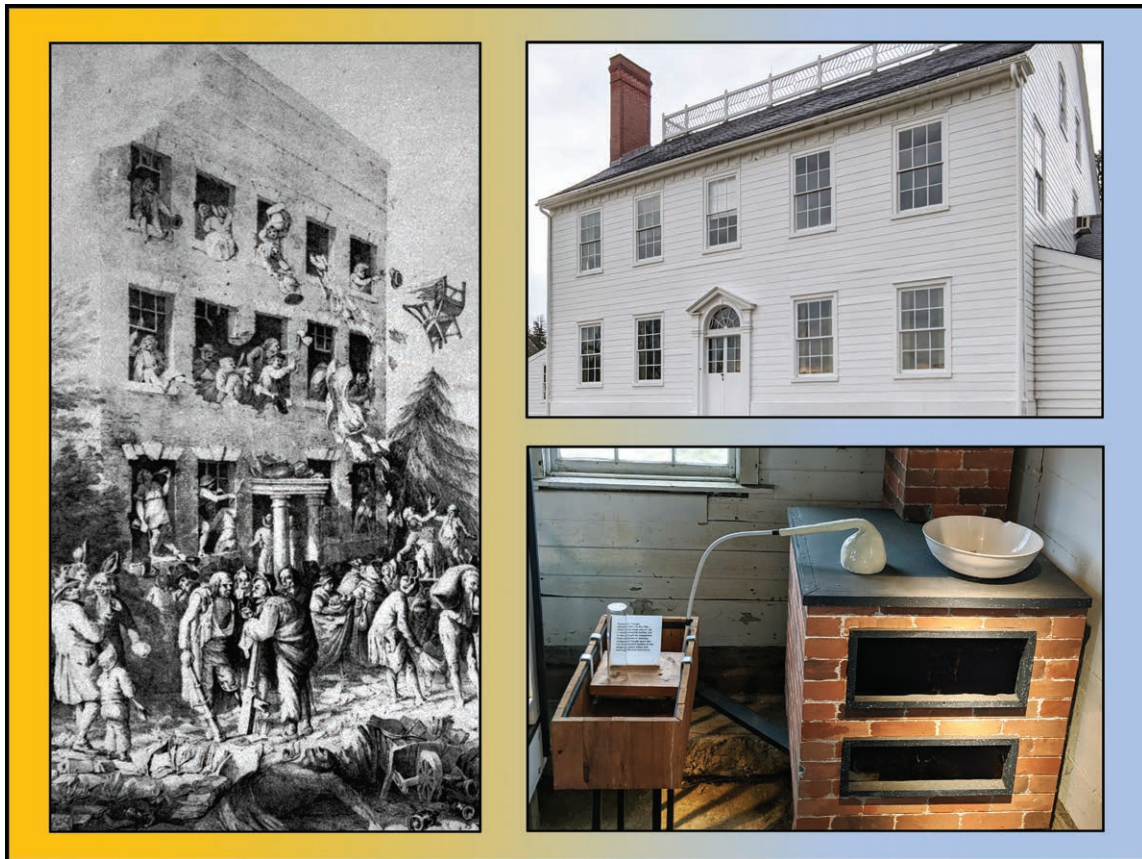


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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Riots of Discovery: Joseph Priestley's Home Laboratories in England and America



An English theologian and natural philosopher, Joseph Priestley (1733 to 1804) discovered many gases, including “dephlogisticated air” or oxygen in 1774. However, his sympathies toward revolutionaries abroad and religious “Dissenters” at home soon made Priestley unpopular with the Crown and the Church of England. In 1791, he abandoned his English home in Birmingham just before an angry mob looted (*left*) and then burned it to the ground. Political and professional outcasts, Joseph and his wife Mary joined their children in America, settling in rural Northumberland, Pennsylvania, in 1794. Wasting no time, Joseph’s laboratory was part of the first-constructed wing of the house, which was finished in 1797 (*lower right*). By equipping the Priestleys’ new home laboratory with a fume hood to exhaust both smoke and toxic, asphyxiating, or flammable gases, Joseph spared the house that Mary had designed (*upper right*) from the fiery fate that befell their Birmingham home. Venting fumes would also help shield the Priestleys from the asphyxiating carbon monoxide that Joseph would discover in 1799. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library–Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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