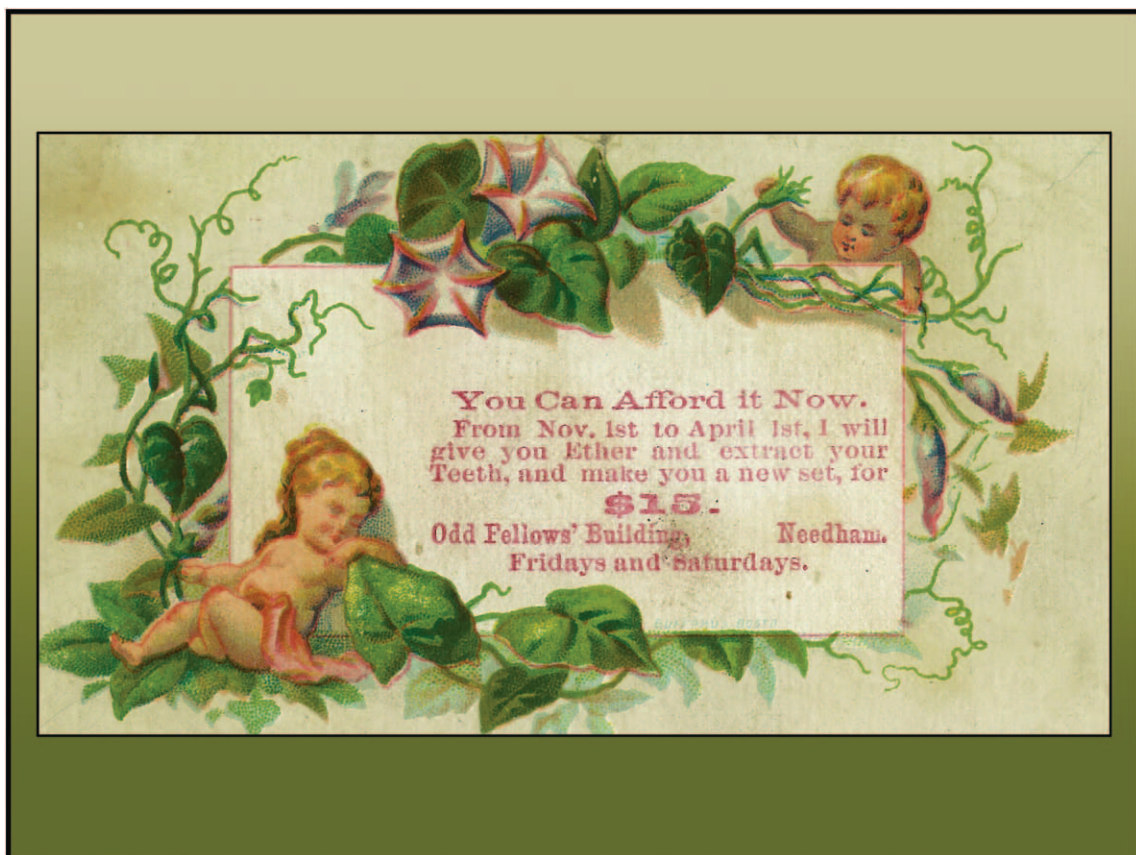


Unlucky Year Thirteen for Needham's Odd Fellows Building: Did Leach's Ether Contribute to the Conflagration?



A signer of the Declaration of Independence who was elected the Governor of Massachusetts, Elbridge Gerry was dubiously memorialized by the coining of “gerrymandering,” a word combining his surname with the word “salamander,” for the amphibian-shaped redrawing of geographic boundaries for political advantage. Also named after Governor Gerry, dentist Elbridge Gerry Leach, D.D.S. (1814–1898), taught at Harvard Dental School (1868–1870) before establishing his weekend dental office in Needham, Massachusetts during non-summer months. Dr. Leach offered ether, dental extraction and a “new set” of teeth for \$15 (about \$360 in today’s U.S. dollars). The commercial shelter for Leach’s Needham office, the Odd Fellows Building was built in 1874 but burned to the ground in 1887. Consequently, Leach’s advertising card (*above*) could have been distributed during a 13-year window of time. Both flammable and explosive, the ether stored in Leach’s office could easily have caused or accelerated the total destruction of Needham’s Odd Fellows Building.... (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

George S. Bause, M.D., M.P.H., Honorary Curator, ASA’s Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Schaumburg, Illinois, and Clinical Associate Professor, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. UJYC@aol.com.