

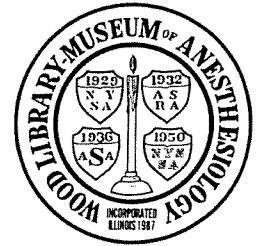
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Homes associated with William Thomas Green Morton

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Update on the *Bulletin*

David B. Waisel, MD
Editor, Bulletin of Anesthesia History

In the Spring 2013 issue of the *Bulletin of Anesthesia History*, I published an editorial about the future of the *Bulletin* and the future of the academic discipline of anesthesia history.¹ I wrote:

Without [an academic] home, young academics struggle to develop careers, senior academics do not receive proper credit within the anesthesiology community, and the anesthesia history community withers.

Robust academic homes have meaningful journals. A renowned *Bulletin of Anesthesia History* will provide a home for aspiring authors to hone their skills and gain academic credibility. It will spur interest in history, which will increase publications in mainstream journals. The right

Bulletin will undergird a credible self-sustaining academic discipline."¹

That editorial generated a lot of responses. Most were in agreement and encouraged us to take on these challenges. Others were concerned that changes may affect our readers. After conferring with colleagues and examining different options, we decided to move forward.

In January 2015, the *Bulletin of Anesthesia History* will become the *Journal of Anesthesia History (JAH)*.

JAH will be an electronic journal owned and sponsored by the Anesthesia History Association and published by Elsevier.

JAH will remain a benefit of membership of the Anesthesia History Association.

We will celebrate the *Bulletin of Anesthesia History* and reflect upon the rationale

of these changes in the January 2015 issue. Primarily, though, we believe moving to an electronic publication with Elsevier will bolster the academic discipline of anesthesia history worldwide.

We look forward to the *JAH*. For now, please visit our new website www.anesthesiahistoryjournal.org to learn more about the journal or to submit manuscripts. Although the first issue will not be published until January, the *JAH* website will have new content weekly, including information about meetings, pictures, quizzes and commentary.

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Homes Associated with William Thomas Green Morton

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Background

William Thomas Green (W.T.G.) Morton [1819-1868], was born in Charlton, Massachusetts, on August 9, 1819, to James and Rebeccah Needham Morton (Figure 1). Rebeccah Needham, W.T.G.'s mother was born in Charlton, Massachusetts, on May 21, 1790, daughter of William and Sabra

Needham.¹ Rebecca was the eldest of eight children who grew up on a prosperous farm in Charlton, Massachusetts. Charlton is a large, pleasant agricultural town situated in the southwesterly part of Worcester County, fifty-seven miles west of Boston. Morton Station Road is named in honor of W.T.G. Morton, who was born a short distance away on what is now Premier Road.

James, W.T.G.'s father, was raised on a farm in Smithfield, Rhode Island. James's father, Thomas, died in a tragic accident when James was very young. At that time, James's grandfather established a trust for James and his siblings. At age 21, James purchased the Smithfield, Rhode Island, farm from his mother. Shortly after, James and Rebeccah Needham were married and

in 1818 James purchased a 70 acre farm in Charlton, Massachusetts.²

W.T.G. Morton's Birth Home

William Thomas Green (W.T.G.) was born in this home and lived here with his family until he was eight years old (Figures 2a and 2b). The original home suffered significant damage in a fire sometime in the 1800s and the existing structure was rebuilt on the original foundation in the 1800s. It is thought that the fire coincided with the Morton family's move to Cemetery Road in Charlton.

It is believed that W.T.G. Morton was born in Charlton, Massachusetts, on August

Continued on Page 4

Homes... Continued from Page 1

76	CHARLTON BIRTHS.	CHARLTON BIRTHS.	77
	<p>MORSE, Tirzah, d. Ephraim Jr. and Hannah, Aug. 29, 1790. Willard, s. John and Polly, Jan. 6, 1835. Zenas, s. Zenas and Abigail, March 8, 1768.</p> <p>MORRIS, Maria, twin d. Sanford and Rachael, Dec. 29, 1845. Mary Lucy, d. Sanford and Rachael, Nov. 23, 1847. Medora Francella, d. Oscar F. and Martha A., Nov. 28, 1849. Sophia, twin d. Sanford and Rachael, Dec. 29, 1845.</p> <p>MORSE, Alma, d. Charles E. and Esther B., Nov. 19, 1843. Ama, d. Jerry and Susan, Dec. 8, 1829. In Millbury. Annis, d. Timothy and Hannah, Jan. 30, 1789. Augusta, d. Timothy and Sophia, Sept. 2, 1831. Charles E., s. Jerry and Susan, Aug. 10, 1838. Cheney, s. Benjamin and Lucy, Oct. 30, 1803. David, s. Timothy and Hannah, Oct. 7, 1778. At Holden. David Mixer, s. David and Ruth, Oct. 1, 1812. Ellen C., d. Prentis and Mary Maria, Oct. 15, 1837. Ellen Jane, d. Charles E. and Esther B., May 4, 1842. Frances A., d. Charles E. and Esther B., Sept. 25, 1848. Hannah, d. Timothy and Hannah, Nov. 27, 1781. At Holden. Hannah Mixer, d. Timothy Jr. and Sophia, Dec. 18, 1816. Hannah M., d. David Jr. and Hannah, July —, 1839. Isabel, d. Charles E. and Esther B., July 8, 1846. Jeremiah, s. David and Naomi, June 13, 1803. Lusinna, d. David and Naomi, April 29, 1805. Marcy, d. Timothy and Hannah, Aug. 18, 1794. Mary, d. David Jr. and Hannah, Oct. 2, 1836. Naomi, d. Timothy and Hannah, Nov. 9, 1784. Naomi Peirce, d. David and Naomi, July 24, 1810. Polly, d. Timothy and Hannah, Feb. 17, 1783. Prudence, d. Timothy and Hannah, Nov. 2, 1792. Ruth Stevens, d. David and Ruth, Nov. 11, 1818. Silence M., d. Jerry and Susan, Aug. 1, 1830. Sophonia, d. Timothy Jr. and Sophia, April 20, 1819. Susan L., d. Jerry and Susan, Nov. 30, 1835. Syrena Meriam, d. Timothy Jr. and Sophia, April 1, 1815. Timothy, s. Timothy and Hannah, April 15, 1786. William B., s. Prentis and Mary Maria, Oct. 9, 1842. William Forbes, s. Timothy Jr. and Sophia, Feb. 24, 1824.</p> <p>MORTON, Abigal, d. Reuben and Abigal, Feb. 6, 1821. Lorenzo, s. Reuben and Abigal, Feb. 17, 1819. Lorian, d. James and Rebeckah, Aug. 4, 1814. At Burrillville, R. I. <i>Morton, William Thomas Green son of James & Rebeckah - Aug 9, 1819</i></p>	<p>MORTON, Marcus, s. Reuben and Susan, March 8, 1832. Reuben Thomas, s. Reuben and Susan, Sept. 27, 1827.</p> <p>MOULTON, Daniel Edwin, s. Levi and Nancy, March 23, 1817. John B., s. John B. and Mary V., Jan. 18, 1845. In Boston. John Farnum, s. Levi and Nancy, May 7, 1819. In Munson. Levi Harrison, s. Levi and Nancy, May 7, 1822. Louisa A., d. John B. and Mary V., March 2, 1842. Mary F., d. John B. and Mary V., Aug. 22, 1839.</p> <p>MOWER, Abigail, d. Jonathan and Elisabeth, March 26, 1763. Alfred, s. Alfred and Betsey, Jan. 10, 1830 (P). Betsy Minerva, d. Alfred and Betsy, Jan. 10, 1830. Ebenezer, s. Jonathan and Elisabeth, May 23, 1769. Elisabeth, d. Jonathan and Elisabeth, May 7, 1756. Jemima, d. Jonathan and Elisabeth, Oct. 25, 1777. John, s. Jonathan and Elisabeth, March 26, 1759. John, s. John and Elisabeth, Dec. 6, 1782. Jonathan, s. Jonathan and Elisabeth, Oct. 25, 1757. Lewis, s. Samuel and Diadamia, June 7, 1784. Livingston, s. Alfred and Betsey, Oct. 14, 1834. Lucy, d. Marshal and Charity, Nov. 4, 1790. Marshall [Matial in c.r.], s. Jonathan and Elisabeth, Sept. 1, 1773. Sally, d. Samuel and Diadamia, Aug. 10, 1782. Samuel, s. Jonathan and Elisabeth, May 17, 1761. Sarah, d. Jonathan and Elisabeth, Feb. 14, 1765. William, s. Jonathan and Elisabeth, March 16, 1767.</p> <p>NASH, Elizabeth Kingsbury, d. Francis and Patty, June 15, 1833. Martha Lavina, d. Francis and Patty, June 15, 1841. Mary Lucy, d. Francis and Patty, Nov. 20, 1835.</p> <p>NEEDHAM, Daniel, s. William and Sabra, July 12, 1808. George, s. George and Lucy, Feb. 22, 1780. Harriet, d. William and Sabra, July 7, 1805. John, s. Daniel, bap. April 16, 1786. c.r. Joseph Parsons, s. Daniel, June —, 1788. Bap. c.r. Lucy, d. George and Lucy, June 14, 1776. Olive, d. Thomas, bap. Oct. 7, 1773. c.r. Polly, d. Daniel, bap. Oct. 10, 1784. c.r. Polly, d. William and Sabra, Aug. 28, 1791. Rachel, d. Daniel, bap. May 6, 1792. c.r. Rachel, d. William and Sabra, June 20, 1803. Rebecca, d. William and Sabra, May 21, 1790.</p>	

Fig. 1. Birth records from the Town of Charlton, Massachusetts. William Thomas Green Morton's handwritten entry has been added at the bottom. The identity of the writer and date of entry is not known.

9, 1819. According to the Book of Vital Records in the Charlton Public Library, W.T.G. Morton's name is not an entry in the book.

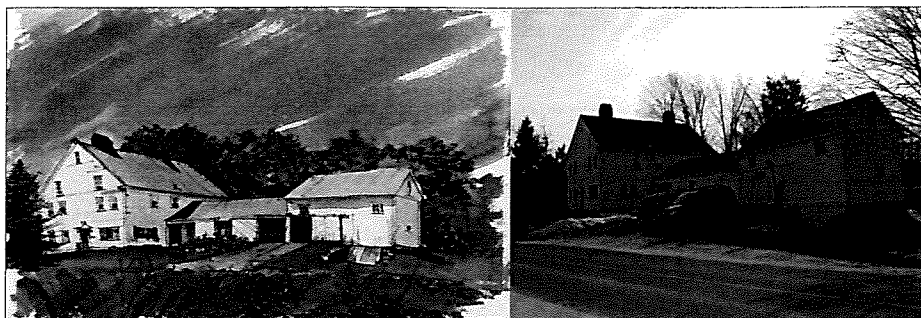
When researching in the Charlton Town Hall, there is a handwritten entry in their Book of Vital Records with Morton's name

recorded. It is not known who made the handwritten entry into this book (Figure 1).

In 1941, the American Society of Anesthetists erected a bronze plaque on the house on 10 Premier Road to commemorate Morton's birthplace. It is inscribed "who first publicly demonstrated ether anesthesia October 16, 1846." In 1945, the society changed its name to its current one, American Society of Anesthesiologists. The May 1945 issue of the society's journal, *Anesthe-*



Figs. 2a and 2b. Watercolor (by Dr. Leroy D. Vandam) and photograph of the home where W.T.G. Morton was born in Charlton, Massachusetts. Courtesy, Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Schaumburg, Illinois.



Figs. 3a and 3b. Watercolor (by Dr. Leroy D. Vandam) and photograph of Waters-Morton House in Charlton, Massachusetts. Courtesy, Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Schaumburg, Illinois.

siology, first used the term American Society of Anesthesiologists.

Waters-Morton House

The home that became commonly referred to as the "Waters-Morton" house became available for purchase in 1827 (Figures 3a and 3b). Israel Waters, the previous owner had died and bequeathed his house to Leicester Academy. During this period, Morton's father was deciding what to do



Fig. 4. Some memorabilia related to history of anesthesia in the 'Morton Room,' located within the Waters-Morton House in Charlton, Massachusetts [currently a private residence].

about W.T.G.'s education. Charlton was the third largest town in area in the state of Massachusetts, but it was a very rural town. There were no schools within walking distance of Morton's first home.

In 1827, James Morton made an offer to the Leicester Academy Trustees to purchase the Waters-Morton house. This purchase

was mutually beneficial to both James and Rebecca. By acquiring the Waters-Morton house, W.T.G. was able to walk to school to further his education and Rebecca was able to remain in her hometown of Charlton surrounded by her immediate as well as extended family. This was his boyhood home from 1827-1836.

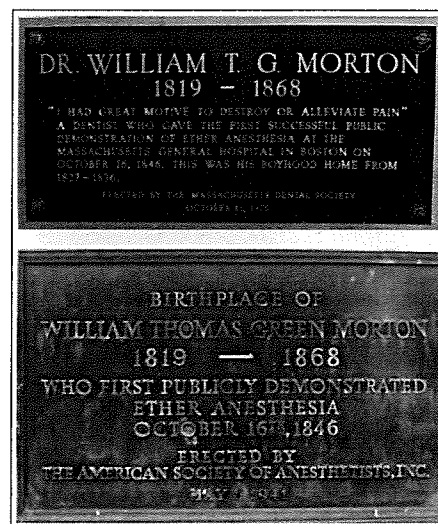
Waters-Morton House was a Georgian style post and beam structure built in 1735, the year the town of Charlton was first settled. The homestead contained 60 acres. A tannery was in operation on this spot prior to its purchase by Israel Waters in 1778, at which time the tannery business was greatly expanded by him. Waters was a prominent businessman and a foremost organizer of the Congregational Society of Charlton. The Waters-Morton house changed hands and businesses many times over the past 250 years. After Morton, the location was a dairy farm, an apple farm and currently an antique store. The current owners of the Waters-Morton house have converted one room of the house into the "Morton Room" (Figure 4). The owners have graciously opened their home to history enthusiasts and shown their collection of artifacts and memorabilia from Morton's era.

A plaque honoring the achievements of W.T.G. Morton has adorned his birthplace and this home (Figures 5a and 5b). In October 1975, the late Massachusetts Senator, the Honorable Edward M. Kennedy, brother of late President John F. Kennedy, participated in dedicating the plaque to the Waters-Morton house. The Massachusetts Dental Society sponsored this plaque. Contained on the plaque along with W.T.G. Morton's name, lifespan [1819-1868], the quote "I had great motive to destroy or alleviate pain", and "A dentist who gave the first successful public demonstration of ether anesthesia at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston on October 16, 1846."

Leroy David Vandam, MD, [1914-2004], was the Chief of the Department of Anesthe-

sia at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston for about 25 years, from the mid-1950s to 1980. He was the first academic chairman there and along with Robert Dunning Dripps, MD, and James Edward Eckenhoff, MD, he coauthored one of the early American textbooks in anesthesia—*Introduction to Anesthesia—The Principles of Safe Practice*. He was Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Anesthesiology* and elevated its stature from a trade journal to a major academic one.

Vandam loved painting, and watercolors were his primary medium. He created a set of five paintings related to W.T.G. Morton homes, two views of his birth home, one of the Waters-Morton House, one of a red barn (Figures 6a and 6b) where young Morton helped his father run a farm equipment business and one of the Ryder Tavern, located diagonally across from the red barn.



Figs. 5a and 5b. Plaques at Morton's birthplace and Waters-Morton House.

These paintings were completed in the mid-1980s and the originals were presented to the Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, then in Park Ridge, Illinois.

Morton Moves to Wellesley

In 1845, Morton purchased land in what is now the small town of Wellesley, just outside of Boston, Massachusetts. On May 29, 1844, he married Elizabeth Whitman of Farmington.³⁻⁵ Elizabeth came from a prominent and well-to-do family, and her father objected to her marriage to Morton. Among other reasons, her father objected to Morton's lack of a medical or dental degree, and he insisted that Morton attend Harvard Medical School to obtain his medical degree as a condition for the marriage.⁵ Wellesley was a lovely bucolic community, a worthy

setting for Mrs. Morton and a fine place in which to raise a family. Wellesley was in close proximity to Boston, and the site was made even more attractive by the presence of the Great Western Railroad running along the western property line with a depot at the edge of Morton's land. This allowed Morton to live as a country gentleman and provided easy access to Boston.³

History of Wellesley, Massachusetts

The land currently known as Wellesley, originally known as "Contentment," was settled in 1660.⁶ Settlers on the land wished to make their ownership official and purchased the land from Native American chiefs Nehoiden and Maugus in April 1680 for five pounds of currency and three pounds of corn.⁴ The land was originally part of the town of Dedham and later Needham after Dedham was divided. The land that became Wellesley was known as West Needham at the time that Morton lived there.⁶ The town of Wellesley was named for the Wells family, the family name of the town's benefactor Horatio Hollis Hunnewell's wife. Wellesley was incorporated on April 6, 1881, and the first census taken in 1890 was 3,600 compared to the most recent 2010 census of 27,982.^{4,7} The Wellesley town seal represented the Native Americans with tomahawk and arrows, the excellent educational system, including Wellesley College, with a book, and a flower that represents the beautiful gardens planted by Hunnewell.⁸

History of the Morton Land

The land upon which Morton built Etherton Cottage was purchased in 1845 from the brother of Edward Everett.⁵ Edward Everett was a prominent political figure of the day; he served as governor of Massachusetts, a U.S. Representative, Senator, and Secretary of State, and as Minister



Figs. 6a and 6b. Watercolor (by Dr. Leroy D. Vandam) and photograph of the Red Barn, Charlton, Massachusetts. Courtesy, Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Schaumburg, Illinois.

to Great Britain. He was also a professor at Harvard and served as its president. He donated the statue of Apollo standing in the Ether Dome at Massachusetts General Hospital.⁶

The land originally belonged to a Parson Noyes, and his homestead became the residence of Morton's parents.⁶ Etherton was constructed to the east of the original home to serve as a summer home in 1845.⁶ It was designed by Morton in the English style of rural architecture; Hale referred to as an elegant dwelling with its full-length porch and gingerbread fretwork (Figure 7).³ An additional home was erected on the property for Morton's sister who was married to Dr. George H.P. Flagg, a prominent Boston physician.^{2,3}

Morton displayed the same intensity in designing his home and grounds as he did with everything else in his life. He created beautiful grounds planted with young trees and flowerbeds. Paths meandered through woods to sparkling streams (Figure 8).

He created sitting areas, follies, and bridges spanning the streams. The house was sited at the highest elevation to maximize the views of the surrounding woods and farms.^{2,3} Well-kept animals wandered the grounds. Ahead of his time, Morton built a state-of-the-art barn for the animals on the property with an attached coach

house, a room for tools, a steam engine room for cutting fodder and grinding grain, and a furnace for steaming potatoes. He secured running water for the home from the stream with a hydraulic pump. Doting on his children, he created a beautiful four-seat swing in the barn for the children's enjoyment.^{2,3}

Morton used Etherton Cottage as a workshop, and many local women manufactured teeth for his dental practice there.⁶ It was also the site of much of his early experimentation with ether. He first used goldfish from the spring on the property. Later experiments were conducted on his beloved water spaniel, but were ceased after an unfortunate experience where he thought he had killed his dog.^{3,5,6} He then began to experiment with ether on himself.⁵ This preliminary work culminated in Morton extracting a tooth from a patient painlessly on September 30, 1846, setting the stage for his successful demonstration of the use of ether at Massachusetts General Hospital on October 16, 1846.^{2,6}

The Morton Family

In addition to his wife, Morton was blessed with five children (Figure 9).⁹ His oldest and youngest sons, William James (b. 1845) and Bowditch (b. 1857) became physicians, graduating from Harvard, something their father was never able to accomplish. William James lived and practiced in New York City and provided a home for his mother after the elder Morton's death. Bowditch resided and practiced in Monterey, California. A third son, Edward Whitman (b. 1848) resided in Cape Colony, South Africa, and fought in the Zulu Wars.⁵ Two daughters, Marion Alethe (Morton) Keeling (b. 1847) and Elizabeth Whitman (Morton) Young (b. 1850), "married well" and resided in New York City.⁵



Fig. 7. Etherton Cottage (McClure's Magazine. 1896).



Fig. 8. *The Mortons at Etherton Cottage* (McClure's Magazine. 1896).

Later Years at Etherton Cottage

In later years, Morton was often in ill health, both physical and mental. He retreated often to Etherton to spend time in the country at his beautiful home with his family. He reverted to his farming roots, becoming a gentleman farmer. He became a trustee of the Norfolk Agricultural Society and raised prize winning crops and animals. He is credited with importing Jersey cows to the United States. As always, he threw himself into his current obsession and became a renowned breeder of fine Jerseys.^{2,3,6}



Fig. 9. *The Morton Family*. Standing [left to right] William James Morton, William Thomas Green Morton, Edward Whitman Morton. Sitting [left to right] Bowditch Morton, Marion Alethe Morton, Mrs Elizabeth Whitman Morton, Elizabeth Whitman Morton. [From Woodward GS. The man who conquered pain. A biography of William Thomas Green Morton. 1962. Boston. Beacon Press]

Financial Hardship

Shortly after his successful demonstration of the use of ether at Massachusetts General Hospital, and after initiating his campaign to receive sole credit and compen-

sation as the sole developer of anesthesia, Morton began to neglect his dental practice, leaving it to apprentices. At the time, his very successful practice was earning about \$9000 annually.² During the years spanning 1847 to 1853, Morton amassed debt of \$187,561, most of which had been spent on legal fees and travel expenses in his campaign for recognition of his use of ether.² His income during these years consisted of two awards in recognition of his use of ether totaling

\$1500, and minor amounts won by his farming successes.² He relied on his wife's money, charity from friends and supporters, and credit extended to him based on his standing in the community as a "doctor." At times he could not afford to feed his family and was reduced to begging and scavenging for food.² Etherton was mortgaged, and was about to be lost to foreclosure when a group of supporters stepped in and saved Etherton for Morton and his family. The high cost included Morton's excellent collection of surgical instruments, his fine library, many of his prize-winning animals and parcels of land were sold to save Etherton.^{2,3,10} Despite this turn of events, Morton continued to spend winters in Washington, D.C., lobbying for recognition and compensation.^{2,3,10}

Last Departure From and Dispensation of Etherton Cottage

Morton left Etherton Cottage for the last time on July 6, 1868, to travel to New York City in another effort to plead his cause. Nine days later while traveling via carriage through Central Park with his wife, he became ill and died in her arms on July 15, 1868.⁵ Within the year, Etherton was sold to Horatio Hollis Hunnewell, the benefactor of the town of Wellesley. A dozen years later, in 1880, Hunnewell transferred the land to what was about to become the new town of Wellesley as a site on which to build the town hall/library complex.⁵ To make way for the new buildings, in 1881 Etherton was moved further down Washington Street to what became known as Morton Field. Over the years, Etherton fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1919, and the site is now

home to housing for the elderly.⁶ Morton's parents' home, the former Noyes' homestead, burnt down during their lifetime, and the cellar hole is the only remaining artifact of the Morton era.⁶ The land upon which Etherton stood is now a beautiful park surrounding the Wellesley Town Hall (the library moved to a new site across the street in the 1950s), originally named Morton Park, before later being renamed Hunnewell Park. The Town Hall is a beautiful pink granite building known as the "Pink Palace." It and the grounds can be visited. It is possible to walk the same paths that Morton walked, view the trees he planted and experience the peaceful calm he might have felt in those beautiful surroundings.

Although the buildings are gone and the name of the park has been changed, Morton has never been forgotten. On July 4, 1961,

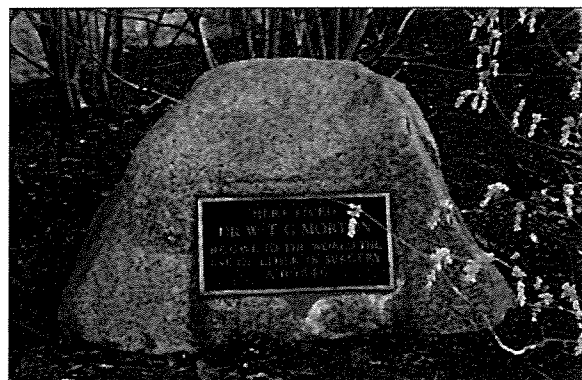


Fig. 10. *Plaque honoring Morton at Wellesley Town Hall* (which replaced Etherton Cottage in 1886).

when Needham held their 250th anniversary parade, the Wellesley Historical Society entered a float depicting Dr. Morton painlessly removing a tooth. Currently, a large granite stone sits on the site of Etherton: "Here lived Dr. W.T.G. Morton. He gave to the world the use of ether in surgery. A.D. 1846" (Figure 10).

Conclusion

W.T.G. Morton came from a simple farming life, often experiencing financial hardship as a child. Attempting to compensate, he established a magnificent estate and family compound in an upscale neighborhood. The same driven personality that allowed him to accomplish this drove him to seek wealth and to make a name for himself. He was initially successful with a thriving dental practice. In his pursuit of financial compensation for the discovery of ether and to be named as the sole discoverer of anesthesia, he neglected his dental practice,

Continued on Page 15

of other days returned to mind and I asked my xxx for I still called her by that dear name, dost thou still love me? She gave me a sweet smile which gladdened my heart in the "lone little wood" more than forty years before. I knew she yet loved me and *I was yet happy*.

Still another "change came over the spirit of my dream" And still another twenty years had passed and I was again sitting in my own room with the same companions by my side. Here I was interrupted by a loud knocking at my door and awoke to find it all but a dream at best yet still a bright, a lovely dream.

Jan. 4th 1842

—Transcribed by Austin Lyke as written by Crawford W. Long, January, 4th, 1842

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became impoverished and had difficulty maintaining his fine lifestyle. This was the tale of the rise and fall of a ambitious man.

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