

ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Hill of “Cocoene,” “Cocoaine,” or Cocaine: Anesthetic Friend or Fiend?



Besides printing a crooked obverse (*top*) on his ca. 1888 “Friendship” trade card, Dr. George E. Hill (ca. 1847 to 1923) misspelled his local anesthetic on the reverse as “Cocoene” (*bottom*). In Pennsylvania periodicals, his spelling misadventures advertised his numbing medication as “Cocoaine.” In August of 1905, *The Scranton Truth* juxtaposed stories of success and failure with cocaine. The success focused on one of Hill’s patients who was still using her same prosthetic teeth 14 yr after her anesthetic; the failure, titled “Cocaine Fiend Arrested,” followed a cocaine addict’s relapse. Is it any wonder then that a wary American public was questioning whether cocaine was a friend or a fiend? (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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