

*Printed New Jerseyana, 1683–1783 in the Colonial Office Records of the National Archives of the United Kingdom*

**Joseph J. Felcone**

**Princeton, NJ: Joseph J. Felcone, Inc., 2020**

**40 pages**

*New Jersey in Print, 1693–1855: Selections from the Collection of Joseph J. Felcone*

**Joseph J. Felcone**

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**81 pages**

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In this digital age, the traditional arts of bibliography and private book collecting have nearly disappeared. There have been giants in the field in previous generations, but Joseph Felcone stands out as the most distinguished bibliographer and collector of New Jerseyana in this era. He has published numerous bibliographies, guides, and other historical works, the latest two which are the subjects of this review.

The National Archives of the United Kingdom (formerly the Public Records Office) contains one of the richest and most comprehensive collections of colonial documents relating to New Jersey. Among the materials are minutes of the proceedings of legislative bodies, session laws, bills, proclamations, newspapers, political tracts, and numerous other publications and ephemera. Previously, there were no specific comprehensive guides to this critical material for the study of New Jersey's earliest years. Researchers needed to resort to examining rudimentary finding aids for the 1,450 large volumes of the British Colonial Office records documenting England's administration of all of its North American colonies. As a result, use of these important materials had been severely underutilized. As Mr. Felcone describes in the introduction, he made several trips to the National Archives of the United Kingdom and meticulously searched through the colonial records and what finding tools were available to locate and describe the materials relating to New Jersey.

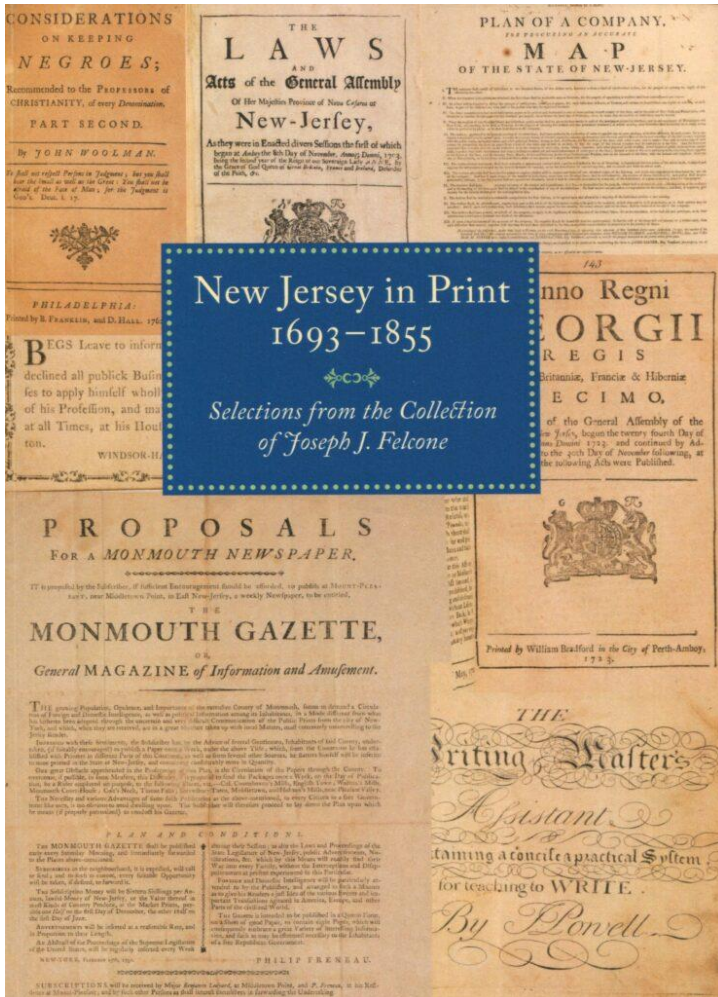
Altogether, there are approximately 300 distinct items described in the guide that resulted from Felcone's painstaking research. The guide is organized by date beginning in 1683. Although the entries are not annotated, each contains the full title of the document and any bibliographic references. In order to facilitate historical research, the exact location at the National Archives is given for each item.

The materials found at the National Archives cover every aspect of England's administration of the New Jersey colony and include all of the deliberations and laws of official bodies relating to social, economic, and political life. There is related documentation found in broadsides, newspapers, and other unofficial or quasi-official items. Given the large number of topics covered, a subject index would enhance this guide even further. Nevertheless, *Printed New Jerseyana, 1683–1783 in the Colonial Office Records of the National Archives of the United Kingdom* is an outstanding and much-needed work and a treasure trove for researchers of New Jersey's colonial history.

Joseph Felcone's personal library spans 325 years of books, pamphlets, pictorial materials, and broadsides printed in New Jersey and/or relating to New Jersey. It contains the finest collection of rare New Jerseyana ever assembled by a private individual, and his collection has formed the basis of several standard reference works that he has written on early New Jersey books and the early New Jersey book trade.

An exhibition of highlights of his collection was scheduled to open at the Grolier Club in New York in September 2020, but the show was canceled due to the Covid pandemic. Certainly disappointed, but undeterred, Mr. Felcone has compiled and published the catalog that was supposed to accompany this exhibition. There are 94 thoroughly described items in all, which include some of the earliest items in his collection, highlighting only known copies, iconic

Americana that was first printed in New Jersey, and other rare and unique items. Nearly all the great New Jerseyana icons are in the assemblage, including one of the two known complete copies of the first printed collection of New Jersey laws, one of the three known copies of the first printed Colonial Assembly minutes in 1711, the first New Jersey imprint dated 1723, and all three parts of the monumental Elizabethtown Bill in Chancery. This beautifully illustrated catalog is a work



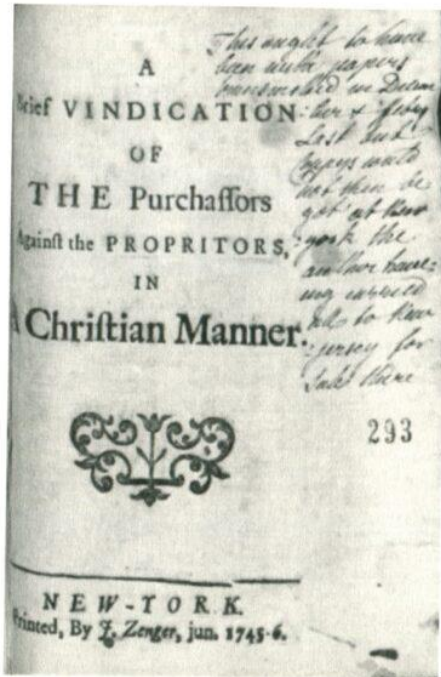
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of art in itself and although it doesn't replace what would have been an outstanding exhibition of Jerseyana at the Grolier Club, it stands alone as an important window into the premier private collection of this generation. It is to be hoped that the exhibition will eventually take place as Covid restrictions are lifted. In the meantime, this catalog is an important addition to Mr. Felcone's extensive bibliographic work and a tribute to a collector, advisor, and friend to more than a generation of historians, students, and the public in New Jersey and far

beyond.

**Ronald Becker**  
**Professor Emeritus**  
**Rutgers University Libraries**



Griffin Jenkins's defense of the Elizabethtown Associates in their dispute with the East Jersey Proprietors, with a note in the hand of James Alexander. CO 5/974(293)

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