

Why the Piedmont Families Organization Is Abstracting the Notary Records

In the early 1970s, the Waldensian descendants in the western U.S. learned that the professional researcher they had been paying for research in the notary records had been falsifying his reports—inventing people not listed in the actual notary acts.

Representatives from those families soon met to create a new organization to find a better way to search those important records. The Family History Library specialist for southwestern Europe, Hugh T. Law, who had also supervised the Piedmont Project, suggested a name for the combined organization: the Piedmont Families Organization (PFO). It was determined to coordinate our efforts and seek together to extend our pedigrees.

In 1980, Marriner Cardon, a Waldensian descendant and a lawyer, took the initiative to register the resulting organization with the Internal Revenue Service (under section 501[c][3]). This means that *donations to the organization, which are all used only for research, are fully tax-deductible.*

An initial project of the new organization was to extract all the genealogically useful information from the Mentoulles Parish Register—the only Waldensian parish register that had not been microfilmed.

The major project of the PFO from April 1992 to the present—and continuing into the future—has been supporting an on-site researcher, **Giovanni Cena**, who is systematically abstracting all Waldensian information of family history interest in the notary records up to about 1709 (when the surviving Parish Registers began).

The rich collection of notary records—many hundreds of volumes—is now housed in the State Archives at Torino, and there are hundreds of volumes pertaining to the Waldensian Valleys. However, as noted above, the PFO project is focusing on extracting information primarily up to 1709, as by then the parish registers began again and provide good genealogical information...

Giovanni Cena, the researcher, makes an abstract of the genealogical useful information in each act, volume by volume, and sends the results to the PFO family historians as an email attachment. These extractions are still in Italian, but are typed, greatly facilitating their interpretation. The notary documents studied above about the Janavel and Durand-Canton families come from these reports.

Rorà, a small village, was chosen as the first area to be researched. Working with a small village permitted the abstractor and the PFO a chance to experiment a little as to the approach to be taken. It also provided experience with what kinds of information notary records in the Valleys would actually contain, and how best to try reconstructing pedigrees from the information.

The project of making the abstracts continues, the pace being controlled primarily by the rate of donations.

The results are far too massive for the rather small group of PFO families to extract *each* family represented in the records, as was done in the **Piedmont Project**, described elsewhere on this site. Rather, each PFO family—and others who have expressed interest, such as the man in Argentina we have referred to—works to reconstruct families on their own pedigree. When lines overlap, as they frequently do, the involved families coordinate so as to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

Through the ongoing efforts of Italian researcher, **Giovanni Cena**, and donations by contributors to the Piedmont Families Organization, **326 volumes of the notary records from 27 Waldensian communities** have been abstracted so far.

All donations to PFO are tax-exempt in the U.S. Please send your donations to:

Piedmont Families Organization
c/o Grover Cardon
1061 East 650 North
Orem, UT 84057

We are extremely grateful for the tireless efforts of Giovanni Cena more than 20 years now. Without his dedication, this project would not have succeeded.