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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Not a Pipe Dream: Crescent Interest in Free's Vegetable Anesthetic



From his George Street office in York, Pennsylvania, Dr. Harry A. Free promised to “extract teeth without pain, by the use” of his Vegetable Anesthetic (*upper left*). Advertised on a trade card featuring a sleepy, pipe-puffing crescent moon (*right*), Free’s proprietary concoction of botanical sedatives extended the anesthetic duration of nitrous oxide. By December of 1892, Dr. Free felt compelled to defend his Vegetable Anesthetic after a patient’s delayed complications were reported to have been linked to Free’s anesthetic. In an advertisement countering what Dr. Free regarded as libelous claims, the dentist included testimonials from three physicians treating the patient who had received the anesthetic that Free had dubbed (*lower left*) “The Wonder of the Age.” (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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