BROTHERS NATHANIEL AND ANDREW PLIMER ran away from their home in Shropshire and the clock-making profession for which their father was preparing them, spending two years roaming the countryside with a band of gypsies before settling in London in 1781.¹ Andrew, the younger brother, became servant to painter Richard Cosway (1742–1821) and Nathaniel servant to enamelist Henry Bone (1755–1834). Within years both brothers were studying miniature painting with Cosway.

Andrew was the more accomplished and highly sought-after artist. By 1786 he had set up a practice independent of Cosway and was exhibiting at the Royal Academy. In works before 1789, he depicted sitters more naturally; the miniatures of this period are often dated and signed “A.P.,” after which he stopped signing his paintings. Between 1815 and 1837, Andrew moved across Great Britain, working in Exeter, London, Scotland, and Brighton. He was a posthumous victim of his own success, spawning many forgeries that can be difficult to spot in part because the quality of the master’s work was so uneven. His paintings from this late phase suffer from redundancy, with the female portraits particularly plagued; their elongated necks and idealist appearance lend many a doll-like quality. The Cleveland Museum of Art, however, has four autograph miniatures by Plimer, all dating from the early stages of his mature career in the 1790s through 1805. Cory Korkow