

Craigie Street and Andrew Craigie

by Lynne Belluscio

As most of you know, Craigie Street marks the eastern boundary of one of the large land tracts that are in the Town of LeRoy. The land tracts were bought by land speculators in the 1790s after the American Revolution. Robert Morris had bought the rights to the land west of the Genesee River, but he suffered devastating financial reversals and had to divest himself of his holdings.

Andrew Craigie and others, such as Herman LeRoy, quickly bought up the land and hoped to reap large profits. Herman LeRoy had made his money in the shipping business, but Andrew Craigie made his money in the pharmaceutical and medical supply business during the Revolution.

Born in 1754, Craigie was only 21 when he was put in charge of procuring medical supplies for American troops in Massachusetts. He cared for the wounded at the Battle of Bunker Hill. In 1777, he was appointed by General George Washington to serve as Apothecary General for the Continental army, a position he held until he left the army in 1783. After the war, he was referred to as "Doctor" Craigie by

his business associates and was selling drugs and medicines in a wholesale business with a partner in New York City. He had a large-scale manufacturing facility in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

His interest in land speculation was not only in Western New York, but also included New England and Ohio. Craigie lived in Cambridge near Boston. In 1809, he built the bridge connecting Boston to Lechmere Point, and developed East Cambridge. He hired surveyor Thomas Tufts, Jr., (so far I haven't been able to find the connection between Thomas Tufts Jr. and Thomas Tufts who came to LeRoy as land agent for Andrew Craigie) to help with his land developments in Cambridge, however, when he rerouted the roads to his new bridge and forced people to use his toll road, his popularity plummeted.

In 1791, Craigie bought a huge home. It had been used as a hospital during the war, but more importantly, it had been Washington's headquarters near Boston for nine months in 1775-1776. Martha Washington had lived there during the winter. Craigie enlarged the house and spent much more money that he

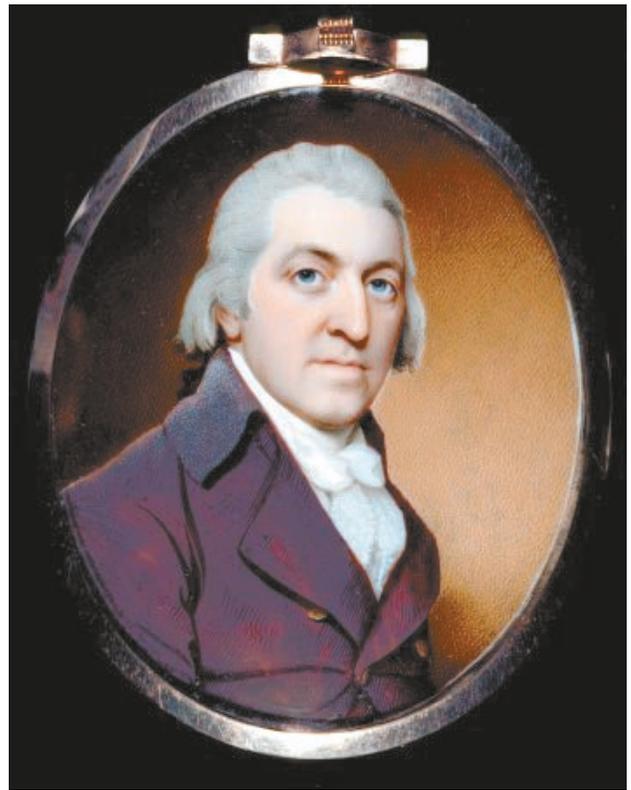
could afford on lavish furnishings and sumptuous entertaining. But his business dealings began to fail and his creditors came pounding on the door. He was virtually a prisoner in his own house, fearing that he would be arrested and put in debtor's prison.

Sources disagree on his date of death. Some say he died in 1819.

Others mention 1821. In any event, when he died, his affairs were so dismal, that his wife had to take in boarders. One of the boarders was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. A few years later, in 1843, Longfellow's father-in-law purchased the Craigie house as a wedding gift. The Longfellow family remained in the home until they established a foundation in 1913 for its preservation. In 1972, the Craigie house and all its furnishings were donated to the National Park Service and it is seasonally opened to the public.

Another interesting note is that in the early 20th Century, Sears Robuck created blueprints of a scaled down version of the Craigie - Longfellow House and several were constructed. The most famous is in Minneapolis and serves as an information center for their park system.

Back to Andrew Craigie - - In 1959, the Executive Council of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States, approved an award for pharmacy and decided that it would be in honor of Andrew Craigie. The award is presented to an individual for a career of outstanding accomplishment in the advancement of professional pharmacy within the Federal Government.



Robert A. Thom's painting, America's First Apothecary General, depicts Andrew Craigie.