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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

Oehmig's Monument to Ether, Public Gardens



Unveiled in 1868 on the Boston Public Gardens, the granite “Monument to Ether” avoided taking sides as to which co-patentee, dentist W. T. G. Morton or physician C. T. Jackson, actually deserved credit for bringing ether anesthesia to humankind. As the Ether Controversy raged, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes (1805–1894) mused that the granite was a “monument to ether— or either” of the quarreling co-patentees. In 1992 *Monument to Ether, Public Gardens* was painted (left) by Keith S. Oehmig of Brunswick, Maine, and then placed in the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ newly opened WLM Gallery (center). Oehmig captured in oil that the “ordered, defined structure of the monument and footpaths contrast with the soft, amorphous roses and trees of the Garden.” Note that the nebulously painted “Good Samaritan” figure atop the monument (right) was that of a medieval Moorish physician—a figure chosen purposefully to avoid siding with any one person or profession as to “who discovered anesthesia.” (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image also appears in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

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