The Traditional Waldensian Naming Pattern

For the time period covered by the records on this site, the Waldensians followed a ***very firm naming pattern***. Exceptions to it were exceptionally rare.

This is the pattern:

- A couple's **first son** was named after the husband's father (the **child's paternal grandfather**).

- The **second son** was named after the wife's father (the **child's maternal grandfather**).

- The **first daughter** was named after the father's mother (the **child's paternal grandmother**).

- The **second daughter** is named after the wife's mother (the **child's maternal grandmother**).

In addition, *if a man's first wife died, a second wife's first daughter was given the first name of his first wife*.

This suggests that, at that time, following the normal pattern was deferred for one daughter—the one named after the deceased first wife.

Of course the daughter after that would be named after that child's maternal grandmother—the mother of the *second* wife, not the mother of the first one.

Here are a few examples of how the pattern worked:

Example 1: The Family of Paul GARDIOL:

Suppose you descend from **Paul Gardiol**, of Roccapiatta (a Waldensian village in the Valleys; English: "Flatrock").

By following the research procedures outlined on this site, you discover that **he married Marguerite Sarret, daughter of deceased Pierre, of San Giovanni**.

The Waldensian parish registers show that they had the following children:

- Marthe, born 1692, died 6 November 1757
- Paul, born about 1697, died 5 July 1772
- Jeanne, born about 1700, died 17 April 1765
- Philippe, born about 1705
- Suzanne, born 1706, buried 15 November 1757 age 51
- Madeleine, born 1707, died 30 October 1757 age 50
- Marie, born 1708, died 4 November 1753. age 45

Again by following the procedures on this site, you find that Paul and Marguerite were married in 1691.

You also extend your Gardiol pedigree and discover that the father of the above family (**Paul**) was the **son of another Paul**.

From the will of **this earlier Paul**, you learn that he was **married twice**. He and his **first wife Anna had three sons and a daughter**.
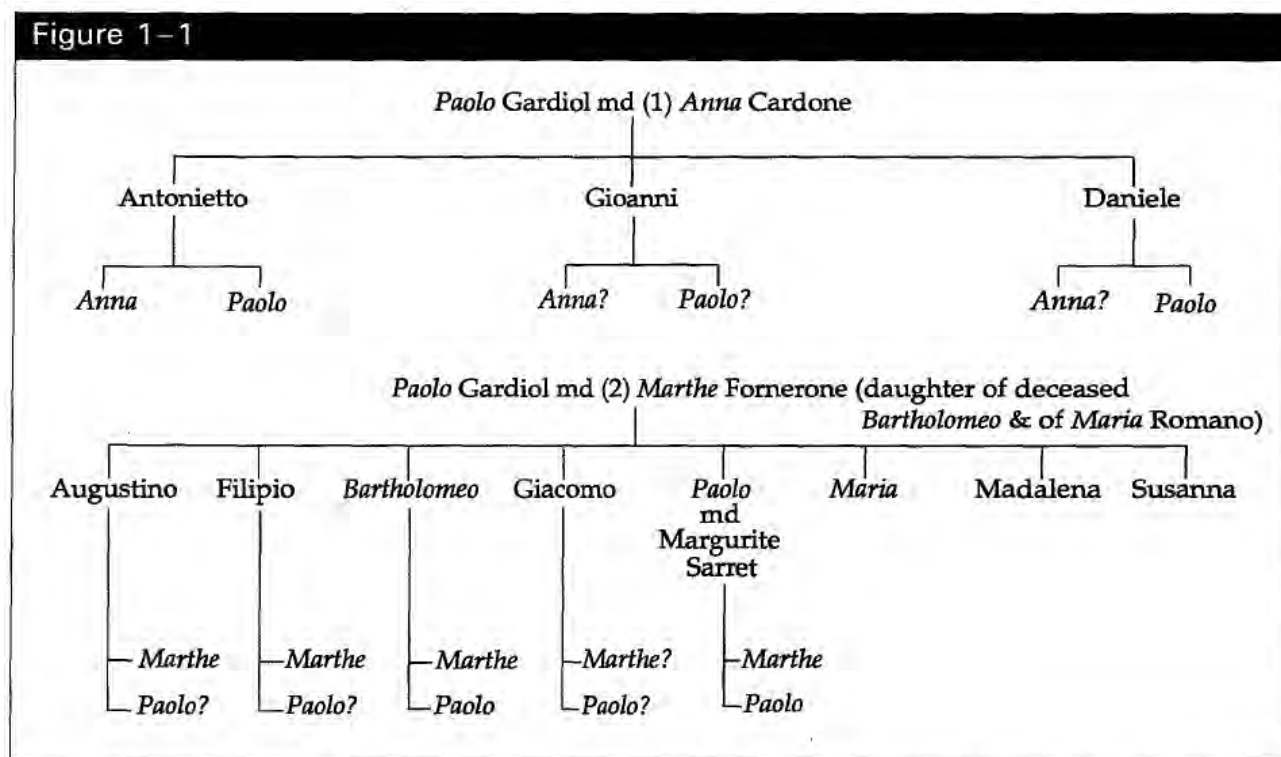
He and his **second wife, Martha had five more sons (including your Paul) and three daughters**.

According to the naming pattern, each of this earlier Paul's eight sons should name his oldest son Paul; and each of the sons should also name his oldest daughter after his mother, **either Anna (the first wife) or Martha (the second one)**. That would mean that the **earlier Paul could have as many as eight grandsons named Paul Gardiol**!

The above list of the children of Paul Gardiol, son of the Paul who married twice, shows that this family adhered to the naming pattern. The oldest child, Marthe (French form of Martha), was named for Paul's mother (the second wife), the child's paternal grandmother. The second child, Paul, was named for the father's father, the child's paternal grandfather.

Gaps between the children suggest that a son, named Pierre after his maternal grandfather, was likely born in 1698 or 1699, or between 1701-1704, but died young. That likelihood is increased by discovering that the third child in the above list, Jeanne, was named after her maternal grandmother, the wife of Pierre Sarret.

The following sketch pedigree shows the naming pattern as it would appear in this family. Names in italics show the naming pattern. Other names come from earlier generations in the family.

The chart clearly shows that the father of this family, Paolo, could have eight grandsons named after him. His **first wife Anna could have three granddaughters named after her**, and his **second wife Marthe could have five granddaughters named after her—all with the surname Gardiol!**

We have not yet tracked down all of Paolo's grandchildren; but so far, in actual fact, he did have at least four grandsons named Paolo, at least one granddaughter named Anna, and at least four granddaughters named Marthe.

Of course, Paolo's daughters who had two sons would name the second one after him and their second daughter after their mother, but all these would have different surnames.

This illustrates the importance of searching all the records carefully to distinguish among all the people with the same name. Trying to distinguish in the records among up to eight Paul Gardiols in the same generation could become very confusing! For that reason, it's crucial that you amass all the clues you can get before you actually get into the earlier records. You'll often need to distinguish among several people with the exact same name and alive at the same time.

Example 2: The Family of Jean MALAN

Suppose that you descend from Jean Malan, of San Giovanni and his wife Marie REYMONDET-JOURDAN.

From the ***Parish Registers***, you learned that:

Jean died on 15 August 1773 at Angrogna

His wife Marie REYMONDET-JOURDAN was born on 25 Jan 1693 and was christened on 1 Feb 1693, both at Torre Pellice; her parents were Jean REYMONDET-JOURDAN and Suzanne JORDAN

Their children were—

- Guillaume, born 27 February and christened 8 March 1716 at San Giovanni
- Daniel, born 15 and christened 28 Nov 1717, both at Angrogna.
- Madeleine, born 18 and christened 28 Jul 1720, both at San Giovanni.
- Jean, born 7 and christened 15 Nov 1722, both at Angrogna.
- Barthélemy, born 2 and christened 15 April 1725, born at San Giovanni but christened at Angrogna.
- Suzanne, born 26 May and christened 6 June 1728, both at Angrogna.
- Etienne, born 16 and christened 26 July, 1733, both at Angrogna.

The parish registers also revealed the marriage and death dates, and most of the persons they married.

Notice the degree to which this family also follows the Waldensian naming pattern:

- The first son, Guillaume, is named for his paternal grandfather.

- The second son, Daniel, does NOT follow the naming pattern; he is NOT named for his mother's father, Jean.

We have found only one widespread departure from the naming pattern in this generation—***the generation that immediately followed the imprisonment and exile.*** It seems that the survivors were assisted at some point—in prison, perhaps, or maybe in Switzerland—by someone whose assistance had saved their lives, and in gratitude named their second child after that person who rendered aid in such a critical time.

- But the third son (the fourth child), Jean, returned to the naming pattern, he being named for his maternal grandfather.
- The first daughter, Madeleine, was named for her paternal grandmother, Madeleine PONS.
- The second daughter (the sixth child), Suzanne, was named for her maternal grandmother, Suxanne JORDAN.

Therefore, except for the second son, who seems to have been named for a benefactor during the imprisonment or exile, the children in this family conform to the naming pattern.

It is crucial to your successful research that you understand this naming pattern. Knowing the pattern can help you distinguish between two potential ancestors with the same name(s), because you can depend on families following that pattern.