

Lornette Pemberton

From: Jacob Simon
Sent: 19 December 2016 08:58
To: Lucy Peltz
Subject: William Legg etc.
Attachments: D.Legg.docx

Lucy

I have updated my William Legg entry as attached in red, to go live in January. It is definitely helpful. But of course I would welcome your thoughts.

I am in the process of calculating all the canvas stamps of the period, as a separate document for the website, to give context and to show, among other things, how similar William Legg's stamp is to his predecessors and successors. Would you like to see my trial version? Again, I would most definitely welcome your thoughts.

Jacob

Restructured March 2014, last updated January 2017

John and William Legg, Reading 1785-1801, painters and glaziers. **William Legg**, 163 High Holborn, London 1801/2-1805/6, artists' colourman; 254 Oxford St 1806, artists' colourman; subsequently 254 Oxford St in various partnerships to 1822 (see below), coachmaker.

William Legg (1760-1823) led a varied career: in Reading in the 1780s and 1790s as a painter and glazier until 1801, then as an artists' colourman in Holborn from 1801 or 1802 until 1805 or 1806, and finally as a coachmaker in Oxford St.

"Wm Legg, colourman to artists", is recorded at 163 High Holborn in Kent's annual London directory for the years 1803, 1804, 1805 and 1806. The stated deadline for information for the directory for 1803 was Michaelmas (29 September) 1802, meaning that by late 1802 William Legg was in business at 163 High Holborn and that he could have been in occupation in late 1801. He also appears in Holden's Triennial Directory and the Post Office London directory in 1805. It is worth adding that William Legg had a son, also William, who was born in High Holborn in August 1803; his wife, Ann, was identified on the birth certificate as the daughter of Mr Woodard, so confirming Legg's origins in Reading and also his presence in High Holborn (for Ann Woodard, see below, 'Legg in Reading'). The birth certificate names Elizabeth Legg and Elizabeth Hodges as witnesses.

Legg the colourman: Legg's premises at 163 High Holborn were situated on the north side of the road, in the parish of St George Bloomsbury, near Drury Lane. These premises were previously occupied by James Poole (qv) until his death in summer 1801, and subsequently by Thomas Brown (qv) by late 1806, whose entry in the *Post Office Directory for 1807* reads, "Brown T. Colour and Primed Cloth Manufactory, 163, High Holborn, Successor to Mr Legg, late Poole." William Legg is probably to be identified with the colourman, Legge, whose white paint P.J. de Louthembourg preferred to Middleton's in 1804, saying it was whiter and purer, and who laid grounds for Louthembourg (Farington vol.6, p.2317). He may possibly be the 'Legge' employed by Henry Fuseli, described as a framemaker by Thomas Coutts in a letter to Fuseli, apparently in 1804, when Coutts wanted Legge to line a picture, make gilt slats for it and hang it up (David Weinglass, *The Collected English Letters of Henry Fuseli*, 1982, p.309, information from Mrs Ann Rice). Fuseli is known on occasion to have used Legg's predecessor, Poole, and his successor, Brown.

Legg's canvas stamp, "WM. LEGG,/ High Holborn/ LINEN." is found on James Northcote's *Mrs Smith*, 1803, with duty stamp dated 1802 (Private coll., London). An indistinct example of this stamp is found on the reverse of the Rice "Jane Austen" portrait (Christie's New York 19 April 2007 lot 120, bought in). In form this stamp is not unlike that of Poole his predecessor and Brown his successor. It would seem that Legg's brother, John, or another member of the family, James, traded in partnership with him for a time in London since a second very similar canvas stamp has been recorded, "W & J LEGG/ High Holborn/ LINEN", including an example datable to 1804 and another 1807 (a photograph of the latter, with associated tax stamp, 1807, was kindly shown to the compiler by Robin Roberts, January 2009). John Legg was listed in the poor rate books as paying a rate in 1802 and 1803 while James Legg was recorded in the land tax assessments in 1804 and 1805, in both cases very probably for the premises at 163 High Holborn (see *Sources* below for a detailed analysis). On the available information, these documents provide further evidence that it was in the period 1801/1802 until 1805/1806, and only in this period, that the Leggs, whether William, John or James, were trading in High Holborn.

Whoever was paying tax, it was William Legg whose name appeared in directories (and so in the public eye) and whose stamp was applied to canvases, whether as William or, in partnership, as W. & J. Legg, as owner in the eyes of the law to meet the requirements of the Linen Act, 1785 (25 Geo III ch.72, clause XXI). Under this legislation, there was a legal obligation that any piece or remnant of a piece of linen or other material subject to duty, should be marked by the owner at both ends with their name, place of abode, the name and quality of the goods and the price or value of the stuff. In practice the price was rarely applied. Because the Leggs traded in High Holborn for only a few years, there are not many recorded examples of canvases bearing the Legg stamp. Those that have a so-called frame mark with legible date belong to the years 1802 to 1807. For an explanation of the frame mark, see on this website, 'Three-quarters, kit-cats and half-lengths': British portrait painters and their canvas sizes, 1625-1850 (section 1.2, The supply of canvas).

Legg the coachmaker: In the *Post Office Directory for 1807*, compiled late in 1806, "Legg" was listed twice at 254 Oxford St: firstly under Legg, W. as "Colourman to Artists" (an unusual description and exactly the same as that in the listing at 163 High Holborn the previous year), and secondly under Williams & Legg as coachmakers, so linking, but not necessarily identifying, Legg the colourman with Legg the coachmaker, as is discussed further below. The partnership, Williams & Legg, was in existence by January 1806 when it appears in the account book of Thomas Jackson (V&A Archive of Art and Design, AAD/2012/1/2/1; for Jackson see [British picture framemakers](#) on this website); the previous partnership at this address, 254 Oxford St, trading as Williams & Bushnell, was dissolved in December 1805 (*London Gazette* 8 February 1806).

In 1799 Williams & Co, late of Reading, coachmakers, advertised that they had taken spacious shops and premises previously occupied by Mr Barnard, coachmaker to his Majesty, at 254 Oxford St (*Reading Mercury* 22 April 1799, accessed through British Newspaper Archive). In the years 1799-1822, Thomas Williams traded at 254 Oxford St as Williams & Bushnell until 1805, as Williams & Legg, 1806-8, as Williams, Legg & Masters, 1809-16, and again as Williams & Legg, 1816-22 (*Morning Chronicle* and other newspaper advertisements, accessed as above). The two men, Williams and Legg, were presumably acquainted from their Reading days (John and William Legg were coach painters there). Quite which Legg was involved in the business may have changed with time. 'W. Legg' was listed as a colourman at 254 Oxford St in 1807 and may have continued at this address as a coachmaker although not documented as such until 1817. James Legg, perhaps William Legg's nephew or cousin, was recorded in a court case in 1810 as joint owner of property stolen from him, Thomas Williams and William Masters, presumably from the coach making business at 254 Oxford St (Proceedings of the Old Bailey, information kindly supplied by Mrs Anne Rice, January 2014). William Legg, the former colourman, was recorded in this business in 1817, when he made his will (see below), in 1818 and 1819 in poll books and in 1822 when his partnership with Thomas Williams as coachmakers was dissolved (*London Gazette* 4 January 1823).

William Legg committed suicide by cutting his throat at his residence, 20 Park Road, on 13 March 1823 (*Morning Chronicle* 18 March 1823). Aged 63, he was buried on 19 March in Bunhill Fields burial ground. In his will, made 6 March 1817 and proved 29 March 1823, William Legg, coachmaker of 254 Oxford St, referred to his leaseholds at Reading and requested to be buried in St Mary's parish church, Reading. He made bequests to his mother Barbara, his wife Ann, his three married daughters, Ann, Elizabeth and Miriam, and to his other children, so allowing us to be confident that this is the will of the former colourman of High Holborn.

Legg in Reading: Legg's will allows us to identify his birth and early years in Reading. William Legg was christened in 1760 at St Mary's, Reading, the son of George and Barbara Legg. He married Anne Woodard on 27 March 1788 at St Mary's, Reading, and they had eight children in Reading, including daughters as named above, who were christened in this church between 1 June 1789 and 7 May 1800, demonstrating that Legg was living in Reading immediately before becoming a colourman in London. It is worth noting that John and William Legg were recorded as painters in Reading in the *Universal British Directory*, vol.4, of about 1798. John Legg is presumably William's older brother, who was christened at St Mary's, Reading in 1756. Their partnership began in 1785, three months after the death of their father when they announced that they were carrying on business as usual "in the Coach, Sign, House-painting, and Glazing Branches" (*Reading Mercury* 15 August 1785, kindly communicated by Robin Roberts). The partnership continued until 1801 when it was dissolved, as announced in their notice, as "Painters, Glaziers &c", dated 2 October, with John Legg carrying on the business (*Reading Mercury & Oxford Gazette* 5 October 1801, kindly communicated by Robin Roberts). It was late in 1801 or in 1802 that William Legg began his business in High Holborn. There is no evidence to suggest that Legg dealt as a colourman in Reading although he would have been well qualified to do so, given the role of some painters who also acted as colourmen, especially outside London.

An earlier member of the Legg family has been identified by Robin Roberts, namely William Legg (1740-98), an uncle, a tallow-chandler in Snow Hill (verbal and e-mail communications, June-August 2011). Another man, William Daniel Legg (1743-1806), haberdasher and joiner, has been put forward by Ellie Bennett (see 'The Wrong Legg', at www.janeaugustenriceportrait.com/the-wrong-legg/4587856565). However, there is no evidence that either individual traded from High Holborn as an artists' colourman. It has been claimed that there could have been an excise duty officer by the name of William Legg who applied his name to canvas; however, there is no evidence in the

legislation or in its application that this was the case. Other members of the Legg family in London, named in the colourman William Legg's will, were Jabez Legg and Samuel Legg, both upholders in Fleet St. There was also a William Legg, father (c.1781-1835) and son (c.1805-1834), trading at one time or another in Chandos St as coachmakers.

Sources: For William Legg's son, William, born High Holborn in 1803, see National Archives, RG 5/28, C.3022, accessible at www.ancestry.co.uk; see also RG 4/4660. Information from Land tax records kindly provided by Mrs Anne Rice, January 2014; these records are also accessible at www.ancestry.co.uk. Land tax was assessed on the owner although the name of the occupier is also given; it is the occupier who is the focus here (whether or not they paid tax on behalf of the owner). Information from rate books comes from the St Giles-in-the-Fields and St George Bloomsbury joint vestry poor rate books, available on microfilms UTAH 112-114 at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre. Both the land tax and the poor rate were usually assessed in June although the 2nd and 3rd instalments of the poor rate were not due until the following December and March, with any change in occupant pencilled in when the instalments were collected. The names recorded, with Christian names spelt out if abbreviated, are given here for the property for the years 1800-1806 for land tax (LT) followed by the poor rate (PR):

1800 James Poole (LT), James Pool (PR)
1801 James Poole (LT), James Pool, with John Legg pencilled in (PR)
1802 James Poole (LT), John Legg (PR)
1803 James Poole (LT), John Legg, with M. Row pencilled in (PR)
1804 James Legg (LT), M. Row, with Joseph(?) Hodges pencilled in (PR)
1805 James Legg (LT), Joseph Hodges, with Thomas Brown pencilled in (PR)
1806 Thomas Brown (LT), Thomas Brown (PR)

Names in these records were not always accurately recorded as is clear from the appearance in the land tax listing of the previous occupant, James Poole, for the two years after his death in 1801. The presence of Row/Rowe and Hodges in the poor rate books may suggest that the property, apparently a four storey building, was subdivided or sublet or that Legg had vacated the premises by 1804 although this would not sit comfortably with the land tax assessment. It is worth noting that Elizabeth Hodges was well known to William and Ann Legg, having acted as a witness at the birth of their son in August 1803. For more information on land tax and poor rate records, see Resources and bibliography.

