

# Pepin of Herstal

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**Pepin II** (c. 635 – 16 December 714), commonly known as **Pepin of Herstal**, was a Frankish statesman and military leader who de facto ruled Francia as the Mayor of the Palace from 680 until his death. He took the title Duke and Prince of the Franks upon his conquest of all the Frankish realms.

The son of the powerful Frankish statesman, Ansegisel, Pepin worked to establish his family, the Pippinids, as the strongest in Francia. He was able to realise his dreams by becoming Mayor of the Palace in Austrasia in 680. Pepin subsequently embarked on several wars to expand his power. He united all the Frankish realms by the conquests of Neustria and Burgundy in 687. In foreign conflicts, Pepin increased the power of the Franks by his subjugation of the Alemanni, the Frisians, and the Franconians. He also began the process of evangelisation in Germany.

Pepin's statesmanship was notable for the further diminution of Merovingian royal authority, and for the acceptance of the undisputed right to rule for his family. Therefore, Pepin was able to name as heir his grandson Theudoald. But this was not accepted by his powerful son Charles Martel, leading to a civil war after his death in which the latter emerged victorious.

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## Background

Pepin, sometimes called **Pepin II** and **Pepin the Middle**, was the grandson and namesake of Pepin I the Elder through the marriage of Pepin I's daughter Begga to Ansegisel, son of Arnulf of Metz. He was also the grandfather of Pepin the Short and great-grandfather of Charlemagne. That marriage united the two houses of the Pippinids and the Arnulfings which created what would be called the Carolingian dynasty. Pepin II was probably born in Herstal (Héristal), modern Belgium (where his centre of power lay), whence his byname (sometimes "of Herstal").

## Rise to power

### Pepin of Herstal

*Duke and Prince of the Franks*  
*Mayor of the Palace*



Pepin of Herstal (right) being offered the services of Saint Hubert (left)

#### Duke and Prince of the Franks

<b>Reign</b>	687 – 714
<b>Coronation</b>	687
<b>Predecessor</b>	Position established
<b>Successor</b>	Charles Martel

#### Mayor of the Palace of Austrasia

<b>Reign</b>	680 – 714
<b>Coronation</b>	680
<b>Predecessor</b>	Wulfoald
<b>Successor</b>	Theudoald

#### Mayor of the Palace of Neustria

<b>Reign</b>	687 – 695
<b>Coronation</b>	687
<b>Predecessor</b>	Berthar
<b>Successor</b>	Grimoald

#### Mayor of the Palace of Burgundy

<b>Reign</b>	687 – 695
<b>Coronation</b>	687
<b>Predecessor</b>	Position reestablished
<b>Successor</b>	Drogo
<b>Born</b>	635
<b>Died</b>	714



King Clovis III and Pepin of Herstal (right side)

As mayor of Austrasia, Pepin and Martin, the duke of Laon, fought the Neustrian mayor Ebroin, who had designs on all Francia. Ebroin defeated the Austrasians at Lucoufao (Bois-du-Fay, near Laon) and came close to uniting all the Franks under his rule;

however, he was assassinated in 681, the victim of a combined attack by his numerous enemies. Pepin immediately made peace with his successor, Waratton.

However, Waratton's successor, Berthar, and the Neustrian king Theuderic III, who, since 679, was nominal king of all the Franks, made war on Austrasia. The king and his mayor were decisively defeated at the Battle of Tertry (Textrice) in the Vermandois in 687. Berthar and Theuderic withdrew themselves to Paris, where Pepin followed and eventually forced

on them a peace treaty with the condition that Berthar leave his office. Pepin was created mayor in all three Frankish kingdoms (Austrasia, Neustria, and Burgundy) and began calling himself Duke and Prince of the Franks (*dux et princeps Francorum*). In the ensuing quarrels, Berthar killed his mother-in-law Ansfléd and fled. His wife Anstrude married Pepin's eldest son Drogo, Duke of Champagne, and Pepin's place in Neustria was secured.

## Duke and Prince of the Franks

Over the next several years, Pepin subdued the Alemanni, Frisians, and Franconians, bringing them within the Frankish sphere of influence. He also began the evangelisation of Germania. In 695, he placed Drogo in the Burgundian mayorship and his other son, Grimoald, in the Neustrian one.

Around 670, Pepin had married Plectrude, who had inherited substantial estates in the Moselle region. She was the mother of Drogo of Champagne and Grimoald II, both of whom died before their father. However, Pepin also had a mistress (possible his second wife) named Alpaida (or Chalpaida) who bore him two more sons: Charles Martel and Childebrand.

## Death and succession

Just before Pepin's death, Plectrude convinced him to disinherit the sons he had with his second wife Alpaida in favour of his grandson, Theudoald (the son of Pepin and Plectrude's son Grimoald), who was still young (and amenable to Plectrude's control). Pepin died suddenly at an old age on 16 December 714, at Jupille (in modern Belgium). His grandchildren through Plectrude claimed themselves to be Pepin's true successors and, with the help of Plectrude, tried to maintain the position of mayor of the palace after Pepin's death. However, Charles (son of Pepin and Alpaida) had gained favour among the Austrasians, primarily for his military prowess and ability to keep them well supplied with booty from his conquests. Despite the efforts of Plectrude to silence her child's rival by imprisoning him, he became the sole mayor of the palace—and *de facto* ruler of Francia—after a civil war which lasted for more than three years after Pepin's death.

## Sources

<b>Spouse</b>	Plectrude, Alpaida
<b>Issue</b>	Grimoald, Drogo, Charles, Childebrand, Others
<b>House</b>	Pippinids
<b>Father</b>	Ansegisel
<b>Mother</b>	Begga

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<b>Pepin of Herstal</b> <b>Arnulfing Dynasty</b> <b>Born: 635</b> <b>Died: 714</b>		
Preceded by <b>Wulfoald</b>	<b>Mayor of the Palace of Austrasia</b> 680–714	Succeeded by <b>Theudoald</b>
Preceded by <b>Berthar</b>	<b>Mayor of the Palace of Neustria</b> 688–695	Succeeded by <b>Grimoald the Younger</b>
	<b>Mayor of the Palace of Burgundy</b> 688–695	Succeeded by <b>Drogo</b>
Preceded by <b>New title</b>	<b>Duke of the Franks</b> 687–714	Succeeded by <b>Charles Martel</b>

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