

# CHAPTER I DOMESTIC ANNALS

In 1665, James Stevenson, likely a tenant farmer from Nether Carsewell, Renfrewshire, married Jean Keir. Their son, Robert Stevenson, was born in 1675 and later became a maltster in Glasgow. In 1710, Robert remarried Elizabeth Cumming, with whom he had a son named Robert in 1720, also a maltster. The narrative traces the lineage to Hugh Stevenson (born 1749) and Alan Stevenson (born 1752), focusing on their lives, early deaths, and ventures in the West Indies, which included a hunt for a deceitful agent that ultimately led to their demise.

The family inherited only a ship painting as a memorial to their adventures and losses. Jean Lillie, a widow passionate about ensuring a prosperous future for her son through education, struggled financially. These domestic and professional ambitions intertwined with Thomas Smith's life, a successful businessman interested in engineering and lighthouse construction who later married Jean Lillie's daughter, effectively blending familial and professional alliances.

The early parts of the family's narrative unfold against a backdrop of perseverance amidst adversity, including considerable infant mortality that deeply affected the family. Letters from the era reveal the emotional toll these deaths took on the family and their community, showcasing a blend of personal tragedy and steadfast piety.

Robert Stevenson, Jean Lillie's grandson and Thomas Smith's stepson, showed early promise and took up engineering under Smith's mentorship. This marked the beginning of the family's enduring legacy in lighthouse engineering. Robert's marriage to Jean Smith, his stepsister, solidified the intertwining of personal and professional realms. Their life, filled with aspirations for their children's futures and the shadow of loss, symbolizes the blend of domestic life with the ambitions inherent in the Stevenson lineage.

The narrative is rich with historical context, detailing the Stevenson family's ties to Scotland's development and the personal trials they faced. This early history sets the groundwork for understanding the significant contributions the Stevensons would make in engineering and beyond, rooted in resilience, ambition, and a profound sense of duty to both family and profession.

