

***The Printed Assembly Minutes & Laws of New Jersey 1703-1732: A Bibliographical Study*****Joseph J. Felcone****Joseph J. Felcone: Princeton, 2016****45 pages, list of works consulted, index****\$15****DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v2i2.54>**

New Jersey has been fortunate in having several extraordinary bibliographers committed to the meticulous and detailed work of finding, listing, and describing materials about the state. One was Donald A. Sinclair, the first director of Rutgers Special Collections, who worked there for 37 years, and then kept at it long after his 1982 retirement. Some of his work concentrated on what Rutgers owned, but others (for example, an examination of material on New Jersey and the Civil War) went further afield.

The author of this volume, Joseph J. Felcone, has provided a similar service by finding and describing materials on the state's history. A lawyer by training, for the last forty years he has been accumulating books, broadsides, pamphlets, and manuscripts about the state (some rare). He regularly provides lists of items for sale, while continuing to add to his own collection. Over time he has published at least 21 books/pamphlets, some like this short volume, but others more august (for example *New Jersey Books 1801-1860* in 1996, a robust 800 pages). His works are a detailed check list of items in private collections (including his), as well as in public libraries and other historical repositories. The descriptions contain information about the content of the publication, the condition of the item, the publisher, and then in "notes" a miscellany of information on people, places, and events. There is a wealth of material in these volumes, some serious and some both curious and fascinating (such as items dealing with murder cases). All show the efforts of a committed scholar, and the kind of bibliographical work rarely any longer done by university professors or librarians. It is detailed, time consuming, and involves considerable travel.

The short volume reviewed here begins with an introduction on the printing history, and then lists the known copies of the minutes of the New Jersey assemblies held from 1703-1732, along with the laws that they passed. Each citation details the variances, however slight, between printed versions or the same version held by different institutions (such as damaged or missing pages). The description of the assembly minutes note the major issues discussed at each session, where it met (in the period after the merger of East and West Jersey the legislature alternated between the former capitols of Perth Amboy and Burlington) – unless, as in one case, a small pox outbreak resulted in an alternative site. Each item includes a list of what institutions own copies (a key for the abbreviations are at the front of the volume), whether they exist only in manuscript form or were printed, or where there appears to be no known surviving copy. Felcone states in his Introduction that he has physically examined each item – thus traveling not only to sites in the state but also out, including the Hunterdon Library, Library of Congress, Newberry Library, university libraries (Harvard, Columbia, Brown), and to the British Archives in Kew, along with others. If a printed or microform copy exists, that, too, is noted. Because copies of the laws were purchased and used by colonial lawyers some items include who they were (such as a copy with the notation that it was a gift from William Paterson to David Brearley).

Who would be interested in the results of this old fashioned type of scholarship? Clearly other rare book and manuscript dealers, librarians, and historians of early America, politics, and the law. Also economic and financial historians, as well as those working in the history of printing, because in this period New Jersey began printing paper money. Here, for example, one item's note quotes Benjamin Franklin's description of paper money being printed – under the careful supervision of members of the legislature, providing a description of the process and of

the printer. When doing research I have wanted to read an early law and this work would certainly help me figure out if a copy has survived and then what institution owns it.

The bibliographical work characteristic of Donald A. Sinclair and Joseph J. Felcone is rarely undertaken today. This volume adds to what both have provided over the years. Scholars would do well to use their bibliographies and other works, this one included.

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