

BOSSINGER FOSTER, JR. (1767-1816), c. 1800
Attr. Archibald Robertson (1765-1835)
watercolor on ivory
2 7/8 x 2 1/4 (7.30 x 5.72)
goldwork on verso of case includes initials 'B. F.'
Gift of Edmund B. Hilliard, 1955
Weis 54
Hewes Number: 48

Ex. Coll.: Sitter; possibly owned by his sister Elizabeth Craigie Foster Haven (1770-1851); through the family to the donor.

Bossenger Foster, Jr., was the only son of Boston merchant and importer Bossenger Foster, Sr. (1742-1805) and his first wife, Elizabeth Craigie Foster (1741-78). He was known in the family as 'Young Boss.' After Elizabeth's death, the father married Mary Craigie (cat. 50), who raised young Bossenger and his sister. Foster graduated from Harvard College in 1787 and afterward pursued a variety of occupations. He studied law in Boston but in 1790 complained to his uncle Andrew Craigie, Jr. (cat. 34): 'There are between 20 & 30 Lawyers now in this Town & not more than 4 or 5 who desire a decent maintenance from practice.... I shall soon become one of the miserable group & unless fortune should smile on me more than on others, I shall have the happy Consolation of not being poor alone.'¹

Building a fortune and maintaining the lifestyle in which he was raised were Foster's greatest concerns. He assisted his uncle and father in their business dealings by travelling to Pennsylvania and New York to inspect properties that they bought and later sold. In 1795 Foster began speculating in land himself, purchasing lots along the Hudson River. He described his long-term plans to his uncle: 'Desirous as I am to settle myself in life, to elect some permanent & lasting object of Employment, it is still a duty I owe myself & which I fully feel the force of - to take advantage of the current opportunities of acquiring property & to make some provision against the future & unforeseen.... My attention will ultimately be directed to the occupation of a Farmer - some little additional income with the annual product of a handsome farm will be equal to the satisfaction of my utmost Views.'² Lacking the business acumen of his father and uncle, Foster was unsuccessful in his investments. He was sent to Europe by family members in 1796 to investigate property in Holland and to interview British citizens who owned land in America that might be for sale. He remained in Europe until at least 1799. Foster never married, and his activities after 1799 are not well documented. He did not become a farmer, but lived with

relatives until his death in Cambridge at age forty-eight.³ This miniature is one of a group of images of members of the Foster and Craigie family attributed to the artist Archibald Robertson (cats. 34-35, 48, 50). It was probably painted in New York about 1800.

¹ Bossenger Foster, Jr., to Andrew Craigie, Jr., January 15, 1790, Andrew Craigie Papers, 1717-1834, AAS Manuscript Collection.

² Foster to Craigie, March 29, 1795, Craigie Papers.

³ Columbian Centinel, January 20, 1816. The funeral was held at the home of Andrew Craigie, Jr.