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NEUROLOGICAL STAMP

Crawford Williamson Long (1815-78)

In 1842 a country practitioner, Crawford Long of Jefferson, Jackson County, Georgia, had participated in "ether frolics". These were wild parties in which ether was inhaled for exhilarative effects. He noted that bruises or minor injuries sustained at the time were unaccompanied by pain. This suggested to him the possibility of using it more constructively to provide surgical anaesthesia and in 1842 he administered ether to a boy, James Venable, and painlessly excised a tumour of his neck. Long used ether on other patients but as a simple modest country practitioner few surgical cases came to him for treatment. However, he was probably the first physician to perform surgery using ether as an anaesthetic. He did not publish his discovery to the medical world until 1849, although he continued its use in surgery and obstetrics throughout his life. Long was postally honoured by the United States as a physician in 1940 (Stanley Gibbons 872, Scott 875).

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