

Colton's Mass Publication of *The Court of Death* by Peale

Years before his successive elections as Anglican Bishop of Chester (1776) and London (1787), Beilby Porteus (1731–1809) garnered Cambridge's Seatonian Prize in 1759 for his poem *Death: A Poetical Essay*. Sixty years later, to survive the Panic of 1819, Rembrandt Peale (1778–1860; artist, Baltimore, Maryland) began painting *The Court of Death*. Peale's gigantic artwork featured 23 life-sized figures inspired by Porteus' prizewinning poem. After exhibiting the painting for decades, Peale sold it in 1858 to showman Gardner Q. Colton (1814–1898), whose nitrous oxide had anesthetized Horace Wells 14 years earlier. After misinvesting the fortune gained from 1849–1850 "Gold Rush" land sales, Colton began supplementing his income from laughing gas demonstrations by offering, at \$1 apiece, 100,000 chromolithographs of Peale's oil painting. Such sales ensured that Colton would survive the harsh antebellum and Civil War circumstances that preceded both his reviving use of nitrous oxide for dental anesthesia and his founding of the "Colton Dental Association" in 1863. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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