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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Dr. Brown Doubles Down: A With-and-without Trade Card for Laughing Gas Anesthesia

From the Wood Library-Museum’s Ben Z. Swanson Collection, the lone image from the obverse of this c. 1892 trade card for Brown’s Dental Rooms featured a happy visage (left) in one direction which, by optical illusion, appears to transform into an unhappy face (right) from the reverse angle. This “upside-down style of with-and-without card” contrasts patient satisfaction with or without nitrous oxide anesthesia for dental extraction. With his ski-jump nose, bell crown cap, and WITH nitrous oxide, the smiling patient (left) rejoices, “I took Laughing Gas... and had my Teeth Extracted without pain!” With his Roman nose and tricorn hat (right) but WITHOUT nitrous oxide, the frowning patient laments, “I didn’t but wish I had!” According to the reverse of this trade card from Waterbury, Connecticut, anesthesia with laughing gas doubled the baseline 25-cent cost of dental extraction. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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