“MEDICAL DEPARTMENT U S N CHLOROFORM FOR ANESTHESIA”

Labeled as a “QUARTER POUND [OF] CHLOROFORM PURIFIED FOR ANESTHESIA,” the chloroform screw-capped inside this amber bottle was manufactured by Mallinckrodt Chemical Works. A less flammable but more potent anesthetic than ether, chloroform offered both fire safety and space-conserving advantages aboard naval vessels. However, any sailor who inadvertently swallowed chloroform faced fearsome antidotes, such as “emetic of mustard” and “spirits [of] ammonia aromatic in water.” If these failed to revive the chloroform drinker, the bottle’s label cites, almost as an afterthought: “Artificial respiration.” (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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