

The Past is Present at the New Jersey State Library
September 30, 2008

Slide 1 The Past is Present at the New Jersey State Library

I am here today to share with you a few stories about some old books, books I found at the New Jersey State Library, books that tell us about New Jersey and about its library, books that not only describe history but are old enough to have been part of history as it was being made.

I like to think of a library as a community's memory, a place where the past is preserved and made available to each new generation. The New Jersey State Library acts as the memory for the state, the place where you can come to learn about New Jersey from its earliest days to the present. My subject for today, the library's rare book collection, is one of the many special collections in the library where, as my title suggests, the "past is present." In the rare book collection you will find our oldest and most valuable books.

The state library is located in Trenton.

Slide 2 Exterior of New Jersey State Library building

In this building you will find a collection of publications that has been accumulating for just over 300 years. Turn to the right and you will see the state house.

Slide 3 Capitol building

It was the library's home during its early years, and even today is only a few steps away.

At the state library we keep our most important treasures in the vault.

The Vault

Slide 4 Picture of closed vault door

Yes, the library has a vault. This is our treasure room, a room where we keep the old and rare books, books that carry a little history not only in their texts but also in their paper, ink, and bindings. The items in the vault give us an opportunity to see and touch a tiny bit of the past. Today I am going to take you into the vault to see a few of our oldest and most interesting treasures.

Slide 5 Picture of interior of vault shot through open door

We have over 3,000 titles in our rare book collection. To keep from taking too much of your time, I am only going to show you eight of them today: five books, two pamphlets, and a map. As we proceed, you will discover that each item has a story to tell, and I

don't mean merely the one intended by the author of the work. I also mean stories about where the item came from, who owned it, the role it played in history. As we proceed, I will introduce you to some of the people associated with each work, authors and editors, printers and publishers, owners and readers, many of them important contributors to the early history of New Jersey.

Printing Using Movable Type

Before we take a look at these eight items though, I would like to mention the invention without which I would have nothing to talk about today: Gutenberg's use of movable type and the printing press to produce books in multiple, identical copies.

Slide 6 Picture of Gutenberg's printing press

It is only after the development of the printed book that literacy became widespread and books became plentiful and reasonably priced. The first full-length printed book, Gutenberg's famous bible, came off the press in 1456, about 40 years before Columbus set sail for the New World. Gutenberg's invention was so successful that by 1500 there were printers at work in every major European country. Some of the early printed books eventually found their way into libraries where we can see them today. A few of these early books even found their way across the ocean to New Jersey and into the New Jersey State Library.

The Library's Oldest Book

The oldest book in our collection was printed in Basel, Switzerland, in 1535. This is the title page.

Slide 7 Title page of Livy's *History of Rome*

Perhaps with a closer view you will be able to see the title.

Slide 8 Close-up of top of title page of Livy's *History of Rome*

As they say, it's all Greek to me, or in this case Latin. I don't read Latin, but I have been able to decipher a bit of this title page.

- T. Livii—the T stands for Titus—Titus Livius was a Roman historian and the author of this book—we know him as Livy.
- Patavini—means “of Padua”—Padua was Livy's home town.
- Latinae historiae—this is the beginning of the title—*History of Rome*.

Here is a close-up view of the lower part of the page.

Slide 9 Close-up of bottom of title page of Livy's *History of Rome*

- Basileae—Basel—the place of publication—a town in Switzerland.
- Frobenianna—this stands for the printing house founded by Johannes Froben.
- M. D. XXXV—do you know your Roman numerals?—1535—year the book was printed.

Let's take another look at the full title page.

Slide 10 Title page of Livy's *History of Rome* with circles

In English it is usually referred to as Livy's *History of Rome from Its Foundation*. Of course, if you wanted to actually read Livy's *History*, you would probably want to read one of the more recent editions, most likely one translated into English.

But if you would like to hold in your hands a bit of history, the same book that sat on a shelf at Wittenberg University when Martin Luther was there, you need to come to the New Jersey State Library.

Our copy of this book is full of handwritten notes.

Slide 11 Page of book showing handwritten notations in the margins

According to documentation in the book, it was owned by Philip Melanchthon, Martin Luther's close friend and the author of the Augsburg Confession, one of the fundamental documents of Lutheranism.

Slide 12 Picture of Luther and Melanchthon

In this picture Melanchthon is on the right. Luther is on the left.

Slide 13 Second page showing marginal notes

The marginal notes are in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and German, supposedly in Melanchthon's own hand. The Melanchthon ownership makes for a great story. Unfortunately, it's probably not true. The Melanchthon ownership claim was made by Samuel Sotheby the London bookseller who was selling the book in 1835, at which time the book was already 300 years old. Most scholars since that time have questioned Sotheby's historical judgment. Commercial motive may have influenced historical accuracy. At any rate, the handwriting does not appear to be Melanchthon's.

Though Sotheby was probably wrong about the Melanchthon connection, there is a good deal of evidence that puts the book in Wittenberg at the time of Luther and Melanchthon, and the handwritten notations would lead one to believe that it was owned by a scholar;

but regardless of who owned it, it is a wonderful example of printing done in the sixteenth century. A scholar at Princeton who examined the book wrote, “The New Jersey copy of the Livy is, of course, interesting for other reasons. It is still in its contemporary pigskin, which is beautifully decorated, although in places badly worn, and it is one of three known copies in the United States, the other two being in the Library of Congress and the Library of the University of Illinois.”

Slide 14 Book showing cover and spine

This 470 year-old book was quite likely in Wittenberg when that city was the center of the Protestant Reformation in Germany. Events in Wittenberg at that time triggered the revolution in thought that eventually led some people to America a hundred years later seeking religious freedom. And for some of these people, the Colony of New Jersey was their destination.

The Trial of Charles I

From 1664 to 1776 New Jersey was an English colony, and its laws and form of government arose from an English model. Today you will find in the rare book collection a large number of English law books published during the seventeenth century.

Slide 15 Title page from *The Tryal of K. Charles I*, 1684

The one I have chosen to show you today is called *A True Copy of the Journal of the High Court of Justice, for the Tryal of K. Charles I, as it was Read in the House of Commons, and Attested Under the Hand of Phelps, Clerk to that Infamous Court*. In 1649 King Charles I was tried for treason by the English Parliament, found guilty, and beheaded. This book includes a transcript of the trial along with some other related information.

Slide 16 Close-up of imprint on title page of *The Tryal of K. Charles I*, 1684

As you can see, it was printed in 1684. That’s 35 years after the trial—long enough for the heroes of 1649 to have become the traitors of 1684, as the title suggests with the words “that infamous court.”

The book has several wonderful illustrations. Here is one showing the defendant in the case.

Slide 17 Book open to page with picture of King Charles I

The unusual spellings and the style of the type give these early books a period look. There are four characteristics you will notice in books written in English and printed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Slide 18 17th & 18th Century Style

- Use of a lower case “s” that looks like an “f”
- Many words within sentences with initial capital letters—many more than we use today
- Italics used for names of people and places
- And words spelled in unfamiliar ways: tryal for example.

Slide 19 Long s samples

The “s” that looks like an “f” is called the long “s.” The long “s” looks like an “f” with the cross line missing or only on the left of the main stem. It is only used in lower case at the beginning or in the middle of a word, never at the end. Can you read this word?

Slide 20 finfulnefs

It’s “sinfulness.”

Slide 21 King’s speech to Lady Elizabeth

Here is a passage from the *The Tryal of King Charles I*. At this point the trial is over and the king is awaiting execution. This passage reports the King’s Speech to the Lady Elizabeth the day before his death. Lady Elizabeth was King Charles’ daughter. Notice the upper case initial letters, the long “s,” and the use of italics.

His Children being come to meet Him, He first gave His Blessing to the Lady *Elizabeth*; and bade her remember to tell her Brother *James*, whenever she should see him, that it was his Fathers last Desire, that he should no more look upon *Charles* as his Eldest Brother only, but be obedient unto him as his Sovereign....

Here is a closer view.

Slide 22 Close-up of King’s speech to Lady Elizabeth

Do you see the long “s” used in “whenever she should see him”?

I chose this passage because of the mention of James and his brother Charles. As you will see shortly, both play important roles in the history of New Jersey.

Let’s take another look at this page.

Slide 23 King’s speech to Lady Elizabeth with date circled

Does the date look strange?

Slide 24 Close-up of date

The eight over nine is not a fraction. Back in the 1600s in England, the year began on March 25th, Lady Day. On the calendar in use in England at the time, January 29 was actually considered to be near the end of the year—to us the end of the previous year. January and February were the last two months of the year. Not all countries agreed with this calendar. Some others began the year on January 1. So the printer compensated for the different calendars by listing both years. For those in England the year was still 1648, but for others, the year was 1649.

England and its colonies continued to begin the year on March 25th up until 1752 when they moved from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. With that change, not only did the beginning of the year move to January 1st, but England and its colonies also lost eleven days. Take a look at this calendar.

Slide 25 1752 calendar

Note that in 1752, September was a very short month: Wednesday, September 2nd was followed by Thursday, September 14th. People in England and America aged 12 days in a single night.

I think that's enough calendar confusion. Let's get back to 1649, the year of King Charles' trial.

When the Dutch Ruled New Netherland**Slide 26** Illustration from *The Tryal of K. Charles I*, 1684

As I mentioned earlier, *The Tryal of K. Charles I* has several excellent illustrations one of which we saw earlier. I thought I would take this opportunity to show you another. I find these to be remarkable considering that the book was printed in 1684. This scene showing all the participants in the trial has been widely used in later histories.

Now let's turn our attention from the old world to the new. At the time of King Charles' trial, Europeans saw America as a wilderness. Only a few people had settled in what would become New Jersey, Swedes and Dutch for the most part, along the Delaware and Hudson rivers. At this time in America there were few people, only one printing press [Cambridge, 1639], very few books, and no libraries.

We have in our collection an old map that shows what America looked like in the middle sixteenth hundreds.

Slide 27 Map of New Netherland, Virginia to Massachusetts, ~1655

The state library has a wonderful collection of historical maps. This is one of our earliest. It shows the Dutch settlements in New Netherland, and covers the American coast from Virginia to Massachusetts. Here is a closer view showing New Netherland.

Slide 28 Portion of map showing area that will become New Jersey

The map was printed in Amsterdam in the 1650s and includes an illustration showing the city of New Amsterdam (New York) at that time. Apparently, when the map was made, the Dutch were under the impression that they owned the land we now call New Jersey and New York.

Slide 29 Portion of map showing illustration of New Amsterdam

New Amsterdam looks like a pleasant enough little village in 1650, though I do wonder why the gallows was placed in such a prominent position. Do you see it there in the middle?

The Establishment and Early Years of the Colony of New Jersey

After the trial and execution of King Charles I, England was declared a republic, and shortly thereafter, Oliver Cromwell was named Lord Protector. Following Cromwell's death, the English Parliament desired a return to monarchy and placed Charles' son Charles II on the throne. As King, Charles took an interest in his colonies in America and did not agree with the Dutch version of the map we just saw. He did not like having a Dutch colony separating his claims in Virginia and Massachusetts.

Slide 30 Upper part of "Genealogy of the Proprietorship of New Jersey, 1664-1702"

In 1664 King Charles II moved to take New Netherland from the Dutch. Charles then gave the land to his brother James, Duke of York, who passed on a small section between the Delaware and Hudson rivers to John Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret, naming the colony after the Isle of Jersey in the English Channel.

Ownership and governance of New Jersey changed hands many times during the colony's first 38 years. I like to show this chart from the book *Path to Freedom* written by Donald Kemmerer. This is the top of the chart. Let's look at the bottom.

Slide 31 Lower part of "Genealogy of the Proprietorship of New Jersey, 1664-1702"

I know you cannot read the text. But just looking at the lines you can see the complexity. It shows ownership and political control of New Jersey passing from one group to another. Here is a view of the entire chart.

Slide 32 "Genealogy of the Proprietorship of New Jersey, 1664-1702" with two circles

At one point during this period, the Dutch regained control of New Netherland for a year. This event is indicated on the chart by the first red circle at the top. Not long after England regained control, New Jersey was divided into two colonies: East New Jersey and West New Jersey. The second red circle marks this event.

Slide 33 Map showing East and West Jersey

This map shows the dividing line between East and West Jersey. Now let's take another look at the chart.

Slide 34 "Genealogy of the Proprietorship of New Jersey, 1664-1702" with four circles

This chart also reveals the little known fact that for one year Boston was the capital of New Jersey. In the year 1688 the two Jerseys were joined with other English colonies to form the "Territory and Dominion of New England in America," and Boston was the capital.

In a very short time that arrangement fell apart, and the two Jerseys muddled along until 1702 when the proprietors surrendered political control to Queen Anne, who combined the two Jerseys to form the unified Royal Colony of New Jersey.

Printing Comes to the Middle Colonies

When the Colony of New Jersey was founded in 1664, Europeans had been printing for two hundred years.

Slide 35 Impressio Librorum (Book Printing)—Late 16th Century (Stradanus)

This engraving made in the Netherlands in the late sixteenth century shows the steps involved in the printing of early books. By the beginning of the seventeenth century there were hundreds of print shops like this all over Europe.

But on the eastern seaboard of America, printing did not arrive until the first press was setup in Cambridge in 1638.

Slide 36 Daye printing press; Bradford dates

Printing first came to the area in and around New Jersey in 1685 when William Bradford set up a printing press in Philadelphia. A few years later he moved to New York City where in 1704 he began printing various government documents for the now united Royal Colony of New Jersey. For almost twenty years the Bradford family had the printing business pretty much to themselves in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania; but in 1722 competition arrived when Samuel Keimer set up a print shop in Philadelphia.

First Printing Done in New Jersey: Keimer and Franklin

Samuel Keimer's name is not one many people recognize today, but I suspect that some of you heard about him when you were in school.

Slide 37 Benjamin Franklin entering Philadelphia

Does this picture look familiar? Do you remember hearing the story of a young man who trained as a printer in Boston and then travelled to Philadelphia to find work and make a name for himself? That's young Benjamin Franklin walking into Philadelphia with the bread under his arms and his future wife watching from the doorway. He was on his way to apply for a job at Samuel Keimer's print shop. Beginning in 1723 Franklin worked for Keimer on several different occasions, the last being in 1728 when Samuel Keimer received a contract to print money for the Colony of New Jersey. It was Franklin's talent as a printer that allowed Keimer to complete the contract. While printing the money for New Jersey, Franklin, as Keimer's assistant, also printed an edition of the New Jersey *Session Laws*, an original copy of which we have in our collection.

Slide 38 Title page of New Jersey *Session Laws*, 1728

Here is a closer look at the title.

Slide 39 Close-up of top of title page of New Jersey *Session Laws*, 1728

It reads in part:

Acts and Laws of ... New Jersey ... as they were enacted by the
Governor, Council, and General Assembly, at a session held at Perth-
Amboy, beginning the 9th of December, 1727

The work was done on a printing press that had been temporarily set up in Burlington, New Jersey, so that government officials could monitor the printing of the money. This publication is the first that we know for sure was printed on New Jersey soil.

Slide 40 Close-up of imprint on title page of New Jersey *Session Laws*, 1728

Here is the imprint: "*Burlington*: Printed and Sold by *Samuel Keimer*, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, for the Province of *New-Jerfey*, MDCCXXVIII [1728]." Note the style: the long "s," initial capitals for nouns, italics for proper names. Samuel Keimer was the printer of record, but we know that Benjamin Franklin did the work. Shortly after completing this job for Keimer, Franklin set up his own printing business in Philadelphia.

The title page of this publication hints at an interesting peculiarity about the Colony of New Jersey. Note that the Assembly met in Perth Amboy but the money was printed in Burlington, supposedly because that's where the government officials were. From 1702

to 1776, New Jersey had two capitals, Perth Amboy and Burlington; and the legislature moved back and forth between the two towns. This was a holdover from the period when New Jersey was actually two colonies, East and West New Jersey. Both capitals were maintained after the two colonies were merged.

The Story of John Peter Zenger and Lewis Morris

Printing at this time could be a risky business. When government authorities did not like what was printed, it was usually the printer who went to jail, not the author of the offending book or article. And political authorities often did not like what was printed. In 1671 the Governor of Virginia is reported to have written

Slide 41 Quote from Governor of Virginia

"Thank God! there are no free schools nor printing-presses, and I hope there will be none for a hundred years ; for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into the world, and printing has divulged these and other libels."

Printers were suspect and printing was closely controlled by the government.

In the 1730s John Peter Zenger set up a printing press in New York competing against William Bradford's press. Since Bradford was the "official printer" for New York and New Jersey, Zenger became the printer for the political opposition which was led by Lewis Morris, an important figure in the history of both New York and New Jersey.

In 1734, angered by articles appearing in Zenger's newspaper written by Lewis Morris and others, the governor put John Peter Zenger in jail for libel.

Slide 42 Trial of John Peter Zenger, 1735

At his trial, Zenger's defense attorney argued that everything written about the governor that had appeared in Zenger's newspaper was true. At the time this was not a valid defense because the law stated that "truth of a libel could not be admitted in evidence." Criticism of the government was libel whether true or false.

After an impassioned speech by Zenger's defense attorney, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty, and thus a blow was struck for freedom of the press.

Three years later Lewis Morris was appointed Governor of New Jersey, the first governor of a New Jersey no longer administratively linked to New York.

Slide 43 Governor Lewis Morris

From 1702 until 1738 New Jersey and New York shared the same governor though they had separate legislatures and courts.

As the new governor, Lewis Morris delivered a speech to the New Jersey Assembly. The text of the speech was printed shortly afterwards. We have one of the original printed copies.

Slide 44 Close-up of the first page of Governor Morris's speech to the Assembly, 1738

Governor Morris began by saying, "It is with great pleasure I meet this first General Assembly of the Province of New Jersey, by his Majesty now made independent on the Governor of New York."

Slide 45 Close-up of the last page of Governor Morris's speech to the Assembly, 1738

When we turn to the last page of the speech, we discover that the printer was none other than John Peter Zenger.

I like to show this speech because it contains one of my favorite quotes. In this speech Governor Morris defines the role of the legislature in the following way.

Slide 46 Quote from speech delivered by Governor Lewis Morris

"All the moral virtues seem to be comprised under the terms justice and honesty, and it is God only can make men so: but it is the business of the legislature to make it dangerous for men to be otherwise."

Perhaps this attitude toward the law explains why the gallows is so prominent in the picture of New Amsterdam we saw earlier.

Slide 47 Close-up of picture of New Amsterdam showing gallows

The First Book Owned by the New Jersey Assembly

To remind the Assembly of the importance of making laws consistent with the laws in England, Governor Morris gave to the Assembly a book from his personal library.

Slide 48 Title page of D'Ewes' *The Journals of All the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, both of the House of Lords and House of Commons*, 1682

This book is still in our collection today. The minutes of the Assembly for November 24, 1738, document the gift, and the hand written note in the book confirms that our copy is the one presented by the governor.

Slide 49 Page in book showing hand-written notation

The note says, “The Gift of His Excellency Lewis Morris Esq. to the Colony of New Jersey.”

This book is the first book acquired by the Assembly—that is the first book other than printed copies of its own laws, minutes, and various publications issued by the governor. And following the presentation of this book to the Assembly, we have documented proof that the Assembly began acquiring other books on government and law including ones covering the laws of England and of New Jersey’s neighbors, the colonies of New York and Pennsylvania. Many of the books acquired during this period are still in the collection today. This slide shows three of them.

Slide 50 Three books

Samuel Smith, Treasurer and Historian

One of the law books acquired during this period was printed by Benjamin Franklin: *The Charters of the Province of Pensilvania and City of Philadelphia*.

Slide 51 Title page of Franklin’s *The Charters of the Province of Pensilvania and City of Philadelphia*

Here is a close-up of the imprint at the bottom of the page. The book was printed in 1742 and purchased by the Assembly around 1750.

Slide 52 Close-up of imprint on title page of Franklin’s *The Charters of the Province of Pensilvania and City of Philadelphia*

If you look closely at the top of the page, you can see a handwritten notation indicating who purchased the book.

Slide 53 Close-up of handwritten notation on title page of Franklin’s *The Charters of the Province of Pensilvania and City of Philadelphia*

It says, “Purchased for the House of Representatives of the Provence of New Jersey by their order By Sam Smith Treasurer.”

Today we remember Samuel Smith as New Jersey’s first historian.

Throughout his career Samuel Smith collected documents relating to the history of New Jersey, and in 1765 he published his *History of New Jersey*, the first general history of the colony.

Slide 54 Title page of Smith’s *History of New Jersey*

Here is a closer look at the title.

Slide 55 Close-up of the top of the title page of Smith's *History of New Jersey*

The History of the Colony of Nova-Caesaria, or New-Jersey. Containing an Account of Its First Settlement, Progressive Improvements, the Original Constitution, and Other Events to the Year 1721.

Take note of who the printer was.

Slide 56 Close-up showing imprint on title page of Smith's *History of New Jersey*

James Parker, the printer of Smith's *History*, was the first person to establish a permanent printing operation in New Jersey. After having run printing businesses in New Haven and New York, he moved back to his home town, Woodbridge, New Jersey, and established a printing shop there in 1752. To accommodate the printing of Smith's *History*, Parker had a printing press set up in Smith's hometown, Burlington.

Smith in his history tells the story of New Jersey from its earliest beginnings just as Livy did for Rome in his *History*, the first book we saw today. One commentator wrote of Smith's book: "It is a sober, business-like work, showing a careful study of original documents. Some of these are embodied in the text, and do not, apparently, exist elsewhere."

The Legislature and the Library Find a Home

During the years following the publication of Smith's *History*, the legislature's book collection continued to grow. In 1790 Trenton became the capital of New Jersey, now no longer an English colony but a state in the United States of America; and a state house was built.

Slide 57 New Jersey's first state house

When the building was completed, the legislature moved in and brought along its reference collection of books and papers. And as they say, the rest is history: From that small collection the New Jersey State Library grew to become the major research library that it is today.

I believe my time is up, and I must close.

Slide 58 Book display showing the eight items covered in the talk

Here are the five books, two pamphlets, and map from today's presentation. These were the eight stops we made on our brief excursion through the rare book collection, a trip covering 230 years from 1535 to 1765.

Slide 59 Vault with door closed

Now it's time to lock the vault so that the treasures will be there when the next person comes looking for them.

Slide 60 Exterior of New Jersey State Library building

As you can see, the past IS present at the New Jersey State Library. Today I was your tour guide. I chose the route and selected the stops along the way, so the fun was mostly mine. The great thing about a library is that at any time you can chart your own route through the collection and make your own discoveries. Then all the fun will be yours.