

A List of Louies, Part 2

In my previous article, we studied a baker's dozen of King Louies (Louis I through Louis XIII). In Louisiana, that's known as twelve - plus one more for lagniappe. Let us continue our history of France by visiting even more of the many monarchs of France named Louis.



Louis XIV, Roi Soleil



Louis XV, le Bien-Aimé

Louis XIV (September 5, 1638 – September 1, 1715), known as the **Sun King** (*Roi Soleil*), became king when he was only four years old. For 72 years and 110 days (1643 – 1715), his was the longest recorded reign of any monarch of a sovereign country in European history. Also known as **Louis the Great** (*Louis le Grand*), it was during the reign of this Bourbon king that René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle claimed the region watered by the Mississippi River and its tributaries for France and named it Louisiana (*La Louisiane*) in honor of the Sun King. In the same way as the planets revolve around the Sun, Louis wanted his courtiers and the people of France to revolve around him. He would be the center of their universe. In the age of absolutism in Europe, Louis XIV's reign exemplified that centralization of power.

During his youth, the relationship between Louis XIV with his mother, Anne of Austria, was unusually affectionate for that period in history.

She spent much time with him and it was Anne who gave Louis his belief in absolute centralized power and the "divine right of kings." After the death of Louis XIII, Anne became Regent, assisted by Cardinal Mazarin as chief minister. In 1661, after Cardinal Mazarin's death, the 22-year-old Louis XIV took complete personal control and began with administrative and fiscal reforms. The treasury at that time verged on bankruptcy. To handle this situation, Louis chose Jean-Baptiste Colbert as Controller-General of Finances in 1665.

Another important minister was Louis Phélypeaux (1643 –1727), who we remember as the *comte de Pontchartrain* (1699), who served as Chancellor of France from September 5, 1699, to July 1, 1714. He had serious responsibilities: the French navy, trade, colonies, matters of religion, the royal household and finances. His son Jérôme, who would also become *comte de Pontchartrain*, served as a councillor to the *parlement* of Paris from 1692, and assisted his father as Secretary of State of the *Maison du Roi* and Navy Minister beginning in 1699. Since Louisiana was a French colony, it's easy to see why Pontchartrain (*père et fils*) played such an important role.

The Sun King decided to rebuild, enlarge and embellish what started out as a hunting lodge (and then a château) into the home of his dazzling royal court at Versailles. The first phase of the expansion took place circa 1661 to 1678. In 1682, the Palace of Versailles became the principal royal residence of France and a setting for both rest and for elaborate entertainments on a grandiose scale. There had to be rules, so a new manner of personal conduct called "etiquette" originated there.

Louis XIV's monarchy was a golden age of literature and art, and during his reign key territories were annexed and France emerged as a powerful European nation. But in the final decades of the king's rule, France was weakened by numerous lengthy and costly wars that drained the nation's treasury. Also, there was a mass exodus of French Huguenots following the king's revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

Extravagance was the backdrop for all of this history. Louis owned over 1000 wigs and 413 beds – and he loved to eat. Portraits often show him in high heels with big hair. This was to make him look taller, since he was only five foot, four inches tall.

One might think fourteen Louies was enough, but it appeared that Louis XIV was determined to ensure that the next *Roi de France* was

also a Louis. Married twice (to Maria Theresa of Spain and, never officially announced or admitted, in a morganatic marriage to Françoise d'Aubigné, Marquise de Maintenon), his heirs to the throne - Louis XIV's eldest son (*Louis, Le Grand Dauphin*), eldest grandson, eldest great-grandson and great-grandson's brother - were all named Louis, the latter becoming King Louis XV. The successive Kings of France were Louis XVI, Louis XVII and Louis XVIII.



The wars waged by Louis XIV left the French in terrible financial shape. Scottish financier John Law convinced the French government to let him introduce his paper money scheme in the early years of Louis XV.

Louis XV (February 15, 1710 – May 10, 1774) was Bourbon King of France from September 1, 1715 until his death in 1774. Born at Versailles, he was the great-grandson of Louis IV, whose reign lasted so long that he outlived both his son and grandson as heirs. Louis XV followed the Sun King by ruling France since the age of five for almost 59 years, the second longest reign in the history of France, exceeded only by his grand predecessor, Louis XIV.

French monarch at the time of the founding of New Orleans by Bienville, Louis XV became known as **Louis the Beloved** (or *le Bien-*

Aimé). Philippe II, Duke of Orléans, was Regent and ruled for the young king at the time of city's founding, and it is for him the city is named. He held that position from 1715 to 1723, until Louis reached maturity (then considered to be his 13th birthday). Cardinal Fleury served as chief minister from 1726 until the Cardinal's death in 1743, when the young Louis took sole control of the kingdom.

Bound in name since 1718, the City of Orléans, France, officially became a sister city with the City of New Orleans January 2018, three hundred years later. Mayor Olivier Carré of Orléans (*Maire d'Orléans*) and Mayor Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans sealed the deal, and the signing was also timed to coincide with the city's annual parade celebration of Saint Joan of Arc's birthday on January 6th. That date was coincidentally also Twelfth Night and the beginning of New Orleans' Mardi Gras celebrations, when the Krewe de Jeanne d'Arc parades each year through the Vieux Carré (no relation to Mayor Carré of Orléans).



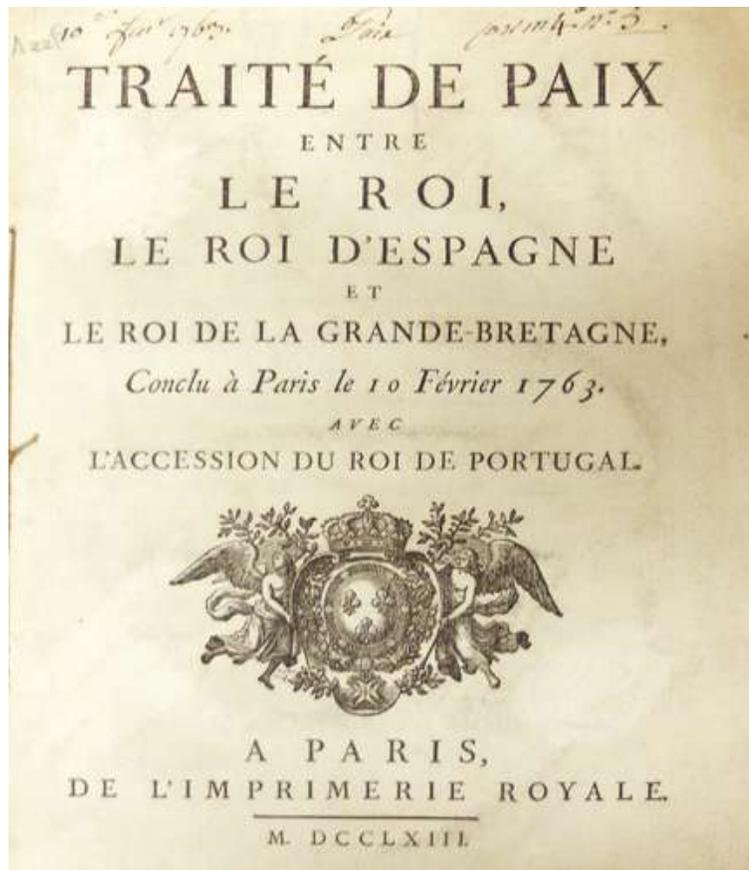
Mayor Olivier Carré of Orléans and Mayor Mitch Landrieu meet.

An economic crisis disrupted the Regency in the early years of Louis XV's reign. The Scottish banker John Law, who had a passion for women and gambling (and had killed a man in a duel over the affections of a woman with a single thrust of his sword), was named (like Colbert under Louis XIV) Controller-General of Finances. In 1716, he opened the *Banque Générale Privée*, which was one of the earliest banks to issue paper money, which he promised could be exchanged for gold. He convinced wealthy Parisian investors to buy shares in the Mississippi Company, a scheme used in colonizing French Colonial Louisiana. The stock first soared and then collapsed in 1720, taking the bank down with it. The "Mississippi Bubble" burst, Law fled France

and the burned investors became wary of investing any time soon after that. The term "millionaire" came into the language to describe the beneficiaries of Law's scheme.

The years of the Regency saw France at war with Spain, which France defeated on both land and sea. Spain quickly sought peace by treaty in 1721. An official silence on religious issues brought another kind of peace to the kingdom. Voltaire and Montesquieu published their first works, and France's Age of Enlightenment was quietly underway.

In 1725, Louis married 21-year-old Marie Leszczyńska, daughter of the deposed king of Poland, when Louis was only 15. Over a ten-year period, she gave Louis ten children (eight girls and two boys), of whom one survived, the Dauphin Louis (1729 – 1765). The Dauphin and his wife, the Dauphine Marie Josèphe, were the parents of the following three Kings of France: Louis XVI (who met his fate at the guillotine) and Louis XVIII and Charles X (who each occupied the throne of France after the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte).



The Treaty of Paris, 1763

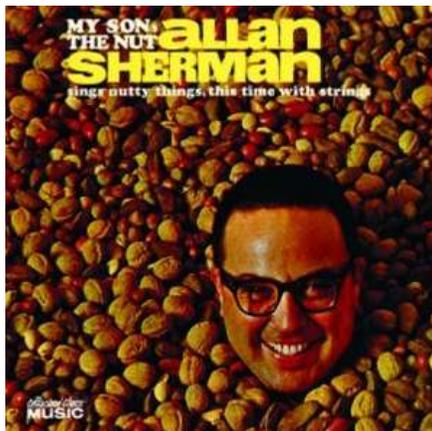
A real failure of Louis XV's reign was France's costly and disastrous loss in the Seven Years' War (known as the French and Indian War in the United States). This culminated in France's ceding most of New France (its North American colonies) to Great Britain and Spain in 1763 under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. Britain received Canada, Acadia and all of Louisiana east of the Mississippi (the Florida parishes) – except for the *Île d'Orléans* (New Orleans), which went to Spain, along with the greater Louisiana territory to the west.

The expensive cost of warfare during the reign of Louis XV drained the treasury and set the stage for the French Revolution to come. Louis XV died two years before the Declaration of Independence and was succeeded in 1774 by his grandson, Louis XVI, who married Marie-Antoinette and lost his head to the guillotine. And so did she.

The album "*My Son, The Nut*" (recorded by Allan Sherman) held the top spot on the Billboard Top 200 for nearly two months in 1963. The following are the partial lyrics of "*You Went the Wrong Way, Old King Louie*," a humorous song parody from that album:

"Louis the Sixteenth was the King of France in 1789.
He was worse than Louis the Fifteenth.
He was worse than Louis the Fourteenth.
He was worse than Louis the Thirteenth.
He was the worst
Since Louis the First ...

You went the wrong way, Old King Louie.
You made the population cry,
'Cause all you did was sit and pet
With Marie-Antoinette
In your place at Versailles ...



You came the wrong way, Old King Louie,
And now you ain't got far to go.
Too bad you won't be here to see
That great big Eiffel Tower,
Or Brigitte Bardot.



Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, from a portrait in the New Orleans Museum of Art by Louise Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun, circa 1788 *Louis XVI, King of France*

Louis XVI (August 23, 1754 – January 21, 1793), born **Louis-Auguste**, was the last Bourbon king of France and the last king of France before the fall of the monarchy during the French Revolution. During the four months before he was executed for treason, Louis was referred to as **Citizen Louis Capet**. His wife, Marie-Antoinette, was guillotined nine months later. What events brought about their tragic demise?

The unfortunate royal couple were married in 1770, Marie-Antoinette being the fourteen-year-old Habsburg Archduchess daughter of Maria Theresa and Holy Roman Emperor Francis I. The young Louis-Auguste, Dauphin of France, had become the next in line to the monarchy upon his father's death in 1765. But he had to wait until

grandfather Louis XV's reign ended on May 10, 1774. Louis XVI assumed the title "King of France and Navarre," which he used until September 4, 1791, when he received the title of "King of the French" until the monarchy was abolished on September 21, 1792.

Tutors provided the young king with poor interpersonal skills and taught him that austerity was a sign of a strong character in a monarch. This resulted in exacerbating the king's natural shyness and magnifying his indecisiveness.

Upon becoming king, Louis XVI attempted to abolish serfdom, as well as certain taxes, but the French nobility opposed these measures. His reign witnessed a number of governing missteps, such as policy measures that did not properly manage the country's debt. Large international loans and the cost of funding France's involvement in the American Revolution placed the country near bankruptcy by the mid-1780s. Deregulation of the grain market resulted in an increase in bread prices. Louis XVI neither offered any real solutions to France's problems nor was he communicative with those who offered help. By 1789 everything had deteriorated and the French Revolution was rapidly set in motion.

France (before the French Revolution) was known as the *Ancien Régime* and divided society into three estates: the First Estate (the clergy), the Second Estate (the nobility) and the Third Estate (the commoners). In May of 1789, in order to address France's fiscal crisis, Louis convened the Estates General, an advisory assembly made up of the three estates. Proposed radical fiscal reforms did not sit well with the nobles nor with the people. By June, the Third Estate declared itself the "National Assembly," aligned themselves with the *bourgeoisie*, and set out to create a constitution.

Louis declared the Assembly null and void and called out the army to deal with the growing public dissension. On July 14, riots broke out in the streets of Paris and the masses stormed the prison known as the Bastille in defiance of the King.

Had Louis acquiesced to their demands, the crowds may have been appeased, but advice from his wife and from hard-liners within the nobility only made things worse. Also, Marie-Antoinette was not fully accepted by members of the French court nor the French people. They were skeptical of her Hapsburg connections and accused her of being promiscuous and sympathetic to France's enemies. The royal family was forcibly moved from Versailles to Paris in October 1789. Louis

ignored his advisors and refused to abdicate as king and attempted and failed to escape to the eastern frontier in mid-1791. On September 21, 1792, the Legislative Assembly proclaimed the First French Republic. That November, evidence was uncovered that proved Louis XVI's secret dealings and counter-revolutionary intrigues, and he and his family were charged with treason. Louis was soon found guilty and condemned to death. He was guillotined January 21, 1793.



The storming of the Bastille, July 14th, 1789

Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette had four children together: Marie-Thérèse, Louis-Joseph, Louis-Charles and Sophie-Beatrix. All died in childhood except Marie-Thérèse. The younger son, Louis-Charles, became Louis XVII, king in "monarchist name only" but barely lived past his tenth birthday.

Next week, we'll take a look at the remaining French monarchs named Louis in: **A List of Louies, Part 3**

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New Orleans Nostalgia
"A List of Louies, Part 2"
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