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## ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

# After the Ether Dome, Bulfinch Drafted His Way to the U.S. Capitol



Boston's Ether Dome (*encircled, left*), the crown of Massachusetts General Hospital's Bulfinch Building (*left*), soared to fame 175 years ago after William T. G. Morton's public demonstration of ether anesthesia. Designated a National Historic Landmark in 1965, the Ether Dome is more than a captivating copper cupola. Blending essential function with elegant form, the design featured windows (*upper right*) to illuminate the surgical theater below. Its draftsman was Charles Bulfinch, a Bostonian architect renowned for his neoclassical style. A year into construction of his namesake building, Bulfinch was recruited to be the "Architect of the Capitol" in Washington, D.C. His design for the United States Capitol Dome (*lower right*), in contrast to that of the Ether Dome, relied more on form than function. Its imposing size and aesthetic symbolized the strength of the young republic, while its problematic wooden construction required frequent repairs. Although diminutive in its dimensions, the Ether Dome would prove to be Bulfinch's more enduring legacy; his original Capitol Dome was replaced with a larger cast-iron version in 1863. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists' Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

Melissa L. Coleman, M.D., Penn State College of Medicine, Hershey, Pennsylvania, and Jane S. Moon, M.D., University of California, Los Angeles, California.