

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

PEMBERTON, Benjamin

Dublin 1744–1799

A pastel “self-portrait” of Hugh Douglas Hamilton appears neither to be by nor of him. The inscription on the back confirms this: Hamilton had one child, who married late, and no grandchildren. The owner in 1895 identified the sitter only as her great-grandfather, but without qualification probably she meant her agnatic forebear. (There is further support for this identification in that later generations married lower orders, so that Emma Pemberton’s immediate family were bootmakers.) This great-grandfather, Benjamin Pemberton, although described as a “bricklayer and lime burner”, was in fact a builder, architect and property developer of some repute. He lived at 7 Park Place (later Park Street), Dublin and was described as a “gentleman” in 1770 when he was admitted to the New Annuity Company. There is no other evidence that he was an amateur pastellist, nor whether he was taught professionally.

Bibliography

Dictionary of Irish architects

Pastels

J.5788.101 [??]SELF-PORTRAIT, pstl, pencil/ppr, 22.5x17 ov., inscr. “Tis is the Likeness of my Great Grand/Father taken by/himself about the year 1791/Emma L. Pemberton/Aug^t 7th 1895” (Dublin, NGI, inv. 19554. Desc.: Emma Louisa Pemberton (1868–1933), Dublin. London, Sotheby’s, 21.v.1998, Lot 246 repr., est. £2–3000, £4200 [=£4830]). Exh.: Dublin 1998, no. 7 repr.; Hamilton 2008, no. 37 repr.; Dublin 2023, all as Hamilton self-portrait. Lit.: Lowell Libson 2015 cat., p. 44 repr.; O’Connor 2018, fig. 4 [new attr., ?] φαν

