

My Ancestral Line Back to Æthelstan, The First King of England (and where it took me)

By Burks Oakley II
28 April 2026

As I am writing this, King Charles III of England¹ is visiting the United States. Here is a current headline from 27 April 2026:

Every stop on King Charles, Queen Camilla's US visit: Here's where they're traveling in America

Royal couple will attend a state dinner, address Congress and honor 9/11 victims during 4-day trip

By Kelly McGreal · Fox News

Published April 27, 2026 4:00am EDT

And here is a photo of King Charles arriving at Joint Base Andrews on Monday, 27 April 2026:



King Charles and Queen Camilla arrive at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland on Monday. (Reuters)

In the past, I wrote about how I am descended from King Edward I of England (1239 - 1307). All four of my father's grandparents were descended from King Edward I, and it turns out that I have twelve different ancestral lines back to King Edward I. See:

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

¹ Technically, King Charles III (Charles Philip Arthur George) is the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and 14 other Commonwealth realms.

For some strange reason, I wondered who the first King of England was, and of course, I wondered if I was descended from him. A quick Google search turned up the following:

Google

who was the first king of england?

X

Q

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AI Overview

Æthelstan (or Athelstan), who reigned from 924 to 939, is considered by modern historians to be the first King of England. He united the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria, becoming the first king to rule the entire territory in 927. He was crowned in 925 and was the grandson of Alfred the Great. [The Historic England Blog +5](#)

Key Details About Æthelstan:

- Reign:** 924–939 (crowned 4 September 925).
- Unified Kingdom:** In 927, he took control of the Viking Kingdom of York, making him the first ruler over all England.
- First Use of Title:** He was the first to use the title *Rex Anglorum* (King of the English) in a 928 charter.
- Significance:** He was known for legal reform, strengthening the monarchy, and creating a unified administration. [Wikipedia +4](#)



The first King of England was Æthelstan (or Ath-el-stan, which is the way that this name is pronounced in English), who reigned from 924 to 939. He was a grandson of Alfred the Great. [More about the letter “Æ” in the Appendix.]

Well, heck. Alfred the Great was my 30th-great grandfather. I previously wrote about him (as well as a number of my ancestors who were European nobility). See:

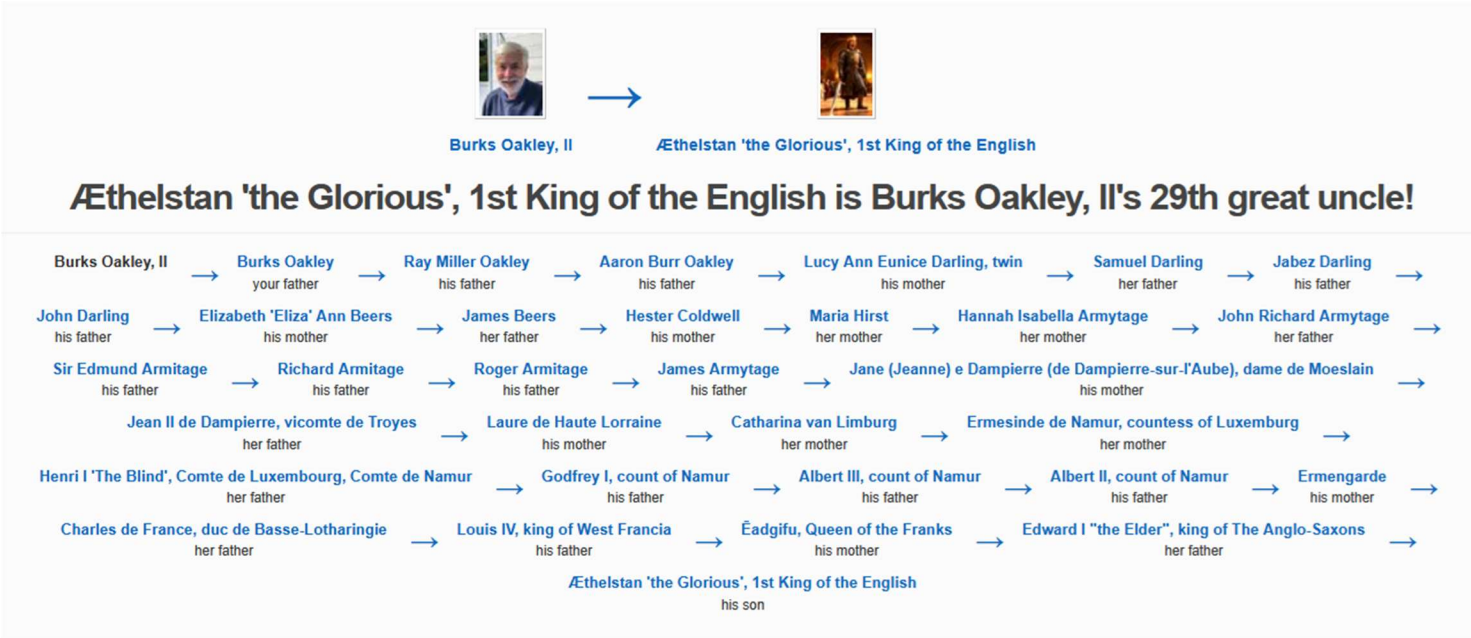
<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/49-EuropeanNobility.pdf>

Here is my ancestral line back to Alfred the Great (from the Geni.com website):



Shucks! My line back to Alfred the Great doesn't go through his grandson, Æthelstan.

Of course, I had to look at my ancestral line going back to Æthelstan:



This screenshot shows that Æthelstan was my 29th-great *uncle*. Æthelstan was a brother of Æadgifu, Queen of the Franks. This woman was my 28th great grandmother.

Eadgifu of Wessex

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Eadgifu or **Edgifu** (d. in or after 951), also known as Edgiva or Ogive (Old English: *Ēadgifu*), was Queen of the West Franks as the wife of King Charles the Simple. She was a daughter of Edward the Elder, King of Wessex and England, and his second wife Ælflæd.^[1]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eadgifu_of_Wessex

Ēadgifu was the wife of King Charles the Simple. Of course, that means that King Charles the Simple was my 28th-great grandfather. Here is an excerpt from the Wikipedia article about this man:

Charles the Simple

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Charles III (17 September 879 – 7 October 929), called **the Simple** or **the Straightforward** (from the *Latin Carolus Simplex*),^[a] was the king of *West Francia* from 898 until 922 and the *king of Lotharingia* from 911 until 919–923. He was a member of the *Carolingian dynasty*.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_the_Simple

Charles the Simple (or Charles the Straightforward, which sounds much better) was a member of the Carolingian dynasty. Following the link to the Wikipedia article about the Carolingian dynasty took me to a page with:

The Carolingian dynasty was a Frankish noble family named after Charles Martel and his grandson Charlemagne, descendants of the Arnulfing and Pippinid clans of the 7th century AD.

Wow! The article mentions Charlemagne – I had forgotten that he was one of my ancestors.

I then looked at the line from Charles the Simple back to Charlemagne:



Since Charlemagne was the second-great grandfather of Charles the Simple, I guess that means that Charlemagne was my 32nd-great grandfather. Sure enough, here is my ancestral line back to Charlemagne from the Geni.com website:



I see that my ancestral line to Charlemagne goes back through Charles III the Simple, King of the Franks.

I actually mentioned being descended from Charlemagne in my earlier narrative about being descended from European nobility – see:

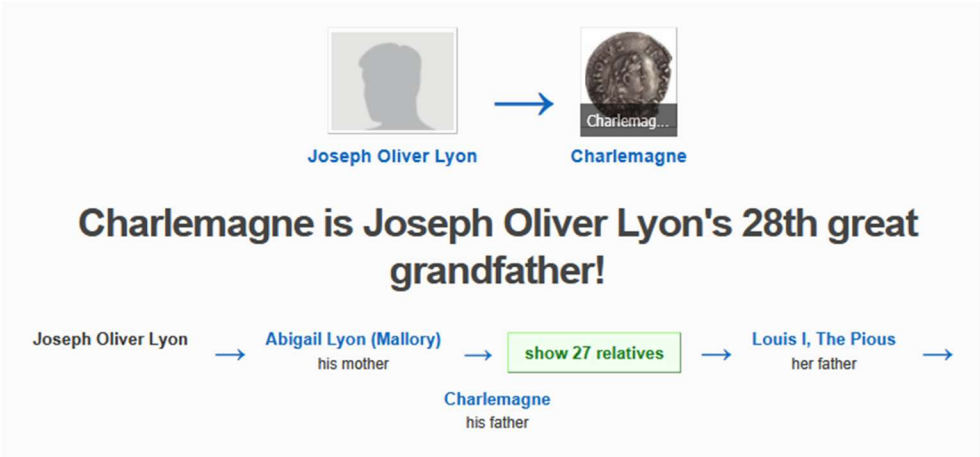
<http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/49-EuropeanNobility.pdf>

When I went back and reviewed that earlier narrative, I learned that in that document, I showed that my ancestral line back to Charlemagne went through my third-great grandmother, Lucy Lyon (1760-1836):



The ancestral line back to Charlemagne shown earlier in this document (which goes back through Charles III the Simple) goes back through Lucy Lyon's husband, Samuel Darling (1754-1807).

My guess was that if I looked hard enough, I would find a number more of my ancestral lines back to Charlemagne. As an example, I randomly looked at Joseph Oliver Lyon (1739-1818), who was Lucy Lyon’s father.



Of course, he was descended from Charlemagne.

I next looked at Abilene Jessup, who was the mother of Lucy Ann Eunice Darling’s paternal grandfather, Jabez Darling:



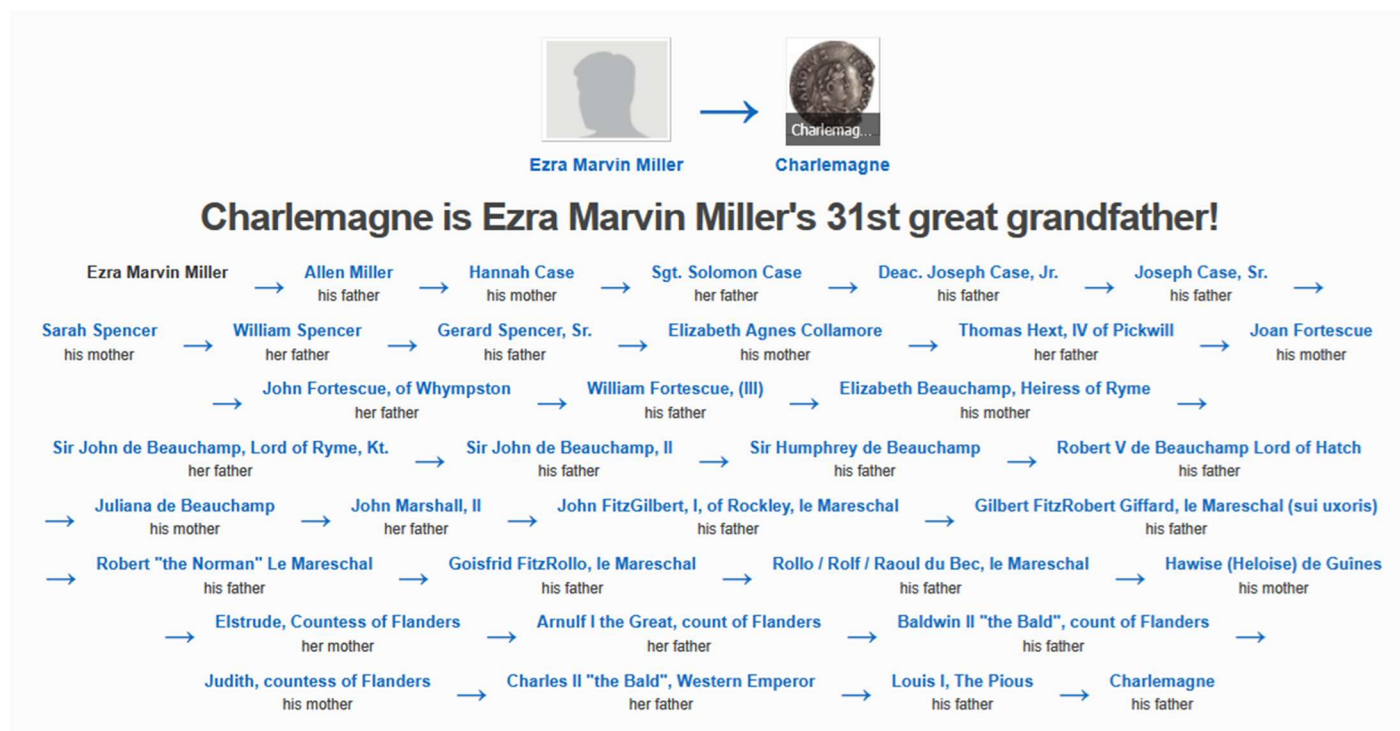
Oh my! Charlemagne was Abilene Jessup’s 28th-great grandfather:



I was determined to find one of my ancestors who wasn’t descended from Charlemagne. So I tried Ezra Marvin Miller, since he is not related in any direct pathway to the Lucy Ann Eunice Darling line. And what did I find out?

Scroll down...

Go to the next page...



Charlemagne was Ezra Marvin Miller's 31st-great grandfather! I give up!!! All my New England ancestors appear to be descended from Charlemagne! Well, not all, but clearly a large number of them.



AI Overview

Key Facts on Charlemagne's Lineage

But at least I have documentation that shows my line(s) back to Charlemagne.

Appendix: The Æ letter, as in Æthelstan

I began this narrative by learning that Æthelstan was the first King of England. I was not familiar with the letter Æ, so of course I had to Google it. Here is what I found:



Æ

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AI Overview

 **æ**
/ɛ/

Æ (minuscule: æ) is a grapheme, often called "ash," representing a Latin ligature, a phonetic sound, or a distinct letter in Scandinavian languages. It is used in Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic, and Faroese to represent vowels, often sounding like the 'a' in "cat" or the 'e' in "bed". It represents the /æ/ IPA sound (as in "cat") and was historically used in Old English. [Hacker News +4](#)

æe

I also asked Google how to pronounce Æthelstan. Here is the AI Overview:



how do you pronounce Æthelstan

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AI Overview

Æthelstan is pronounced **ATH-uhl-stan** (/æθ.ɪ.stæn/ or /æθ.ɪ.stn/). The "Æ" makes a short "a" sound, similar to the "a" in "cat" or "hat," followed by a "th" sound. It is often spelled Athelstan in modern English. [Cambridge Dictionary +4](#)

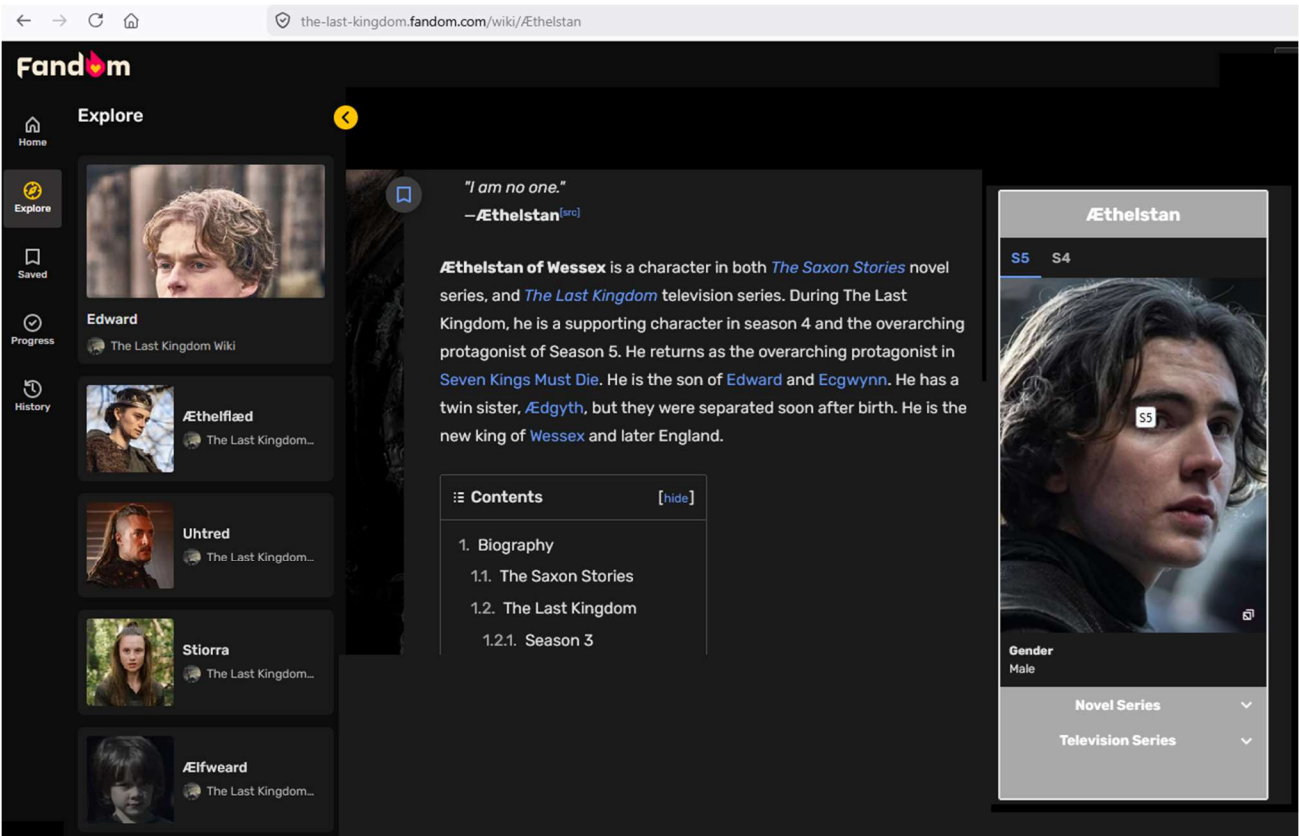
Pronunciation Breakdown:

- **Æth-:** Sounds like "ath" in "gather" or "math".
- **-el-:** A short "uhl" sound.
- **-stan:** Pronounced "stan" (like the name Stan or the end of "standard"). [Cambridge Dictionary +3](#)

Maybe I should have had more about this pronunciation in the first part of the narrative....

Another Appendix: Æthelstan in Modern Culture

While searching online for information about Æthelstan, I ran across references to two television series, *The Saxon Stories* and *The Last Kingdom*, in which Æthelstan is one of the characters:



And apparently, the film *Seven Kings Must Die*² portrays him as gay. See:



was æthelstan gay

XMicroGoogle

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 AI Overview

There is no definitive historical evidence to confirm that King Æthelstan was gay, but it is a theory explored in fiction. While the movie *Seven Kings Must Die* portrays him as gay, historical records only confirm he never married or produced an heir, which was unusual for a 10th-century monarch.  Facebook +2

Key Details Regarding Aethelstan's Sexuality:

• **Historical Record:** Historians do not know for sure, as personal details from that era are scarce. His lack of a wife or children is well-documented, which some speculate could be due to religious piety or sexuality.

• **The Last Kingdom/Seven Kings Must Die:** The movie portrays Aethelstan (played by Harry Gilby) as gay and in a relationship with a manipulator named Ingilmundr. This was based on hints in the source material's books to explain his lack of an heir, notes [IMDb](#).



If he didn't marry or produce an heir, well, that could explain why I am not his descendant (but I am descended from his sister, Æadgifu).

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Kingdom:_Seven_Kings_Must_Die

Since there are television shows and films about Æthelstan, I went to YouTube.com and searched for videos about him. Wow! I wasn't expecting to see so much. Here are a few samples:

YouTube

Æthelstan

All

Shorts

Unwatched

Watched

Videos

Recently uploaded

Live



Æthelstan: The First King of the English

997K views • 8 years ago

History Time

Watch my latest history documentary here:- <https://youtu.be/c3Hq6UaFQqk> Watch my latest Vikings documentary here:- ...



Athelstan - First King of England Documentary

466K views • 1 year ago

The People Profiles

Hello everyone! If you enjoyed the video, please help feed the algorithm by liking and commenting. This is very important as the ...

4K CC

Summary

Born around 893, this Anglo-Saxon leader expanded Wessex's influence to unify the territory. The People Profil...

Shorts



"Æthelstan: The First King of England"

740 views



Athelstan The First True King of England

5.8K views



Aethelstan The First King of England and His Final ...

13K views



Athelstan: The King Who Unified England

2.1K views



The Wise King Æthelstan Unifying England and ...

26 views

A screenshot with more YouTube videos about Æthelstan is on the next page...

YouTube

Æthelstan

XQ

THE FIRST KING OF ENGLAND



13:02

The True Story of King Æthelstan | The Last Kingdom

372K views • 4 years ago

History Profiles

https://www.patreon.com/historyprofiles Track : Myths and Legends (Collection) Composer: Noonsol Watch: ...

3 moments Ancestry and Early Life | The Battle of Brunanburh (937) | The Great Battle

IE



9:33

Athelstan: a king greater than Alfred?

5.6K views • 1 year ago

HistoryExtra

The Anglo-Saxon ruler regarded as the first true 'King of all England', Athelstan is no doubt deserving of a significant role in the ...

7 chapters Intro | What do we know about Athelstan? | 'King of all England' | Why isn't Athelstan called 'the great'? | ...

Æthelstan

924-939

English monarchs

House of Wessex



5:04

King Æthelstan - English monarchs animated history documentary

18K views • 4 years ago

History Box

You can help us keep making these videos by supporting us via Patron: https://www.patreon.com/historybox King Æthelstan was ...

4 moments King Æthelstan | King Alfred | 927 - Viking stronghold of York conquered | Edward the Elder

Note that the first video on this page is taken from *The Last Kingdom*. That video’s URL is:

<https://youtu.be/ZAX5OD5AdXA>