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STORIES of New Jersey

to the hills of the interior, to escape invading soldiers of the Crown. As chancellor or chief judge of the highest court, an office held by the Governor, he upheld the measures confiscating the property of those New Jersey residents who adhered to the King. When independence was declared and a new State Government was created he became its head, replacing the last Royal Governor, William Franklin, son of the great Benjamin.

There is a story told of one raid on Governor Livingston's house, in which the quick wit and charm of his daughter Susan averted a serious situation. The British were about to search a secretary containing important papers. Susan promised to show them where secret documents were hidden if they would leave the desk untouched, implying that it held some very private papers of hers. The Redcoats, betrayed by their gallantry, were hoodwinked into accepting a sheaf of old law briefs.

Livingston, born at Albany in 1723 of a prominent New York family, was graduated from Yale, and was admitted to the bar in 1748. While practicing law in New York City he joined a group opposing the existing Church of England theocracy and British domination. He was editor of the Independent Reflector established by James Parker at Woodbridge, N. J., in 1752; a publication which that printer refused to handle after 52 issues, fearing Royal officials. Livingston then edited the Watch Tower column in the New York Mercury, frequently writing under such pseudonyms as Z.B.X., Z.Z., and B.X.A. At that time, according to one authority, the province of New York had fewer than a score of college graduates, among whom were Livingston and his three elder brothers. In 1772, asking to be delivered, as he put it,

From ladies, lap-dogs, courtiers, garters, stars,  
Pops, fiddlers, tyrants, emperors, and czars,

he built on his land in Elizabeth, Liberty Hall, so named for political reasons. Several years previously he had bought about 120 acres to devote to his hobby of fruit growing, and had imported trees from England until he had 65 varieties of pears, plums, cherries, peaches and apples. His daughters, the three "Livingston Graces," the best known of his 13 children, soon made the place a resort for the very class he had shunned. In 1774 the house was the scene of the wedding of Sally Livingston to John Jay, already one of the prominent men of the Colonies.

At Liberty Hall Livingston entertained a talented youth from the West Indies, Alexander Hamilton, who lived with him a few years preparing for college at an academy in Elizabeth.

At Parsippany on Parsippany Road is the Bennett House, a private home, where Governor Livingston lived while avoiding the enemy at Elizabeth. The rear of the house, moved across the road, now forms half of another building.

At the end of the war the Governor returned from his retreat at Parsippany to Liberty Hall, although complaining that the town was full of "unrecommended strangers, guilty-looking Tories, and very knavish Whigs." He had acquired two nicknames: Rivington's Royal Gazette had called him "Don Quixote of the Jerseys," while his prominent thinness and height had inspired a New York belle to dub him "The Whipping Post."