

Engraved print.

THE GORDON RIOTS

The Riot in Broad Street on the Seventh of June 1780.

Author
HEATH, James after WHEATLEY, Francis

Publication date
Sept 29, 1790.

Publisher
Publish’d by John & Josiah Boydell, Cheapside & at the Shakspeare Gallery Pall Mall,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Engraved print.

Dimensions
Image: 425 by 597mm (16.75 by 23.5 inches). Sheet: 580 by 740mm (22.75 by 29.25 inches).

Notes
The Gordon Riots broke out across London in June 1780 in protest at the Papists Act, passed two years before. The Papists Act had lifted a number of the Penal Laws in Britain, which discriminated against Roman Catholics. The Protestant Association in London, led by Lord George Gordon, marched on Parliament along with other protesters to present a petition against the Act. The disturbance spread, resulting in the destruction of Newgate Prison and the Clink, and the escape of

the prisoners. After several days, troops were sent against the rioters.

The print was made after a painting by Francis Wheatley, commissioned by the publisher John Boydell. It shows a specific incident during the Riots, when the house of a rich Catholic Irishman, Mr Donovan, was attacked and looted. Troops arrived and fired on civilians after giving them several orders to disperse. The painting was destroyed while the engraving was being made from it, but the print was widely circulated. It is dedicated to the London Light Horse Volunteers, who helped during the riots, and was possibly commissioned to show the inadequacy of the authorities' response.

James Heath (1757-1834) engraver, he was appointed historical engraver to George III in 1794.

Francis Wheatley (1747-1801) painter; he was elected to the Royal Academy in 1791.

Bibliography

BL G,8.152; BM G,8.152; John Heath, The Heath Family Engravers 1779-1878, vol 1. (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993) 1790.6; Mary Webster, Francis Wheatley (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) E69.

Provenance

Price: £1500

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