

Chapter 54

William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke – “The Best Knight that Ever Lived” (and my 21st-Great Grandfather)

[Originally written 25 July 2020]

Introduction

I have been using the Geni.com website to learn about my ancestors who lived in Europe in the Middle Ages. Geni.com has what they call the “World Family Tree”. Unlike Ancestry.com, where everyone has their own complete (or incomplete) family tree, Geni.com is having its users collaboratively build just a single family tree. On Ancestry.com, there can be one thousand or more duplicate entries for the same person – and these entries often have conflicting information. On Geni.com, there should only be one entry on the entire website for any given person. Individual users on Geni.com can add their ancestral lines until they connect with people already in the World Family Tree. And then their lines immediately become part of this enormous family tree. As of late July 2020, there are over 145 million individuals in the World Family Tree – see:

<https://www.geni.com/worldfamilytree>

Over the past year, I have added various lines from my family tree to Geni.com, and then connected these lines to individuals already in the World Family Tree.

Using Geni.com, I have found a number of my ancestral lines that go back twenty or even thirty generations into the past. For example, I have twelve different ancestral lines going back to King Edward I of England (1239-1307) – see:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/50-MyLines-to-KingEdward.pdf>

My ancestral lines connect back to a wide range of European nobility from the Middle Ages. My ancestors include kings from England, France, Sweden, Scotland, Germany, and even the Kingdom of Jerusalem (which existed during the Crusades). There are numerous knights, barons, and earls among my ancestors. Not to mention Charlemagne and King Alfred the Great. See:

<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/49-EuropeanNobility.pdf>

It seems that every day or two I find new ancestors to include in this group.

William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke

I recently learned that I am descended from William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke (1146-1219):



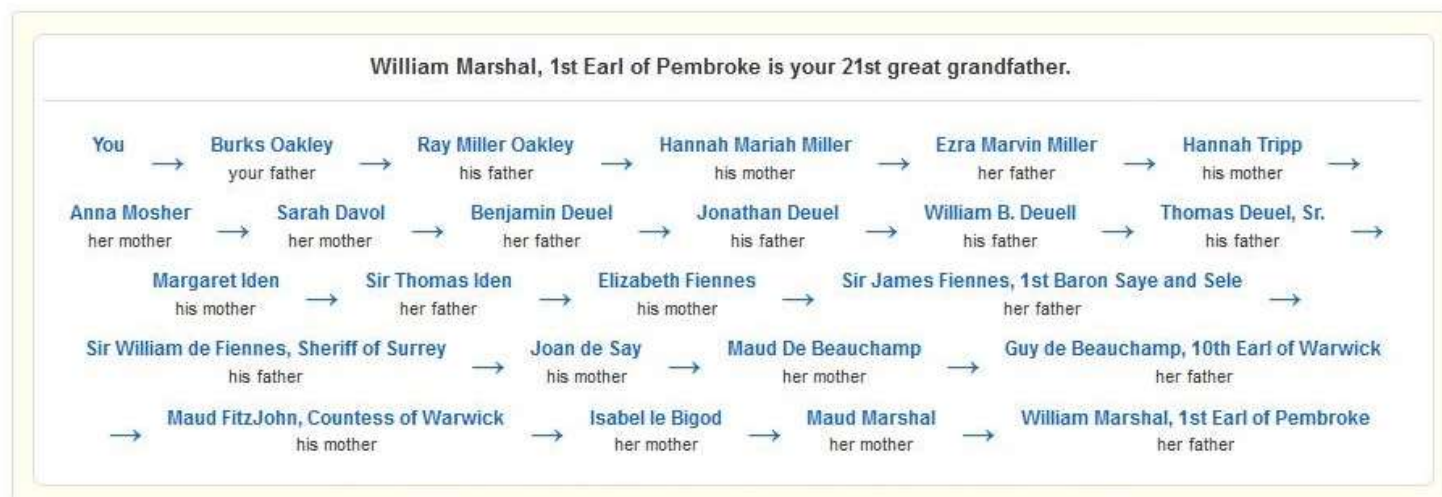
William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke

Gender: Male
Birth: May 12, 1146
Rockley, Marlborough, Wiltshire, England
Death: May 14, 1219 (73)
Caversham, Henley, Oxfordshire, England (Old Age)
Place of Burial: Round Chapel of Knights Temple, London, Middlesex, England (United Kingdom)
Immediate Family: Son of [John FitzGilbert, I, of Rockley, le Mareschal](#) and [Sibilla "FitzEdward" d'Everux](#)
Husband of [Isabel de Clare](#), heiress of [Pembroke](#)
Father of [William Marshal, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, Magna Carta Surety](#); [Richard Marshal, 3rd Earl of Pembroke](#); [Maud Marshal](#); [Gilbert le Marshall, 4th Earl of Pembroke](#) (Knight Templar); [Isabel Marshal, Countess of Cornwall](#) and 5 others

The profile for Sir William on Geni.com is at:

<https://www.geni.com/people/William-Marshal-1st-Earl-of-Pembroke/6000000002459854209>

Here is my ancestral line back to Sir William:



Sir William was my 21st-great grandfather. This ancestral line goes back through my Oakley-Miller ancestors (my father's side of the family). It includes William B. Deuell (1615-1680), who was born in Lincolnshire, England, and immigrated to Newport, Rhode Island. He was quite an interesting person in his own right - see:

<https://www.geni.com/people/William-Deuell/6000000009376622002>

This line includes an Earl, a Baron, and a Countess. Isabel le Bigod was the daughter of Sir Hugh Bigod, 3rd Earl of Norfolk, who was one of the twenty-five sureties of the *Magna Carta* of King John.

But I digress...

Getting back to Sir William Marshal, here is an excerpt from the Wikipedia article about him:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Marshal,_1st_Earl_of_Pembroke

William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke (1146 or 1147 – 14 May 1219), also called William the Marshal (Norman French: *Williame li Mareschal*, French: *Guillaume le Maréchal*), was an Anglo-Norman soldier and statesman. He served five English kings – Henry II, his sons the “Young King” Henry, Richard I, and John, and John’s son Henry III. [Note from Burks – I am descended from King Henry II – see the Appendix.]

Knighted in 1166, he spent his younger years as a knight errant and a successful tournament competitor; Stephen Langton eulogized him as the **“best knight that ever lived.”** [my emphasis] In 1189, he became the de facto Earl of Pembroke through his marriage to Isabel de Clare, though the title of Earl would not be officially granted until 1199, during the second creation of the Pembroke Earldom. In 1216, he was appointed protector for the nine-year-old Henry III, and regent of the kingdom.

Before him, his father’s family held a hereditary title of Marshal to the king, which by his father’s time had become recognized as a chief or master Marshalcy, involving management over other Marshals and functionaries. William became known as ‘the Marshal’, although by his time much of the function was delegated to more specialized representatives (as happened with other functions in the King’s household). Because he was an Earl, and also known as the Marshal, the term “Earl Marshal” was commonly used and this later became an established hereditary title in the English Peerage.

Much more about the “best knight that ever lived” in the aforementioned Wikipedia article.

How cool to be able to count Sir William Marshal (1146-1219) as one of my ancestors!



Head of the effigy of William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke, in Temple Church, London
[from Wikipedia]

Appendix

The Wikipedia article about Sir William Marshal included the following:

He served five English kings – Henry II, his sons the “Young King” Henry, Richard I, and John, and John’s son Henry III.

I am a direct descendant of King Henry II:



King Henry II was my 22nd-great grandfather. This ancestral line goes through my Oakley-Darling-Lyon ancestors. It includes King Henry II’s son King John I.

I also am directly descended from King Henry III of England:



King Henry III was my 21st-great grandfather. The ancestral line in this chart goes through my Oakley-Burr ancestors. Sarah Burr (my 4th-great grandmother) was a first-cousin of Aaron Burr, the 3rd Vice President of the United States.

The two other kings mentioned in the Wikipedia article were sons of King Henry II and were my 22nd-great uncles.

I want to point out that Geni.com always calculates the “Shortest blood relationship” between two individuals. Since I have multiple ancestral lines back to these English kings, I never know which line Geni.com will come up with.