

■ ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

St. Jacob's Oil



Used for centuries by Native American and Asian archers as arrowhead poisons, the deadly alkaloids of the monkshood (*Aconitum* sp.) root were compounded into one of America's most widely advertised quack liniments of the 1880s. As 2% aconite in a turpentine-ether-alcohol tincture, this "antineuralgic" was sold as *Sankt Jakob Oel* in Germany and as "St. Jacob's Oil" in English-speaking nations. Spuriously advertised as prepared by German monks from the Black Forest, this panacea for rheumatism, sciatica, and other painful conditions was distributed by suppliers in Maryland, Ohio, and New York. According to the Dutch-door-like "metamorphic" advertising card (pictured above, courtesy of the Wood Library-Museum), sufferers whom "St. Jacob's Oil befriended" would find "Neuralgia tortures ended." (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image appears in color in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

George S. Bause, M.D., M.P.H., Honorary Curator, ASA's Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Park Ridge, Illinois, and Clinical Associate Professor, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. UJYC@aol.com.