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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

A Clumsy Chloroforming in Connecticut: Look What the Cat Dragged In...



Discovered independently in America, France, and Germany in 1831, chloroform was first used as an anesthetic in 1847 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Six years later, in London, chloroform provided obstetric anesthesia for the birth of Queen Victoria's eighth child. Although initially the preferred anesthetic of Europeans because of its potency, portability, and pleasant odor, chloroform fell out of favor in the United States due to its anesthetic mortality. By 1881, however, the *Danbury News* reported a *nonlethal* chloroforming that took place 95 miles east, in Norwich, Connecticut. (Note that clergyman Henry Ward Beecher had hailed the latter city as "the Rose of New England.") The *News* cited how one Norwich couple had administered chloroform to their "extremely fitty" cat to "put it out of its misery." Then, like proper Norwichians, they had planted not any bush, but "a rosebush over its remains." The next morning, their darling kitty "appeared at the door to be let in," all adorned with bits of roses. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists' Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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