Brokers of Public Trust

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It seemed like a simple question, "Why did people go to notaries?" Answering it has taken me on a journey with countless twists and turns, and whatever answers I can now give to the question are owed to the aid of many scholars and friends in the United States and Italy. It is a pleasure to be able to thank them at last. I want also to express my appreciation for the support of the American Philosophical Society, the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar, and Wesleyan University for four project grants. I am indebted to the rare-book librarians of the Lillian Goldman Library at Yale Law School, Harvey Hull and Mike Widener, who supplied a most pleasant work setting, as well as the staffs of the rare-book collections at the law libraries of Harvard University, the Library of Congress, and the University of Pennsylvania.

Although I did not know it at the time, this book had its inception twenty years ago in a pertinent conference comment from John Martin and a brilliant Wesleyan undergraduate history thesis by Daniel Rosenberg. It began its winding course at an NEH Summer Seminar at the Newberry Library directed by Armando Petrucci and Franca Nardella in 1993. Among those who have given me invaluable assistance at numerous points along the way I would especially like to acknowledge the efforts of John Pinto, Irene Fosi, Orsola Gori, and Nicholas Adams. I am grateful to Thomas Kuehn and Simona Feci for answering questions over many years and also for having kindly read drafts of chapter 1. In the course of my research I have benefited from the expertise of many scholars and friends, and I would like to thank them all, especially Renata Ago, James Amelang, Stefano Andretta, Daniel Brownstein, Eleonora Canepari, Elizabeth S. and Thomas V. Cohen, Sherrill Cohen, Lucilla Cola, Michele Di Sivo, Bruce W. Frier, Anthony Grafton, Julie Hardwick, Isa Lori Sanfilippo, John Marino, Donna Merwick, James O’Hara, Mary Quinlan, Virginia Reinburg, Kenneth Stow, Maria Antonietta Visceglia, and Patricia Waddy. I would also like to express my gratitude to those whose interest encouraged the project, Paul Gehl,
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