JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

A View of the Thames Showing the Bridge, Palace and Abbey at Westminster

JOSEPH NICHOLLS

Sold

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REF: 140078

Description

JOSEPH NICHOLLS1713-1775English SchoolA View of the Thames Showing the Bridge, Palace and Abbey at WestminsterOil on canvas90.2 x 147.3cms35.5 x 58 inches
Joseph Nicholls was a painter and illustrator of topographical views in the manner of Samuel Scott, a specialist in London river views. M H Grant in his Dictionary of British Landscape Painters says that Nicholls is one of the best of the old painters of London views.

Some of his views of the City of London, Stocks Market and Fountain in the Temple were engraved, as were his illustrations to Captain C Johnson's Famous Highwaymen, Murderers etc in 1734.

This painting shows the old stone bridge at Westminster. There was fierce resistance to the building of a second bridge as the citizens of London regarded its construction with jealousy even though it was to be some way upstream from London Bridge. It took an act of Parliament in 1736 to secure the necessary authorisation for the building, although this was not obtained without great opposition from the City of London as well as from Southwark and the watermen and bargemen of the Thames. (Until the bridge was built the only communi-cation between Lambeth and Westminster was by the ferry-boat near the palace gate.)

The original design was for a wooden bridge but this was abandoned after the severe frost of 1739-40 when some of the piers for the wooden bridge were carried away. A bridge of Portland stone was then decided upon and the expenses were defrayed by public lotteries and Parliamentary grants.

The bridge was opened in 1750, having taken eleven years to build at a cost of £389,500. It measured 1,223 feet in length and 44 feet wide with thirteen large and two small semi-circular arches. Between each arch at street level was a semi-octagonal recess which provided cover for pedestrians (and places of ambush for cut-throats and robbers). It was originally held to be an engineering triumph. However, after the removal of Old London Bridge and the resultant stronger tidal current, several of the supports of the piers of the bridge were eroded over time and eventually washed away. After many years of repairs and expense the old bridge was finally demolished and building on the current bridge started in 1855.

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