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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Salt's Portable Ether Inhaler



Patented on March 5, 1847, this portable ether inhaler was manufactured by a cutlery and surgical instrument firm, M. Salt & Son of Birmingham, England. To prepare the inhaler for use, the physician or dentist had to simply: (1) remove the top, add ether to the main cylinder's sponges, and then replace the top; and then (2) partly or completely open the aeration holes at the base (*left*). In *The Pharmaceutical Journal* of London, this inhaler was noted to provide “the alternate admission of air and ether” so that “vapour may be regulated without the necessity of removing the apparatus from the [patient’s] mouth.” When Salt’s portable ether inhaler was not in use, both its top and bottom ends could be sealed—a clever design ensuring both economy in ether use and fewer spills inside the jacket pocket of the etherist. Apparently, spilling this “Salt” was not bad luck! (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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