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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Beacon, Not Buccaneer: Ramón Betances, Puerto Rican Patriot and Chloroform Pioneer



Nicknamed “*El Padre de la Patria*” (upper left), Ramón Emeterio Betances y Alacán (1827 to 1898)—physician, writer, abolitionist, and Freemason—was the first political leader to espouse Puerto Rican nationalism. This gold-plated medallion celebrates the 185th anniversary of his birth in Cabo Rojo, or “*El Pueblo de Cofresí*”—hometown of infamous pirate Cofresí and historic lighthouse *Faro de Morrillos* (lower right). A bust of Betances appears next to the Masonic Lodge (*Logia Cuna de Betances*, upper left) that was built upon his birthplace. Betances completed most of his education, including medical school, in France, where he embraced the principles of liberty and equality. Upon his return to Puerto Rico, he promoted public health by burning slave barracks during a cholera epidemic. Later, while in exile for his revolutionary ideals, Betances used the pseudonym “*El Antillano*” (upper left) to champion Antillean freedom from European and North American imperialism. In 1862, during a rare stint in Puerto Rico, Betances enlisted the help of Pedro Arroyo, Venezuelan anesthesiologist, to perform the first surgery under chloroform on the island. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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