

# The Heart of King Louis XVII

King Louis XVI, ruled France, with his Queen, Marie Antoinette, from 1774 to 1792. When Austria and Prussia declared war on France, Marie Antoinette was accused of passing military secrets to the enemy. On August 10, 1792 the royal family was arrested on suspicion of treason and imprisoned. On January 21, 1793 King Louis XVI was convicted and executed on the guillotine.

Antoinette was cruelly treated during her final days of captivity. Her children, including Louis XVII, were taken from her, and her best friend, the Princess de Lambelle, was killed and her severed head was put on a pole and paraded in front of the Queen. Antoinette was executed by the guillotine on October 16, 1793, at the age of 37. She was executed without proof of the crimes for which she was accused.

Louis XVII, age 8 at the time of his father's execution, automatically became King Louis XVII. Held captive like a caged animal, monarchists were unable to free him. The subject of his ultimate fate remained controversial for centuries. The official record indicates that he died in prison at age 10 from tuberculosis. The doctor who performed the autopsy, Philippe-Jean Pelletan, stole the heart, and pickled it in alcohol. Despite the



aforementioned and hundreds of books on the controversy, many speculated that he had escaped his captors and was survived by royal heirs.

In early 2000, scientists performed preliminary DNA tests on the alleged heart of Louis XVII and compared it to DNA from a lock of hair taken from Marie Antoinette as a child. The results indicated that the heart and hair from the queen shared mitochondrial DNA.

In order to conclusively resolve this mystery, Philippe Delorme, a recognized expert on this account, organized two independent tests. Jean-Jacques Cassiman, a professor of genetics at Belgium's Louvain University, conducted one test; Ernst Brinkmann of Germany's Muenster University conducted the second. The results showed that the consensus mitochondrial DNA sequence from the heart was identical to that of the, Marie Antoinette.

As a result of the DNA authentication of the organ's identity, French royal decedents and supporters buried the heart next to the remains of his executed parents, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, in the cathedral of Saint-Denis, outside of Paris.

*Setting the Standard for Quality DNA Identification*



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