

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BRION DE LA TOUR, Louis-Marie

Paris 5.VIII.1758–13.X.1803

A pastel of Lekain, once inscribed “La Tour” and derived from an earlier engraving, was previously thought to be the basis of a Janinet print, and accordingly given to Brion de La Tour; we think it more likely to be by Lenoir (*q.v.*, J.478.201). There is no other indication that Brion used pastel. However the multiple confusions about the engraver and draughtsman “Brion de La Tour” are here clarified from état civil records (which appear to have been overlooked until first noted here in 2024).

The elder Louis Brion, dit de La Tour (several generations of the family used the surname, but none consistently, and it is usually omitted from état civil documents), was the son of Anselme Brion and Catherine Milet who were married 1.X.1722 at Saint-Jean, Pont-à-Mousson, where Louis was baptised, église de Saint-Laurent, 10.V.1725.

This Louis Brion, ingénieur-géographe du roi and a noted cartographer, married Marie-Louise Bailly, at Saint-Séverin 28.IV.1757. His atlas, entitled *Comp d'œil général sur la France...*, was published in 1765, under the name “Brion”. His year of death is not known, but in 1802 a *Voyage dans la ci-devant Belgique et sur la rive gauche du Rhin...* was published, the text by J.-B.-J. Breton, while the other contributors were “Louis Brion, pour la partie du dessin, et Louis Brion père, pour la partie géographique”, confirming that father and son were then still alive. In 1809 a dispute arose over the accuracy of another atlas, and “Brion de La Tour, doyen des géographes” engaged in the polemic, indicating that the father was still living then.

That son Louis-Marie Brion was born in Paris 5.VIII.1758 and baptised the same day at Saint-Sulpice. (He seems never to have used his second forename, but it is retained here for clarity.) By the time his brother (and godson) Marie-Stanislas was born (26.I.1773), the family were living in the rue de Sorbonne.

Louis-Marie married a Louise-Angélique-Charlotte Colarde (1756–) at Saint-Séverin 3.X.1786. “Louis-Marie Brion, peintre”, died in Paris, 98 rue de Vaugirard, on 13.X.1803 aged 45 (Archives de Paris, état civil reconstitué; inv. p.m., 17.X.1803, AN MC/ET/LVIII). He exhibited in the salon de 1796, a “premier leçon d’amour”, when he was described as “Brion (Louis), élève de Restout, rue de Vaugirard, no. 96”. He does not however appear in the registres des élèves de l’Académie royale, but presumably studied with Jean-Baptiste Restout privately. Draughtsman, engraver and history painter, two Revolutionary pictures, the assassinations of Le Pelletier (lost) and of Marat (Versailles, musée Lambinet), were engraved by himself. He was also an occasional portraitist in oil or unspecified media (his portraits of Pilâtre de Rozier, Suffren and a series of 18 portraits illustrating the main figures in the affaire du collier were engraved by Jean-Baptiste Chapuy). An oil portrait of an inconnu in the musée Carnavalet is signed and dated “Latour/1793”. That choice of name, without Brion, encourages

the speculation (for which no proof has yet been found) that Louis-Marie Brion might be the Latour, miniaturist who was in London in 1794–95, advertising his newly invented Physigraph in the *Times*, 3.IV.1794 (from 72 New Bond Street; with the patronage of Princess Sophia of Gloucester), and in partnership with Constant de Massoul (*Morning chronicle*, 16.V.1795; *v.* Jeffares 2017c).

Portalis & Béraldi have him working in Paris, at 98 rue de Vaugirard, until 1823 – which seems to be the source of the date given universally for his death until corrected here. This is probably a misreading of 1803 but may be a confusion with the son of Louis-Marie and Louise Colarde, Louis-Maximilien, who was baptised in Saint-Séverin 4.IX.1787 (the family then living at rue du Plâtre), and married Thérèse-Alexandrine Danois in Paris, 21.VI.1821, when Louis-Maximilien was recorded at Saint-Maur-des-Fossés. Reprints of earlier topographical works have also clouded the chronology of this family.

Bibliography

IFF; P&B; Sanchez 2004; Saur; Willk-Brocard 2017

Pastels

Henri-Louis Cain, dit LEKAIN, s “La Tour” (*Cailloux*). *Lit.*: B&W 267, ?attr. [*v.* Lenoir, J.478.201]