

ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

From Tops in “Gas” Advertising to Bottom of the Bottle: H. L. Seher, M.D., D.D.S.



In 1875 Herman L. Seher (1847 to 1897) earned his M.D. and D.D.S. from the Eclectic Medical College of Pennsylvania. His first wife died a decade later, and Dr. Seher remarried in 1888. His heavy drinking soon drove his second wife to separate from him. She moved a few houses down Philadelphia's North 11th Street from where Dr. Seher was practicing dentistry. The laughing gas services that he had advertised initially as costing 25 cents in the 1880s had risen to 50 cents (*right*) by the 1890s. By then, Dr. Seher had also begun distributing this dental trade card (*left*) featuring a boy in Asian attire. A toy depicted in the card's lower left, a wooden top, was an apt metaphor for Dr. Seher's personal life, which had begun spinning wildly out of control. After his 11-year-old daughter died, the dentist began battering his estranged wife. Not long after making bail for "habitual drunkenness and wife beating," Dr. Seher found himself clutching the feet of a safecracker who had launched himself out of one of the Seher dental office windows. Finally, in 1897, at 50 years of age, the hapless Dr. Seher died from complications of his alcoholism. This trade card is part of the WLM's Ben Z. Swanson Collection. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists' Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology)

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