

William Brooks  
1696-1749

This William Brooks may well have been the son of Brooks of Aldersgate Street (q.v.). "William Brooks, Writing Master and Accomptant at the corner of Haye's Court, the upper end of Gerrard Street, near Newport Market in S~ Ann's Westminster-With whom Youth may Board " is the address given on Plate = of this master's only known work-A Delightful Recreation for the Industrious. At the foot of the plate, in one issue of this copy-book, is a line added at a later date, " Remov'd into Wardour Street opposite S~ Ann's Court in Old Soho".

This very capable piece of work, the author informs us in his preface, was performed when he had "but just turned the third part of his climacterical year "-a roundabout way of saying that he had just come of age. The imprint bears no date, but Plate XIII is dated 1717. Prefixed to this work is his portrait engraved by G. Bickham after P. Tomlinson. In his dedication of this book to the Archbishop of Canterbury he makes an ingratiating allusion to a "young Indian prince brought from South Carolina ... and committed to his care by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel ... to be instructed in writing, arithmetic and the principles of the Christian religion; who in about six months time, by his assiduous application could read the bible, and made such a progress in writing and arithmetic, as was scarcely to be paralleled in so short a space". Plate XIV is dedicated "To the Ladies of Great Britain" and intimates that young ladies may receive instruction.

William Brooks, having married the widow of another schoolmaster-Dennis Smith (q.v.)--carried on his predecessor's school at Castle Street, in the Park, Southwark. It was to this same Dennis Smith that Gabriel Brooks (q.v.) was apprenticed. On leaving Southwark William Brooks removed to Much Baddow in Essex where he died in 1749, The school at Southwark was taken over by Richard Morris (q.v.).

To Bickham's Universal Penman William Brooks contributed one plate (No- 32), and another plate (No- 50), dated 1720, to his Penmanship in its Utmost Beauty and Extent. Massey says that there is one plate of his in Bickham's Penman's Companion, but no copy of this book has been seen.