

## Eleanor of Aquitaine's Bed Chamber

This box depicts my vision of what it may have looked like in 1173. No actual images or written descriptions of the room exist today.

During Covid, I began reading the series of novels by Sharon Kay Penman on the Plantagenet Kings of England. While reading them, I was intrigued by Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122 - 1204) one of historical characters Penman wrote about in the series. I don't know where my attraction to smart, strong and attractive women comes from, but Eleanor of Aquitaine was certainly one and what an interesting life she lived.

During her long life, Eleanor of Aquitaine was described by her peers as being strong willed, intelligent, cunning, sexy, fiercely independent and as being "More Than Beautiful". Quite a lady. She took part in the Second and Third Crusades, was married to King Louis VII of France and to King Henry II of England. She was the mother of young Henry, Hal, King of England, Richard Lion Heart, King of England, and England's King John. Additionally her daughter was the Queen of Sicily and Eleanor herself served as Regent of England while her son Richard was held prisoner after the Third Crusade.

As fascinating as all this is, my inspiration for creating this roombox was the incredible family drama of this dysfunctional English family and its life lessons related to passing family responsibilities, wealth and position on to the next generation. (Not much seems to have changed during the past 800 years or so.)

Let me explain. During the Middle Ages when feudalism was the social order of the day, things were unbelievably chaotic. English Lords and Monarchs constantly fought each other for territory, power and position. Insuring the future viability, power, wealth and even the lives of one's children and spouse were often daunting challenges. Henry II's solution to this challenge was to appoint his children to various positions of power while he was still alive enabling him to watch over them thus insuring their success and long range viability. Young Hal was given England, Richard Aquitaine, Geoffrey Brittany and John Ireland.

Unfortunately things did not work out. Henry II was a very successful warrior king, politically astute, and possessing a dominate personality. The

problem was his unwillingness to give to his children the power, money and authority to carry out their new responsibilities. His children became extremely frustrated with their father's behavior and with the active assistance of their Mother attempted to depose their father, King Henry II. Henry, of course, found out about the plot and quickly ended it. His children immediately realized the folly of their actions and quickly sought forgiveness from their father which was given. However as much as Henry II wanted to forgive Eleanor, whom he still dearly loved, he realized that he could no longer trust her.

His solution was to confine Eleanor to her chambers in various castles for the next sixteen years and seek the comforts of a mistress for himself. During those sixteen years, with the exception of a few royal occasions, Eleanor was unable to communicate with the outside world or her children.

After Henry II's death, Eleanor again took center stage and for many years advised both sons, King Richard Lion Heart and King John. She died at the old age of 82.

This box is my vision of what Eleanor's bed chambers may have looked like during those sixteen years of her confinement..