# The ancestry of Samuel James Hingston

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Samuel James Hingston (SJH) emigrated to Canada in the early 1800s with the 100th Regiment of Foot, fought and was wounded in the War of 1812, was married twice, once to Winifred Cavendish and once to Eleanor McGrath, had nine children and died in Hinchinbrook, Lower Canada, on 21 November 1830. “The internet” quite consistently shows his parents as Benezer Murdock Hingston and Priscilla Compton. As Chris Burgoyne summarizes it, this attribution may be the best we have, but it is not without problems, and the documentation is scarce. The aim of this (rather long) post is to review the evidence, add a few elements to support this claim, and voice some remaining misgivings.

I believe it was James King in his *Book of Hingstons* who first proposed that SJH was the son of Benezer Murdock Hingston, a descendent of Major James, and Priscilla Compton[[1]](#endnote-1). As there is no direct evidence for this claim, the case is circumstantial, and it is important to understand its context. The main elements are:

1. That SJH is from the Hingstons of Aglish, more specifically a descendent of 8. James Hingston and Catherine Murdock[[2]](#endnote-2).
2. That he could be one of the known but unnamed children of 9. Benezer Murdock Hingston and Priscilla Compton, born in Monmouth County, New Jersey shortly before the American Revolutionary War, while Benezer was settled there and before he and his wife were expelled in 1780 for having participated in the War on the side of the British.
3. That the only one of the children of 8. James and Catherine who could be SJH’s father is 9. Benezer Murdock Hingston. I agree with Burgoyne’s analysis of this claim and have no more to say about it, save that it also seems to exclude SJH having been a child of any other descendant of 8. James’s father, WIlliam.

# The Primary Evidence

Let’s start with what can be documented from primary sources concerning SJH.

The earliest record I have seen concerning him is the baptism of his son John on 16 November 1806 at Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral in Quebec City[[3]](#endnote-3). He is Sergeant-Major in the 100th Regiment of Foot and the mother is his wife Winifred (no maiden name given, but said to be Cavendish). John was to die on 18 April 1807.

The 100th (aka The Prince Regent’s County of Dublin Regiment) was raised in 1804[[4]](#endnote-4). Col. Isaac Brock wrote of it “*The men were principally raised in the north of Ireland, and are nearly all Protestants; they are robust, active, and good looking”[[5]](#endnote-5)* The regiment served in several engagements in the War of 1812[[6]](#endnote-6), including the Battle of Chippewa where SJH was wounded and filed a claim*.* British Army Records show that SJH was made Ensign and Adjutant on 4 January 1810[[7]](#endnote-7). The regiment was renumbered the 99th in 1816, then withdrawn to England and disbanded in 1818[[8]](#endnote-8). SJH was made Lieutenant on 15 May 1813 and placed on half-pay on 25 November 1818[[9]](#endnote-9). In most records concerning him in Quebec, he is shown with a military rank and regiment. In 1823, in recognition of his military service, SJH was granted a lot in Hinchinbrook[[10]](#endnote-10).

SJH and Winifred had had at least two children in Ireland who came to Canada, Samuel James and Thomas. Records of their births are not known.

A year after Winifred’s death, on 11 April 1815, at St Gabriel’s Presbyterian Church in Montreal, SJH married Eleanor McGrath, daughter of Owen McGrath, a blacksmith, and Margaret Garey or Geary, both Catholics. Eleanor was a Catholic and was buried in 1866 in at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Montreal.

SJH died on 21 November 1830 in Hinchinbrook and was buried there.

On 22 June 1831, Eleanor McGrath Hingston applied to be placed on Pension List as the widow of an officer who had died on half-pay. She swore on 11 Apr 1831 that she was legally married to Samuel James Hingston, late a lieutenant on half-pay, of the 99th Regt of Foot, who had died at Hinchinbrook on 21 November 1830. The file contains certified copies of their marriage certificate, birth certificates of their children, and the certificate of SJH’s death, indicating that he died of rheumatic fever at age 55[[11]](#endnote-11).

The age at death indicates that he would have been born about 1775. There is a birth date of 1 November 1775 that appears frequently on the Internet. King claims it, but without citing evidence. The date appears in a tree of the descendants of SJH and Eleanor McGrath prepared by E. D. Gray-Donald, dated 21 Dec 1965, which predates King’s work, so it is possible that it comes from family history and that the tree is King’s source.

Two other Canadian documents are relevant to determining SJH’s origins. The 1891 census records the birth countries of everyone’s parents, and two of SJH’s children, Margaret and Sir William Hales, report their father as born in Ireland.

So, primary documents in Canada tell us SJH was Irish, Protestant, born around 1775, and spent much of his life in an Irish Protestant regiment.

# Claim 1: The link to the Hingstons of Aglish

The only family of Hingstons in Ireland for which there is significant documentation are the descendants of Major James Hingston who went to Ireland about 1650, serving in the Commissariat of Cromwell’s Parliamentary Army and whose grandson purchased Aglish in 1702.

The first claim, that SJH is in fact from the Aglish Hingstons, relies on links to other families. The most striking connection is the appearance of the names William Hales in SJH’s descent, notably, Sir William Hales Hingston (1829-1907), SJH’s son by Eleanor McGrath, distinguished physician and mayor of Montreal. The name was then passed to Sir William’s son, Father William Hales Hingston, s.j., and to one of his grandsons.

The link appears to be to Rev. William Hales (Aglish 1747, Co Cork 1831), son of Rev. Samuel Hales and Helena Hingston, daughter of 7. William Hingston. Educated by his uncle, 8. James Hingston, Hales became professor of Oriental Languages at Trinity College Dublin and the author of over 20 publications in astronomy and biblical chronology[[12]](#endnote-12).

In Ireland, it is passed to 32. William Hales Hingston, son of 16. James Hingston and Ann Hodnet and to one of Benezer’s children.

The Canadian Hingstons claimed links to other branches of the Aglish Hingstons. Sir William, in his entry in *Canadian Men & Women of their Time* (1898)[[13]](#endnote-13), claims to be connected also to the Cotters and the elder Latouches of Dublin. The claim also appears Sir William’s biography by his son, Father W.H. Hingston[[14]](#endnote-14).

The link to the Cotters would be through Anne Sackville Cotter, daughter of Rev. George Sackville Cotter (1754-1831), who married in 1812 32. William Hales Hingston, while that to the Latouches is through Isabella Cotter, daughter of Sir James Laurence Cotter, 2nd Baronet, and Isabella Hingston (1759-1892), who married James Digues Latouche. Isabella Hingston was a daughter of 8. James Hingston and Catherine Murdock.

It thus appears that family names and lore provides substantial evidence of SJH’s connection to the Aglish Hingstons, all to descendants of 8. James Hingston.

# Claim 2: The link to Benezer Murdock Hingston and Priscilla Compton

There is ample evidence in contemporary documents from New Jersey, cited by King, that 9. Benezer Murdock Hingston, second son of 8. James Hingston, settled at Freehold, Monmouth County, New Jersey before 27 December 1776, on land granted to him by his father-in-law Richard Compton, that he married Priscilla Compton, served as a guide for the British in the Revolutionary War, after which their goods were confiscated, they were expelled, and returned to Ireland.

In 1794 Benezer filed with the British authorities a claim for compensation from losses incurred during the Revolutionary war, which says that he was in great financial distress, married, with four children, none named, at his return in Ireland in October 1780[[15]](#endnote-15). He asks for compensation for three plots of land in Lower Freehold adding to 185 acres, obtained by deed from Richard Compton, Thomas Bartow and Theophilus Osborne.

That his wife’s name is Priscilla, daughter of Richard Compton, and that she had a sister Jenny (married Ferrol, possibly the Sarah Compton who married William Ferril in Monmouth 12 Aug 1780) are confirmed in two documents from New Jersey dated 17 November 1799[[16]](#endnote-16).

BMD records in New Jersey in collections starting in the 1660s from either ancestry.com or familysearch.com shed no light on this matter. There are no Hingston births or marriages before 1890. Looking at the Comptons, a family established much earlier in New Jersey, shows several marriages before 1764, but then none till 1775, and none between 1781 and 1797. This is a period that has interested genealogists for a long time, and it is pretty clear that many records no longer exist.

Burgoyne shows Benezer and Priscilla having seven children. Could SJH be one of four unnamed ones born in New Jersey? Working backwards, the following four can definitively be shown to have been born in Ireland:

* 56. Spencer Compton bap 4 April 1781 at Mallow, Cork[[17]](#endnote-17), m. about 1825 in Cork Ann Hayes (b ca 1805) and d ca 1839, leaving three children. His birth was recorded under the name Kingston, son of Benezer Murdock Kingston and Priscilla. Given that Benezer and Priscilla arrived in Ireland in Oct 1780, Spencer must have been conceived before they left. Burgoyne, following RGH, says he was born in Bandon ca 1774. The place may be right, but not the date.
* William Hales (b. 30 Jan 1785, Kilshannig[[18]](#endnote-18)), who served in the Royal Navy and died on duty in the West Indies, unmarried[[19]](#endnote-19).
* Catherine Isabella (b. 28 May 1787, Kilshannig[[20]](#endnote-20)), m 4 Aug 1818 in Cork Anthony Welstead. Benezer is said at her marriage to be Surveyor of Excise at Glanadore, Cork, on the coast SW of Cork City[[21]](#endnote-21).
* Clayton Love Hingston married at Bandon, Cork on 20 May 1817[[22]](#endnote-22) his cousin Mary Ann Bernard Hingston. Irish Civil Registration records show him dying at Bandon in 1871 at age 82[[23]](#endnote-23). This would have him born ca 1789, almost certainly in Ireland.

About two of the other three children, not enough is known to determine where they were born, but they could have been born in New Jersey. Irish Civil Registration records start in 1845 and contain no events concerning either of them.

* John m. 1808 Judith Ann Limerick[[24]](#endnote-24), sister of Col. Wm. Limerick, of Union Hall, Myross Parish, Co. Cork. Died ca 1824 without issue.
* Samuel James Hingston, b ca 1775, d 1830.

The remaining known child, 50 Lt Col James Hingston, is more puzzling. According to Burke’s, he was an ensign in 1805, served in the Peninsula War, was appointed Commandant, Royal African Corps in 1828 and Lt. Gov. of Cape Coast Castle, Ghana. He died on Nov 26 1837 in Kentish-town, and his son, Clayton, declared him to be 49, which would make him born ca 1789[[25]](#endnote-26). It would also make him an ensign at 16, which, although possible, is not likely.

The other oddity about 50 James is that he joined the army as an officer, meaning his family probably had to buy him a commission. The alert reader will have noticed that SJH started as an enlisted man, as shown on the birth of his first son born in Quebec, and was promoted to officer in 1810. This tells me that either he was younger than 50 James, and the family could only afford one commission, or he had a falling out with the family, enlisted, and made his way up the ranks on his own. If James was older, he would have had to have been over 62 at his death, and at least 30 when he enlisted.

In any case, at most John, Samuel, James and possibly the yet unborn Spencer could be the four children claimed by Benezer in his petition to have been born in New Jersey. The order is not clear. John appears to have settled in an estate in Ireland, but it might not have been his father’s as some records indicate that Benezer sold his share before going to New Jersey. But if naming conventions were followed, 50. James should have come first.

# The trouble with names

Other than the lack of a document directly linking SJH to Benezer and Priscilla, the most troubling part of the case to me has always been the lack of alignment with conventional naming patterns. 8. James and Catherine Murdock quite closely adhered to naming conventions: Elizabeth (maternal gm), William (paternal gf), Elizabeth again (paternal gm), Maria Helena (?), Benezer Murdock (maternal gf), Catherine (mother), Mary (?), James (father, but died as child), James again (father), Isabella and John.

Among Benezer’s known or attributed children, one finds several James’s (paternal gf) and a Catherine (paternal gm), but no Benezer, Priscilla, or Richard. And although the James part of Samuel James is familiar, Samuel is not a common name in the Hingston family before then, although it might come from Rev. Samuel Hales, William Hales’s father and SJH’s uncle. Not all of the four New Jersey children are known, so some bearing family names may have died young, or be wrongly attributed to other branches of the family. The same situation applies to SJH’s children, none of whom were called Benezer or Priscilla, or any name that could be tied to the Comptons. Perhaps SJH was making a break from his family, and name consistency was the last thing on his mind.

A final misgiving is the fact that SJH’s family uniformly report him as being born in Ireland, not the United States. Gray-Donald’s family tree from 1965 claims that “Samuel James Hingston was the son of Ben Hingston, a clergyman. His grandfather also bore the name of Ben Hingston. “ Gray-Donald was married in 1908 to one of Sir William’s grand-daughters. By 1965, Sir William himself and his siblings had been dead for over 50 years, and the last of his children had recently died. King reports that documentation supporting the purported New Jersey connection (which appears in some reports as in Pennsylvania) was found by the genealogist Vivian F Taylor, working on behalf of Dr Richard G Hingston (Burgoyne’s RGH) in 1989. So although the Hingston connection to America was presumably known in the family (it appears in Burke’s with reference to Benezer, but without any mention of SJH), the details appear to have been lost. I suppose it is possible that even if SJH’s descendants knew he had been born in the USA, the experience had been so painful, and for him, so short, that they repressed it. I might have done the same.

1. James King, *The Book of Hingstons in Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, United States*, unpublished ms, 4 vols, 1993, available at the LDS Family History Library (929.273 H591, film 1698151 items 6-9). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. I’m using the identification numbers from Chris Burgoyne’s site (Tree HN http://www-civ.eng.cam.ac.uk/cjb/hingston/hn.htm) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. All Quebec births, marriages and deaths cited in this article come from *Quebec, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621-1967*, available at ancestry.com [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Canadian Military History Gateway, <http://www.cmhg.gc.ca/cmh/image-329-eng.asp?page_id=395>, consulted 15 Sep 2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. 100th Regiment of Foot (Prince Regent’s County of Dublin Regiment), <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/100th_Regiment_of_Foot_(Prince_Regent's_County_of_Dublin_Regiment>), consulted 15 Sep 2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Samuel James Hingston, British Army Records, consulted at Library and Archives Canada [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. History of 100th of foot, ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. SJH, British Army Records, ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Canada Land Grants [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. British Army, Applications for Pensions for Widows and Children [of officers], 1755-1908 (WO 42). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. William Wroth, William Hales, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11918 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. “Sir William H Hingston”, *Canadian Men and Women of our Time*, 1898. http://archive.org/details/canadianmenwomen00morg [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Rev. William H. Hingston, s.j., “William Hales Hingston, MD (829-1907)”, *Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Report*, 18 (1951), 109-120, http://www.umanitoba.ca/colleges/st\_pauls/ccha/Back%20Issues/CCHA1951/Hingston.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. National Archives. Records of the Auditors of the Imprest, Commissioners of Audit, Exchequer and Audit Department, National Audit Office: Records of Claims Commissions: American Loyalists Claims Series 2, New Claims Various Papers (AO13/96B) Folios 501-505 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. New Jersey Colonial Documents. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. *Ireland, Births and Baptisms, 1620-1911*. The name error is mentioned by King. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Ancestry.com. *Ireland, Births and Baptisms, 1620-1911* [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. Original data: *Ireland Births and Baptisms, 1620–1911*. *Index.* Salt Lake City, Utah: Family Search. Parents shown as Benjamin Murdock Hingston and Priscilla. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Sir Bernard Burke, A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain & Ireland, London: 1875. Also revision of 1958. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Ancestry.com. *Ireland, Births and Baptisms, 1620-1911* [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. Original data: *Ireland Births and Baptisms, 1620–1911*. *Index.* Salt Lake City, Utah: Family Search. Parents shown as Benjamin Murdock Hingston and Priscilla. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Freeman’s Journal, cited by Burgoyne [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Platt, Lyman. *Irish Records Extraction Database* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1999 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. “Ireland, Civil Registration Indexes 1845–1958,” Index. FamilySearch, Salt Lake City, Utah. General Register Office. "Quarterly Returns of Births in Ireland with Index to Births." Belfast, Ireland. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Platt, Lyman. *Irish Records Extraction Database* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1999. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Freeman’s Journal, Dec 2 1837. Also FreeBMD, Dec 1837, St. Pancras, vol 1, p. 260 and death certificate registered Nov 29 1837. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)