

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

CULLEN, John

Dublin 1761–c.1825/30

The miniaturist was the son of a “box-keeper” at the Theatre Royal, Crow Street and the Smock Alley Company: recorded in the 1760s and 70s; in the earliest reference (1760) he is described as Mr Cullen, Linnen-draper, Bride-street. From this, and various deeds in the Dublin registry, it is possible to deduce that he was Edmond Cullen, gentleman, whose will is recorded in 1787 and who was probably baptised at St Audoen’s, Dublin (Church of Ireland) in 1744. In 1761 he married Mary Gerrard, daughter of a baker in Dublin.

His son John Cullen studied in the Royal Dublin Schools in the mid-1770s, winning a prize for figure drawing in 1775. Thereafter, according to Pasquin, he was taught by H. D. Hamilton (*q.v.*), whose style he closely followed. He produced miniatures and pastels, but of the latter few are now known.

According to the *Dublin evening journal and post*, on 13.v.1797, the marriage took place between “Mr. John Cullen, of Suffolk-street, Miniature Painter, to the Widow Hair [sic], daughter of the Rev Charles Grace of Co Galway.” (Betham’s abstracts have “Mare Catherine... Widow Bellay”; she must have been the Catherine Grace who married Patt Bailly in Ballinakill on 8.ii.1796.)

An earlier notice in *Saunders’s news-letter* for 16.iv.1783 mentioned that “Mr Cullen, Miniature Painter” removed from Moore’s Jeweller, Essex-Bridge, to Butler’s, Jeweller, corner of Suffolk-Street and Grafton Street. He remained in Suffolk Street until 1787 and from 1789 to 1823 (he was listed there as a member of the Hibernian Society of Artists in 1814), and 10 William Street 1787–89. He exhibited in Dublin between 1800 and 1825.

Tom Paine (*Political and miscellaneous works*, London, 1819, II, pp. 195ff) has a curious report of an “imposter” in New York c.1800 (previously in England and India), claiming to be a former British army officer but revealed to be the son of Cullen the box-keeper. He is unlikely to be the miniaturist, but may have been a brother, perhaps Edmond, Jr, who was baptised on 18.vii.1762 (St Audoen’s) to Edmond and Mary. The arithmetic suggests that John’s baptism may not have been recorded because he was born rather soon after his parents’ marriage.

Bibliography

Crookshank & Glin 1978; Crookshank & Glin 1994; John C. Greene, *Theatre in Dublin, 1745–1820*, 2011; McGuire 1939, p. 15; Pasquin 1796; Saur; Strickland 1913

Pastels

J.2522.101 Richard Wingfield, 3rd Viscount POWERSCOURT (1730–1788), pstl/ppr, ov., sd ✓ “Jn Cullen/... 1778” (Colonel G. H. Johnston 1913; Kilmore, Co. Armagh, Bennett & Son, 16–18.vi.1920, Lot 565; desc.: PC 2014). Lit. Strickland 1913, n.r. φ



J.2522.103 Mrs TIGHE of Rossanagh, Co. Wicklow [?Mrs William Tighe, née Sarah Fownes (1743–)], pstl/ppr, 22.7x17 ov., sd “Jn. Cullen Delin^t 1778” (Dublin, NGI, inv. 7349. Acqu. Eila Graham Antiques, Dublin, 1971). Exh.: Dublin 2023. Lit.: McGuire 1939 p. 15 repr.; Le Harivel 1983, repr. φ



J.2522.155 Man in brown coat, pstl/ppr, 24x20 ov., inscr. illegibly (Dublin, Adams, 12.iii.2019, Lot 522 repr., Irish sch., est. €100–200) [new attr.] φv

