

# Italian Research

## Class Handout, FamilySearch



### Italian Research

#### Overview

Researching your Italian heritage can be both fun and rewarding. It isn't difficult to do, and there are many resources to help you along. This class will give you an overview of the research process and the records and resources available to you.

#### Where to Start

History has played a part in record keeping in Italy. The first historical event to have a profound effect was the Council of Trent, 1545-1563. Here the Catholic church consolidated and unified basic doctrine, divided the population into parishes, and required a separate document for baptism, marriage, and death for each parishioner. Although Italy has been divided into duchies, principalities, kingdoms, etc., church records have remained constant.

In 1796, Napoleon Bonaparte defeated the Hapsburgs and sent them back to Austria. He organized the part of the country he ruled into regions, provinces, and towns, most of whose boundaries are still adhered to today. In 1806, he required the government to begin keeping civil registration of vital events. By 1815, Napoleon was defeated, and most of Italy returned to former sovereigns. Civil registration ceased in most of the north, with the exception of Trento, but continued without interruption in the south. Sicily, never governed by Napoleon, began civil registration on its own in 1820.

From 1866-1871, most of Italy became a unified country after decades of unrest, revolt, and warfare. As each region or city became part of the unified Italy, civil registration was once again instituted. The final piece of unification occurred in 1954 when the free city of Trieste was awarded to Italy in a treaty with Yugoslavia. Many northern areas will have two periods of civil registration: from about 1805-1814/1815 (Napoleonic) and from 1866 to the present. Civil registration for some areas, such as Rome and Venice and their surrounding communities, began in 1871, the date they joined the unified Italy. Much of southern Italy has civil registration from 1809 to the present. The entire region of Toscana (over 250 communities) extracted church records from 1805-1865 to create a civil record to add to the records that began in 1866.

Wars were notorious for destroying records. Many communities responded to a law after WWII to call all citizens together to try to reconstitute their records from memory. These records may not be totally accurate, and several dates may have been reported for the same event, but they are better than no record at all.

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#### What is Available?

Uninterrupted microfilming has been going on in Italy since the mid 1970s. Some Waldensian (protestant) records were filmed shortly after WWII. The Genealogical Society of Utah has been filming parish and civil records in as many archives as will give permission. Filming is done in diocesan archives (baptisms, marriages, deaths) and provincial and court archives (births, marriages, deaths) in order to obtain as many towns' records as possible that are available in a central location. Filming in individual parishes and towns would be extremely time consuming, not to mention difficult. Occasionally military records have also been filmed in provincial archives. Most records will have indexes, while many will also have ten-year indexes.

#### How to Find Records in the FHL Catalog

Because Italian records are kept on a local level, simply typing the name of the town in the Place Search on the Family History Library Catalog home page will get the results you need. (Occasionally records have been filmed in such a way that they are cataloged by province.) If you see, for example, "Italy, Caserta" and "Italy, Caserta, Caserta," the second choice will be for the records from the city itself. The first choice will call up entries for the province only. Click on your town name followed by **Church Records** or **Civil Registration**, depending on which type of record you would like to search. Continue clicking on the links until you reach the actual catalog record. In the upper right hand corner you will see **View Film Notes**. Clicking on this link will display the film notes and numbers.

Note: If your town is actually a small village within the communal boundaries of a larger town, your records may be found in the larger town.

#### How to Find Records in the FHL Catalog

##### For letter-writing help:

[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)  
[www.circolocalabrese.org](http://www.circolocalabrese.org)

##### Immigration

[www.ellisland.org](http://www.ellisland.org)  
[www.castlegarden.org](http://www.castlegarden.org)  
[www.stevemorse.org](http://www.stevemorse.org)  
[www.italians-world.org/Italy/BancaDatiGb.htm](http://www.italians-world.org/Italy/BancaDatiGb.htm)  
<http://www.imigrantesitalianos.com.br/>

##### Surname searches

<http://gens.labo.net/en/cognomi>  
<http://italia.indettaglio.it/eng/cognomi/cognomi.html>

##### Parish locator

[www.parrocchie.it](http://www.parrocchie.it)  
[www.chiesacattolica.it](http://www.chiesacattolica.it)

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#### What is Available?

##### Town locator

[www.comuni.it](http://www.comuni.it)  
<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~itappnc/pipcintown.htm>  
<http://www.landfinder.it/townfinder.asp?aff=AF0071&sid=&lng=INGLESE&p>

##### Great maps

[www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/italy.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/italy.html)  
<http://vlib.iue.it/hist-italy/maps.html>

##### Military districts

<http://www.esercito.difesa.it/root/vario/Distretti.asp>

##### Tribunale search

[http://www.giustizia.it/uffici/info/05\\_fin1.htm](http://www.giustizia.it/uffici/info/05_fin1.htm)  
<http://www.tribunali.it>

##### Provincial archives inventories and addresses

[http://www.iagi.info/genealogia/archivi\\_di\\_stato.htm](http://www.iagi.info/genealogia/archivi_di_stato.htm)  
<http://archivi.beniculturali.it/Patrimonio/ricerca/html>

##### Word lists

<http://www.familysearch.org> (Research/Research helps)

##### Gazetteers

*Nuovo dizionario dei comuni e frazioni di comuni con le circoscrizioni amministrative* (New dictionary of communities and hamlets of communities with their administrative jurisdictions). 22<sup>nd</sup> edition. Roma: Società Editrice Dizionario Voghera dei Comuni, 1954. (FHL book INTL REF 945 E5n, 1954. 1966 edition on FHL film no. 795276)  
*Annuario generale dei comuni e delle frazioni d'Italia (Touring Club Italiano)*. (General yearbook of the communes and hamlets of Italy). Milano: TCI, 1993 (FHL book INTL REF 945 E5t 1993.)  
<http://www.fallingrain.com/world/IT/>

##### Atlases

*Atlante stradale d'Italia* (Road atlas of Italy). Scale 1:200,000. Milano: TCI, 1998 (FHL book INTL REF 945 E7t 1988)  
[www.googlemaps.com](http://www.googlemaps.com)

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