

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

THORNHILL, Katherine

?Derby c.1715 – ?Liverpool a.1778

Nothing has hitherto been known of the pastellist responsible for a portrait of the daughter of a Mayor of Liverpool; she was subsequently portrayed by Joseph Wright of Derby (Fitchburg Art Museum). Sarah Clayton ran a coal business in partnership with her nephew, Thomas Case (1731–1790), which became bankrupt in 1778. The attribution is based on the sitter's 1778 will, in which the "Crayon picture painted by my late worthy friend Mrs Katherine Thornhill" was bequeathed to her niece. Two versions are known: one later belonged to Thomas Edward Walker, né Case, the great-grandson of Sarah Clayton's partner, while the other, probably that referred to in the will, is in the Walker Art Gallery (with a suggested date of c.1757 which seems correct), bequeathed by a clergyman of Liverpool origins, and presumably acquired by his grandfather with the contents of Thingwall Hall bought from the executors of Mrs Clayton's great-nephew, also Thomas Case (1777–1845). (It may be that Mrs Clayton's bankruptcy defeated the terms of her will.) It does not seem that both pastels are by the same hand; the T. E. Case version, of higher quality (which may have been retained by the family when Thingwall Hall was sold), might well have been copied by an amateur such as Katherine Thornhill; it was attributed to Cotes in the 1972 sale, and although not entirely convincing that attribution is more plausible in in colour and may be correct.

From the terms of Mrs Clayton's will we can identify Katherine Thornhill as one of the daughters of John Thornhill of Stanton, from a family which Burke describes as "one of the most ancient families" of Yorkshire, while *Familiae minorum gentium* indicates that John Thornhill was the son of the keeper of the Angel Inn at Bakewell, who married advantageously, acquiring the Stanton manor from the Bache family. Like each of her siblings, Katherine received £1200 under her father's will of 13.x.1729 (probated 7.IV.1731), where she and two siblings appear as under 18. Like "Mrs" Clayton, she was unmarried (she was the "Miss Kitty Thornhill" who drank tea with Mrs Isaac Green on 9.IV.1749 during a trip to London) and was dead by the time of Mrs Clayton's will.

Bibliography

Ronald Stewart-Browne, *Isaac Greene, a Lancashire lawyer of the 18th century*, Liverpool, 1921; *Familiae minorum gentium*, I, p. 240; Burke, *Landed gentry*

Pastels

Sarah CLAYTON (1712–1779), pstl (the sitter; legs 1778 "her niece Mrs Eliz. Simpson if she survive me if not then to her mother Mrs Eliz. Warrington or in case she shall not outlive me to Lady Robinson her sister")

?=/?version, pstl/ppr bl., 61.3x45.4 (Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, inv. 2544. [?desc.: sitter's great-nephew, Thomas Case (1777–1845), of Thingwall Hall; acqu. with Thingwall Hall, Samuel Thompson; his son, Samuel Henry Thompson; his son,] Rev. Samuel Ashton

Thompson Yates (1841–1903), legs 1906. Exh.: Liverpool 1988, repr., as c.1757. Lit.: T. C. Barker & J. R. Harris, *St Helens 1750–1900*. Liverpool, 1954, p. 22 repr.; Nicolson 1968, I, p. 189, fig. 29; Andrew Carrington Shelton, "Storming the Acropolis", in Elise Goodman, ed., *Art and culture in the eighteenth century: new dimensions and multiple perspectives*, Cranbury, New Jersey, 2001, p. 140 n.r., "a decidedly modest affair" ♪



?=/?version, pstl, 60x44 ([?sitter's nephew, Thomas Case; desc.: his great-grandson, Thomas Edward Walker, né Case (1848–1882), of Papplewick Hall.] Rudding Park. London, Christie's, 16–17.X.1972, attr. Cotes. Richard "Dick" Ratcliffe (1934–2011), antiques dealer, The Manor House, Waddington, Lincoln; sale p.m., Lincoln, Golding, Young & Thos Mawer, 26.V.2012, Lot 285 repr., as by Thomas Edward Case [later Walker (1848–1882), of Ince Hall, Lancashire and Blythe Hall, Nottinghamshire], 19th century, est. £1000–1500 [new attr., ?; cf. Cotes] ♪

