A List of Louies, Part 3

In my most recent article, A List of Louies, Parts 2, we explored Kings Louis XIV (The Sun King); his great-grandson, Louis XV; and Louis XVI (grandson of Louis XV). Let us complete our study of the French monarchy by taking a look at the remaining kings of France named Louis.

The first of these, Louis XVII, wasn’t around very long and never actually ruled France, but read on to get the rest of the story.

Louis XVII (March 27, 1785 – June 8, 1795), born Louis-Charles, was the younger son of King Louis XVI of France and Queen Marie Antoinette. Given the title Duke of Normandy at birth, Louis XVII’s
older brother Louis-Joseph died of tuberculosis in 1789, and the four-year-old Louis-Charles became Dauphin and heir to the throne. As heir apparent, he held that title until 1791, when the new French constitution accorded him a new designation: *Prince Royal* of France.

Upon his father’s execution on January 21, 1793, in the midst of the French Revolution (at least in the eyes of the royalists), Louis-Charles became “King of France”. But by then France was a republic, and the unfortunate young *Fils de France* was imprisoned in the Temple. First constructed in Paris as a medieval fortress by the Knights Templar, the Temple’s tower held Louis-Charles beginning August 13, 1792.

Despite never having actually ruled as king, the hostility and fears of the Revolutionaries were directed against him. In July 1793, he was physically ripped from the arms of his weeping and pleading mother and given over to a cobbler named Antoine Simon to transform the former prince into a staunch republican citizen. According to royalist reports, he was tortured and forced into signing a “confession” that his mother and aunt had sexually molested him. The following day, he was allowed to see his elder sister, Marie-Thérèse Charlotte, for the last time.

Like his brother before him, Louis-Charles succumbed to tuberculosis shortly after his tenth birthday. Dr. Philippe-Jean Pelletan, overseeing physician during the autopsy, was shocked to see the numerous scars covering the young king’s body, a result of the physical abuse suffered while imprisoned in the Temple. The young king’s remains were placed in an unmarked grave in Sainte Marguerite cemetery, but the heart was smuggled out by Dr. Pelletan. It was eventually placed in a crystal urn and in 1999 DNA analysis did indeed prove that the heart belonged to Louis-Charles. In 2004, with all due pageantry, French Legitimists had the heart buried in the Basilica of St. Denis next to the remains of the king’s parents.

That put to rest all rumors of the “Lost Dauphin,” the possibility that Louis-Charles had somehow escaped and had been spirited away by royal sympathizers. Yes, back in those days there were many popular candidates for this “missed monarch” including the famous naturalist John James Audubon, who spent significant time in Louisiana.

Even though he never reigned as king, Louis XVII’s title is derived from monarchist theory, which asserts that there must always be a monarch. So, upon the death of one monarch, the heir apparent or (failing that) the heir presumptive immediately becomes monarch.
Because of this, his uncle took the name of Louis XVIII of France rather than Louis XVII, retaining it upon the Bourbon Restoration in 1814 (more on that later).

**French Rule After Louis XVI**

Maximilian Robespierre, French lawyer and politician, effectively ruled the nation from 1793-1794, until he was overthrown and beheaded. After his demise, a five-member committee known as *le Directoire* (the Directory) ruled France from November 2, 1795, until November 9, 1799, when Napoléon Bonaparte became First Consul of France in what is known as the *Coup d’État of 18 Brumaire* (November 9th under the French Republican Calendar), considered by most historians to be the end of the French Revolution. Widely regarded as a military genius, Napoléon led many successful military campaigns, fighting 60 battles and losing only 8, mostly at the end. After high rates of disease crippled the French army in Saint Domingue, Napoléon decided to sell Louisiana and its crown jewel, New Orleans, to the United States in 1803. The following year, on December 2, 1804, he was crowned Emperor of France. He ruled until 1814, when Louis XVI’s brother took the throne. Napoléon ruled again briefly in 1815 during what is known as the “Hundred Days”.

The “Hundred Days” is the name for the period between Napoléon’s return from exile on Elba to March 20, 1815, in Paris upon the second restoration of Louis XVIII on July 8, 1815. Just like the Hundred Years’ War, the “Hundred Days” is not exact (a period of 111 days). Napoléon was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815.

The *Directoire* also lends its name to a period of furniture, often considered to be a transition between Louis XVI and French Empire.

**The Bourbon Restoration**

The Bourbon Restoration (1814 - 1830), as mentioned above, is that period of French history that began with Napoléon I’s abdication in 1814, and the Bourbon monarchs were restored to the throne. The executed Louis XVI’s brother became Louis XVIII under the First Restoration. This reign was interrupted by Napoléon’s return to France during the “Hundred Days”, but Napoléon was forced to abdicate again, leading to the Second Restoration. A constitutional monarchy of moderate rule was soon eclipsed by a return of the ultra-royalists during the reign of Charles X (1824 – 1830), younger brother of kings Louis XVI and Louis XVIII, upending egalitarian principles and favoring
large landowners and the aristocracy. Opposition to these policies brought about the July Revolution in 1830, Charles X’s abdication and an end of the Bourbon Restoration.

**Louis XVIII** (November 17, 1755 - September 16, 1824), Louis Stanislas Xavier, known as the Desired (*le Désiré*), styled Count of Provence at birth as brother of King Louis XVI. The first French king of the Bourbon Restoration, he ruled France from 1814 to 1824, except for a period in 1815 mentioned earlier as the “Hundred Days”. He spent twenty-three years in exile (1791 – 1814) during the years of the French Revolution and the First French Empire, and again during the “Hundred Days.”

![French King Louis XVIII](image)

*French King Louis XVIII*

At the time of his birth, Louis Stanislas was fourth in line to the French throne, behind his father and his two elder brothers: Louis Joseph
Xavier and Louis-Auguste (Louis XVI). Louis XVIII succeeded his young nephew, Louis XVII, in 1795, as titular king of France, but did not actually begin his reign until after Napoléon was exiled to Elba. In 1808, Hartwell House in Buckinghamshire became Louis XVIII’s court-in-exile, and his landlord was the Prince of Wales (the future George IV of Great Britain). In 1813, Louis XVIII issued a declaration from Hartwell asserting that all those who served Napoléon or the Republic would not be punished for their acts, and those from the nobility and clergy whose lands were confiscated during the Revolution would be compensated for their losses. In 1814, after Napoléon’s abdication, Louis XVIII began to actually rule France (only to be interrupted the following year by Bonaparte’s return).

Louis XVIII’s second return from exile was not greeted with a great deal of enthusiasm. Neither Napoléon’s victors nor the king’s French subjects were thrilled by the prospect, yet there did not appear to be any real alternative to Bourbon rule. Louis XVIII’s leniency promise did not quite pan out: Napoléon’s Marshall Ney was executed for treason, Napoleonic government officials were purged and others were executed.

Calling for continuity and reconciliation, Louis XVIII attempted to appease the French people by selecting centrist cabinets, much to the chagrin of ultra-royalists such as his younger brother, the comte d’Artois (the future Charles X). The allies drafted a new and more severe Treaty of Paris (formally ending Napoléon’s “Hundred Days”), under which France lost territory (such as the Saar Basin and Savoy) and France was also required to pay a substantial war indemnity.

In 1823, the French army mobilized under Louis XVIII to assist the Spanish Royalists in restoring King Ferdinand VII of Spain to absolute power. Toward that goal, French forces defeated the Spanish liberal forces at the Battle of Trocadero on August 31, 1823.

Louis XVIII, suffering from obesity, gout and gangrene, began to see a decline in his health in the spring of 1824. He died on September 16, 1824, and was succeeded by his brother, the Count of Artois, as Charles X. But Louis XVIII was not the last king of France named Louis.

**July Revolution of 1830**

The July Revolution of 1830 (*révolution de Juillet*) led to the overthrow of Charles X, Bourbon monarch, and replacement by his cousin, Louis
Philippe, Duke of Orléans, who himself, after eighteen precarious years on the throne as Louis-Philippe I, would be overthrown in 1848. It marked the shift from one constitutional monarchy, under the restored House of Bourbon (1814 – 1830), to another, the July Monarchy. Here there was another transfer of power from the House of Bourbon to its cadet branch, the House of Orléans. Still, there were supporters of the House of Bourbon, who were called Legitimists, while supporters of Louis-Philippe were known as Orléanists.

La Liberté guidant le peuple, Eugène Delacroix, commemorating the French Revolution of 1830 (July Revolution) on July 28, 1830

But before Louis-Philippe took the throne, there was another Louis, and if you blinked your eye, you would have missed him:

**Louis XIX (??),** well, not really, but he was technically King of France for less than 20 minutes. Louis Antoine of France, Duke of Angoulême (August 6 1775 – June 3, 1844) was Charles X’s eldest son, which
made him the last Dauphin of France from 1824 to 1830, the same years of his father’s reign.

He was technically King of France and Navarre for less than 20 minutes before he himself abdicated, due to his father's abdication during the July Revolution in 1830. He never reigned over the country, but after his father's death in 1836, he was the Legitimist pretender as Louis XIX.

**Louis Antoine, Louis XIX (?)**  
**Louis-Philippe I**

**Louis-Philippe I** “King of the French”, the Citizen King, was the only French king to visit New Orleans, but this was more than three decades before he was to take the throne. In exile the young duc d’Orléans (great-great grandson of the prince for whom New Orleans was named), toured the United States for four years. In 1798, while visiting Louisiana, he was entertained by Julien Poydras in Pointe Coupée and by the Marigny de Mandeville family in New Orleans.

Louis-Philippe I was the son of Louis-Philippe II, duc d’Orléans, who called himself “Philippe Égalité”, but that name did not keep him from the guillotine during the Reign of Terror.
France (as the home of Victor Hugo, Chopin, Liszt and Honoré de Balzac) under Louis-Philippe had a golden age in literature and music. You are probably aware of the Louis-Philippe style of furniture. Much of the Louis-Philippe style of furniture, architecture and art exemplified the personality of the king himself. Unlike the Bourbons before him, he replaced formal robes with business dress, lived in Paris and avoided pomp and ceremony. He wielded his own umbrella and imposed no official styles. Despite these outward signs of simplicity, Louis-Philippe’s support came from the wealthy bourgeoisie.

During the February 1848 Revolution in France, Louis-Philippe abdicated, left Paris under disguise, fled to England and died two years later. One can learn more about Louis-Philippe’s reign in my article entitled Oysters d’Orléans.

Louis-Philippe was the last French king, but not the last monarch. That honor went to Charles-Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, who became Emperor Napoléon III. This how it happened:

Louis Napoléon (nee Luigi Buonaparte) was the younger brother of Napoléon I. Although he was a monarch in his own right from 1806 to 1810, ruling over the Kingdom of Holland as Louis I, he was never King of France. But he was the father of a French Emperor, Napoléon III. The Emperor’s mother was Hortense de Beauharnais, the daughter of Empress Joséphine and Napoléon I’s stepdaughter.
Napoléon III, nephew of Napoléon I and founder of the Second French Empire, was the first elected President of France from 1848 to 1852 but seized power to become Emperor of the French from 1852 to 1870.

So, let’s recap:

Kings of France **Louis I through Louis V** were of the Carolingian Dynasty (750 -887), which was a Frankish noble family founded by Charles Martel and included his grandson, Charlemagne, who greatly extended the Frankish realms.

The Capetian Dynasty lasted from 987 to 1792. The senior line ruled in France as the House of Capet from the election of Hugh Capet in 987 until the death of Charles IV in 1328. After the House of Capet (which included **Louis VI through Louis X**) came the cadet branch House of Valois (**Louis XI and Louis XII**) and the cadet branch House of Bourbon (**Louis XIII through Louis XVI**). One will notice that the dynasty ended not with the guillotining of Louis XVI but the abolishment of absolute monarchy upon the founding of the First French Republic in September 1792. **Louis XVII** is considered by some to be part of the Capetian Dynasty, although his title is disputed since he never actually governed.

Under the Bourbon Restoration (1814 – 1815), with an interruption known as the “Hundred Days”, there were two kings named Louis from the House of Bourbon: **Louis XVIII** and Louis Antoine (**Louis XIX**). Since he was monarch for less than twenty minutes, Louis Antoine’s title is also disputed.

The last Louis was from the House of Orléans, and his reign was known as the July Monarchy (1830 – 1848). Known as **Louis-Philippe I**, and due to having changed the styles and forms of the
ancient régime, the title “King of France” was replaced with the more populist “King of the French”. He neither became Philip VII, King of France, nor Louis XX.

The Capetian Dynasty continued to hold the French throne until 1848, when the French monarchy under Louis-Philippe was finally dissolved in the February Revolution of 1848.

This concludes a short history of the 18 kings of France named Louis, or 19 if you count Louis Antoine, and one Louis-Philippe. When compiling “A List of Louies” we must not forget New Orleans’ own King of Jazz, Louis Armstrong, who also reigned as King of Zulu in 1949. Another New Orleans trumpeter of renown was Louis Prima. There’s just no end to the “Louis” royalty.

It must also be remembered that there were four Kings of the Franks named Clovis during the Merovingian dynasty that lasted from the middle of the 5th century until 751. Clovis I, who united all of the
Frankish tribes under one ruler, is important in the history of France as the first king of what would become France. Also significant is that he was converted to Catholicism in 496, at the behest of his wife Clotilde (later venerated as a saint).

Clovis is an early form of the name Louis, which in its Latinized form is “Ludovicus” and comes from the Germanic name “Hluodowig”, which is comprised of the elements *hlod* (fame) and *wig* (war, or combat). It should probably make sense now why Clovis and Clotilde are familiar names in South Louisiana.

A list of New Orleans Louies also includes composer and virtuoso pianist Louis Moreau Gottschalk and jurist Louis Moreau-Lislet, who (along with Edward Livingston and James Brown) wrote the *Digeste de la Loi Civile*, Louisiana’s first civil code. Then there was the New Orleans boxing promoter Lou Messina, who could tell you that a “louie” is another term for a left hook. Louis André Martinet, born in St. Martinville, Louisiana, an African-American lawyer, was a key figure during the civil rights efforts surrounding the end of Reconstruction and was in 1876 the first African-American graduate of Straight
University Law School, now Dillard University (having already passed the Louisiana Bar the year before). His legal achievements were recognized in 1957 when the Greater New Orleans Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, an organization of African-American legal professionals, was founded and named for him.

And if you’re in the New Orleans French Quarter, “hang a louie” (take a left turn) on Chartres Street and continue past St. Louis Street and then past the Royal Orleans Hotel (the former St. Louis Hotel) until you come to the St. Louis Cathedral. What could better highlight how important the numerous kings named Louis, whether saints or sinners, were to the history of Louisiana?

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New Orleans Nostalgia  
“A List of Louies, Part 3”  
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