

## **Lornette Pemberton**

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**From:** Jacob Simon  
**Sent:** 08 February 2017 09:33  
**To:** Nicholas Cullinan  
**Cc:** Pim Baxter; Gabriella Swaffield  
**Subject:** Legg canvas stamp  
**Attachments:** D.Legg canvas stamp.docx

Dear Nick

Even before I met her, the owner of the portrait of Mrs Smith felt that the canvas stamp on her portrait was identical to that on the Rice portrait. Last night, my partner Jenny, who has not previously seen the images, felt exactly the same. Of course I agree. The implication may be that most others will be equally convinced. The question, however, is whether supporters of the Rice portrait will seek wriggle room. I have done a document illustrating the stamp, as attached.

Were we to think of releasing the image now, it would have to be done with the owner's permission. She is a journalist and had an idea for a story round her portrait (which I rather discouraged: anything for a quiet life). She may not wish to release the image until she has made a decision on whether she wishes to do her own story. If she is still considering a story, one obvious time to publish would be at the time the Winchester exhibition opens.

Perhaps you would consider with Pim and others whether we should provide further details to the owner so she can make a fully informed decision on how she would like to go forward in this matter. All I have done is to flag up that there is interest without going into detail. I would be very happy to share all my correspondence, which has been done through her husband.

Jacob

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## The Legg canvas stamp

William Legg is documented as a colourman in London, in High Holborn, c. 1801/2-c.1805/6, as is set out on the National Portrait Gallery website at [British artists' suppliers, 1650-1950 - L - National Portrait Gallery](#).

At the time colourmen were legally obliged to mark their canvas with their name, address and the nature of the product. Under the legislation, duty was raised on canvas, among other textile products. William Legg, and at one stage his brother, John, used two stamps:

W<sup>m</sup> Legg,  
High Holborn  
LINEN

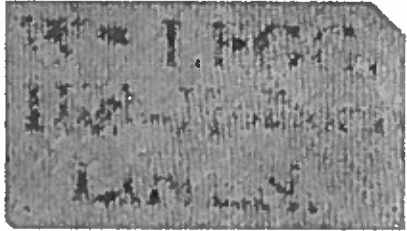

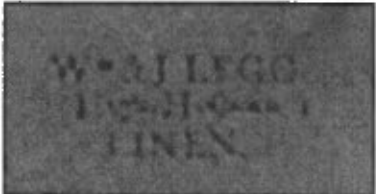
W & J Legg  
High Holborn  
LINEN

Such canvas stamps for any supplier are rare since many paintings have been relined. The Legg business was in operation for only four or five years making their stamps rarer still.

James Northcote's portrait, *Mrs Smith*, dated 1803 (Private coll.) has never been relined. It has a clear impression of the stamp of William Legg, together with an associated duty stamp, dated 1802 (suggesting that the canvas was manufactured and taxed in 1802 and used in 1803). See illustration on page 2.

The stamp on the Rice portrait, now indistinct following several relinings, has the same layout and wording as the Mrs Smith stamp. It appears to be identical. See illustration on page 2.

It is claimed that the word "Holborn" is spelt "Holbourn" on the Rice portrait but this is unclear from the reproduction of the stamp on the Rice portrait website. It is also claimed that the word "Holborn" is followed by the numeral, "1". From experience of canvas stamps, this marking would appear to be incidental, rather than an actual numeral, and perhaps results from the way the stamp was applied to the canvas, as is illustrated by an example of a stamp by Legg's successor, Thomas Brown, in the Victoria and Albert Museum (See illustration on page 2).

Supplier, work details	Supplier dates, mark transcript	Product mark
<b>William Legg, W. &amp; J. Legg</b>	At this address 1801/2-1805/6 Successor to Poole, followed by Brown See <u>British artists' suppliers, 1650-1950 - L</u>	
<i>Illustrated:</i> James Northcote, <i>Mrs Smith</i> , 1803 (Private coll.)	<i>Stamp on canvas:</i>  W <sup>m</sup> LEGG, High Holborn. LINEN.	
<i>Illustrated:</i> Unknown artist, 'Rice portrait', called <i>Jane Austen</i> (Private collection)	<i>Stamp on canvas:</i>  W <sup>m</sup> LEGG, High Holborn. LINEN.	
	<i>Stamp on canvas:</i>  W <sup>m</sup> & J LEGG High Holborn LINEN.	
<b>Thomas Brown</b>	In business from 1805/6, successor to Legg See <u>British artists' suppliers, 1650-1950 - B</u>	
<i>Illustrated:</i> Henry Fuseli, <i>The Poet Observing Nerea with Her New Lover in Her Grotto</i> , c.1810-13 (Victoria and Albert Museum)	<i>Stamp on canvas:</i>  T. BROWN. High-Holborn LINEN.  [Similar in format to William Legg's stamp]	