**Normans**

The Normans were originally Vikings (their name a variation of Norsemen or Northmen) from Scandinavia, who settled in the eastern part of the Frankish kingdom—held by other Germanics, the Franks—in present-day northern France, now known as the province of Normandy. The Viking chief who founded Normandy in the 10th century CE, Rollo, was from present-day Norway, although more of his followers were Danes than Norwegians (or Swedes). The Normans settled other regions as well, including the British Isles, Italy, and Sicily. The name is sometimes applied to peoples of the region of Normandy in France but is more often used with historical context.

**Origins**

Viking raids on the territory of present-day France began in the late eighth century CE. According to the *Royal Frankish Annals* or the *Annales regni Francorum*, an anonymous contemporary account of Frankish political and military history from 741 to849, the first raid on Frankish lands took place in 799. Raiding had become intense by the mid-ninth century in the Seine basin,beginning with an attack on St.-Wandrill in 841.

By about 900 the Vikings had secured a permanent foothold on Frankish soil in the valley of the Lower Seine River and their raids were crippling the Frankish economy and even the fabric of society. In 911 King Charles III the Simple of the Franks negotiated the Treaty of St.-Clair-sur-Epte with Rollo, who had emerged as a significant personality among the Vikings, ceding him the land around the mouth of the Seine and present-day Rouen.

**History of Normans**

***Normandy***

Rollo, the first Norman ruler, set about carving out a much larger sphere of influence for himself, which became known as the Duchy of Normandy. Afterward Normandy experienced little interference from Frankish royalty; Norman rulers acted as kings in their homeland even though they were part of the Frankish domain. The fact that Scandinavian place-names are scattered throughout Normandy may attest more to Viking administrative control than to actual Viking settlement. Danish place-names predominate in eastern Normandy, the area first ceded to Rollo; in the west names show a Celtic influence, suggesting that Irish-Norse immigrants, and perhaps others from British Orkney and the Hebrides, may have relocated in Normandy. In any case the colony seems to have received repeated influxes of immigrants from all over the

Viking world. The Normans adopted many of the customs of the Franks. The few pagan Viking graves found in Normandy imply either a rapid adoption of Christianity among the Vikings or an imitation of Frankish burial customs. The Normans soon expanded southward into what became known as Lower Normandy. Over the next centuries Norman counts or dukes sought to expand territory beyond Normandy.

***England***

The military conquest of England was led by William (William the Conqueror), duke of Normandy. William believed he had been named as heir to the English Crown by Edward (Edward the Confessor). Edward was connected to the Norman ruling class through his mother, Emma, the daughter of Richard II le Bon of Normandy. He and his parents had been exiled in Normandy after the Danish invasion of 1013; Edward formed many ties there and on ascending to the throne angered many Anglo-Saxons by surrounding himself with Normans. In the end—whatever promise he had made to William—on his deathbed in 1066 he named Harold (Harold Godwinson), the powerful earl of Wessex, as his heir.

On Harold's coronation William (now called William I) began assembling an army. He received a stroke of good luck in his bid for the kingdom when Harold was faced with an invading army led by Harold III Sigurdsson, king of Norway. Harold managed to defeat Sigurdsson at Stamford Bridge on September 25, 1066. Two days later some 5,000 knights under William crossed the English Channel and landed at Pevensey Bay on September 28. The force headed for Hastings. Harold's troops marching southward, although numbering some 7,000, were poorly trained and armed (at least by Norman standards). At dawn on October 14 William led a surprise attack, with effective cavalry charges. In what is known as the Battle of Hastings Harold's army was routed, and he was killed by an arrow.

William then moved on London and forced a surrender. He was soon crowned king of England. Over the next years he suppressed a number of revolts by the Anglo-Saxon nobility, including one in Northumbria in 1069–70. He had a number of castles built in the English countryside to establish his rule, which, by 1071, was complete.

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