

## ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

### From \$1 a Pound to \$1 a Grain—Coca Leaf to Cocaine in 1885



In June of 1885, New York's *American Agriculturist* magazine published that "The discovery that Cocaine will produce local anaesthesia, or insensibility to pain, is next in importance to the discovery of the properties of ether." The article cites the genus of the Coca shrub (*left*) as *Erythroxylon* [*sic*] which means "red-wood." In 1885, a pound (454 g) of dried coca leaves sold for \$1. However, at 1/7000 of that weight, a grain (65 mg) of cocaine isolated from the coca leaf (*right*) also sold in 1885 for that same \$1, which is more than \$25 in today's U.S. dollars. The *American Agriculturist* notes that in "view of the probable increased demand for Coca, ... our Department of Agriculture [should] consider the possibility of successfully cultivating the shrub within our territory." (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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