Alarmed by the rising frequency of reported anesthetic accidents in the 1890s, American dentists began exploring ways to avoid using nitrous oxide, ether, or chloroform on their patients. Among a crowd of proprietary local anesthetics marketed to these professionals was Tonalgia. The floral trade card (above) touted Tonalgia as “the most satisfactory local anesthetic ever used.” Tonalgia’s active ingredient was a uniquely vasoconstricting local anesthetic … named cocaine. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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.