



This painting depicts Charles I with his wife, Queen Henrietta Maria (of France) and two of their children: Prince Charles, who later became King Charles II (standing in front of his father), and Princess Mary (in her mother's arms).

The King appointed Anthony Van Dyck to be his Court Painter in 1632. The artist created this large oil-on-canvas during that time frame. Today the painting is owned by the Royal Collection Trust is displayed in the East Gallery of Buckingham Palace (the Queen's residence in London).

In the painting's background, we see a silhouetted view of popular London buildings: Parliament House, Westminster Hall and, likely, the Clock Tower.

Charles I was born in Fife (an area in Scotland, north of Edinburgh), the son of King James I (of England) also known as King James VI (of Scotland) and grandson of Mary, Queen of Scots (who was beheaded after Elizabeth I signed her death warrant).

When Charles I became King, the United Kingdom was not free of turmoil (both internal and external). His father had been the target of the Gunpowder-Plot conspirators, and Charles inherited a kingdom rife with religious disputes (between Catholics and Protestants). The [Royal Academy website tells us more](#):

Tensions between the King and Parliament centered around finances, made worse by the costs of war abroad, and by religious suspicions at home. Charles's marriage was seen as ominous, at a time when plots against Elizabeth I and the Gunpowder Plot in James I's reign were still fresh in the collective memory, and when the Protestant cause was going badly in the war in Europe.

During 1629, Charles I granted his attorney General, Sir Robert Heath, the right to establish a colony in America. He gave him the land between 31 and 36 degrees north latitude, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The King named that land after himself—calling it *Carolus* (Latin for "Charles")—but Heath was never able to establish a colony.

As his reign continued, Charles I had all kinds of disagreements with Parliament. These disputes eventually led to the English Civil War:

...on 22 August 1642 at Nottingham, Charles raised the Royal Standard calling for loyal subjects to support him (Oxford was to be the King's capital during the war). The Civil War, what Sir William Waller (a Parliamentary general and moderate) called "this war without an enemy," had begun.
(See the [Royal Academy biography of Charles I.](#))

The next 6½ years did not go well for the King. High-ranking members of the Army believed that as long as Charles I lived, the country would not be at peace:

The Army, concluding that permanent peace was impossible whilst Charles lived, decided that the King must be put on trial and executed. In December, Parliament was purged, leaving a small rump totally dependent on the Army, and the Rump Parliament established a High Court of Justice in the first week of January 1649.

On 20 January, Charles was charged with high treason 'against the realm of England'. Charles refused to plead, saying that he did not recognise the legality of the High Court (it had been established by a Commons purged of dissent, and without the House of Lords - nor had the Commons ever acted as a judicature).

The King was sentenced to death on 27 January. Three days later, Charles was beheaded on a scaffold outside the Banqueting House in Whitehall, London. (See [Royal Academy biography of Charles I.](#))

At the time Charles I was executed, his son—Charles II—was on the European mainland. He was a King-in-Exile until he returned to Britain in 1660.

After Britain invited Charles II to return to his country and become King, the son of Charles I decided to reward eight friends who had stood by him (and were loyal to him) during his eleven-year exile. Holding that his father's original "Carolus" land grant to Sir Robert Heath was no-longer valid, the new King granted his eight friends a Charter covering the same land which his father had initially granted to Heath.

The colony, which Charles I had originally named for himself, became known as “Carolina.”

Credits:

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Charles I and His Family

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