

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

TOWNE, T.

fl. London 1782–92

T. Towne exhibited portraits at the Royal Academy between 1787 (a pastel) and 1791 (from Waltham Abbey, 1787; Pond Street, Hampstead, and 115, St Martin's Lane 1788; and Albion Street, Blackfriars 1789–91; in 1791 his submission was of the celebrated fire at the Albion Mills). None of these has survived.

An unidentified male profile from 1782 is signed on the backboard “by Mr Towne/Greenhill's Rents/St John Street”, an address in Smithfield, London. A portrait of a clergyman (Mr Cadogan, according to an annotation) exhibited in 1784 was given to “J. Towne” of 30 Fetter Lane, but he is identified as “T. Towne” on the print made by Charles Howard Hodges of this portrait of Rev. William Bromley Cadogan (Earl Cadogan's son); it is a fairly crude profile probably taken with a “delineator”, possibly in pastel. A group of seven such pastels relating to the family of John Nichols have been identified by Julian Pooley. Two were engraved by “Towne”, and the inscriptions support this, but there is no further clue as to the artist's forename. At least half a dozen other anonymous pastels could well be by the same hand.

A pastel from 1792 is apparently inscribed J. Towne on the *verso*, although a later mount transcribes this as T. Towne; the address in 1792 was Upper Marylebone Street, which does not correspond to any of the known homonyms. If it is by the T. Towne of the Cadogan profile, his skill has progressed somewhat.

It has been suggested that the RA exhibitor was the Rev. Thomas Towne (?Dorset c.1753 – Royston 1830), minister at the New Meeting-house, Kneesworth Street, Royston from 1793 until his death (he insured property there with the Sun Fire Office in 1794) and an amateur artist. A portrait of the clergyman (engraved by Ridley) appears in the *Evangelical magazine*, X, vi.1802, p. 202. He married for the second time, in London, 10.IX.1794, a Mary Bishop. From the name Livesay Mary given to a daughter born at Royston, 3.V.1798, we can infer that Towne's first marriage was to Christian Livesay Blackmore on 13.I.1778, from which we find that he originated in Smedmore, Dorset (not Downham Market, Norfolk as some sources have). His third son Joseph Towne (1808–1879) was a noted anatomical sculptor. He published *The art of painting on velvet* in 1811, a publication in which he promoted “T. Towne's Alumina”, a preparation (no doubt using alum) designed to allow watercolour to adhere to velvet. A later publication, *The automatical camera-obscura* (1821), despite the title, is not concerned with optical devices and has nothing to do with the delineator used for the pastel profiles.

Since velvet painting was a technique also used by the Jewish artist Francis Town or Towne (1738–1826), Rubens 1953 presumed that Rev. Thomas Towne and Francis Town were related (Francis is not to be confused with the Exeter landscape painter). Francis Town was thought to be the Isaac ben Benjamin Thun (possibly an exile from Thun-Hohenstein) listed as a subscriber to *Midrash Phineas*, a book published

in 1795 for members of the New Synagogue. Velvet painting was a form of decoration that was practised by a number of Jewish artists (*v.g.* Martha Isaacs; Amelia Noel). Francis Town's children, among them Charles Town (1781–1854), Benjamin and Lydia, Mrs Emanuel, were also prominent velvet painters. But it is difficult to see how they can be related, and there is no evidence that the Town family were pastellists.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Oxford DNB, *s.v.* Joseph Towne; W. D. Rubinstein & al., *Palgrave dictionary of Anglo-Jewish history*, Basingstoke, 2011, *s.v.* Town family; Julian Pooley, “Notes on the ‘Towne’ portrait of John Nichols and other members of his family and circle”, unpublished, 2012; Alfred Rubens, “Francis Town of Bond Street and his family”, *The Jewish Society of England – transactions*, XVIII, 1953, p. 100; Sée 1911; Waterhouse 1981

Pastels

J.724.101 Isaiah BLACKBURN (1783–), pstl, 24x19 ov., inscr. *verso* “Isaiah Blackburn/born 28th Sept^r 1783/Painted by J. Towne/Upper Mary Bone St/Portland Square/28th Sept^r 1792” (Cheltenham, Mallam's, 22.I.2015, Lot 185 repr., est. £80–120) φ



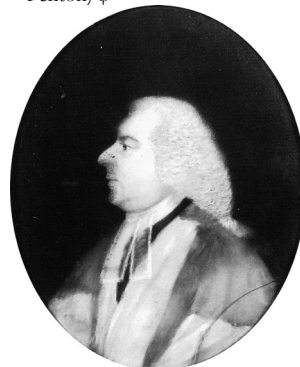
J.724.103 Rev. William Bromley CADOGAN (1750–1797), m/u
~grav. Charles Howard Hodges

J.724.105 Mrs William CRADOCK, née Sarah Gent, mother-in-law of John Nichols, pstl, 24x19 ov., c.1782 (desc.: John Bruce Nichols, Holmwood Parl, 19.VII.1929, Lot 4 part (of 7). Rev. John Gibson; London, Sotheby's, 1973, Lot 68 part, £70; G. Fenton) φ



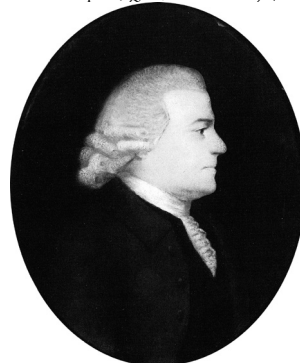
J.724.107 Dr Andrew Coltee DUCAREL (1713–1785), librarian and antiquary, friend of John Nichols, pstl, 24x19 ov., c.1782 (desc.: John Bruce Nichols, Holmwood Parl, 19.VII.1929, Lot 4 part (of 7). Rev. John Gibson; London, Sotheby's, 1973, Lot 68 part, £70; G. Fenton) φ

Lot 4 part (of 7). Rev. John Gibson; London, Sotheby's, 1973, Lot 68 part, £70; G. Fenton) φ



~grav. P. Audinet, for Nichols, *Illustrations of the literary history of the eighteenth century*, London, 1818, iii, p. 313, “Towne pinx”

J.724.11 Joseph JACKSON (1733–1792), typefounder and friend of John Nichols, pstl, 24x19 ov., c.1782 (desc.: John Bruce Nichols, Holmwood Parl, 19.VII.1929, Lot 4 part (of 7). Rev. John Gibson; London, Sotheby's, 1973, Lot 68 part, £70; G. Fenton) φ



J.724.112 ?Mrs Joseph JACKSON, friend of John Nichols, pstl, 24x19 ov., c.1782 (desc.: John Bruce Nichols, Holmwood Parl, 19.VII.1929, Lot 4 part (of 7). Rev. John Gibson. PC 2012) φδ



J.724.112 [olim J.85.14736] John MARSHALL, Esq., in a brown coat, pstl, 24x19 ov. (Leyburn, Tennant's, 28.IV.2018, Lot 1208 repr., with two other items, est. £150–250) [new attr. .VII.2018, ?] φαν



J.724.114 John NICHOLS (1745–1826), printer and antiquary, pstl, 24x19 ov., 1782 (desc.: John Bruce Nichols, Holmwood Parl, 19.VII.1929, Lot 4 part (of 7). Rev. John Gibson. PC 2012) φ



J.724.12 Man in a brown coat, blue waistcoat, pstl, 25x19 ov., sd *verso* “15 Oct^r 1782/by M^r Towne/Greenhill’s Rents/St John Street” (Chichester, Henry Adams, 7.XII.2017, Lot 378 repr., with another, est. £2) φ



~grav. Cook, for Nichols, *Collections for the History of Leicestershire*, 1787, “Towne pinx 1782/Cook sculp”

J.724.117 ?John NICHOLS, pstl, 24x19 ov., c.1782 (desc.: John Bruce Nichols, Holmwood Parl, 19.VII.1929, Lot 4 part (of 7). Rev. John Gibson London, Sotheby’s, 1973, Lot 68 part, £70; G. Fenton) φδ



J.724.121 Lady, crayons, Royal Academy 1787, no. 118

J.724.131 Lady in a blue dress, pstl, 24x19 ov. (Chichester, Henry Adams, 7.XII.2017, Lot 378 repr., with another, est. £2) φ



J.724.119 ?Mrs John PRIDDEN (∞ 1787), née Anne Nichols (1768–18..), John Nichols’s daughter, pstl, 24x19 ov., c.1782 (desc.: John Bruce Nichols, Holmwood Parl, 19.VII.1929, Lot 4 part (of 7). Rev. John Gibson. PC 2012) φδ



J.724.135 Lady in a pink dress, pstl, 25.5x20 ov. (Ian Stewart, Beal House; Edinburgh, Lyon & Turnbull, 14–15.X.2020, Lot 394 repr., anon., est. £300–500) [new attr., ?] φαν

