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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

“Old Ironsides” through the Holmes Stereoscope



Most anesthesiologists know that physician and writer Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. (1809–1894, portrayed right), suggested the word “anaesthesia” to celebrated etherizer W. T. G. Morton. This occurred over 16 yr after Holmes immortalized in verse as “Old Ironsides” the 44-gun warship *Constitution*. Holmes’ poetry prevented “the harpies of the shore” (naval scrapyards) from plucking that “eagle of the sea.” About 29 yr after this intervention, Holmes invented his American hand-held stereoscope for viewing stereographs, which are paired photographs showing the same subjects or scenes from slightly staggered perspectives. To the left is a stereograph of the veteran ship from the War of 1812, the frigate that Holmes rescued—“Old Ironsides.” (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image also appears in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

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