

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

OKEY, Samuel, Jr

London 21.II.1742 – ?America p.1780

Mezzotint engraver; exhibited engravings after Reynolds and Cosway at the Society of Artists in 1767 (from Great Carter Lane) and 1768 (from F. Newberry's, corner of St Paul's Churchyard). From the captions on some of his English prints, Chaloner Smith (and the DNB) inferred that his father was a printseller with a shop at the back of St Dunstan's, Fleet Street, but this seems to be a confusion with the son. He was probably the Samuel Okey born 21.II.1742 (and baptised at St Margaret Lothbury a month later) to Samuel Okey and Mary, née Atterbury. (An elder Samuel baptised 17.IV.1741 at St Stephen's, Coleman Street, died a few months later.) His father was described as a mariner in the allegation for marriage 1736, and as a hatbandmaker in his will (proved 12.XII.1768): sons Samuel, Thomas and John Okey were mentioned, the last presumably the J. Okey also selling prints from St Dunstan's.

Samuel Okey emigrated in 1771, settling in Rhode Island. Here he set up in business with a Charles Reak, a printer with whom he had previously worked in London. A notice in the *Newport Mercury* (10.XI.1773) advertised books, prints and pictures from their shop fronting the parade in Newport. They engraved plates (dated examples are known between 1773 and 1775), and offered "portraits taken in crayons; water colours, chalks &c." (presumably by Okey). Further "Mr Okey takes likenesses in miniature, and has been honored with several premiums from the society for encouraging arts, manufactures and commerce, in London." He intended to open an academy for teaching the rudiments of drawing but seems to have enrolled as a private in Haslet's Delaware regiment in the American revolutionary forces in Delaware, 7.III.1776; the name is erased in the muster, suggesting he may have died. Reak died on 24.I.1780 at Fort Knyphausen, New York; his widow Ann (1723–p.1784) returned to England. Presumably it was Okey's brother John who died 3.IX.1782, born London, resident of Newport, who enlisted in the Rhode Island regiment in 1781, aged 32 (Daniel Popek, *They "fought bravely..."*, 2015).