

**Other#**  
**Refer code** NJFLHI5380  
**Accession#** 2016.299  
**Received as** Custodial Transfer  
**Source** Elias Vosseller  
**Creditline**  
**Home loc** Archives Building:A

**Object name 2**  
**Object name 3**  
**Accession date** 08/27/2016

008\Collection No 210.JPG



Additional Oath parchment piece

**Identity Statement:**

Title: Hunterdon County Oaths of Abjuration and Fealty  
 Extent of the unit of description:  
 3 items, 6 linear feet

**Scope & Content / Abstract:**

This collection is composed of three documents. The first document is an Oath of Fealty. It is an oath required to be signed (or affirmed, if a Quaker) by anyone assuming appointed or elected office in the County of Hunterdon, swearing allegiance to King George II of England, and rejecting the claims of William III, the Pretender King.

The second document is an oath of Abjuration. It is another oath required to be taken simultaneously with the Oath of Fealty, in which the swearer rejects the catechism and the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope.

The third document appears to be a smaller extension or attachment of the Oath of Fealty. All three documents contain the names and signatures of oath takers, along with some notes, from 1744 - 1758. The documents are such that the top of a sheet page of parchment holds the oath in written form. Those swearing sign their names below, with additional pieces of parchment being sewn on as needed.

**Context:**

Administrative / Biographical history: History Re-discovered: Hunterdon County Oaths of Abjuration and Fealty  
 In August of 2016, the archives team was cataloging manuscripts from a backlog of unprocessed records found in the library office. We had set aside a small bundle of parchments, because we knew they were quite old and most likely important documents. When we unrolled and examined them, we were astonished to discover that they were very important parchments.  
 We discovered two related documents: Oaths of Abjuration and Fealty, from 1744-1758. In those days, any person who was elected to or appointed to a public office had to swear (or affirm, if they were a Quaker) to two different but related oaths. The first is an Oath of Abjuration, in which the person who signs swears (or affirms) that they reject the teachings and authority of the Catholic Church in Rome and the Pope. This is a paraphrase, of course; the actual oath is quite fascinating and highly detailed in its utter rejection of Catholic Catechism. The other oath, signed in conjunction with the first, is an Oath of Fealty where the person signs (or affirms) that they owe their allegiance to George II, King of England, and that they reject the claims of the Pretender King James III or again, the authority of the Pope and Church in Rome.  
 Each official signed each document when they took their office. Also, the same documents of signatures were used for a period of at least 14 years; additional sheets of parchments were sewn to the bottom of the last as more room was required. The result is a veritable list of signatures of "who's who" in mid-17th century Hunterdon County. At this time, the county stretched from Trenton (the Assunpink Creek) in the south to the ancient border with Sussex in the north, so this list is very extensive. It includes the signature of at least one Signer (John Hart), and many other people who came to prominence in the revolutionary times or were the fathers of those who did.  
 The Society came to be in possession of these documents from Elias Vosseller, an early member of the Society. He detailed his find in a paper read before the Society on September 7, 1901, and published in *The Jerseyman*: "An Interesting Find of Two Parchments Relating to Early New Jersey." (Vol. 7, No. 4, Page 31, 1901)  
 In his address, Mr. Vosseller relates his discovery of these documents some weeks previous in the office of the County Clerk, "dusty, faded, stained, torn and mouse-eaten." He was obviously impressed enough with the importance of the documents that he obtained permission of the Clerk, A.R. Dilts, Esq., "to take them out and make copies of them. Afterwards I read to him these copies and then asked him to allow the originals to be placed in the archives of our Society for care and safe keeping. This request he granted."  
 So, 115 years after Elias Vosseller discovered these amazing manuscripts in the Clerk's office and had them transferred to our care, we have re-discovered them. The importance of these documents, both as items that preserve cultural history and as artifacts in and of their own right, is priceless.

**Structure:**  
**Disposition:**

**Disposition date:****Conditions of Access & Use:**

Access conditions: Manuscript collections may only be viewed at the Hiram E. Deats Memorial Library. The Hiram E. Deats Memorial

Library, the Library and Archives of the Hunterdon County Historical Society, is open for business every Thursday (except for major holidays), 12 Noon to 4 PM, and the fourth Saturday of each month, from 10 AM to 4 PM. Appointments for research purposes may also be pre-arranged with the Society's Executive Director. The retrieval and use of manuscripts, microfilm, and other library materials ends 15 minutes prior to closing time of each open business day.

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Language of material: English

Finding Aids: In vertical file

**Allied Materials:**

Location of originals: Archives Building

**Collection** HCHS Manuscript Collection

**Event**

**Medium**

**Catdate** 08/27/2016

**Catby** Cornelius, Donald

**Display value**

**Status date** 05/09/2018

**Status by** Cornelius, Donald

**Status** Processed

**Condition**

**Condition by**

**Cond date**

**Cond notes**

**Appraiser**

**App notes**

**Acq value**

**Value date**

**Current value min**

**Current value max**

**Ins policy#**

**Ins company**

**Ins rep**

**Ins phone#**

**Ins premium**

**Ins value**

**Policy exp date**

**Temp loc**

**Date**

**Invn date**

**By/Until**

**Invn by**

**Subjects**

Oaths  
 Officials, Government  
 Clerks  
 County government  
 Royalty  
 Religious tolerance  
 Religion & politics

**Classification**

**Search terms** Hunterdon County, New Jersey  
 West Jersey, Colony

**People** Hart, John

**Notes**

**Updated/by** 05/14/2018 08:13 PM Unknown

**Dataset**