

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

FOLDSONE, John

c.1745 – London 1787

Also Foldstone; sometimes erroneously Foldson. An obscure figure who exhibited at the Society of Artists 1769–70 and at the Royal Academy from 1771 up to 1783; he worked in oil as well as pastel, making portraits, genre pictures and history paintings. Some of his work was engraved. He also advertised from 30.XII.1769 (*Public advertiser*) as a copyist, from Little Castle Street, Oxford Market:

As Mr Barrett, a famous Copyer of Family and Historical Pictures is dead, permit me to offer myself to succeed him in that Capacity; and as I have made that science my chief Study for many Years, hope my Endeavours will be approved, particularly as I shall leave both the Applause and Gratiuity to those who desire my Assistance in that Branch.

In 1781–83 his address was 91 Newman Street. According to Edwards, “his practice was to attend his sitters at their dwellings”, which may have encouraged him to work in pastel; he started in the morning and finished after dinner. His history paintings were “too feeble to claim the notice of posterity”. His pastels are said to have been influenced by both Russell and Reynolds, while remaining quite original, with “an undeniable distinction, force and quality” according to Sée; none has survived. After suffering from palsy for three years, he died young, leaving a widow and young family. Elizabeth Fell married John Foldstone on 29.VIII.1767 at St James’s, Westminster; at least nine children followed between 1768 and 1783. Although the date of his death is usually given as c.1784, a John Foldstone was buried in Marylebone on 12.VIII.1787. His daughter Anne, Mrs Joseph Mee (1770–1851) was a successful miniaturist, irritating Horace Walpole by delaying commissions which she blamed on the pressure of work to support her family after Foldstone’s death (she later received help from Sir Thomas Lawrence).

Bibliography

Edwards 1808; Basil S. Long, “Mrs Mee, miniature painter”, *The connoisseur*, XLV, 1935, pp. 218ff; Oxford DNB; Sée 1911; Wright 2006