

McCarty's "Dental Anaesthetic"

**UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.**

ALFRED L. MCCARTY, OF DES MOINES, IOWA.

**DENTAL ANÆSTHETIC.**

**SPECIFICATION** forming part of Letters Patent No. 402,263, dated April 30, 1889.  
Application filed January 17, 1889. Serial No. 296,650. (No specimens.)

*To all whom it may concern:*  
Be it known that I, ALFRED L. MCCARTY, dentist, a citizen of the United States of America, and a resident of Des Moines, in the county of Polk and State of Iowa, have invented a new and useful Anæsthetic, of which the following is a specification.

My object is to provide a simple, safe, efficient, and convenient compound specially adapted for use in the practice of dentistry; and my invention consists in compounding the following-named ingredients, in about the proportions specified, to wit: five (5) grains crystallized muriate of cocaine, six (6) drops of chloroform, six (6) drops of extract of staphysagria, three (3) drops of oil of cloves, and three (3) drams of water. These ingredients are thoroughly mixed to produce a volatile fluid that can be readily put in vials, to be therein placed on the market for sale, and readily applied locally and hypodermically for all the purposes for which an anæsthetic is adapted.

By adding the staphysagria the compound is greatly improved as an obtunder.

While the compound can be advantageously applied externally by simply wetting the surface of an affected part of the body, it is specially adapted for use in extracting teeth.

To prevent pain in using the forceps for extracting teeth, I inject about five (5) minims of the anæsthetic into the gums on each side of a tooth before I apply the forceps.

What I claim, and desire to secure by Letters Patent of the United States, is—

The herein-described compound to be used as an anæsthetic, consisting of crystallized muriate of cocaine, chloroform, fluid extract of staphysagria, (staves-acre), oil of cloves, and water, in about the proportions specified.

ALFRED L. MCCARTY.

Witnesses:  
MARTIN P. SMITH,  
THOMAS G. ORWIG.

Known later as Lice-bane after Hippocrates introduced it as a pediculocide, *Delphinium staphysagria* (Greek for "dolphin bunch-of-wild-grapes") is a blue flowering plant, the buds of which resemble a dolphin's snout or a lark's heel (hence its other name, Larkspur). The foul smell and burning taste of *staphysagria*'s seeds did not discourage ancient Greeks from chewing them to relieve toothache. To avoid cocaine's toxicity, an Iowan named Alfred L. McCarty was granted U.S. Patent No. 402,263 (center) on April 30, 1889, for the "Dental Anaesthetic" that he compounded from cocaine, chloroform, cloves, and *staphysagria* (clockwise from bottom left). Blissfully unaware of *staphysagria*'s medicinally useful polyoxygenated norditerpenoids, McCarty was likely cognizant of the herb's use both by the ancients and by his contemporaries, many of whom used it in homeopathic doses for toothache. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image also appears in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at [www.anesthesiology.org](http://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](mailto:UJYC@aol.com).