

J. J. Dawson

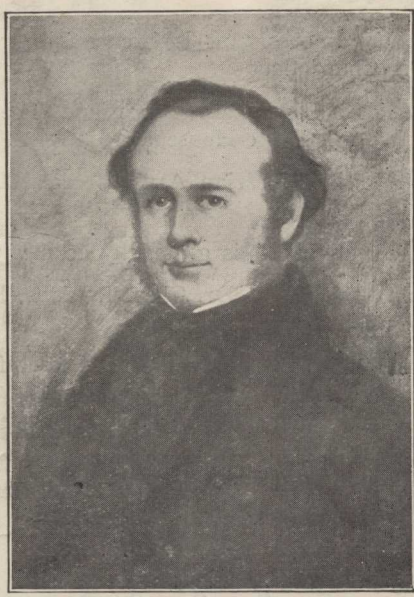
CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF
HORACE WELLS
DISCOVERER OF ANESTHESIA

BY

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READ BY TITLE AT THE 17TH GENERAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION FOR DENTAL RESEARCH, CLEVELAND, OHIO, MARCH 18, 19, 1939.
ABSTRACTED IN JOURNAL OF RESEARCH, VOL. 18, NO. 3, JUNE 1939.

PRINTED IN THE BULLETIN OF THE
HISTORY OF MEDICINE, VOLUME VII, 10, DECEMBER, 1939.

Preface

That this article contains much material which heretofore has never been published, except in the original sources long since forgotten, is due to the invaluable assistance of:

Miss Alice McCann, Librarian of the School of Dentistry, University of Pittsburgh. (This library is one of the three outstanding libraries of its kind in the world, and has a collection of historical documents and books dealing with the discovery of anesthesia and the controversy which followed, that is second to none.)

Mr. Albert C. Bates, Librarian, and Mr. Thompson R. Harlow, Assistant Librarian of the Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

Mr. Richard G. Hensley, Chief Librarian of the Reference Division, and his assistant, Mr. Thomas J. Manning, of The Public Library of the City of Boston.

Mr. Donald A. Wing, Assistant Reference Librarian, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

Mr. Dennis A. Dooley, State Librarian, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Library, State House, Boston.

Col. Harold W. Jones, Librarian Army Medical Library, Washington, D. C.

The help of these individuals is gratefully acknowledged.

The author is also indebted to Dr. Chas. J. Wells, Buffalo, N. Y. for his generous loan of the cuts used in this article.

This article was written to supply the need of a factual Chronological history of Dr. Horace Wells.

W. H. A.



CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF HORACE WELLS
DISCOVERER OF ANESTHESIA^{1 2}

W. HARRY ARCHER, B. S., D. D. S., F. I. C. A., F. A. C. D.

1815

January 21. Born at Hartford, Windsor County, Vermont³. First child of three born to Horace and Betty Heath Wells. (1) (2) (3) (6)

1817

Brother Charles was born. (3)

• 1818

Family moved to Bellows Falls. (1) (3)

1819

Sister Mary was born. (3)

1821-1834

Attended select schools for 12 years; boys private school for one year with Mr. Ballard, at Hopkinton, New Hampshire; Academies at Amherst, Massachusetts and Walpole, New Hampshire.

He was a teacher for one district and many Writing Schools and at one time contemplated entering the ministry. (1) (2)

1834-1836

Studied dentistry in Boston by association with leading dentists. No dental college at this time.

Practiced briefly in Boston. (1) (2)

1836

Started practice in Hartford, Connecticut. Soon head of his profession. (2)

April 4, 1836. In the Connecticut Courant, Vol. 72, No. 3715, page 3 is the following ad:

Dr. H. Wells, from Boston, would inform the Citizens of Hartford, and the adjoining Towns, that he has at length acceded to the wishes of numerous friends

in this section of the country, by making arrangements for spending a short time in this City, with a view of becoming a final resident, should present patronage be sufficient to warrant future success.

He offers himself as a professional Dentist, and all work in the line of his profession will be thankfully received and faithfully executed. As he has embraced the new and much improved style of inserting Teeth as recently introduced into London and Paris, He pledges himself to give an acknowledged satisfaction in the most difficult cases. In soliciting a share of patronage, Dr. W. would avoid boasting of his own skill, or derogating that of others—but Ladies and Gentlemen are respectfully invited to call and examine his method of Inserting Mineral Teeth on Gold Plate. Particular attention paid to the preservation of Natural Teeth, by a process of cleansing and filling with gold.

Office in Main-street, nearly opposite the Connecticut Hotel, 2d door from State-street, April 4.

* * * *

This certifies that I the subscriber, a citizen of Hartford, employed Dr. Wells, while in Boston, in an operation on my teeth, and I am happy to say that it has answered my most sanguine expectations.

Joseph S. French.

In the same paper for April 11, (page 3) and April 18, 1836 (page 1) appeared this ad:

Horace Wells, Dentist. Office in the Exchange-Buildings, on Main-street, two doors from State-street. April 11.

August. Admitted by letter to the First Church of Christ in Hartford. (4)

1838

Published a small volume, "An Essay on Teeth: Comprising a Brief Description of

of our vital statistics of this town do not cover any birth or deaths prior to 1854. There was no law in Vermont concerning the records of vital statistics prior to that date." Hence the date of birth was obtained from his first biographer (1) and checked with replies from descendants and the data on Horace Wells' grave marker.

¹ Read by title at the 17th General Meeting of the International Association for Dental Research, Cleveland, Ohio, March 18, 19, 1939.

² Abstracted in Journal of Dental Research, Vol. 18, No. 3, June 1939.

³ Mr. William S. Pingree, Town Clerk of Hartford, Vermont, informs me "that the record

their Formation, Disease, and Proper Treatment". Case, Tiffany & Co., Hartford, 1838.

Notice in the first volume of the Hartford Directory: "Wells, Horace, dentist, 162½ Main Street". (5)

Married to 20 year old Elizabeth Wales on July 9, 1838. (14) (Elizabeth Wales, born April 9, 1818, died July 17, 1889) (6) (21)

1839

August 26. Only child, Charles Thomas Wells was born. (Died June 8, 1909) (6) (21)

December 31. Patent #1450 issued to Horace Wells for Coal Sifter.⁴ (7)

1840

Discussion with Linus P. Brockett, Hartford, Conn., showed Wells "Deeply impressed with the idea that some discovery would yet be made by which dental and other operations might be performed without pain." (14)

1841

May 13. First entry in Day Book. (12)

Records of first five years of practice probably lost. (8)

William T. G. Morton of Farmington, Conn., recited to and studied Dentistry under Dr. Wells. (9)

Busy practicing his profession.

1842

William T. G. Morton continued his study of dentistry under Wells. (9)

Practice flourished. (1) (2)

1843

Interesting entry in Day Book, September 10, 1843: "Mr. Morton, Dr. Solder . . . and spiral springs—\$1.32." (8)

Wells and Morton enter into an agreement for the promotion of an "enterprise" in Boston, concerning which, under the date line of November 22, 1843, the following letter from Wells to Morton is printed in Dr. N. P. Rice's book: "to show

⁴It has erroneously been reported that no patents were issued to Horace Wells. Mr. J. A. Brearley, Chief Clerk, Department of Commerce, United States Patent Office, Washington writes: "You are advised that the Index of Inventors

the good feeling which existed between them, and the cause which really induced their separation". (15) [Dissolution of partnership]

"Dr. Wells wrote: 'We can both of us see at a glance that it is madness for us to go ahead under present circumstances, for the reason that our receipts will barely pay the cost of materials used, even if we had ever so much work at the prices you have taken those jobs now on hand. . . [Unfortunately part of the letter was deleted]. . .

'I am satisfied in my own mind that our enterprise will be a total failure. So let us give it up and jog along here at home as usual; in case you do not give up the enterprise, I, of course am ready, and do give you notice that I wish to get out of it as soon as our agreement will permit. I wish you to understand that I have not the least fault to find with you; I have the utmost confidence in you as a gentleman, and one who will ever aim to act your part well in accordance with the strictest honor and integrity; we have both exerted ourselves to the utmost, and I believe that our ill-success cannot be attributed to either of us so far as 'goaheaditiveness' is concerned'". (15)

1844

Morton apparently convinced Wells to continue this strange relationship, because on January 30, 1844 this ad appeared in the American Traveller (Vol. 19, No. 61).

DENTISTS

Messrs. Wells & Morton, Dentists, No. 19 Tremont Row, are determined to make their valuable invention extensively known, and duly appreciated in the shortest time possible; with this in view we now propose to insert teeth on gold (until further notice) without compensation until the expiration of one year; then if the patient is perfectly satisfied that our invention is really valuable and superior to any other mode of constructing gold plates, we shall expect a small compensation which may be previously agreed on, otherwise we will ask nothing. All we shall require when the teeth are inserted, will be just enough to pay for the materials used, which will be but a trifle. If by this means we are enabled to introduce our improvement more extensively than in the ordinary way, our object will be attained.

All persons can have the benefit of this proposition, whether living at a distance or in town, by calling or sending us word

from 1790 to 1847 shows two patents issued in the name of Horace Wells of Hartford, Connecticut, No. 4836 for Shower Bath issued November 4, 1846 and No. 1450 for Coal Sifter issued December 31, 1839."

within one week after the publication of this notice, so long as it may be continued.

N. B.—Dr. Charles T. Jackson's certificate respecting this invention to be seen at our office.

Wells & Morton,
No. 19 Tremont Row.

Nov 4—Wly

This co-partnership was apparently in name only, as Wells remained in Hartford. (8) Wells describes this relationship in these words: "I—assisted in establishing him in the city of Boston—" (9)

Wells had quite a number of coal sifters made by Col. Thomas Roberts, Manufacturer. (10)

March 4th. Entry in Horace Wells' Day Book: "Dr. Wm. T. G. Morton, to operations on teeth and instructions in the art of dentistry *as per agreement* \$50.00 (8) (12)

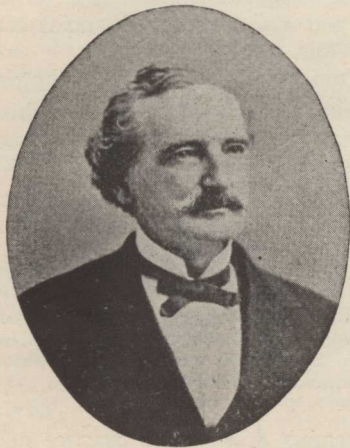
Entries on May 4th, 17th, 21st, 27th, June 11, August 30, September 2nd, show charges for work done for Morton or his patients. (8) (12)

October 24. The following appeared in the Boston Daily Atlas (Vol. 13, No. 100).

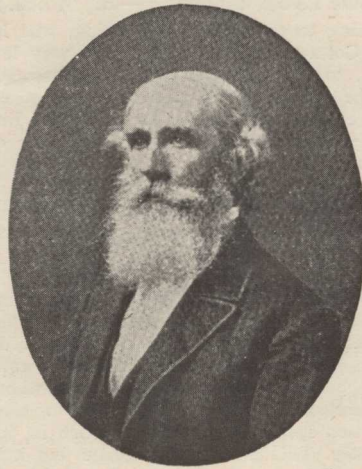
COPARTNERSHIP NOTICE. This certifies that the co-partnership of WELLS & MORTON has been dissolved by mutual consent.

Oct. 18, 1844 Horace Wells
 ep3t 023

December 10, attended G. Q. Colton's lecture on chemical phenomenon where the idea of inhalation anesthesia crystallized



GARDNER Q. COLTON



DR. JOHN M. RIGGS

in Wells' mind. (9) (11)

December 11, inhaled nitrous oxide gas administered by Colton and had an aching third molar painlessly extracted by his friend and former pupil Dr. John Riggs, later of Riggs' disease fame. This was the first operation performed under nitrous oxide inhalation anesthesia. (11)

Experimented with administration of nitrous oxide to his patients to prevent pain while teeth were being extracted.

1845

January, entries in Day Book for charges for work done on patients were made on the 6th, 7th, 11th, 15th, and 16th. (12)

The last of January—Wells lectured before Dr. John C. Warren's class on "The Use of Nitrous Oxide for the Prevention of Pain" and demonstrated anesthesia for extraction before Harvard medical students in Boston. (13) Dr. Wm. T. G. Morton was present and loaned Wells the necessary extracting instruments. (9) (10)

February 4th, 6th, 7th and 17th entries made in the Day Book. No more entries until Sept. 10th. (12) Wells states, "the excitement of this adventure, [the demonstration in Boston] brought on an illness from which I did not recover for many months, being thus obliged to relinquish, entirely, my professional business." (9)

February 5, 1845, in the Hartford Courant, Vol. 9, No. 30, page 3, appears:

COTTAGE TO LET—H. WELLS, wishing to give up house-keeping, will let his Cottage on Lord's Hill at a very low rent, to one who will pay some attention to the shrubbery and trees on the premises. Possession given on the 1st of April. Enquire at his office between the hours of 10 and 12 A. M. tf feb 4

April 7, 1845, The Hartford Courant, this date, Vol. 9, No. 81, page 3, has the following notice:

DENTAL NOTICE—Having relinquished my professional business for the present, in consequence of ill health, I do with pleasure refer those who have confidence in me, to Dr. J. M. Riggs, whose professional qualifications in my opinion are not surpassed by any Dentist in the country. This is strong language, but it is said solely for the benefit of my friends who may require any operations on the teeth in my absence.

H. Wells.
Hartford, April 5, 1845. 13wd&w86

This arrangement lasted, according to Riggs' day book, from April 1, 1845 to September 1, 1845. Riggs allowed Wells \$25.00. (10 Appendix)

April-May. Arranging a "Panorama of Nature" which was exhibited for some time in the City Hall, Hartford. (10)



HORACE WELLS COTTAGE

May. Conversations with Hon. James Dixon regarding his discovery of the pain relieving properties of nitrous oxide. (10 Appendix)

June 2, 1845, This ad in the Hartford Courant, Vol. 9, No. 129, page 3, announced the opening of:

WELLS' PANORAMA OF NATURE

H. WELLS will give a series of Entertainments, embracing the subject of Natural History, at the CITY HALL, commencing THIS EVENING, Monday, June 2d.

Major Hamilton's Brass Band will be in attendance.

Single tickets 25 cents. Tickets admitting a Lady and Gentleman, 37 1/2. Children under 12 years of age at half price.

Doors open at 7 1/2—commence at 8 o'clock.

Hartford, June 2, 1845. dtf

(This notice was repeated June 3, 4, 5, 1845.)

June 18, 1845, P. W. Ellsworth, M. D. published an article in the Boston Medical & Surgical Journal, Vol. XXXII, No. 2, "On the Modius Operandi of Medicine". On pages 396 and 397 he says: "The nitrous oxyd gas has been used in quite a number of cases by dentists, during the extraction of teeth, and has found by its excitement, perfectly to destroy pain; the patients appear very merry during the operation, and no unpleasant effects follow." Dr. Ellsworth lived in the same house with Dr. Wells at this time.

July. Morton travelled to Hartford and conferred with Wells and Riggs concerning the manufacture and use of nitrous oxide and also to settle financial accounts with Wells. (10)

Morton states Wells was arranging an exhibition of birds at the time of this visit. This was probably part of the "Panorama of Nature". (10)

August 29, 1845. This notice was published in the Hartford Courant, Vol. 9, No. 205, page 3:

DENTIST

H. Wells, Dentist, having taken rooms at No. 14 Asylum Street, a few doors from Main Street, will resume his professional business on Monday, September 8, 1845.

d&wtf 6

September 8. Resumed practice in Hartford, at 14 Asylum Street. Entries in Day

Book for Sept. 10th, 11th, 12th, 15th, 16th, 23rd, and 26th. (12)

October 9th, 10th, and 12th, entries in Day Book. (12)

November 5th. Entry in Day Book. (12)

Winter, Wells invents shower bath and tub. Applied for patent. (10)

Controversy over this invention with Col. Thos. Roberts, a stove dealer, tin and sheet iron manufacturer. (10) Settled by arbitration with Francis Parson Esq. in favor of Wells.

1846

March. Entered into partnership with Col. Thos. Roberts for manufacture and sale of shower baths. (10)

Spring. Actively engaged in shower bath business. (10)

April 4. The last entry was made by Dr. Wells in his Day Book. (12)

Summer. On a visit to New York Wells called on Dr. Valentine Mott, "... and made the fact known ... of the influence of the Nitrous Oxyd or Sulphuric Ether to obliterate all consciousness of pain in surgical operations. ..." (14)

Oct. 19, Morton wrote to Wells concerning his new "compound" for putting patients to sleep. (10) (16)

Boston, October 19, 1846

Friend Wells:

Dear Sir:—I write to inform you that I have discovered a *preparation* by inhaling which a person is thrown into a sound sleep. The time required to produce sleep is only a few moments, and the time in which persons remain asleep can be regulated at pleasure. While in this state the severest surgical or dental operations may be performed, the patient not experiencing the slightest pain. I have *patented* it, and am now about sending out agents to dispose of the right to use it. I will dispose of a right to an individual to use in his own practice alone, or for a town, county or state. My object in writing you is to know if you would not like to visit New York and the other cities to dispose of rights upon shares. I have used *the compound* in more than one hundred and sixty cases in extracting teeth, and I have been invited to administer it to patients in the Massachusetts General Hospital, and have succeeded in every case.

The Professors Warren and Hayward have given me certificates to this effect. I have administered it in the hospital in the presence of the students and physicians—the room for operations being full as

possible. For further particulars I will refer you to extracts from the daily journals of this city which I forward to you.

Respectfully yours,

Wm. T. G. Morton

Oct. 20. Sent letter to Morton in reply to Morton's announcement of a "new compound".

"Hartford, Connecticut, Oct. 20, 1846

"Dr. Morton—Dear Sir:

"Your letter, dated yesterday is just received, and I hasten to answer it, for fear you will adopt a method in disposing of your rights, which will defeat your object. Before you make any arrangements whatever, I wish to see you. I think I will be in Boston the first of next week, probably Monday night. If the operation of administering the gas is not attended with too much trouble, and will produce the effect you state, it will undoubtedly be a fortune to you, provided it is rightly managed.

"Yours, in haste,

H. Wells."

October 24. Saturday, Dr. and Mrs. Wells arrived in Boston.

Wells visited Morton and observed the administration of the "compound" to several patients for the extraction of teeth. On his return, Mrs. Wells details the following conversation: "I asked him", she says, "whether Morton had discovered anything new?" He replied: "No! it is my old discovery and he does not know how to use it." (14)

October 26. Monday—Dr. Wells and his wife returned to Hartford.

November. Wells sold out his shower bath business to Col. Thos. Roberts. (10)

December 9, 1846. Published claim as discoverer of anesthesia in Hartford Courant, as follows:

Hartford, Dec. 7, 1846.

Mr. Editor:—You are aware that there has been much said of late respecting a gas, which, when inhaled, so paralyzes the system as to render it insensible to pain. The Massachusetts General Hospital have adopted its use, and amputations are now being performed without pain. Surgeons generally throughout the country, are anxiously waiting to know what it is, that they may make a trial of it, and many have already done so with uniform success. As Drs. Charles T. Jackson and W. T. G. Morton, of Boston, claim to be the originators of this invaluable discovery, I will

give a short history of its first introduction, that the public may decide to whom belongs the honor.

While reasoning from analogy, I was led to believe that the inhaling of any exhilarating gas, sufficient to cause a great nervous excitement, would so paralyze the system as to render it insensible to pain, or nearly so; for it is well known, that when an individual is very much excited by passion, he scarcely feels the severe wounds which may at the time be inflicted, and the individual who is said to be "dead drunk", may receive severe blows, apparently without the least pain, and when in this state, is much more tenacious of life than when in the natural state. I accordingly resolved to try the experiment of inhaling an exhilarating gas myself, for the purpose of having a tooth extracted. I then obtained some nitrous oxide gas, and requested Dr. J. M. Riggs to perform the operation at the moment when I should give the signal, resolving to have the tooth extracted before losing all consciousness. This experiment proved to be perfectly successful—it was attended with no pain whatever. I then performed the same operation on twelve or fifteen others with the same results.

I was so much elated with this discovery, that I started immediately for Boston, resolving to give it into the hands of proper persons, without expecting to derive any pecuniary benefit, therefrom. I called on Doctors Warren and Hayward, and made known to them the result of the experiments I had made. They appeared to be interested in the matter and treated me with much kindness and attention. I was invited by Dr. Warren to address the Medical Class upon the subject, at the close of his lecture. I accordingly embraced the opportunity, and took occasion to remark that the same result would be produced, let the nervous system be excited sufficiently by any means whatever; that I had made use of nitrous oxide gas or protoxide of nitrogen as being the most harmless. I was then invited to administer it to one of their patients, who was expecting to have a limb amputated. I remained some two or three days in Boston for this purpose, but the patient decided not to have the operation performed at the time. It was then proposed that I should administer it to an individual for the purpose of extracting a tooth. Accordingly a large number of students, with several physicians, met to see the operation performed—one of their number to be the patient. Unfortunately for the experiment, the gas bag was by mistake withdrawn much too soon, and he was but partially under its influence when the tooth was extracted. He testified that he experienced some pain, but not as much as usually attends the operation. As there was no other patient present, that the experiment might be repeated, and

as several expressed their opinion that it was a humbug affair, (which in fact was all the thanks I got for this gratuitous service), I accordingly left the next morning for home.—While in Boston, I conversed with Drs. Charles T. Jackson and W. T. G. Morton upon the subject, both of whom admitted it to be entirely new to them. Dr. Jackson expressed much surprise that severe operations could be performed without pain, and these are the individuals who claim to be the inventors. When I commenced giving the gas, I noticed one very remarkable circumstance attending it, which was, that those who sat down resolving to have an operation performed under its influence, had no disposition to exert the muscular system in the least, but would remain quiet as if partially asleep. Whereas, if the same individuals were to inhale the gas under any other circumstances, it would seem impossible to restrain them from over exertion.

I would here remark, that when I was deciding what exhilarating agent to use for this purpose, it immediately occurred to me that it would be best to use nitrous oxide gas or Sulphuric Ether. I advised with Dr. Marcy, of this city, and by his advice I continued to use the former, as being the least likely to do injury, although it was attended with more trouble in its preparation. If Drs. Jackson and Morton claim, that they use something else, I reply that it is the same in principle if not in name, and they cannot use anything which will produce more satisfactory results, and I made those results known to both of these individuals more than a year since.

After making the above statement of facts, I leave it for the public to decide to whom belongs the honor of this discovery.

Yours truly,
Horace Wells, Surgeon Dentist.

December 10. Wrote to Morton as follows:

Dear Morton:

I have just seen a copy of your claim, and find that it is nothing more than what I can prove priority of discovery (to) by at least eighteen months. When in Boston, at your room, I was well satisfied that the principal ingredient was ether, and, to all appearances, it had just the effect of this alone on the patient to whom I saw it administered in your office. Now, I do not wish, or expect, to make any money out of this invention, nor to cause you to be the loser; but I have resolved to give a history of its introduction, that I may have what credit belongs to me. Although it is in my power to invalidate your patent, by a word, yet, as long as we remain on good terms, I shall not aim to do it. . ."

(17)

The balance of this letter was deleted.

December 18. Wrote to Hon. James Dixon for a passport for his trip abroad. (8) The object of this trip was to purchase paintings for resale in the United States and to present his claims as the discoverer of anesthesia.

December 19, passport # 1485 issued to Horace Wells by State Department, U. S. A. (8)

December 22, in the Hartford Daily Times, (No. 1854, p. 3) appears a partnership notice of Horace Wells and J. B. Terry.

DENTISTS

Hartford, Dec. 19, 1846

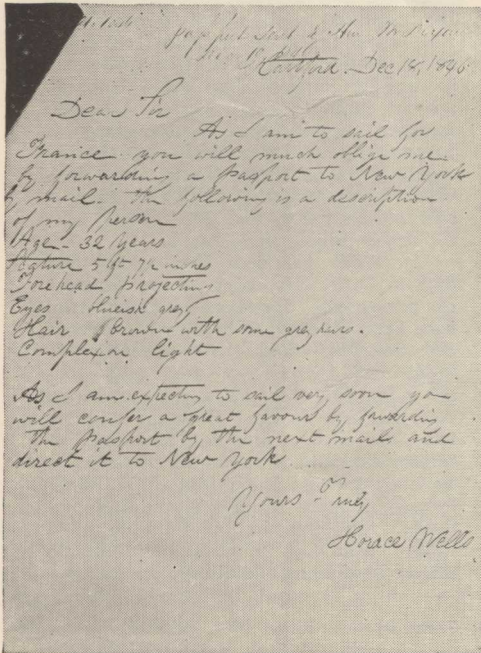
The subscribers having associated themselves in the business of Dental Surgery, respectfully invite all who may require the service of Dentist to call at their rooms, 180 1/2 Main Street, where all operations will be performed in a faithful and workmanlike manner.

Copartnership Notice Horace Wells
dec 22 eodsmw 3m66 J. B. Terry

December. Sailed for Paris from New York.⁵

1847

Hon. James Dixon protests to a select



DR. WELLS LETTER TO HON. JAMES DIXON REQUESTING A PASSPORT

committee of the House of Representatives against that committee rendering a favorable decision regarding Morton's claims as the discoverer of anesthesia until he had an opportunity to present Wells' claims. (10)

February. Presented "his claim to the discovery of performing operations without pain" to the "Academie de Sciences" and the "Academie de Medecine" and the "Parisian Medical Society". (See Brewsters letter under March 26, 1847 dateline)

February 17. Published this article in Galiganis' Messenger while in Europe. (This article was reprinted in The Boston Atlas, April 2, 1847, columns two and three, page 2.)

"Paris, Feb. 17, 1847.

Sir:—As you have recently published an extract from the Boston Medical and Surgical journal, which recognises me as the discoverer of the happy effects produced by the inhalation of exhilarating gas or vapor for the performance of surgical operations, I will now offer some suggestions in reference to this subject. Reasoning from analogy, I was led to believe that surgical operations might be performed without pain, by the fact that an individual, when much excited from ordinary causes, may receive severe wounds without manifesting the least pain; as, for instance, the man who is engaged in combat may have a limb severed from his body, after which he testifies that it was attended with no pain at the time; and so the man who is intoxicated with spirituous liquor may be treated severely without his manifesting pain, and his frame seems in this state to be more tenacious of life than under ordinary circumstances. By these facts I was led to inquire if the same result would not follow by the inhalation of some exhilarating gas, the effects of which would pass off immediately, leaving the system none the worse for its use. I accordingly procured some nitrous oxide gas, resolving to make the first experiment on myself, by having a tooth extracted, which was done without any painful sensations. I then performed the same operation for twelve or fifteen others, with the like results; this was in November, 1844. Being a resident of Hartford, Connecticut, (U. S.,) I proceeded to Boston the following month, (December), in order to present my discovery to the

⁵ Exact date of departure is unknown. Mr. Byron H. Uhl, District Director, U. S. Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Ellis Island, New York Harbor, N. Y., advises me that; "No records of departing passengers are available prior to March, 1929."

medical faculty—first making it known to Drs. Warren, Hayward, Jackson and Morton, the two last of whom subsequently published the same, without mention of our conference. Since this discovery was first made I have administered nitrous oxide gas and the vapor of ether to about fifty patients, my operations having been limited to this small number in consequence of a protracted illness which immediately ensued on my return home from Boston, in January, 1845. Much depends on the state of mind of the patient during the inhalation of gas or vapor. If the individual takes it with a determination to submit to a surgical operation, he has no disposition to exert the muscular system; whereas, under other circumstances, it seems impossible to restrain him from over exertion; he becomes perfectly uncontrollable. It is well to instruct all patients of this fact before the inhalation takes place. The temperament and physical condition of the patient should be well marked before administering the vapor of ether; persons whose lungs are much affected should not be permitted to inhale this vapor, as serious injuries have resulted from it in such cases. Nitrous oxide gas, or protoxide of nitrogen, is much less liable to do injury, and is more agreeable to inhale, producing at the same time equal insensibility to all painful sensations. It may be taken without the least inconvenience by those who become choked almost to strangulation with ether; in fact, I have never seen or heard of a single instance where this gas has proved in the least detrimental. This discovery does not consist in the use of any one specified gas or vapor; for anything which causes a certain degree of nervous excitement is all that is requisite to produce insensibility to pain. Consequently, the only question to be settled is, which exhilarating agent is least likely to injure the system. The less atmospheric air admitted into the lungs with any gas or vapor the better—the more satisfactory will be the result of the operation. Those who have been accustomed to use much intoxicating beverage cannot be easily affected in this manner. With cases of dislocated joints, the exhilarating gas operates like a charm; all the muscles become relaxed, and but a very little effort will serve to replace the limb in its socket, and while the operation is being performed the muscles do not contract as when in the natural state, but are as easily managed as those of a corpse. Allow me to add that I have had no opportunity of reading any of the French professional reports or discussions on this subject. I shall remain in Paris until the 27th inst., and in the interval I should be pleased to impart such information as I may have acquired by a close observation of the various phenomena connected with this interesting subject.

Horace Wells."

February 27. Left Paris for London. (10)

March 4. Sailed from Liverpool in the *Hibernia* for Boston. (10)

March 8. Wells' Memoir was read before the Academy in Paris. (10)

March. Returned from England.⁶ Had conferences in Boston with Warren and Hayward. (15)

March 26. The Boston Transcript copied, in column one, page 4, by request, Dr. Brewster's letter from the column of the foreign correspondent of the New York Journal of Commerce:

Paris, March 1st, 1847. The all absorbing topic of conversation in the Saloons of Paris, and the all engrossing discussions in the learned and scientific Societies here, as in most of Europe, is our "American discovery" of performing surgical operations without pain. All the nations, I might almost say, all the individuals, are trying to claim the merit of the discovery.

Numberless communications are published from persons who knew all these things long ago, 20, 30 and 40 years since, yet to the present moment, they have not succeeded in wresting the honor of this discovery (the greatest ever given to man since the days of "Jenner,") from the western world.

I have seen in your paper of the 30th December last, a letter from Doctor Marcy, which gives the whole honor to Horace Dr. Wells, dentist of Hartford. I have also seen in the 6th January, Dr. Jackson's reply, and the rejoinder of Dr. Marcy, in the 8th. In the "Boston Medical and Surgical Journal" I see a letter which gives the discovery to Dr. Wells. These are things which I hope you will settle fairly on your side of the water, and let "Caesar have the things which are Caesar's."

Dr. Wells has been for the last few days in Paris. His claims to the discovery of performing operations without pain, have been presented to both the "Academie des Sciences," and the "Academie de Medecine," where they are under consideration. He has likewise been before the "Parisian Medical Society," and related the history, progress, and final result of his discovery; I was present; the Society were of opinion, that if Dr. Wells brought forward proofs that he had performed the extraction of teeth in 1845 without pain, then he would be entitled to the merit of being the discoverer.

⁶Exact date not known. Mr. John H. Jensen, Inspector in charge of Immigration and Naturalization, U. S. Department of Labor, East Boston, Mass., writes; "... please be informed our records go back only to 1848."

Imagine to yourself, Messrs Editors, a man to have made this *more than brilliant discovery*, visiting Europe without bringing with him the proofs. Dr. Jackson acted much more wisely, when he claimed the discovery; for he wrote to the "French Institute," his letter bore the Boston, Liverpool, and the French post-marks, then it was sealed by the Institute, its receipt recorded, and left sealed until ordered to be opened. Had Dr. Wells done the same thing in Nov. 1844 his claim would not now admit of a doubt. Whether he used the nitrous oxyde gas, or sulphuric ether, matters but little, inasmuch as their results are the same, and he seems after having tried them both, to have given the preference to the gas, as being more agreeable to inhale. Other kinds of ether have since been tried here, but none pretends to claim the merit of the discovery by using a new substitute. Though there are some persons skeptical as to its ultimate value, I have used it in many cases with perfect success, and have seen some of the most painful operations in surgery performed in our hospitals without the patients feeling the slightest pain. No country in the world offers the same facilities as France for testing the value of any discovery in the medical science. Here man and beast are made subservient to the rigors of experimental proof. When this discovery was first mooted, some feared danger from fire, that the breath would ignite and the lungs explode; but the many experiments made at Alfoet upon horses who had been made to inhale the ether, prove that when the lamp is applied to the mouth immediately after inhalation, a blue flame burns exteriorly, but soon expires without the slightest harm or danger.

As an American I feel proud that this discovery originated in my native land, and regret that any efforts should have been made to rob the rightful discoverer of his just due.

Very truly yours,

Brewster.

March 30. Published "History of the Discovery of the Application of Nitrous Oxide Gas, Ether, and other Vapors, to Surgical Operations." J. Gaylord Wells, Hartford, 1847.

March 30, Forwarded the original testimonials and affidavits and other papers contained in the above volume to Dr. C. S. Brewster, No. 11 Rue de la Paix, Paris to be presented by him to the scientific and medical societies of Europe in order that Wells priority in the discovery of anesthesia could be established. (9)

April 2, Article in Galignani's Messenger republished in the Boston Atlas

bearing a Paris Feb. 17, 1847 date line.

April 22. Letter written by Wells to the Editor of the Boston Post, Vol. 30, No. 95, page 1, referring to a long article which appeared in the April 7th 1847 issue and signed E. W. (Probably Edward Warren, Morton's representative):

TO THE EDITOR OF THE
BOSTON POST

Hartford, April 19, 1847

I have just seen a long article in your paper of the 7th inst, signed E. W., which I will answer in one word. The letter which is there introduced with my signature was written in answer to one which I received from Dr. Morton, who represented to me that he had discovered a "compound," the effects of which as described by him, entirely eclipsed those produced by nitrous oxide gas or sulphurate ether, he stating that his "compound" would *invariably* produce a sound sleep, the length of which was wholly optional with the operator; that he had not made a single failure in one hundred and sixty cases, &c., &c. He also stated that he had obtained a patent for this "compound". I accordingly started for Boston to learn more of this improvement on my discovery, with which I had made him acquainted long before.

While at his office I saw the (so called)



SILVER MEMORIAL WREATH AND PLAQUE. PRESENTED BY THE ODONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF MADRID, SPAIN TO THE CITY OF HARTFORD, CONN. JAN. 14, 1907.

compound administered to a patient; it apparently had the same effect as the gas, which I had many times administered for the same purpose. Before I left for home the gas was given to several other patients with but partial success—at least so said the patients with whom I conversed. I then enquired about his patent, and found to my surprise that he had not obtained one, nor even made an application for one, this being done at a subsequent period, as the date of his specifications and patent clearly show. Respecting the interview which E. W. had with the Hon. James Dixon at Washington, I am informed by Mr. Dixon that the statement of E. W. in the article referred to, is a gross misrepresentation of the truth, and if necessary, he will sign a certificate to that effect.

Respectfully,

HORACE WELLS

April. Wells went to New York and with his attorney went to the Custom House to get the paintings purchased in Paris. He also arranged with a manufacturer to have frames made. (10 Appendix.)

May. The General Assembly of the State of Connecticut passed resolutions stating that Wells was the discoverer of anesthesia.

May 12. Published the following article in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, Vol. 36, p 298, 1847, dealing with the contents of the October 20, 1846 letter:

THE DISCOVERY OF ETHEREAL INHALATION

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

Sir,—Having seen an article, by Edward Warren, in the Medical Journal of the 28th April, which has special reference to myself, with your permission I will answer through the same medium, as briefly as possible.

Mr. Warren, who is a gentleman in the office of Dr. Morton, seems to exult in the possession of a letter with my signature, which he has published. I am much surprised that Dr. Morton, for his own sake, should have permitted that letter to be published, for when *his* letter is read, to which mine was an answer, it places the whole matter in quite a different light. Dr. Morton, in his letter dated 19th October, 1846, gave me to understand that he had made a discovery which would entirely eclipse the one I had made. He says:

"I have discovered a *preparation*, by inhaling which a person is thrown into a sound sleep; the time in which persons remain asleep *can be regulated at pleasure*. While in this sleep the severest surgical or dental operations may be performed, the

patient not experiencing the slightest pain. I have patented it, and am now sending agents to dispose of the right to use it. I have used this *compound* without a single failure in over one hundred and sixty cases, in extracting teeth. My object in writing you is to know if you would not like to visit New York and the other cities, and dispose of rights.

Respectfully yours,

W. T. G. Morton."

Now I would ask all who have made use of ether since its first introduction, on perusing the above letter, if they would for a moment imagine the discovery, as above described, to consist in the use of this article ether? On receiving the above letter, I went to Boston to learn the nature of this improvement on my discovery; I there saw Dr. Morton administer his (so-called) compound, and the patient, instead of going quietly to sleep, to be aroused at pleasure, as I had been informed would be the case, became exhilarated, succeeded by a stupor, the same as is produced by the inhalation of nitrous oxide gas. While at Dr. Morton's office, three or four other patients inhaled the "compound," two of whom informed me that it was an entire failure. I thought this remarkable after his operating on one hundred and sixty patients "without a single failure." I then inquired about his patent, which the letter stated had been obtained for the compound, and learned, to my surprise, that he had not obtained one, nor even made an application for one; as will be seen by the date of his letter to me, and the date of his application for a patent, the specification bearing date October 27th, 1846, and the date of his letter being 19th October, 1846. Mr. Warren states that I "returned home, determined to have nothing to do with the business." Now is it at all strange, after the above development of facts, that I acted thus? In the first place, what could I do in reference to his patent, for he had got none; and in the next place, after what I had seen, it was evident that this "preparation" was no improvement upon my discovery (with which I had made him acquainted more than eighteen months before), even allowing it to be a "compound." In November, 1844, I made this discovery, and applied it with perfect success, as is proved by affidavits of the very first character. I have also proved that I went to Boston at that time to make my discovery known to the medical faculty, and addressed Dr. Warren's class upon the subject, and endeavored to establish the principle that the nervous system, when wrought up to a certain degree of nervous excitement by any means whatever, would become insensible to pain; then stating that I was using nitrous oxide gas for this purpose, considering it the most harmless. When I first made the discovery, rectified

ether was used, as well as nitrous oxide gas. This is clearly proved by affidavit; but I preferred the latter as being more agreeable to inhale, and less liable to do injury.

It is truly astonishing to see with what pertinacity Drs. Jackson and Morton adhere to their pretended priority of discovery, simply because I gave the preference to the nitrous oxide, after having tried both the vapor and the gas. It has been said that the rectified sulphuric ether vapor acts as a sedative merely, while the nitrous oxide gas only operates as a stimulant. This is a mistake, and no man who has ever made experiments with both the gas and vapor will make such an assertion. When I first administered the nitrous oxide for a surgical operation, I was astonished that the patient did not exert the muscular system, as is generally the case when taken merely for pleasure, and this proved to be the case in subsequent operations. That this is a remarkable phenomenon, is acknowledged by all who have made use of it for this purpose, and it is precisely so with the vapor of ether; both at first stimulate, then, when continued to excess, act as a sedative, producing a stupor. Several gases of this nature are now being used in Europe with perfect success. Does it follow that every one who makes use of a different gas is to be entitled to the credit of this discovery; or is it the one who first proved, by actual experiment, that one of these gases would have this wonderful effect? Every reasonable man will at once say that the *principle*, when fully demonstrated, constitutes the discovery. Both Drs. Jackson and Morton admit that they were fully aware that I had used nitrous oxide for this purpose long before the date they give as the time of their discovery. Suppose *A* makes the discovery that a certain degree of compression of the limb, with a cloth bandage, will so paralyze the limb that it may be amputated without pain, and he proves this beyond a doubt, presenting his discovery to the world. Soon after, we hear of *B*, proclaiming that he has made a wonderful discovery, which consists in the use of a leather strap to produce this compression, and he insists that it is nothing like the discovery of *A*, who uses the cloth bandage. Now these are parallel cases, and if each gas or vapor which may be used for this purpose is a distinct and independent discovery, then allow me to ask, where will it end? I informed Drs. Jackson and Morton of this discovery in November, 1844, both admitting that the idea was entirely new to them. Dr. Jackson particularly seemed inclined to ridicule the whole thing.

Mr. Warren states that my experiment before the medical class in 1844, was a failure, and all pronounced it a "humbug." Now this is perfectly true. The gas bag was removed too soon, and the patient experienced some pain, and I was denounced

as an impostor; no one seeming inclined to assist in further experiments. The excitement of this adventure immediately brought on a protracted illness, which compelled me to relinquish my professional business entirely. For this reason, and because I did not wish to incur the responsibility of administering this powerful agent without the co-operation of the medical faculty, my operations have been somewhat limited, but perfectly successful. I had operated on something like fifteen patients with the gas before having the interview with Drs. Jackson and Morton in November, 1844. After relinquishing my professional business in consequence of this illness, Dr. Morton requested me to prepare some of the gas for him. I told him to go to Dr. Jackson, as he was a chemist, and get it. The sequel is already known. In due time we heard of surgical operations being performed at the Hospital, without pain, by means of a secret "compound", and Drs. Jackson and Morton announced as the discoverers. Ere long my discovery, which I designed should be free to all, is trammelled with a patent.

Mr. Warren speaks of an interview which he had with the Hon. James Dixon. To show him that his memory sometimes proves treacherous, I will here give a copy of a letter which I have just received from Mr. Dixon.

"Hartford, May 5th, 1847.

Dear Sir,—The communication of Mr. Edward Warren, of Boston, to which you have called my attention, is incorrect in several particulars. Mr. Warren, it seems, misunderstood my conversation with him. The person whom I consulted with, in regard to the use of your discovery, was Dr. Riggs, of Hartford, and not yourself, and I so informed Mr. Warren.

Yours respectfully,

James Dixon."

Dr. Horace Wells, Hartford."

With the foregoing statement of facts, I close, wishing, in all sincerity, to receive no more credit for this discovery than what in justice I am entitled to.

Respectfully,

Horace Wells.

Hartford, May 5, 1847.

July 3, 1847. This announcement appeared in the Hartford Daily Courant (Vol. 11, No. 157, Whole No. 2917)

DENTISTS

Hartford, Dec. 19, 1864

"The subscribers having associated themselves in the business of Dental Surgery, respectfully invite all who may require the services of a dentist to call at their rooms, 180 1/2 Main Street, where

all operations will be performed in a faithful and workman-like manner.

Horace Wells
J. B. Terry."

May 27 d&wtf 97

August 21, Wells gave nitrous oxide for removal of testicle by Dr. E. E. Marcy. (This case was published in Boston Medical and Surgical Journal of Sept. 1st, 1847, No. 5, Vol. 37.)

August 28, 1847. The Hartford Daily Courant carried this notice:

DENTISTS

Notice:—Having associated with me in business, Dr. J. B. Terry, I cheerfully recommend him to my friends and patrons who may require dental operations in my absence. Those employing him may depend on having dental operations performed in a faithful and workmanlike manner.

Horace Wells.

Hartford, Aug. 28, 1847.

November 4, Patent # 4836 issued to Horace Wells for a Shower Bath. (7)

1848

January 1, Wells administered nitrous oxide to Henry A. Goodale for the amputation of his leg. Operation was performed by Dr. P. W. Ellsworth. (Case reported by Dr. Ellsworth in The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, June 17, 1848, Vol. 37, (No. 25, p 498)

January 4, Wells administered nitrous oxide to Mrs. Mary Gabriel for the "removal of a fatty tumor from her right shoulder weighing six and a half ounces. This was performed by Dr. L. B. Bernsford, assisted by Drs. Grant and Crary". (14)

January 17, 1848 Notice in New York Evening Post:

H. Wells, Surgeon Dentist, the discoverer of the "Letheon", having removed to New York, will give gratuitous advice respecting the use of Chloroform, Nitrous Oxide Gas, and "Letheon", as applied to the extracting of teeth from 10 o'clock A. M. until 3 o'clock P. M. Residence 120 Chambers Street, west of Broadway.

January 17, 1848, The New York Herald carried the following notice:

TEETH EXTRACTED WITHOUT PAIN.—H. Wells, Surgeon Dentist, who is known as the discoverer of the wonderful effect of ether and various stimulating

gases in annulling pain, would inform the citizens of New York, that he has removed to this city, and will for the present attend personally to those who may require his professional services. It is now over three years since he first made this valuable discovery, and from that time to the present, not one of his numerous patients has experienced the slightest ill effects from it; the sensation is highly pleasurable. Residence, 120 Chambers Street, West of Broadway.

January 21, Friday—33 years old this date.

While mentally deranged, due to the effects of constant self experimentation with chloroform, Dr. Wells was arrested because of annoyances committed on Broadway. (19) Police records apparently lost. (20)

January 22, Saturday—Permitted to go to his rooms on Chambers Street where he secured his razor, other necessities and unknown to his guard, a bottle of chloroform. (19)

January 23, Sunday—Attending church services in the Tombs. Seemed to be in good spirits, but profoundly affected by the sermon. Wells was a sensitive, very religious individual. Feeling that he was guilty of what he thought to be a terrible crime he committed suicide. (19)

January 24, Monday—Body discovered by the guard. "Dr. Walters, the coroner, was called to hold an inquest, and the jury rendered a verdict, 'that the deceased came to his death by suicide, by inflicting a wound in the left thigh with a razor, while laboring under an aberration of mind'". (19)

January 25, 1848, Tuesday: The Evening Post carried the following story and letters:

Melancholy Suicide.—Dr. Horace Wells, who was arrested last Friday, under circumstances which are fully explained in the following letter, and with apparent truthfulness, committed suicide on Sunday night last, in his cell at the Tombs. By his side were found, on his bed, an empty vial, labelled "Chloroform", the contents of which he had doubtless taken, preparatory to taking life. A pen-knife and a razor were also on the bed; with the latter he had lacerated the flesh of the left thigh quite to the bone, severing the femoral artery . . . In one corner of his cell were found his watch and the following letters:

New York, Jan. 23, 1848.

To the Editors of the Journal of Commerce:

Gentlemen:—I wish, through the medium of your journal, to make a plain statement respecting the unhappy circumstances in which I am at present placed. My real name is now before the public as a miscreant, guilty of a most despicable act, that of wantonly destroying the property of those girls of the town who nightly promenade Broadway. The facts, so far as I am concerned, are briefly these:—On Tuesday evening last a young man with whom I had recently formed an acquaintance, went with me to my office in Chambers St., and while there, he said a woman of bad character had spoiled a garment for him while walking in the street, by throwing something like vitriol upon him; that he knew who it was, and would pay her back in the same coin. As I had some sulphuric acid in my office, which I was using in some chemical experiments, he requested the liberty of taking some of it, for this purpose. He accordingly cut a groove in the cork of a phial, so that a small quantity only might escape when it was suddenly thrust forward. He then said that he might get it upon his own clothes. I told him that I had an old cloak, which could not be much injured by the acid, as it was good for nothing.—By his request I walked into the street with him, he wearing my old cloak, and I having on my ordinary over-coat. We proceeded up Broadway, and when about opposite the theater, he said that he saw the girl he was in pursuit of, and he soon gave her shawl a sprinkling: we then turned down Broadway, when my friend proposed to sprinkle some of the other girls, I immediately objected, and told him that what he had already done was not in accordance with my own feelings, although it was done in revenge; and when we arrived at Chambers St., I took my phial and cloak; at the same time two of his friends came up and I left him, supposing that I had dissuaded him from doing the mischief he proposed, which is as foreign to my nature as light is opposed to darkness. I then regretted exceedingly that I had countenanced in any manner the first act. On getting home I found that my cloak had apparently received the principle part of the acid which had escaped from the phial as the wind was blowing towards us when the act was done. On meeting with my acquaintance the next day, he said that himself and his two friends, whom I met the previous evening, had resolved to drive all the bad girls out of Broadway by sprinkling them with acid. I in vain reasoned with him against committing so much injury when he had not been harmed. This was the last interview which I have had with him to the present time.

I wish now to state as well as I am able what influenced me to do this act on Friday

evening, which I confess was done with my own hands; and this was the only one of which I am guilty and which resulted in my arrest. I had during the week been in the constant practice of inhaling chloroform for the exhilarating effect produced by it; and on Friday evening last I lost all consciousness before I removed the inhalor from my mouth. How long it remained there I do not know; but on coming out of the stupor I was exhilarated beyond measure, exceeding anything which I had ever before experienced, and seeing the phial of acid (which had been used a few evenings previous as above described) standing on the mantel, in my delirium I seized it and rushed into the street and threw it at two females. I may have thrust it at others, but I have no recollection further than this. The effect of this inhalation continued very much longer than ever before, and did not entirely pass off until sometime after my arrest. I do not make this statement expecting to free myself from all blame in this matter; yet I have been induced to make a minute statement of facts, that the public may better judge of this misdemeanor so far as I am concerned. I state, unhesitatingly, that I would no sooner, deliberately, in cold blood, go into the street and commit the gross acts of wantonness which have been committed for the last few evenings, than I would cut my right hand from my body. No, I am not prone to do mischief, as all can testify who have ever known me. But now I am placed in circumstances where I am obliged to bear the reproaches of the world for the most contemptible acts in which I have not participated. Because I have done this one act in a moment of delirium, I must bear the brunt of the whole. Some of the papers disbelieved my statement about others being concerned in this business; but I am informed to day that while I was in close confinement last evening, the same acts were being committed in Broadway; several were sprinkled with acid. However, my character which I have ever prized above everything else is gone—irrevocably gone—and I am now in the most miserable condition in which it is possible for man to be placed. One of those abandoned females who were examined yesterday, stated that I had often addressed her in Broadway. Now I do most solemnly assert that the statement of the girl is utterly false; I never have, on any occasion, had anything to say to these miserable creatures. If myself alone was the only one to suffer by all the false statements, which may be or have been made respecting me, it would be nothing compared to the injury to my dear-dear wife and child. Oh! may God protect them! I cannot proceed, my hand is too unsteady, and my whole frame is convulsed in agony. My brain is on fire.

Sunday evening, 7 o'clock.

I again take up my pen to finish what

I have to say. Great God! has it come to this? Is it not all a dream? Before 12 o'clock this night I am to pay the debt of nature. Yes, if I was to go free tomorrow, I could not live and be called a villain. God knows I am not one. O, my dear mother, brother, and sister, what can I say to you? My anguish will only allow me to bid you farewell. I die to-night, believing that God, who knoweth all hearts, will forgive the dreadful act. I shall spend my remaining time in prayer.

Oh! what misery I shall bring upon all my near relatives, and what still more distresses me is the fact that my name is familiar to the whole scientific world, as being connected with an important discovery; and now, while I am scarcely able to hold my pen, I must bid all farewell! May God forgive me! Oh! my dear wife and child, whom I leave destitute of the means of support—I would still live and work for you, but I cannot—for were I to live on, I should become a maniac. I feel that I am but little better than one already. The instrument of my destruction was obtained when the officer who had me in charge kindly permitted me to go to my room yesterday.

Horace Wells.

To The Editors

My last request to Editors is, that they will, while commenting on this unhappy affair, think of my poor wife and child—also my mother, brother and sister, all of whom are numbered among the most respectable members of society.

H. Wells.

To My Dear Wife

I feel that I am fast becoming a deranged man, or I would desist from this act. I can not live and keep my reason, and on this account God will forgive the deed. I can say no more.

Farewell

H.

To Mr. Dwyer

Dear Sir: When you receive this I shall be no more. I wish you would take my watch and present it to my dear wife, together with the trifle I have already given you. Please to see to my burial: let me be interred here in the most secret manner possible. I wish you or Mr. Barber would go immediately to Hartford, and reveal this misfortune to my wife in the most inobjectionable manner possible, and attend to the business which we spoke of this morning, when you little thought of this occurrence.

Yours,

H. Wells.

*To Messrs. Dwyer and Barber,
Weston Hotel.*

N. B. Please tell Mr. James to write to Mr. F. W. Stowon, No. 19 Rue du Faubourg Possonier, Paris and tell him of my death.

* * * *

As some papers connect the name of Dr. Wells with the "discovery of ether or chloroform", it may be proper to state that to the deceased is due the original discovery of "ether" now in use by dentists and others; but that Dr. Morton, of Boston, first successfully applied it, after its use had been suggested by Dr. Wells. Chloroform is an entirely different thing, discovered, we believe, by Dr. Simpson, of Edinburgh.

* * * *

January—. Death mask made.⁷



DEATH MASK OF HORACE WELLS

January 26, 1848, Wednesday: The Daily Hartford Courant had the following:

EDITORIAL

THE LATE HORACE WELLS

The death of this gentleman has caused a profound and melancholy sensation in this community. He was an upright and estimable man, and had the esteem of all who knew him. Of undoubted piety, simplicity and generosity of character,

⁷ The date on which the mask was made or by whom is unknown. It hangs at present in the Boston Medical Library. Mr. James F. Ballard, Director, advises me that he has "been unable to find any reference to the Library's acquisition of Horace Wells' Death Mask. It has been in the Library for a great many years, as I remember seeing it even in the old building at 19 Boylston Place. I suppose that we have had it for some time previous to 1892".

enthusiastic in the pursuits of science, and having just been acknowledged as the discoverer of etherization in surgical operations, he was regarded with the highest respect and regard by all our citizens, and there was no one who seemed less likely to meet the sad fate that has befallen him.

In the letters which were found in his cell he speaks of himself as having formed a habit of taking ether for its exhilarating effects. There is no reason to suppose that he did this deliberately. The probability is that his mind was somewhat unsettled by the frequency with which he inhaled it in trying experiments in order to satisfy himself on the feasibility and propriety of employing it in surgical operations. Being of an excitable temper, the effects of this course, added to the agitation which he felt in consequence of the attempt to gain the credit of his important discovery for rivals, and the intensity with which he watched the proceedings in Paris on this subject, till he was formally acknowledged as the real discoverer, further unbalanced his mind so that he was peculiarly in danger of mischief. When in this disturbed state it is not to be wondered at that he betook himself to the inhaling of chloroform, that in the madness occasioned by it he should have engaged in the acts for which he was arraigned, or that under the pressure of his misery he should have put an end to his own life. He committed the fatal act by cutting open his thigh, completely severing the femoral artery, having first inhaled chloroform to deaden the pain. Before doing this he wrote the letters which we copy below, expressive of his desperate intentions and the mental suffering which led to the rash consummation.

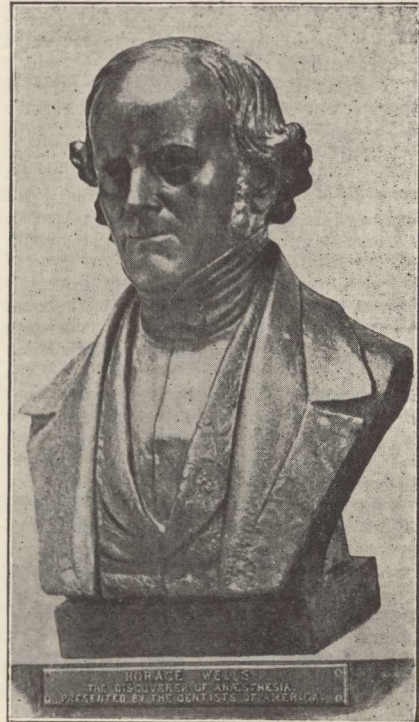
By a melancholy coincidence, Dr. J. B. Terry, his late partner, was bereaved of a son under most afflicting circumstances on Saturday. We are informed that Mrs. Wells wrote to her husband to avoid writing to Dr. Terry on business, as he was not in a state of mind to receive such correspondence. Little did any think how great an affliction awaited her at that very time!

(The letters referred to in this editorial are printed under date line of New York, Jan. 25th, 1848.)

January 27, 1848. In the Hartford Courant, Vol. 12, No. 23, Whole No. 3093, is the following notice under deaths (page 3.)

The Funeral of Dr. Horace Wells will take place at his late residence, No. 117 Main St., this (Thursday) P. M. at half past 2 o'clock.

Buried in the Old North Burying Ground. (On May 18, 1908 Dr. & Mrs. Wells' bodies were removed and brought to Cedar Hill for burial). (21)



PORTRAIT BUST OF HORACE WELLS, PRESENTED BY THE DENTISTS OF AMERICA. NOW LOCATED IN ARMY MEDICAL LIBRARY, WASHINGTON, D. C.

January 27, 1848, In the Hartford Daily Courant, Vol. 12, No. 23, Whole No. 3093, on page 2, is an editorial copied from the New Haven Journal.

THE SUICIDE OF DR. WELLS.

The statement of this unhappy event as given in another column, is by no means in our judgment calculated to give the public mind the exact morale of this affair. It is the belief of medical men here who know all the facts, that he was utterly irresponsible in a moral view for all he did, and that his whole conduct was the dictate of insanity. Indeed, those who knew him, know that his whole conduct was utterly irreconcilable with his firm and established character.

He spent some days in this city last summer—called at our office—and we were struck with the intellectual merit as well as modesty of the man. There was something peculiar in him. He remarked to us the extreme pain he suffered from the course of some medical gentlemen in reference to his discovery, and we formed the opinion that he was subject to great mental depression, amounting almost to

disease—a fact his friends say was true of him.

He was however, a high minded gentleman, utterly incapable, while in his right mind, of the low and boyish mischief which he committed in New York, and there is no doubt whatever that that which some of our public presses refer to as a fault, was only a misfortune, and all the more dreadful because of its awful effects on himself. He was a man to whom the world owes public thanks for taking the lead in the most wonderful discovery in human history, and we are pained to see any of the public press, almost without examination, stigmatize as a "monster", the man who had laid humanity under such an obligation. We witnessed but the other day a surgical operation in this city under the influence of ether, or that which grew out of Dr. Wells' discovery. We felt then how much the world owed him. This and such facts known to all, should make us slower in condemnation.

"Tis well
To speak the best we can of
human kind."

March 15, F. A. Brown & C. L. Covell, appraisers under oath submitted to the Probate Court this:

Inventory & appraisal of estate of
Horace Wells
Late of Hartford Deceased
Exhibited & Accepted
March 20th, 1848.

Recorded Book 49 page 229 . . .

* * * *

Office Furniture

1 Sofa (castors broken off)	13.00
1 Rocking Chair (red)	1.25
1 Center Table	5.00
1 Dentist Chair	3.00
1 Carpet (say 16 yds) @ .50	8.00
1 Looking Glass	2.50
1 Stove & Pipe	9.00
Lot of Shells	15.00
1 Show Case containing do	5.00

Tools, etc.

Murite of Ammonia, say 6 lbs. 15c	.90
2 Pairs Forceps (new)	3.00
6 Pairs Forceps	.75 4.50
1 Pair Forceps	.50
1 Pair Forceps	.25
3 Pairs Forceps	.50 1.50
24 Files 1.00 per doz.	2.00
Lot Gold	1.00
2 Glasses	.25

35 Excavators & Burrs (Square Finish) 1.50 doz.	4.25
24 Excavators & Burrs (Round finish) 1.00 doz.	2.00
23 Excavators & Burrs (Ivory handle) 1.00 doz.	1.92
21 Pluggers, etc. (Ebony & ivory handle) 4.50 doz.	7.87
1 Spring Saw	.50
1 Drawing Plate	1.00
3 Files	.50
978 Teeth (plate & pivot) 6c	58.68
2 Cases for tools 2.—	4.00
	94.62
47 Bells, etc.	10.00

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The fact that there does not exist any of the personal effects, instruments or equipment of Horace Wells was something I couldn't understand. However through the kindness of Miss A. Louise Blair of Hartford, I have received copies of the papers in the Horace Wells' file at the Probate Court, which show that his estate was insolvent and the office furniture, tools and household furniture were sold at auction.



MEMORIAL TO HORACE WELLS IN
THE PLACE DES ETATS-UNIS, PARIS

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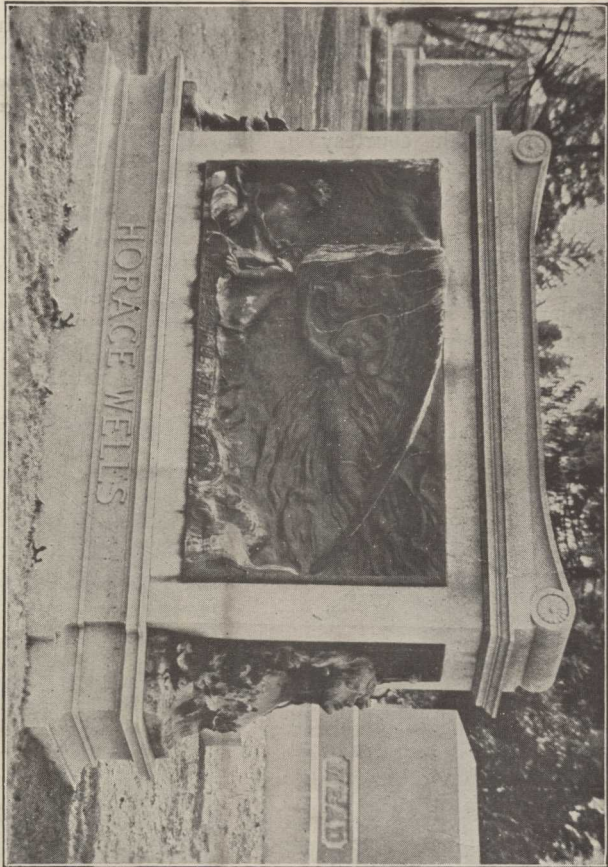
19. Personal communication from Alexander C. Anderson, Chief Inspector of the Police Dept., City of New York.

20. Personal communication from Mr. Gerald C. Scrivener, Superintendent, Cedar Hill Cemetery, Hartford, Conn.

21. Personal communication from Miss F. L. Gerrity, Bureau of Vital Statistics of Hartford Board of Health.



MEMORIAL WINDOW IN CENTER CHURCH, HARTFORD, CONN.



MONUMENT ERECTED BY CHAS. T. WELLS ON THE WELLS FAMILY BURIAL
PLOT IN CEDAR HILL CEMETERY. BURIED HERE ARE DR. HORACE WELLS,
HIS WIFE ELIZABETH WALES WELLS AND SON CHAS. T. WELLS.