**MINUTE PARTICULAR**

**W. S. Blake: New Facts and Engravings**

BY G. E. BENTLEY, JR.

G. E. Bentley, Jr., (gbentley@chass.utoronto.ca) hopes that his book on Thomas Macklin as printseller and patron will come out in 2016.

1

WILLIAM Stadden Blake (1748–1814), engraver and printer of 16 ‘Change Alley, has a claim upon our attention chiefly because he shares two of his names with William Blake (1757–1827), engraver, printer, artist, and poet. When references of 1770–1827 to engravers named Blake are found, it may be difficult to determine which Blake is intended. It is therefore useful to record newly discovered facts about W. S. Blake and note differences between his career and that of the poet.

2

William Stadder Blake, the son of William and Fanny Blake, was christened on 14 January 1748 in St. Andrew's Church, Holborn. His apprenticeship indenture, with two handsome seals and “This Indenture” in Gothic type, reads:

This Indenture Witneffeth, That [William Stadden Blake Son of Daniel Blake late Citizen and Vintner of London Deceased] doth himself Apprentice to [Samuel Carr Harper] Citizen and Clothworker of London to learn his Art, … to serve from the Day of the Date hereof, unto the full End and Term of [Seven] Years …. And the said Master [In Consideration of Ten Pounds] his paid Apprentice in the fame Art which he useth, … shall Teach and Instruct, or caufe to be Taught and Instructed …. In Witneff whereof the Parties above named to thefe Indentures interchangeably have put their Hands and Seals, the [Second] Day of [December] in the [Second] Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord GEORGE the II[1] … and in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and [Sixty One] ….  

[WM Stadden Blake] [Har(?) Pollard]

Engraving was important for clothworkers, because engraved designs were extensively printed on cotton and silk.

In 1795 and 1796 William Staddon Blake was one of two churchwardens in the splendid church of St. Mary Woolnoth. He married a woman named Sarah, and in his will of 2 November 1795 he left “all” his “Worldly Estate and Effects” to his “beloved Wife Sarah Blake.” “Mr. W. S. Blake” died “in ‘Change Alley” in September 1814, and the will was probated on 10 November “by the oath of Sarah Blake Widow.” Sarah Blake was a prosperous woman: in her will, dated 10 June 1825 and probated 27 February 1826, she left £2000 to her niece Elizabeth Simpson (wife of William

3

I should like to dedicate this note to John Windle. I am also grateful for invaluable advice to Robert N. Essick and Mary Lynn Johnson.

1. There is considerable variation in the spelling of W. S. Blake’s middle name: Stadden on his own apprenticeship record and those of several of his apprentices, the trials of 1782 and 1805 at which he testified, and his will; Stadder for his christening; Staddon as a churchwarden.

2. For instance, “Blake the Engraver” whom Joshua Gilpin met on 14 April 1796 was taken to be the poet (G. E. Bentley, Jr., “The Way of a Papermaker with a Poet: Joshua Gilpin, William Blake, and the Arts in 1796,” Notes and Queries 231 [ns 33.1] [1986]: 80-84) until the discovery of a letter to Gilpin of 13 April 1796 referring to “Blake Engraver & Printer of Exchange Alley, Cornhill” made it clear that the engraver was W. S. Blake (Bentley, “The Way of a Papermaker with a Poet … Postscript,” Notes and Queries 231 [ns 33.4] [1986]: 525).


3. International Genealogical Index (IGI) of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:J3MK-BLQ>. I cannot account for the fact that the father of W. S. Blake is recorded as Daniel Blake in the apprenticeship indenture.

4. The same document was printed twice on one piece of paper, which was then torn in half along an undulating line. The authenticity of the individual documents could be ascertained by fitting the two halves back together. Of course such half-documents tend to survive separately and rarely.

All the information here about clothworker apprenticeships derives from the extraordinary generosity of Mary Lynn Johnson.

The poet’s indenture is not known to have survived; it is hypothetically reconstructed in BR(2) 12-14.

5. London Metropolitan Archives, reference COL/CHD/FR/02/0955-0962. The portions in manuscript are given within square brackets.


8. Quoted from a reproduction of the will in the National Archives, PROB 11/1562/134.

Woolley Simpson); £1000 to her nephew John Wyatt Lee; thirty acres of land in Great Totham, Essex, to Thomas Lee (son of John Wyatt Lee); stock in the West Middlesex Waterworks Company, London Dock Company, and Waterloo or Strand Bridge Company; messuages or dwellings at 29 and 30 Queen's Row, Walworth, Surrey, to her friend Samuel Willett; and to her sister Frances Maria Lee “my two Leasehold Messuages or Dwellinghouses with the outbuildings and appurtenances thereto respectively belonging being Numbers 16 and 18 in Change Alley Cornhill in the City of London now in the occupations of John Rowe and George Turney.”

4 Through the courtesy and initiative of John Windle, a number of new prints by the writing engraver W. S. Blake of ‘Change Alley have turned up, and clustering with them are some curious new facts related to him.

Newly Recorded Prints

5 “ICHNOGRAPHY of CHARLESTON, | South-Carolina, | At the Request of Adam Tunno, Esq. For the use of the | PHOENIX FIRE-COMPANY OF LONDON, | Taken from Actual Survey, 2d August 1788 by | Edmund Petrie.” “Published 1st Jan. 1790 by E Petrie N.° 13 America Square [London].” “Blake sc ‘Change Alley.” 49 x 70 cm. See illus. 1.

6 “Devonshire Tooth Tincture,” c. 1790. 26 x 21 cm. See illus. 2.

Sold Here, | THE | Devonshire | Tooth Tincture; | Which immediately relieves the most violent Tooth-ache; it cures the Scourvy in the Gums; fastens Teeth that are loose; pre-

10. For previously recorded prints and trade cards, see Bentley, “A Collection of Prosaic William Blakes” 175-76 and “Trade Cards and the Blake Connection” 130-32, and Warner.
11. Ground plan (OED).
12. OED says that scurvy is characterized by “tenderness of the gums.”
2. “Devonshire Tooth Tincture,” c. 1790. 26 x 21 cm. Victoria University in the University of Toronto. Blake Suppl. no. 344 (Box 14).
vents those which are | decaying from becoming Worse; re-
stores them to their pristine Colour; | and renders the most
Offensive Breath in a short time | delicately Sweet. | ALSO, | THE | Devonshire | Tooth-Powder. | Which speedily cleans, whitens, and beautifies the Teeth, without | impairing the
Enamel. | Blake fc ‘Change Alley.’

The advertisement is written in a variety of scripts in
differing sizes; the most ornamental are the first "Devon-
shire" and "Tooth-Powder." The only other decorations are
curlicues and a variety of flicks or tiny circles, which are
pervasive. The whole is quite handsome. The date is prob-
ably in the early 1790s, when there was a flurry of adver-
sisements for Devonshire Tooth Tincture in terms very like
those of the W. S. Blake print.

7 A bank note with a crest (perhaps "FAW") with, beneath it,
"Blake fc Change Alley". 10.7 x 21.5 cm. The whole form
reads:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.º</th>
<th>N.º</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winborn Bank</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Promise to pay ……………………………………</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Bearer on Demand Twenty Pounds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Fryer, Andrews &amp; Woolfryes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ent. 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. The "Devonshire Tooth Tincture" was generously drawn to my
attention on 31 Jan. 2012 by John Windle (through Robert Brandeis),
who sent me a reproduction and sold it to the library of Victoria Uni-
versity in the University of Toronto. I subsequently discovered (1 Feb.
2012) that it was offered and reproduced online by Grosvenor Prints,
stock no. 9938, £280.

14. For Moore & Co’s handsome advertisement for carpets (?1797) by
the poet-engraver William Blake, see Robert N. Essick, The Separate

15. Argus 12, 16, 18-19, 23, 27 Nov., 4-5, 10, 15-18, 28 Dec. 1789, 1-2,
7-8, 15, 25 Jan., 5, 9, 12, 16 Feb., 5 March, 19 Oct., 1 Dec. 1790, 11
March 1791, 7, 15 Jan. 1793; Morning Post 27 April 1793; St. James’s
Chronicle 18 Jan. 1791, 14 Feb. 1792; Star 19 Jan. 1793; and World 21
Oct. 1789. The short "s" in the text of the W. S. Blake engraving
suggests a date after 1800, while the arcahic long "s" in “Blake fc” suggests
a date before 1800.

16. Three examples of the form (CIB.833-55) are in the online cata-
ologue of the British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals, "modern
reproduction using original printing plates." They were acquired from
the IFS School of Finance, which perhaps owns the copperplate
itself. "179 “ is the date that the bearer is to fill in.

On 5 April 1797 “W. S. Blake, (Writing Engraver)” signed a testi-
monial for Alexander Tillich’s “Specimen … to prevent the forger-y of
below, for the trial of James Rowe for having forged an order for pay-
ment of £30.

8 “General Washington,” an engraving with a thirty-two-line
dedication to Washington (“died … upon the 15th day of
December 1799”), imprint “London, Published by W. S.
Blake, 16, Change Alley Friday, June 27, 1800.” 58.1 x 44.4
cm. See illus. 3.

9 “Portrait of Jos. Capper Esq. of the Horns Kennington.”
"Publish’d as the Act directs by W. S. Blake Oct. 1804”, 7.7 x
7.5 cm.

Joseph Capper (1726/7–1804) was a prosperous, eccen-
tric, cantankerous retired grocer (he left £30,000) who lived
at the Horns tavern, Kennington. “A favourite diversion of
his was killing flies in the parlour with his cane.”

10 “RICHMOND [coat of arms] YORKSHIRE. | This Plate is
Humbly dedicated to the R. Honble Lord Dundas [coat of
arms] by his Lordships most Obedient & Faithful Humble
Servant. | G. E. Towry | Pub by W. S. Blake ‘Change Alley 27
Jan. 1809.’” Colored aquatint, not signed by designer or en-
graver (perhaps engraved by W. S. Blake, who was a writing
engraver). No watermark; paper size 37.5 x 46.5 cm.; cop-
perplate size 29.7 x 43.5 cm. See illus. 4.

11 A view of a broad city street with carriages, surrounded by
an urn, an hourglass, a skull, a scythe, a fire-axe, and an or-
namental vase with St. George spearing a very modest
dragon and a label “Albion” (probably for the Albion
Insurance Company). The engraving is signed Richard "Cor-
bould del” and “Blake fc Change Alley” (c. 1814). 13.5 x
20.3 cm.

A letter of 13 April 1796 from Corbould to Gilpin recom-
ends "M. Blake Engraver & Printer” of Exchange Alley,
Cornhill who being more immediately in that line of en-
graving that will suit for the larger Drawing.

17. The print also appeared in William Granger, New, Original and
Complete Wonderful Museum and Magazine Extraordinary 3 (1805), at
p. 1693, where it is inscribed “Republish’d by Hogg & C” July 1 1805.”

19. Robert N. Essick has two W. S. Blake prints designed by Corbould
for the Albion Insurance Company (one the engraving described
1998): 123, with a reproduction of this print at p. 129.

20. Quoted from the manuscript in the Historical Society of Pennsyl-
vania (see Bentley, “The Way of a Papermaker with a Poet … Post-
script”).
3. "General Washington," 1800. 58.1 x 44.4 cm. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. P.588-1985, from the Keynes collection. The last three lines of the elegant calligraphy overlap the image of the heraldic eagle. The image at the top represents a storm-racked islet identified as “WASHINGTON”.

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W. S. Blake’s Apprentices

William Blake the poet had only one apprentice, Thomas Owen in 1788–95, and this fact was reported only a few years ago.21 W. S. Blake, on the other hand, had at least eleven apprentices from 1771 to 1806:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apprentice</th>
<th>Fee</th>
<th>Dates of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Powell, Thomas</td>
<td>£30</td>
<td>6 July 1786–July 1793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidgell, John</td>
<td>£45</td>
<td>5 July 1787–July 1794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottway, Thomas</td>
<td>£40</td>
<td>3 Feb. 1788–Feb. 1795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girtin, Jn</td>
<td>£2</td>
<td>1 Dec. 1790–Nov. 1797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkham, Majer</td>
<td>£10</td>
<td>8 Dec. 1796–Dec. 1803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaforce, Joseph</td>
<td>£2</td>
<td>1 Nov. 1797–Oct. 1804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaforce, Thomas</td>
<td>£2</td>
<td>1 Dec. 1797–Nov. 1804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowe, Jn</td>
<td>£10</td>
<td>4 July 1799–July 1806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes, Samuel</td>
<td>£25</td>
<td>13 March 1783–March 1790</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


a. Thomas Powell was bound (2 Aug. 1768) to John Banister and turned over first (5 Feb. 1771) to W. S. Blake and then (12 April 1774) to John Powell, jackmaker, citizen, and farrier.
Of these apprentices, Bowler, Chaplain, Joseph and Thomas Delaforce, Girtin, Holmes, Kirkham, Ottway, and Rowe were apprenticed as clothworkers, while Kidgill and Powell were stationers turned over from masters in the Stationers’ Company. The forms of clothworker indenture in 1783–99 differed only in minor ways from that of 1761.

13 It was customary in the book trades for boys to be apprenticed to members of the Stationers’ Company. However, exceptions were not rare. In 1792, for instance, nineteen engravers and printers were apprenticed to members of the guilds of barbers, cooks, framemakers, knitters, girdlers, goldsmiths, haberdashers, leathersellers, lorriners, merchant tailors, and musicians.22 Note that this list does not include apprentices in the Clothworkers’ Guild, to which W. S. Blake and nine of his apprentices belonged. Some boys were nominally apprenticed to a member of the Stationers’ Guild and a month later turned over to the real master (practicing in the book trades) such as a nominal grocer.24

W. S. Blake’s Addresses

14 William Staden Blake, engraver, citizen, and clothworker of Butcher Hall, Newgate Street [Horwood D2], took Powell (1771) and Kidgill (1773) as apprentices.25 He identified himself as an engraver of Abchurch Lane [Horwood E2 (illus. 5)] at the trial at which he testified in 1782.26 His Exchange (Change) Alley address is one street south of Cornhill,27 stretching two blocks between Birchin Lane to the east and a tiny unnamed lane to the west (see illus. 5). The “Post Office” is just across Lombard Street to the south; on the north side of Cornhill is the “Royal Exchange,” just north of this is the “Bank of England,” and one street to the north of the east end of Cornhill in Threadneedle Street.

22. A lorriner or lorniner was a maker of small ironware, as in horse bridles, according to the OED.

Curious New Facts about W. S. Blake

16 He was the printer of


(2) “SIR WILLIAM CURTIS, BAR. Alderman & Representative of the City of London”, “Thomas Lawrence Esq.” R.A. pinx.” “Will. Sharp, Member of the Imperial & Royal Academy of Vienna, sculpt.” “Published by W. S. Blake, Change Alley, London, March 1, 1814” 62.3 x 38.3 cm. Sir William (1752–1829) was a rich banker, Lord Mayor (1795–96), and head of the City Tories.

(3) “St. Mary Magdalen’s Taunton from an original drawing by the late Alexander Poole Moore; pubd. by W. S. Blake, Change Alley, 1 Aug. 1809.”


17 At the trial at the Old Bailey of John Hevey for forgery on 20 February 1782, “William Stadden Blake … engraver in Abchurch-lane,” testified that “Hevey applied to him to engrave the plate about the middle of July last, and printed about five hundred of them,” for which Hevey paid him £3.3.0.

18 Joseph Delaforce (age 22), the former apprentice of W. S. Blake, called on Sunday morning, 9 June 1805, at 16 Change Alley to see “my fellow-apprentice” John Rowe. Clearly he was expected and suspected, and his coming had been prepared for: Blake said that “the time before he took four” guineas. Therefore a hole was drilled through a panel from the countinghouse of Mr. Turner adjacent to the parlor, and Turner’s clerk, William Tagg, was set to keep watch. Blake had scratched tiny numbers on sixteen guineas, and

34. The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, London’s Central Criminal Court, 1674 to 1913 <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org>, reference t17820220-63. Blake was not implicated in the forgery.

35. Delaforce said that he had “the copy of my freedom” in his pocket-book.

36. William Turner, 16 Change Alley, presumably a clerk or accountant, gave £10.10.0 to the eye hospital for several years (see “W. S. Blake and Charity,” below).
on Saturday night he put them in a drawer, which he
locked. Delaforce asked to see Rowe, and, while the servant
went to fetch him, Tagg saw Delaforce come into the parlor,
force open the drawer, and take something. The constable
was summoned, five guineas were impounded, and the numbers
on the coins were found to correspond to those
missing from the drawer. Delaforce was tried on 10 July
1805 at the Old Bailey for stealing them. He was convicted
and sentenced to death, but he was recommended to mercy
on account of his youth. In January 1807 he was
transported for life to New South Wales, Australia, on the ship
Duke of Portland. At the trial, Blake testified that in his
premises “the ground floor consists of the shop, the parlour,
and an accompling-house.” “The parlour is in St. Edmund
the King [parish], and the other part is in St. Mary Wool-
noth.” He said that he had no business partner.

19 James Rowe was indicted at the Old Bailey for having
forged and counterfeited on 9 July 1805 an “order for pay-
ment” of 30l. signed William Stadden Blake, with intent to
defraud Sir Richard Carr Glyn, Bart. [(1755–1838),
the great banker, formerly Lord Mayor] Charles Mills,
and Thomas Halifax” of Birchin Lane, which forms one termi-
nus of Exchange Alley. W. S. Blake was a witness; a bank
clerk also testified that Blake “had cash in our house”
and had dealt with the bank for “some years.” At the trial on 18
September 1805 Rowe was found not guilty. Perhaps he
was a relative of Blake’s apprentice John Rowe.

W. S. Blake and Charity

20 W. S. Blake was described in 1825 as “Mr. Blake, of ‘Change
Alley,’ a jocose and excellent man, now deceased, who
employed much of his time and means in kind offices to oth-
ers.” “Blake, W. S. 16, Change-alley” gave £1.1.0 to the
London Infirmary for Curing Diseases of the Eye in 1807,
1808, 1809, 1810, 1812, and 1813, and after his death
“Blake, Mrs, Change-alley” gave the same sum in 1814 and
1815. Notice the appropriateness of an eye hospital to an
engraver. William Stadden Blake was also a trustee of Mr.
Richard Smith’s charity for the poor of the parish of St.
Mary Woolnoth. The Examiner no. 171 (7 April 1811):

21 All this information about the writing engraver W. S. Blake
helps to provide a context for the poet and engraver
William Blake.

Other Interloping Engravers Named Blake during
the Poet’s Lifetime

E. Blake (fl. 1824–27)

22 The six prints signed “Blake del et sc.” or “Blake sc” in The
Seaman’s Recorder; or, Authentic and Interesting Narratives
of Popular Shipwrecks, and Other Calamities Incident to a
Life of Maratime [sic] Enterprise, 3 vols. (1824–25) were
probably engraved by the “E. Blake” who signed plates
(1825–27) for W. West’s Theatrical Characters. “Interior of
the Sessions House, Old Bailey” (c. 1824), signed “Blake del
et sc.”, is also probably by E. Blake.

23 “KANGKOOK” (the dandy Major General Sir Henry Fred-
erick Cooke [1784–1837]), a colored print signed “Blake
fc.,” on the ground at bottom right, inscribed “London, Pub.
dec. 17, 1824 by S. W. Fores”, “41 Piccadilly, corner of
Sackville Street.” Platemark 31.5 x 20.3 cm. The style of the
engraving and the formation of the signature seem to be
those of E. Blake: in “Blake fc.” the leftward flourish from the
top and bottom of the “B” and the two-stroke looped
“k” are very like those in “Blake fc.” (“Lord Byron in a
Blake fc.” (“M. J. Huntley, as Bagzad,” West’s Theatrical Char-
acters [1825]), and “Blake fcet” (“M. J. H. Kemble, as Mas-
saniello,” West’s Theatrical Characters [1825]). The date of
the print (“1824”) means that it cannot be by W. S. Blake,
who died in 1814. An earlier engraving of “KANGKOOK” is
inscribed “Drawn Etch’d & Pub’d. dec. 1819” by Rich
Dighton” (on the grass at the bottom right), platemark 28.7
x 19.5 cm. (Bentley copy). The two versions of “Kangkook”
exhibit minor design differences.

Delaforce.
40. Article on William Sharp in The Annual Biography and Obituary,
for the Year 1825 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and
Green, 1825) 246.
41. London Infirmary for Curing Diseases of the Eye (1808) 20, (1809)
23, (1810) 14, (1811) 17, (1813) 14, (1814) 14, (1815) 22, (1816) 15.
42. Accounts and Papers, Seven Volumes. (3) Relating to Charities and
Charitable Donations, for the Benefit of the Poor and Other Persons in
England and Wales, vol. 20 (1829) 266.
43. Bentley, “Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, Blake, and The Seaman’s
44. Christopher Heppner, “Blake and The Seaman’s Recorder: The Let-
ter and the Spirit in a Problem of Attribution,” Blake 12.1 (summer
45. See Heppner 16-17.
46. The differing plate sizes indicate that these are separate engravings.
47. A copy in the British Museum has “Pub’d by T. M’Lean Haymarket”.Vol. 49, no. 3 (winter 2015–16)
24  T. J. Blake signed

“An Accurate Map of Canaan, divided into the Twelve Tribes of Israel”, “T. J. Blake sculp”, no imprint (?1780), 22.3 x 16.4 cm.


48. See also the rather crude trade card of Wm Goodcheape “Engraved by T. J. Blake N.º 18 Hosier Lane, West Smithfield”, recorded in Bentley, “Trade Cards and the Blake Connection” 132.