Preface

In a version of “rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief,” the governor’s office in New Jersey has been inhabited since its inception in 1664 by a wide range of characters who for good or ill stamped their influence on the state’s polity. In this New Jersey has probably differed more in degree than substance from its neighbors, indeed, from any other state. What makes New Jersey distinctive are the different constitutional arrangements that helped or hindered its governors’ attempts to influence policymaking and to leave a positive legacy for the future. Writing for the tercentenary celebration of New Jersey’s history, Duane Lockard reminded readers in his *The New Jersey Governor: A Study of Political Power* that even under weak constitutions a strong leader could exert influence; and even under a strong governor constitution (New Jersey has one of the strongest of all the states), a weakling can fail.

Eighteen years after Lockard produced what is still the best single-volume treatment of the governorship, Paul Stellhorn and Michael Birkner published a set of essays treating each governor who served between the colony’s founding in 1664 and the close of William P. Cahill’s one-term governorship in 1973. The essays in that volume collectively reinforced Lockard’s central argument, while adding a great measure of amplifying detail. New Jersey has a strong governor system, but governors who have served since 1964 have demonstrated varying degrees of political vision and sagacity.

There are two major premises behind the decision to publish this revised and expanded edition of *The Governors of New Jersey*. First, and perhaps foremost, we wanted to introduce New Jerseyans to the governors and acting governors who have served the state since the 1974. They are a mixed lot. Each governor made decisions that have had consequences beyond his or her term of office, yet there has been relatively little analysis of the administrations of these governors. Second, a new edition offers the opportunity to bring the governorship of New Jersey to a new audience. While most of the original essays have been only modestly revised to bring the scholarly literature on a particular governor up to date, in at least one instance a fundamental rewriting of an essay was called for, due to a recent revisionist interpretation of one of the state’s most controversial governors, Lord Cornbury. Discerning readers of this edition will notice that we continue to run the original illustration that was widely viewed as Cornbury in women’s clothing, but this time with the cautionary note that the illustration is much disputed.

No essay or portrait is as much contested as Cornbury’s, but the essays herein will provide ample material for ongoing research on and evaluation

of the individuals herein depicted. History is an argument without end. To have a good argument you need good material to work with. We hope this volume provides just that for the next generation of governor watchers.

MICHAEL J. BIRKNER

DONALD LINKY

PETER MICKULAS