Hall’s Engraving of Morton Etherizing Frost

The title page (above left) of the 1890 edition of Trials of a Public Benefactor, introduces readers to Dr. Nathan P. Rice’s efforts to credit dentist William T. G. Morton as the world’s first surgical etherizer. The book features G. R. Hall’s classic engraving (above right) with a caption reading “Wm T. G. Morton, M.D. Surgeon Dentist, Boston, administering ether preparatory to performing the operation by which he first discovered and demonstrated the marvellous [sic] anaesthetic powers of ether in surgery.” That caption is not exactly accurate. Indeed, Morton’s etherization of the seated merchant, Eben Frost, for dental extraction occurred on September 30, 1846, 6 yr before Morton, a medical school dropout, received his honorary M.D. from the Washington University of Baltimore, Maryland. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image appears in color in the Anesthesiology Reflections online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

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