

THE LIMNER COMPANY



Attributed to EDMUND ASHFIELD (1640 - 1679)

A portrait miniature of a Young Gentleman, wearing pale blue doublet over a white shirt and blue cape fastened with a jewelled pin at his shoulder and white lace jabot

Circa: circa 1675

circa 1675

Watercolour and bodycolour on vellum

Oval, 60mm (2 3/8in) high

Original silver-gilt frame, with engraved reverse, possibly by the goldsmith Colonel James Seamer

This interesting 17th century miniature dates to around 1690 and follows closely the style of painting shown in the portrait of The Hon. Charles North by Ashfield in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London [P.44-1987]. The V&A miniature is one of a group of five portraits of members of the North family attributed to Edmund Ashfield, who was active between 1669–90, by John Murdoch in *Seventeenth-century English Miniatures in the Collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum* (1997). The attribution to Ashfield is based on the initials 'E. A.' found lower centre right on one of the miniatures of 'Charles North, 5th Baron North de Kirtling'.

In 2014, Neil Jeffares discovered that Ashfield was the descendent of Sir Edmond Ashfield (1566-1616) of Chesham, Buckinghamshire. He likely studied with John Michael Wright but instead of oil painting he worked in pastels from around 1669. As a talented pastellist, he made portraits of those in prominent Royalist families, as well as of prominent scholars and collectors such as Elias Ashmole (now in the Ashmolean Museum). He may well have dabbled in painting miniatures as so many in his circle did.

The young man in this portrait wears dress suitable for a young noble sitter, with classical Roman overtones in the scalloped sleeves and a fine lace jabot. The frame may have been designed and made by the goldsmith Colonel James Seamer, who was also a passionate amateur draughtsman. According

to George Vertue, Seamer collected pictures and 'curiosities', knew many artists, was steward of the Virtuosi of St Luke in 1702 and a subscriber to Kneller's academy in Great Queen Street in 1711. His collection was especially rich in the prints of Van Dyck; when it was auctioned in 1737, 'from his application for about 50 years in the collecting, its believed it will be the best that has been sold since the late Lord Somers's.' Seamer made private drawings of family and friends as exercises in draughtsmanship and Vertue noted his 'sketches of heads with the pen Loosely done good Expression ... in the manner of Inigo Jones.' [1] Many of his frames were used to hold miniatures owned by the collector James Sotheby (1607–1685) who was a prominent 17th-century English art collector known for assembling a significant collection of portrait miniatures, often described as part of the "Sotheby heirlooms".

[1] Walter, S. S. (1939, Aug 12). COLONEL JAMES SEYMOUR OR SEAMER: GOLDSMITH, BANKER, PENMAN, ENGRAVER AND COLLECTOR. *Country Life (Archive : 1901 - 2005)*, 86, 142-143. Retrieved from <https://lonlib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/colonel-james-seymour-seamer/docview/1542809321/se-2>