

MY FAMILY HISTORY

You are searching for your roots? You are wondering how to undertake research to find out more about the history of your family? You would like to know what genealogical resources you will need to find your ancestors? You have come to the right place.

Before you start, please note that, in Switzerland, there are various sources to help you find traces of your ancestors. There are civil registers, archives and bibliographies. However, they cannot all be consulted in the same way: this depends on right to access, timeframes for registration, or the places of conservation required by cantonal law and the various depositary institutions.

The Valais is no exception to this rule. Here are some guidelines to facilitate your search and avoid unpleasant surprises.

- 1st step: Finding the origins of your family name
To find out the place of origin of your ancestors, consult the [Répertoire des noms de famille suisses](#) provided by the Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse.
If your family name did not originate in the Valais, please contact the relevant [association généalogique](#).
- 2nd step: your family name originated in the Valais
If your family name does come from the Valais, the Valais State Archives (AEV) and the Valais Multimedia Library (MV) are valuable resources. We suggest that you explore the following resources:



SOURCES PREVIOUS TO THE 17TH CENTURY

For periods earlier than the 17th century, useful documents are rare, not systematic and difficult to access. Some towns and villages preserve lists of heads of families or hearths (rather seldom). Names of persons also appear in private acts; deeds of property (often bound in thick registers) mention many family names. All of these documents, which are handwritten and usually in Latin, are difficult to read and interpret for people lacking knowledge in palaeography.



PARISH REGISTERS

The search usually begins with a consultation of parish registers in which pastors recorded baptisms, marriages and deaths. The Valais State Archives conserve only copies of the old parish registers, the originals being the property either of the Diocese of Sion or the Abbey of St. Maurice. These copies cover the period between the 17th century (seldom before) and the 19th and 20th centuries. Parish registers had the status of official acts until 1876.

Indeed, in the Valais, as in the rest of Switzerland, public cantonal registers were introduced only in 1876, in accordance with the new Swiss Constitution of 1874, which gave federal authorities a legal basis for registering population movements.

NOTE ? applications to consult parish registers require written permission from the pastor of the relevant parish. For more information on statutory limits of protection, you can consult the following website:

For more information on statutory limits of protection, you can consult the following website:
<https://www.vs.ch/web/culture/delais-de-protection>

Requests can also be addressed directly to the Diocese:

Diocèse de Sion,
Rue de la Tour 12
CP 2124, 1950 Sion 2
Tel + 41 27 329 18 18
Fax + 41 27 329 18 36
e-mail: diocese.sion@cath-vs.ch

There is a detailed list of the parish registers available at the Valais State Archives at our database ScopeQuery under the heading "[Collections, Registres de paroisse](#)".



CENSUS

Population census ([Les recensements de population](#)): the more or less regular censuses transcribed according to district and township also contain a wealth of information. The Valais State Archives conserve these registers under the call number DI 3090 (former Department of the Interior) for the years 1798, 1802, 1829, 1837, 1846, 1850, 1870, 1880



REGISTRY OF EMIGRANTS

The register of emigrants (call no. DI 358: [Le registre des émigrés](#)) also contains a great deal of information about the population of the Valais in the 19th century. It records the names of the emigrants, their birthplace and their destination. A copy of this register can be consulted in the reading room of the Valais State Archives.



CIVIL REGISTRY

The Law on Civil Status, pursuant to the new Swiss Constitution of 1874, went into effect only in 1876, following a referendum. It required the creation of civil status districts and uniform procedures throughout

Switzerland, and entrusted the Federal Bureau of Statistics with the task of compiling information on the basis of personal declarations of marriages, births and deaths. At the head of each district, the registrar alone had the competency to draw deeds and the authority to celebrate marriages. Detailed information on the history of civil status is available at the website of the *Dictionnaire Historique de la Suisse (DHS)*. The Civil Registry, regularly kept in the Valais since 1876, can be consulted only under certain conditions, but not by the general public. The registry is under the authority of the Service for Population and Migration, which has possession of these documents. For information, you must contact this service directly ([Service de la population et des migrations](#)), or, if you are a Swiss national, the registrar of your township.



THE "GENEALOGIES" COLLECTION

Our collection has several genealogies that have been entrusted on deposit, including that of the Chastonnay family. A digital copy of this family tree is available at <http://gw.geneanet.org/hdechastonay>. Similarly, the Archives holds the family trees of families from the High Valais, like the Ruppen "Hamjini", Eyer "Simini", Walden of Naters, Salzmann "Josephi" of Naters, Schmid "im Stock", Schmid "im Dorf" and Nellen of Baltschieder and Naters.

For information on family names and coats-of-arms, the *Armorial valaisan* is an indispensable source: the three armorials can be found online at https://doc.rero.ch/search?In=fr&p=armorial+du+Valais&action_search=

User:

Password:

Login

[Forgotten password?](#) / [Create an account](#)
