

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES
OF XVIII & XIX CENTURY
MEZZOTINTERS**

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Biographical Notes of XVIII & XIX Century Mezzotinters by Anonymous

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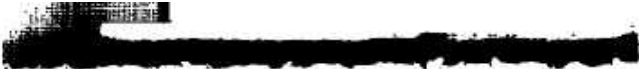
Lady Caroline Price
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, PTR.
JOHN JONES, ESQ.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES OF
XVIII & XIX CENTURY
MEZZOTINTERS

NOT MENTIONED IN OUR
TWO PREVIOUS BROCHURES

NEW YORK
M. KNOEDLER & Co.
FIFTH AVENUE AT THIRTY-FOURTH ST.

1905



*“Masters in
Mezzotint.”*

One of the most distinguished of English writers on the subject, Alfred Whitman, says: “Fine mezzotints appeal to the least cultivated mind, while to the student and art amateur they are a never-ending source of fascination and delight.”

In the previous pamphlets due consideration of a number of fine engravers was foregone, the object of these preliminary studies being, as stated, to call attention to only the greatest men in the profession. In order, therefore, to treat the subject more comprehensively and completely there are now added brief accounts of a number of good scrapers, some of them far above the average, who extend the field surveyed well into the nineteenth century.

The fine old mezzotints made upon copper showed signs of wear after twenty or thirty impressions had been taken from a plate. This accounts for the great scarcity and value of fine prints. At the present day it is the custom to “steel face” the copperplates by means

of an electrolytic process, whereby they are enabled to yield a great number of fine impressions.

The old mezzotints being upon copper the grounding was much more tender and velvety than when the plates from which they were produced were of steel. Mezzotinting upon this metal was introduced by William Say in 1820, his first subject being the portrait of Queen Caroline, from which plate 1200 impressions were taken. There is noticeable in prints taken from steel plates a certain hardness which does not appear in impressions from copper plates.

**Richard
Tompson
Died 1693** Richard Tompson and Alexander Browne flourished about 1690. It is uncertain whether they engraved or scraped. It is known that at least they published fifty or more plates bearing the inscription "Tompson excudit." They were the first to issue "Counter Proofs." A Counter Proof is a reverse impression, printed from a proof on paper subjected to great pressure while it is still wet and heavily charged with ink. Tompson engraved the portrait of Nell Gwynne and her two sons.

**Alexander
Browne**

The years which include his most notable works are those from 1680-1700. His skilful rendering of details was most distinguished and showed that he understood the capabilities of his art. He scraped a number of portraits after Lely, Kneller, Dahl, Wissing, and Van Dyck.

**R.
Williams**

The last of the mezzotint artists of the seventeenth century was Robert White, who did his best work between 1680-1683. He was considered a better line engraver than scraper. He, however, showed considerable talent in his mezzotint portraits.

**Robert
White
1645-1704**

He was the son of Robert White and produced work of no small importance between 1714 and 1731. Before devoting his time to mezzotint work he took up portrait painting and line engraving. He it was to whom was given the credit of etching the subject before grounding, a method followed by Richard Earlom and others. He also used the graver for adding the black spot in the eyes. He did not produce many portraits. The notable position he holds in the art was due to his introduction of this preliminary etching the subject before anything else was done.

**George
White
1671-1734
About**

**William
Faithorne
1616-1691**

Eldest son of the famous line engraver. He was a mezzotint scraper of distinction, and if he had not fallen into dissipated habits would have attained more of the quality of his most notable contemporaries. He engraved about fifty portraits, besides allegorical and other subjects.

**John
Simon
1675-1751
About**

This engraver, the rival of John Smith, was of Huguenot descent, and came to England in the early part of the eighteenth century. He practised line engraving in Paris, but gave it up after reaching London, where he devoted his entire time to mezzotint, becoming a master of the art in a short time. His skill was so great that he was selected by Sir Godfrey Kneller after the latter's falling out with John Smith, and engraved over forty of his portraits besides many from Dahl, Murray, and Gibson. He did not confine himself to portraits, though of these he executed nearly 200, but engraved many Biblical and fancy subjects. He was greatly influenced by John Smith, but was not up to his level in drawing and arrangement of details; but nevertheless when at his best his plates were excellent.

As did his father he engraved several series of plates. These included twelve Hampton Court Beauties, five Philosophers of England, ten Sovereigns of England, and forty-three Kit-Cat Club. It may be of interest to know that this last named club comprised forty-eight members who met at a tavern in Shire Lane, off Fleet Street, in London, called the "Cat and Fiddle," and kept by one Christopher Cat. The club also held meetings at Barn Elms, at the house of Jacob Jonson, who built a room for their purposes. He commissioned Sir Godfrey Kneller to paint portraits of the members, having them made of uniform size to fit the spaces arranged for them. This size (36 x 28 inches) afterwards became known as "Kit-Cat," which allowed of a portrait a little over half-length. The twelve Hampton Court Beauties were all full-length in their original state, but were afterwards cut down to three-quarter length and retouched by Faber. (He was noted for this practice.) He produced some 500 plates. He was a careful and finished worker, but was at his best in the later years of his life when he showed a brilliancy that compares favorably with the best work of his time.

**John
Faber, Jr.
1684-1756**