

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

PHILLIPS, Peregrine

London 1759 – Milltown, near Dublin 1784

The numerous homonyms, including several families where the name was borne by successive generations, the inaccuracies of early sources and the fantasies of his father have thrown considerable confusion over this obscure artist. He exhibited chalk drawings (one, in “chalks”, might be a pastel) at the Free Society between 1771 and 1776, using the address of his teacher, Thomas Burgess (*q.v.*) 1771–74 and another accommodation address in 1776 (Messrs Brown’s, 4 Pall Mall); in 1778, from 8 Prince’s Street, he sent an engraved gem to the Royal Academy. Four years later, “P. Phillips Jr” exhibited a miniature cast at the Royal Academy in 1782, sent from Brussels. The death of “Peregrine Phillips, an eminent artist” in Milltown, near Dublin, was announced in *Faulkner’s journal* (30.III.1784). Strickland suggests that he was the “honorary member of the Dublin Volunteer Corps” but “a native of London” (sending his address from Wright’s Coffee House, Soho Square) who published “An address to the good people of Ireland” (a tract against Pitt’s anti-smuggling measures) in the Dublin *Hibernian magazine* in .IV.1789; Strickland’s implication is that the gem engraver and pamphleteer was the son of the artist who died in 1784.

In fact the address was written by the father of the artist, Peregrine Phillips (1725–1801), an attorney said to belong to an ancient Welsh family. As a boy he had been sent to America – Farington thought he had been in the merchant navy, but he may well be Peregrine Phillips, baptised 18.VII.1725, son of Richard Phillips, cooper, admitted to Christ’s Hospital and apprenticed on 13.III.1740 to serve Thomas Storer of Golden Square and the owner of sugar plantations in Jamaica. While in America (where he remained until, apparently, being wounded at the siege of Louisberg in 1745), he was taken up by Benjamin Franklin; his radical ideas influenced his writings on subjects from poetry to politics, but also led to his later being dismissed from a lucrative position at the Wine Licence Office. Of his six children by his wife, a Miss “Gascoyne” (said to be a close relative of Charlotte Corday, but probably the more prosaically named Mary Gaskin who married Phillips in St Bride’s, 15.XI.1751), the most famous was the opera singer, Anna Maria Crouch (1763–1805, the subject of pastels by Hamilton and Pope *qq.v.*, as well as a great many other portraits). The family accompanied her to Ireland in 1781, where she performed in Dublin, Cork and Limerick; her father brought a letter of introduction from Dr Johnson to William Windham, and seems to have obtained a minor appointment at Dublin Castle. They returned in 1783, but the young singer became involved in various amatory adventures in which both her own and her father’s lives were threatened. She was married to a Lieutenant Rawlings Crouch, RN soon after her return to London, although her various liaisons continued, notably with John Philip Kemble and the tenor, Michael Kelly. Her father ended his days in an elaborate cottage his daughter built for him off the King’s

Road near Sloane Square with a “Gothic hall” capable of entertaining 20 people.

Anna Maria’s eldest brother, Peregrine Phillips, showed “a great genius for drawing and engraving” according to his sister’s biographer. He was apprenticed to “a capital seal engraver” and died of tuberculosis in his 25th year, before completing his apprenticeship, leaving a widow “of whom little was said by his family”.

Bibliography

Bénézit; *Child apprentices in America from Christ’s Hospital, London, 1617–1778*; Highfill 1975, IV, pp. 81ff; McGuire 1939, p. 15; Strickland 1913; Maria Julia Young, *Memoirs of Anna Maria Crouch*, London, 1806

Pastels

J.5886.101 Lady, chalks, Free Society 1772, no. 147