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New Jersey Copyright Registrations, 1791–1870

By Joseph J. Felcone

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COPYRIGHT REGISTRATIONS provide important information for local historians as well as bibliographers and book historians. Beginning about 1850 these records also offer valuable insight into regional manufacturing, popular music publishing, the production and advertising of patent medicines, and photography.

Happily, the New Jersey copyright records survive complete. In the early 1990s I located the hitherto unknown first volume, covering the years 1791 through 1845, in a filing cabinet in a district court clerk's office in Trenton. I transcribed and published those records in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 104 (1994). The later records, from 1846 through 1870, are in the Library of Congress. That repository also holds some loose manuscript and ephemeral material pertaining to New Jersey copyright registrations, a small part of which supplements the previously published records from the first New Jersey volume. In light of this supplemental material and the improved editorial capability made possible by digitization, I have completely re-edited the 1791 through 1845 records.

The present book contains *all* the known New Jersey copyright records from the first registration in 1791 through the middle of 1870, when all copyright activities were removed from the individual states and consolidated in the Library of Congress. Preceding the chronological record of registrations is a very brief examination of the origin and history of copyright legislation in New Jersey and the mechanical requirements mandated by that legislation. A commentary on the editorial process completes the introductory text, and a comprehensive index concludes the volume.

For the first fifty years of New Jersey copyright registrations, almost all applications were for books and pamphlets. The exceptions were generally maps and an occasional chart or single piece of music. Authors were Jersey residents, and the printers and publishers were usually in New Jersey. After the mid-1840s, applications for music increased as popular interest in sheet music grew. In 1848 the first application for a package label was recorded. Over the next two decades, registrations of labels increased exponentially, particularly for patent medicines. By the final decade of New Jersey registrations, only one third of applications were for books and pamphlets, while a third were for labels and trademarks of New Jersey products, and the remaining third were for other forms of printed and graphic matter. The latter included sheet music; maps; charts and tables; photographs; engravings and lithographs; brochures and circulars; periodicals; and designs.

The applications came from every county in the state, and from major cities as well as small towns like Smith's Landing, Atlantic County, and Pokeville, Warren County. They often record titles of books, pamphlets, and maps that have not survived or were never published. The rapid development of the patent medicine industry in Newark, Trenton, and elsewhere in New Jersey is revealed by the many labels, dosing directions, and hyperbole-laden advertisements. One finds registrations for games and toys manufactured by the Harold Brothers of Plainfield; for

photographs from several of New Jersey's earliest photographers; and for hundreds of popular sheet music titles produced by the J. L. Peters Company. The exhaustive index lists all personal names, geographical locations, and subjects.

The book is handsomely designed by Jerry Kelly.

\$38.00 + \$5.00 shipping. New Jersey residents add 6.875% sales tax. Institutions billed.

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