

End of the Viking Era, the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

This story takes place in England, following the death of Edward the Confessor who left no direct heir. The throne passed to Harold of Wessex. Apparently, Harold's brother Tostig was not happy with this so he influenced the Viking warrior and King Harald Hardrada to invade England. This occurred in 1066, the same year William the Bastard of Normandy was also planning an invasion of England.

Viking King Harald Hardrada led a force of about 10,000 men and landed first near York where he routed the English earls sent to stop him. The Vikings decided on Stamford Bridge as a meeting place for an exchange of hostages. As the Vikings were relaxing, King Harold of England arrived with his army and a battle ensued. Many of the Vikings had removed their mail shirts and helmets in the hot sun. Viking outposts held the English at bay at the bridge while the rest of the Viking army rearmed. A fierce hand-to-hand battle lasted all day before Harald Hardrada was killed. The Vikings fled going back to their ships. Only 24 ships of the initial 200 made it back to Norway. Following the Battle of Stamford Bridge, King Harold marched his army to Hastings to meet the invading forces of William of Normandy. This battle is generally accepted as the end of the Viking era.

William was a distant cousin of Edward the Confessor and believed he had a right to the throne of England. William was also a descendent of Rollo, the Viking warrior who invaded France in the early 900s. The French king, Charles the Simple, gave land to the invading Vikings hoping that they would not attack Paris. As a condition of the land grant, the Vikings converted to Christianity (Catholicism). The land was known as Northmannia, the land of the Northmen, later shortened to Normandy. Over the next 100 years, Normans intermarried with the French and became residents of the land. William was the son of Robert I of Normandy and his concubine (mistress) Arlette, the daughter of a tanner. William was also the great-great-great grandson of Rollo. There is a statue of Rollo in Fargo, ND near the Sons of Norway lodge.