of letters that will find all variant spellings, you should use the Advanced Search (see below).

- Created a **surname file** in your computer word processing program in which you can "paste" the acts as you find them. For example, if you descend from the Janavel family, you might call the folder **JANAVEL - Claims**.

Because there are **only 7 volumes** of Waldensian Claims Records and, for now at least, you should Copy and Paste **only the records with the ancestral surname you seek as the Claimant, or the direct relative of the Claimant**—there is no need to copy every claim in which that surname is mentioned merely as one of the neighbors.

When searching the Claims Records, you should begin with the volume for the area where your ancestor lived.

We will first provide a brief overview of the search capabilities on this site and then help you through the actual search process.

The abstracts of the **Inheritance Claims Records** on this site are presented in the **Adobe PDF format**. All web browsers have the capability to find a name or portion of a name in a PDF file. There are two ways to search a PDF file: **Basic Search** and **Advanced Search**.

The **Basic Search** is easier to use and so that is what we will demonstrate.

CAUTION: It is almost certain that the surname you seek will not be mentioned in every volume, that is, in every locality. That would require that they had inherited, or had purchased, land in each community, and our search over more than 20 years has never revealed anyone with such broad holdings.

Don't let it discourage you, therefore, if you search through several of the volumes without finding the ancestor you seek—or even anyone else of the surname. Your goal is to search all the volumes so that you find all of the Claims mentioning your ancestral surname.

STEP 1 -   Know the **surname** you will search and which **community** you wish to begin with.

STEP 2 -   To access the Claims Records for that community, **go to the Inheritance Claims Section then click on the name of the community**.

STEP 3 -   In the word processing file you made for this search—for instance, **JANAVEL – Claims**—type **Senato di Pinerolo** [the Claims Records were kept in the Pinerolo Senate collection of papers]; then add the "mazzo" [batch] number and the name of the community. You should have something like:

Senato di Pinerolo, batch 97, Luserna San Giovanni

STEP 4 -   When the first record from that volume appears on your screen, you will notice a small box labeled **FIND** near the upper-center of the screen. Type in that box **the letters you chose** from the surname you are searching.

Remember that the *Claims Records are in Italian*, so *__choose letters from the Italian variations of the surname__*. Then press ENTER.

STEP 5 -   If the computer finds an act with those letters in it, it will stop and show that part of the act. Be sure that the letters highlighted are really part of the actual surname you are searching. If the computer stops often on other words with those letters together, you might want to try another set of letters. Experiment until you find letters that pick up the surname you seek and not too many others. Just be *certain* that you don't miss any mentions of the surname you seek. You may choose to find many other words, rather than risk missing records with the surname.

STEP 6 -   If the surname you seek is shown in a Claims Record, **highlight that whole Claims record** with the surname of your ancestor and press **Ctl+C**. *__Be sure to include the page number__*. This copies (to the computer memory) the act you have highlighted.

When you have done that, click on the name of your surname file again; it will appear on the screen again and click at the end of the document and press **CTL+V** to "paste" that act—with your ancestral surname in it—into your own surname file.

CAUTION: The COPY and PASTE process transfers all the words properly but sometimes does not accurately copy the spaces and formatting. This is often the case with the graphs (pedigree charts) following the text of the act. You may need to compare the graph in the Inheritance Claims volume and adjust the spacing in your word processing file so that the graph accurately reflects the original.

STEP 7 -   Now you need to find the date of each record you have just copied into your file. Simply use the scroll bar in your web browser to scroll up in the volume. Look for the date as you scroll upward. The dates are in bold type on the left side of the page so they are easy to see. You will usually only need to scroll up a few pages but in some volumes you may need to scroll up many pages.

The date usually includes the month, day, and year except the volume for Rorà where the date will just be the year 1697.

Type the date into your word processing file at the top of the act you have just copied. Alternately, you can use the COPY/PASTE process to copy the date into your file.

STEP 8 -   Continue this process until you have finished searching the entire volume of Claims Records.

STEP 9 -   Choose the volume of Claims Records for one of the other communities and repeat the above steps. Continue this process until you have searched all 7 Claims Records volumes for your ancestral surname.

STEP 10 -   When you have completed your search of all 7 volumes of **Claims Records**, you are ready to organize the results according to the **Suggested Strategy for Organizing the Results of Your Search**.

STEP 11 -   After you have followed the strategy to organize all the families with a particular surname, you are ready to search the **Exile Records** (not to be confused with the Exile Inheritance Claims Records) for your ancestor.

To continue your research, go to the **Waldensian Exile Records** link on the **Bridging the Gap** section of the website.

NOTE: If you have extensive computer experience, you may wish to try the **Advanced Search**, available in Windows Explorer, Firefox, and Safari. (Chrome does not yet support this feature.) The Advanced Search is more powerful because it will let you search a document for several different spellings of the surname. The downside is that it is a little bit more complicated to use. However, after you use it a few times it will become second nature.

To access the Advanced Search, click on the down arrow to the right of the "**Find**" box and choose "**Open Full Reader Search.**" The Advanced Search window will open to the left of your document. At the bottom of this window, click on "**Use Advanced Search Options**". In the box

labeled "**Return Results Containing**:" select "**Match any of the words**" then type each of the names, separated by a space, (or portions of the names) into the box labeled "**What word or phrase would you like to search for?**" If you are searching for whole names, click on the box labeled "**Whole words only**". If your search includes portions of words, leave this box unchecked.

If you have any matches, they will appear in the "**Results**:" box in the Advanced Search Window. To see the match in your document, click on the match listed in the "Results:" box.

 Advanced Search is a very powerful search tool that allows you to find the occurrence of **any number of variations** of your surname as well as portions of the surname. For example, to find all of the various spelling of Cardon, simply enter **Card Cord** into the search box. Of course you could also enter each of the many variant spellings but that would be a lot of unnecessary typing.