

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BLYTH, Benjamin

Salem, Massachusetts 1740 – p.1787

Brother of an heraldic and commercial painter, Samuel Blyth (*q.v.*), Benjamin Blyth (or Blythe) began his career as a pastel portraitist in the 1760s. He also worked in oils (not very well) and miniature (rarely), and made engravings in collaboration with John Coles of Boston. Biographical details remain uncertain, but it appears more likely that Benjamin was born in 1740 (as indicated in the entry recording his admission to the Essex lodge of freemasons in 1781) rather than the 1746 given in older sources. Nothing is known as to how he adopted the medium of pastel in the 1760s, although it is natural to speculate some connection with Copley, who had written to Liotard in 1762. Blyth advertised in the *Salem gazette* of 10–17.V.1769, announcing that he

Begs Leave to inform the Public, that he has opened a Room for the Performance of Limning in Crayons at the House occupied by his Father in the great Street leading towards Marblehead, where Specimens of his Performance may be seen. All Persons who please to favour him with their Employ, may depend upon having good Likenesses and being immediately waited on, by applying to their Humble Servant, Benjamin Blyth.

Until 1782, he remained in Salem where, according to the Rev. William Bentley's diary (25.X.1809), the "wretched dauber" gained "much employment from the money of privateer men". The bill for the pastel of General Thomas is probably indicative of his charges (at least for his larger pastels, in 1777): 4 gns for the crayon picture, £1 16s for the frame and glass, and 3s for a box. Around 1782 he moved to Virginia, where, in Norfolk County in 1785, he married a widow, Mary Dougle. The following year he seems to have settled in Richmond, advertising in the *Virginia gazette* (19.VII.1786, repeated several times), in substantially the same terms as the Salem advertisement, adding oil and miniature to crayons, and seeking also an apprentice. A few dozen pastels are now attributed to him, but few are actually signed, and the œuvre is by no means securely identified.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Bolton 1923; Bowen 1892; Burroughs 1936; Foote 1957; Grove 1996; Saur; Washington 1987

Pastels

John ADAMS (1735–1826), 2nd president of the USA; & pendant: spouse, née Abigail Smith (1744–1818), pstl/ppr, 57.3x44.8, inscr. *verso* "drawn by Blythe 1763", 1766 (Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society, MA330011. Abigail Adams; her son, Thomas Boylston Adams (1772–1832); his daughter, Elizabeth C. Adams (1808–1903); her first cousin, once removed, Charles Francis Adams (1835–1915); Mrs Charles Francis Adams 1923; their son Henry Adams (1875–1951); John Adams (1875–1964); don 1964). Exh.: Boston 1975 (*Mrs Adams*); Washington 1987, no. 95 (*Adams*). Lit.: Bowen 1892; Bolton 1923, p. 7 n.r.; Foote 1957, repr., as 1766; L. B. Miller, *In the minds and hearts of the people*, New York,

1974, repr.; Oliver & al. 1988, pp. 5ff, pl. 1/2; David McCullough, *John Adams*, London, 2001, repr.; Meschutt 2001, fig. 11 (*Mrs Adams*); Miriam Gross, *John Adams: patriot, diplomat, and statesman*, 2005, repr./n.r. ♀



Elizabeth BRADISH; & pendant: sister, pstl/ppr, 37x26.5 (Bolton, Massachusetts, Skinner, 7.XI.2004, Lot 215 n.r., attr., est. \$800–1200, \$2100)

George CABOT (1752–1823), of Beverly, senator, pstl, 45.7x38.1, sd "B. Blyth pinxit, 1767" (Colonel Henry Lee of Brookline; his daughter, Mrs Frederick L. Shattuck; her son, Henry Lee Shattuck, Boston, 1936). Lit.: L. Vernon Briggs, *History and genealogy of the Cabot family*, Boston, 1927, I, opp. p. 72 repr.; Burroughs 1936, n.r.; Foote 1957, pp. 71, 82 n.r. ♀



Mrs Joseph CABOT, née Elizabeth Higginson (1722–1781), in a yellow-brown satin dress, white fichu with lace, white cap tied under chin, bust, facing front, bright blue background, pstl, 50.8x38.1 (Joseph Lee, Jr, Boston, 1939). Lit.: Vernon Briggs, *ibid.*, p. 58 repr, as by Copley; Foote 1957, p. 83 n.r. ♀



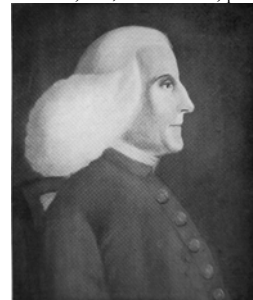
Rev. Thomas CARY (1745–1808), minister at Newburyport, Massachusetts, pstl/ppr, 55.9x43.8, c.1773 (First Religious Society, Newburyport; dep. Boston, MFA, a.2005). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 83 n.r.; Copley 1995, fig. 205 ♂



Photo courtesy First Religious Society, Newburyport, and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; ©2006 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Captain John COLLINS (1753–1784?); & pendant: spouse, pstl, 58.4x43.2, ?1776 (Joseph Kindig III, Pennsylvania, 1956). Lit.: Foote 1957

Judge Samuel CURWEN (1715–1802), pstl/ppr, 55.3x42.4, 1772 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 4134.7. Legs George Rea Curwen 1900). Lit.: Bolton 1923, p. 7 n.r.; Burroughs 1936, n.r.; Foote 1957, p. 86 n.r.;



Sarah CURWEN (1742–1773), pstl/ppr, 55.9x43, c.1770 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 4134.12. Legs George Rea Curwen 1900). Lit.: Bolton 1923, p. 7 n.r.; Foote 1957, p. 86 n.r. ♀



Dabney, v. Stevens

Elias Hasket DERBY (1739–1799), merchant, pstl/ppr, 53.1x46.5, 1776 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, M.4135. Acqu. 1935). Lit.: Foote 1957

Mrs Elias Hasket DERBY, née Elizabeth Crowninshield (1736–1799), pstl/ppr, 56.6x41.1, 1776 (Salem Maritime National Historic Site, SAMA 1674. Acqu. 1964)

Ezekiel Hersey DERBY (1772–1852), pstl/ppr, 58.9x45.8, 1776 (Salem Maritime National Historic Site, SAMA 1675. Acqu. 1964)

Richard DERBY (1712–1783), merchant, pstl/ppr, 59.1x48.9, c.1771–79 (Salem

Maritime National Historic Site, 490. Acqu. 1955)

Derby, v. Pickman

Rev. James DIMAN (1707–1788), pstl/ppr, 34.9x30.5 ov.; & pendant: spouse, née Mary Orne (1721–1787), pstl/ppr, 35.2x30.7 c.1750–70 (Houston, MFA, B.61.106.1/2. The Bayou Bend Collection, don Miss Ima Hogg). Attr.

Diman, v.q. Haraden

George DODGE (1726–1808), merchant, of Beverly and Salem; & pendant: spouse (∞ 1746), née Lydia Herrick (1726–1798), pstl, 55x43, c.1770 (desc.: sitters' daughter, Hannah, Mrs John Cabot; desc.: George Dodge Cabot, New Jersey, 1957). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 89 n.r.

John FISKE (–1797), sea captain and merchant, of Salem. Lit.: Foote 1957, citing reference in Bentley's diary

Mrs John FISKE, née Lydia Phippen (1747–1782), pstl/ppr, 52.2x39.5, c.1770 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 103,698. Legs Misses Marion C. & Elizabeth C. Allen 1913). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 90 n.r.

James FLAGG (1739–1775), pstl/ppr, 51x27.5, c.1770 (desc.: Thomas N. Tileston, Clinton, New York, 1957). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 90 n.r., ?attr.

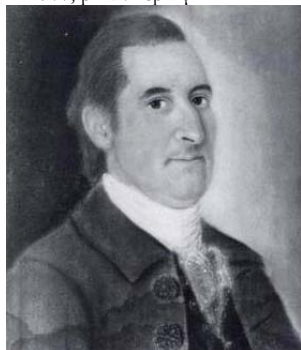
?John GARDNER (1731–1805), merchant and shipowner; & pendant: spouse, née Elizabeth Pickering (1737–1823), pstl/ppr, 46x35.5, inscr. *verso* "J. Gardner/of Boston/New England", c.1776 (James Kochan Fine Art, Frederick, Maryland, 2010) φ



Gardner, v.q. Stevens

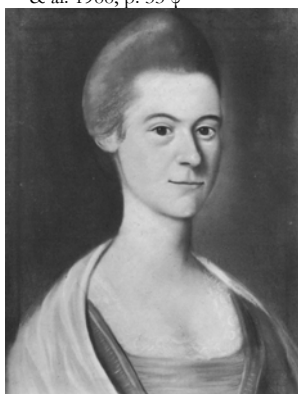
John GIBAUT (1768–1805), sea captain, collector of the port of Gloucester, pstl/ppr, 54.2x37.8, c.1782 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 2,989. Don Benjamin Barstow 1891). Lit.: *Visitor's guide to Salem*, 1916, p. 195, as by Coles; Bolton 1923, p. 7 n.r., attr.; Foote 1957, p. 91 n.r.

William GODDARD (1740–1817), publisher, pstl/ppr, 43.5x35.5, c.1780–85 (Rhode Island Historical Society, 1972.19.3. Acqu. 1972). Lit.: Marion B. Stowell, *Early American almanacs: the colonial weekday Bible*, New York, 1977, p. 127 repr. φ



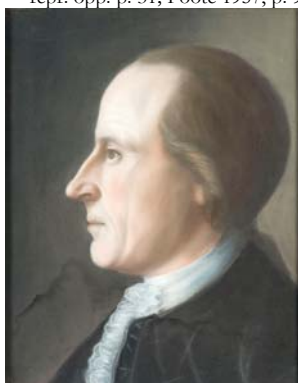
Mrs Thomas Mason (∞ 1774), Mrs Jonathan HARADEN (∞ 1782), née Eunice Diman (1752–1796), daughter of James Diman and Mary Orne, pstl/ppr, 51x41.5, c.1774

(Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society, inv. MA330090. Don Mrs Irving W. Bailey, née Helen Diman Harwood 1972). Lit.: Oliver & al. 1988, p. 33 φ



Rev. Edward HOLYOKE (1689–1769), president of Harvard. Lit.: Bolton 1923, p. 7 n.r.

Dr Edward Augustus HOLYOKE (1728–1829), physician and scientist, profile, to left, pstl, 38.1x30.5, sd *verso* 1771 (Miss Elizabeth Stuart Osgood, Salem, 1957. Mrs C. Odgood, USA. Manchester, New Hampshire, Northeast Auctions, 3–5.VIII.2007, Lot 1636 repr., est. \$7–10,000, \$35,960). Exh.: Worcester 1943, no. 46. Lit.: *The Holyoke diaries*, Salem, 1911, repr. opp. p. 31; Foote 1957, p. 92 n.r. φ



Mrs Edward Augustus HOLYOKE, née Mary Simpson Vial (1737–1802), pstl, 36.8x29.8, sd 1771 (Andrew Nichols, Boston, 1936; Mary Eliot Nichols, Hathorne, Danvers, Massachusetts, 1957). Lit.: *The Holyoke diaries*, Salem, 1911, repr. opp. p. 77; Burroughs 1936, n.r.; Foote 1957, p. 93 n.r. φ



William HOMANS (1749–1839), major in the Revolutionary army and merchant, pstl/ppr, 49.4x34.1, c.1770–80 (Beverly Historical Society and Museum, 2540. Desc.: sitter's granddaughter; don 1935). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 93 n.r.

Mrs HOMANS, née Relief Brown (1755–1842), and her daughter Phoebe Homans (1779–), pstl/ppr, 49.3x34, c.1779–83 (Beverly

Historical Society and Museum, 2541. Desc.: sitter's granddaughter; don 1935). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 94 n.r.

Rebecca HOOPER (1755–1790), pstl/ppr, 57.7x44.6, c.1775–85 (Norwich, Connecticut, Leffingwell Inn, 74.DUP141). *Olim* attr. Copley

Joseph LEMMON (1715–1772), physician, pstl/ppr, 51.1x40.7, c.1770 (Smithsonian 1977.131 NMAA. Don Mr & Mrs Flew Murphy). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 94 n.r., *olim* attr. Copley φ



?Thomas MASON (1750–), pstl/ppr, 48.3x38.1, c.1760–70 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 2,750. Acqu. 1890). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 94 n.r., attr.

Samuel MCINTIRE (1757–1811), architect and carver of Salem, pstl/ppr, 35.5x24.8, c.1780 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 123,420. Acqu. 1938). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 94 n.r., attr. φ



Thomas MELVILL (*Bostonian Society*), v. *American sch.*

William MESSERVY (c.1780–1852), aged c.2, pstl, 39.5x28, c.1782 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum. Desc.: George P. Messervy; don 1904). Lit.: Foote 1957, pp. 75, 97 n.r., attr.

William Samuel MOOREHOUSE (1730–), soldier, pstl/ppr, 59.5x43.9, c.1780; & pendant: spouse, née Annis Stern (1730–), pstl/ppr, 59.8x43.9, c.1780 (Shelburne Museum, 27.3.3-1/2. Desc.; acqu.). Lit.: Muller 1976, fig. 67/66 attr.; Schmiegel 1975, p. 329 n.r., anon., cf. author of Crosby portraits φ



Rev. John MURRAY (1742–1793), pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Newbury Port, pstl, 61x40.6 (Old Newbury, Historical Society). Lit.: Massachusetts historical records survey, 1939, as Copley

~grav.: Samuel Hill, 14.9x9 (Winterthur, DE, museum, 1956.0010.008A)

Azor ORNE (1731–1796), merchant of Salem, delegate to the Federal Constitutional Convention, 1787; & pendant: spouse (∞ 1754), née Mary Colman (1730–), pstl, 52x43. c.1770 (Miss Mary F. Boles, Marblehead, Massachusetts). Exh.: Marblehead portraits, 24–31.VII.1924, as by Copley. Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 98 n.r., as Blyth/cop. a/r Blyth

Colonel James OTIS (1702–1778), chief justice of the Court of Common Pleas, pstl, 48.3x38.1 (Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society, not located 1957). Lit.: *Catalogue of the paintings... cabinet of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 1885, no. 20 n.r., anon., “nearly obliterated”; Massachusetts historical records survey, 1939, as by Blyth; Foote 1957, p. 99 n.r.

Theophilus PARSONS, pstl (Caroline L. Parsons, Boston, 1936). Lit.: Burroughs 1936, n.r.

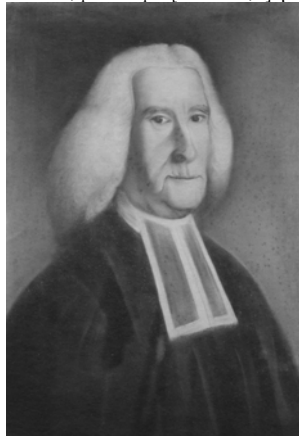
Mrs Benjamin PICKMAN, née Antis Derby (1769–1836), pstl/ppr, 56.5x41.3, c.1775–80 (PC, SAMA 2235)

Mrs Benjamin PICKMAN, née Abigail Love Rawlings (Portsmouth, Northeast Auctions, 12.XI.2000, Lot 739 repr., attr. Blyth), v. *American sch.*

David ROPES (1739–1793), property developer, pstl/ppr, 63.6x49.7, c.1775–85; & pendant: spouse (∞ 1760), née Priscilla Webb (1741–1831) (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 107.943/1728/-) Lit.: *Visitor's guide to Salem*, 1953, p. 165; Foote 1957, p. 99 n.r.

Jonathan SIMPSON (c.1685–1763), pstl, 48.3x41.3, a.1763 (Mary Eliot Nichols, Hathorne, Danvers, Massachusetts, 1957). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 100 n.r.

Rev. William SMITH (1707–1783), father of Abigail Adams, pstl (Mrs Lewis Greenleaf, Nantucket. Lit.: *The book of Abigail and John: selected letters of the Adams family, 1762–1784*, 2002, p. 20 repr. [new attr., ?] φ



John SOMES (1745–1816), pstl/ppr, 46.7x39.3, c.1780–90; & pendant: ?spouse, née Anna Dolliver (1755–1846), pstl/ppr, 46.7x39.3, c.1780–90 (Gloucester, MA, Cape Ann Historical Museum, 1596/1309. Acqu. 1952/1948)

Mrs Nathaniel Dabney, née Elizabeth Gardner (1750–1834), later ∞ 2° James Bridges, 3° Ebenezer STEVENS, pstl/ppr, 58.4x45.7 or 55.1x41.7, c.1775 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 118,172. Acqu. 1925). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 79 n.r. *Olim* attr. samuel Blyth

Eban'r SYMS, aged 13 years 7 months, pstl/ppr, 37x26 (Roland Hammond, North Andover,

Massachusetts. Bolton, Massachusetts, Skinner, 18.II.2007, Lot 103 repr., attr., est. \$3–5000, \$2200) φ



John THOMAS (1724–1776), surgeon and soldier, major-general of Continental troops in Canada, -pstl/ppr, 52.5x40, ?1777 (Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society, inv. MA330323. Comm. c.1775, 4 gns for portrait, £1 16s. for frame and glass; desc.: sitter's great-great-granddaughters, Sarah and Joanna Williams; don 1923). Lit.: Bolton 1923, p. 7 n.r.; Foote 1957, pp. 73, 102; Oliver & al. 1988, p. 103 φ



Deacon Jonathan Simpson WARD, Old South Church, Boston, pstl, 54.6x40.6 (Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Northeast Auctions, 3.VIII.2003, Lot 950 repr.) φ



Capt. George TURNER, pstl/ppr, 50.5x35.2, 1770; & pendant: spouse (1740–), pstl/ppr, 52.3x41.6, 1770 (Saint Louis, United Missouri Bank, inv.37. DUP 34. Acqu. 1973)

Francis WARDEN (1760–?1780), pstl/ppr, 54.8x41.5, c.1765 (Shelburne Museum, 27.3.1-15. Desc.: William Francis Warden. Don Katharine Prentis Murchy 1958). Lit.: Muller 1976, fig. 65, attr. φ



George WASHINGTON; & pendant: spouse, Martha Washington, m/u, a/r C. W. Peale

~grav.: J. Norman. Lit.: Bolton 1923, p. 8 n.r.

Benjamin WEST (1731–1775), soldier, waist-length, ¾ to left, tricorn hat, pstl/ppr, 54x40, c.1774 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 116,640. Desc.: Mrs Sarah C. Batchellor, Concord; don 1922). Lit.: *Essex Institute historical collections*, 1937, no. 349, as self-portrait; Foote 1957, p. 102 n.r.

Mrs Henry WHITE, née Elizabeth Safford (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 124,689), v. *American sch.*

Joseph WHITE, Jr (1748–1830), sea captain, pstl/ppr, 52x39.6, c.1775–85; & pendant: spouse, née Elizabeth Stone (1749–1822), pstl/ppr, 52.2x39.6, c.1775–85 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 2,987/2,988. Don Benjamin Barstow 1891). Lit.: Bolton 1923, p. 8/7 n.r.; Burroughs 1936, -/no. 53 repr.; Foote 1957, p. 103 n.r. -/Φ



Master WINSLOW (London, Christie's, 20.VI.1969, Lot 104 repr., as by Blyth), v. Copley

Young woman, c.20 years old, in blue dress, wrap lined with pink over left shoulder, pstl/ppr, 24.8x19.4, c.1775–85 (Salem, Peabody Essex Museum, 106,735. Don Henry F. Waters 1876). Lit.: Foote 1957, p. 105 n.r. Man; & pendant: woman, pstl/ppr, 59.5x43.5 (Bolton, Massachusetts, Skinner, 10.VI.2001, Lot 49 repr., attr., est. \$4–6000, \$5500) [Attr.] φ/φ



Portraits in other media

Rev. George WHITEFIELD (1714–1770), pnt., 1770. Lit.: Bolton 1923, p. 8 n.r.; Foote 1957. A/r Nathaniel Hone pnt.

