

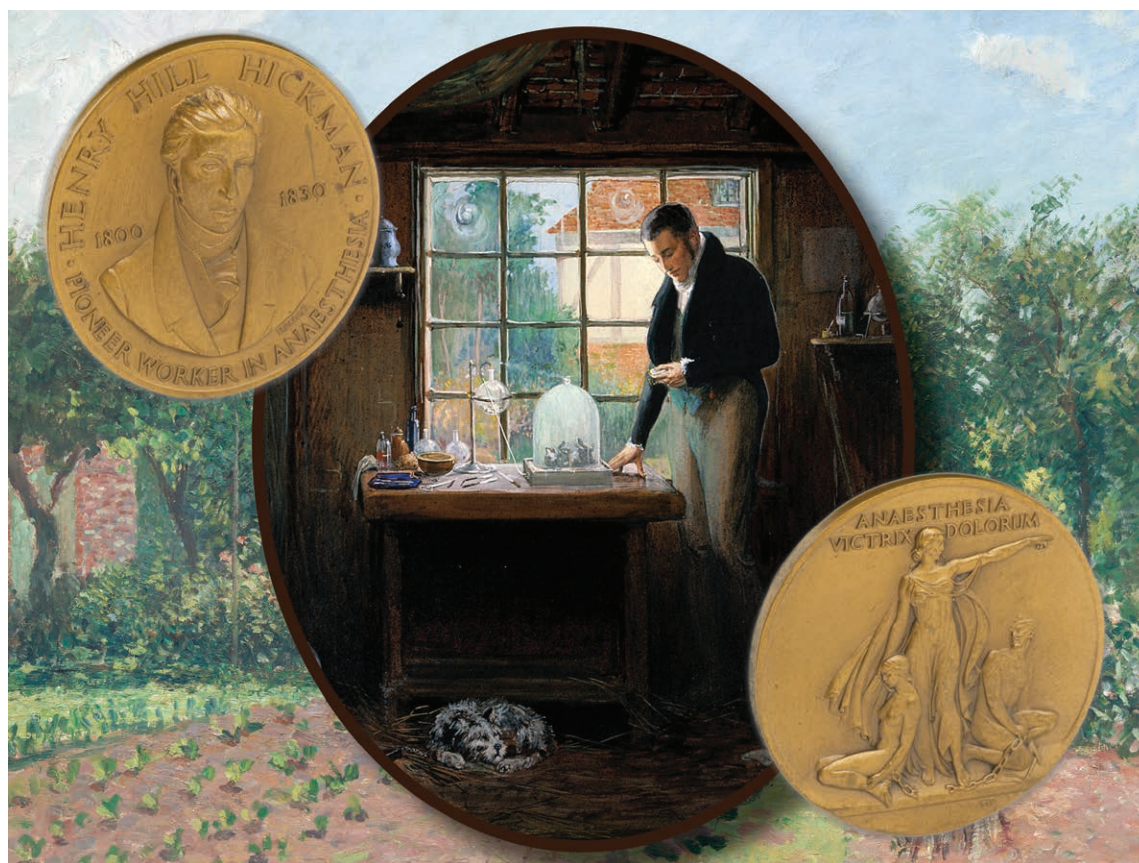
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## ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

# Only Half Dead: Henry H. Hickman and “Suspended Animation”



Appalled by the plight of surgical patients before the advent of ether anesthesia, English physician Henry Hill Hickman (1800 to 1830, *center*) championed “suspended animation” as an anesthetic technique. He induced hypercapnic narcosis and transient respiratory arrest by enclosing puppies in glass chambers (*center*). At times, he infused supplemental carbon dioxide to expedite the process. Thereby sedated, the canines would tolerate the removal of parts of their ears without associated pain, hemorrhage, or inflammation. By contrast, the same procedure performed on awake dogs would cause discomfort, bleeding, and edema. Eager to disseminate his findings, Hickman sought the patronage of scientist T. A. Knight of England and King Charles X of France, to no avail. During his short lifetime, no scientific community would endorse his use of controlled asphyxia, which sometimes required rescue insufflation. However, a century after his death, Hickman would be immortalized. Seeking to raise the profile of a burgeoning specialty, the Anaesthetic Section of the Royal Society of Medicine would endow an international honor in his name. Since 1935, the Hickman Medal has been given every 3 years to a physician or scientist with outstanding contributions to anesthesia. The one pictured above, with an image of Hickman on its obverse (*upper left*), and a woman depicting “*Anaesthesia, Victrix Dolorum*” on its reverse (*lower right*), was awarded to Ralph Waters, M.D. (1883 to 1979), pioneer of American academic anesthesiology. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library–Museum of Anesthesiology. [www.woodlibrarymuseum.org](http://www.woodlibrarymuseum.org))

Jane S. Moon, M.D., Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine, University of California, Los Angeles, California.