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Edwin Brockholst Livingston began *The Livingstons of Livingston Manor* as a project to trace his family’s lineage. Livingston explores his family’s origins in Scotland and their journey to America in the seventeenth century. The Livingston family includes religious reformers, members close to royalty, and important figures during the American Revolution. The first edition of this book was intentionally intended for the Livingston family but proved quite popular, so the author decided to work on a more comprehensive book. The result is a well-researched book that brings the history of the Livingston family to life.

Critically, *The Livingstons of Livingston Manor* does not just trace the genealogy of one family but also explores the larger historical events the family lived through. As a result, the author uses wide-ranging primary and secondary sources. Family papers and journals, the memoirs of John Quincy Adams, the Journals of the Continental Congress, the registers of the Privy Council, and sources found in the Archives of Rotterdam, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the Archives of the State of New Jersey, all enrich Livingston’s narrative. While family papers are of the utmost importance in a work like this, archival documents, records of places of employment and burial, and the journals of people outside of the family lend credence to the family history.

Livingston wrote this book to make his family history accessible to a broader audience. He begins with a brief background about the family in Scotland and then in North America, but this history falls short in places because of the lack of supporting documentation. However, the author is aware of this and makes note of instances where the records cannot prove what has been claimed. The founder of the Scottish Livingston line was a Saxon landowner who reputedly donated his land to Holyrood Abbey. Although his charter has not been recovered, two existing charters confirm this. That Saxon landowner was named Leving,
and his lands stayed in the family until the sixteenth century.

The Scottish Livingstons descended from the House of Callendar. Because the Earldom of Callendar merged into the Earldom of Linlithgow, the author presents complete genealogies of both. Descendants of the House of Callendar, as well as the American branch of the Livingstons, were involved in momentous events in history. “Sir William, the first of the House of Callendar, accompanied King David II in his unfortunate invasion of England” (p. xxv). Alexander, the 5th Lord of the House of Callendar, was one of the guardians of Mary, Queen of Scots when she was an infant. Alexander, the 7th Lord of the House of Callendar, cared for and educated Princess Elizabeth (daughter of King James VI).

Livingston begins chapter 1 by describing Reverend Alexander Livingston, the first rector of Monyabroch, which is now Kilsyth. Alexander was not the only Scottish Livingston to be a man of the cloth; his son and grandson were also reverends. Alexander was even appointed by the Scottish Privy Council as one of three commissioners to oversee the maintenance of the Protestant religion in Stirlingshire. Reverend Alexander Livingston did, unfortunately, fail at one of the tasks assigned by the Privy Council. He was tasked with bringing a Lady Livingston before the presbytery to make a confession of faith. Three times Alexander was asked to bring her in, and three times he failed. He was deposed by the Privy Council for this failure but did not fight the council’s decision. He did not survive long after the deposition, but the date of his death remains unknown.

Reverend William Livingston, Alexander’s son, took over, temporarily, his father’s position as rector of the parish of Monyabroch when Alexander was deposed. The Glasgow Presbytery recommended in 1598 that William permanently fill this position. Just like his father, though, William got into trouble with the Privy Council. The Protestant Reformation swept through Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and Scotland was no exception, but multiple generations of Livingstons resisted certain aspects of the episcopacy. Alexander, William, and William’s son, John, all suffered the anger of the authorities because of their beliefs.

John Livingston, William’s son, was also a minister. “Young Livingston was licensed, and commenced to preach the gospel at his father’s and neighbouring churches in the month of January, 1625, but owing to his aversion to all Episcopal ceremonies he was regarded by the bishops with natural suspicion” (p. 20). It took several years for John to be ordained as a minister due to his resistance to the episcopacy. John went to Ireland to work as a minister in 1630 because of the Scottish bishops not wanting to ordain him. That said, he managed to get into trouble in Ireland because of his low opinion of the Service Book, a liturgical book for church members, which resulted in his suspension for nonconformity. John eventually went back to Scotland to minister there, but he made several more trips to Ireland in later years.

In 1635, John married “a lady of the Fleming family” (p. 24). The lady is assumed to be Janet Fleming, but, curiously, John never mentioned her by name in his memoirs. Before marrying Janet, John had tried to reach the shores of North America in 1634 but never made it. After marrying Janet, he once again took a voyage to North America, apparently after talking to John Winthrop, but that voyage did not make it to the New World possibly due to bad weather. From 1638 on, John was a Covenanter (Scottish Presbyterians who believed that Jesus was the head of the church and not the king) and in 1663 was exiled to Rotterdam in the Netherlands. His wife and two of their children joined him at the end of 1663. In August 1672, Reverend John Livingston died in Rotterdam, but the location of his grave is unknown.

Robert Livingston, John’s son, was the first Livingston to settle in North America. Historians
believe that Robert may have been one of the children to live in Rotterdam with his parents because of his knowledge of the Dutch language. Robert set out for New England in 1673, but the records are incomplete as to when he made landfall. He made his way to New York and became connected with the wealthy Dutch families there. In 1679, Robert married Alida Schuyler, the widow of Dominie Nicholas Van Rensselaer. The Livingstons and Schuylers remained close and even intermarried in later generations.

The succeeding generations of the American branch of the Livingstons played important roles in the British North American colonies. Indeed, multiple members of the Livingston family were embroiled in the American Revolution as soldiers. Philip Livingston has been remembered as “the Signer,” due to him being one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Captain Henry Beekman Livingston served under Generals Philip Schuyler and Richard Montgomery during the invasion of Canada in 1775. William Livingston was the governor of New Jersey until his death in 1790. Robert Livingston held dual positions as secretary for Foreign Affairs and chancellor of the State of New York toward the end of the war. Eventually, he resigned his secretary post but not before making an impression on foreign dignitaries, like the Prince de Broglie.

*The Livingstons of Livingston Manor* is a thorough and well-researched account of the Livingston family. Both in Scotland and in North America, the Livingston family played an important role in the events that roiled the world during several tumultuous centuries. Livingston does an excellent job tracing his family’s genealogy and has put together an impressive book. The one drawback is that this book is specifically about the Livingston family and the times they were living in, so, outside of learning more about this important family, this book may be of somewhat limited appeal to both casual readers and historians. Nevertheless, I recommend this book to anyone who is interested in either the history of this family or the broader historical events that shaped their lives.
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