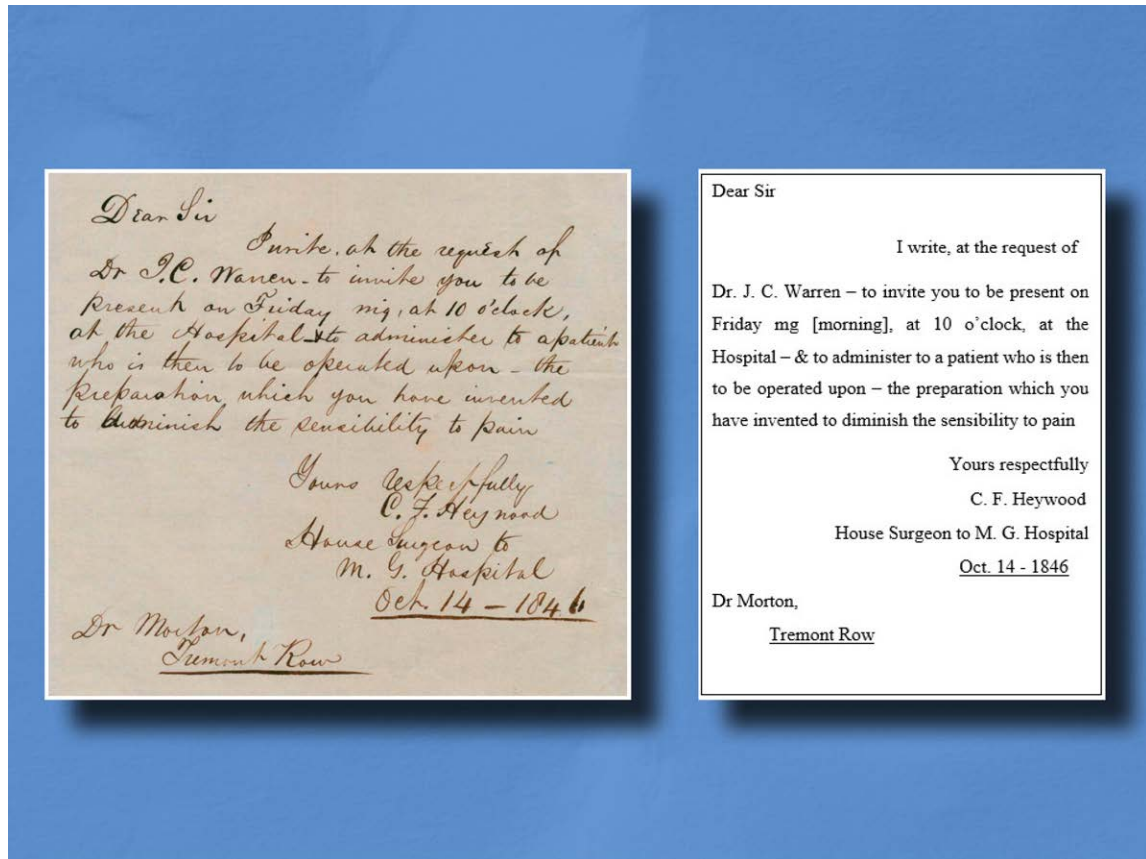


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## ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

# A Prelude to Painless Surgery: Charles F. Heywood's Invitation to W. T. G. Morton



Penned 2 days before surgical etherization's public debut, an invitation (*left*) from house surgeon Charles F. Heywood, M.D. (1823 to 1893), to Boston dentist William T. G. Morton (1819 to 1868) requested that Morton administer his "preparation...to diminish the sensibility to pain" at the Massachusetts General Hospital on October 16, 1846. One of the few extant handwritten documents relating to "Ether Day," the letter is held by the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts (W.T. G. Morton papers, call number: Ms. N-567, reproduced with permission). As evidence of his primacy in this discovery, Morton published a different transcript of this letter in the *Statements* volume submitted to the U.S. Congress in 1853, and later in *Trials of a Public Benefactor* (1859), his authorized biography. The advent of painless surgery, a great boon to humanity, would be tarnished almost immediately by the "Ether Controversy." Now a precious historical document, Heywood's letter served as a prologue to "Ether Day" and critical evidence in Morton's ultimately futile claims for financial compensation. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists' Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology. [www.woodlibrarymuseum.org](http://www.woodlibrarymuseum.org))

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