

ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

“Dr. Dewees’s Anaesthetic Inhaler” for Ether or Chloroform



After earning his A.B. and A.M. degrees at Pennsylvania’s Ursinus College, William Bushy Dewees (1854 to 1911) completed his M.D. thesis on obstetrical anesthesia in 1877 at the University of Pennsylvania. Following his move to Salina, Kansas, Dr. Dewees applied for a patent on a double-valved inhaler (*right*) for ether or chloroform. The “patent applied for” designation (*left*) dates the box to sometime between the September 13, 1900, filing and the November 12, 1901, “granting” dates on US Patent No. 686270. The ease with which the all-metal “DR. DEWEES’S Anaesthetic Inhaler” was sanitized was a selling point exploited by its Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, manufacturer, the J. Elwood Lee Company. That firm was better known to veteran anesthesiologists by its acronym “JELCO,” which was used on many products, including intravenous catheters. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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.