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"Neither Shall There Be Any More Pain"

Peter Drummey 00:04

I argue that the most important historical event that took place here in Boston is not the things that we associate out of the national history, but the public demonstration of a medical procedure, which is so profound that billions of people have, in fact, had anesthesia as part of a medical procedure and the public knowledge and reception of this and spread of information about it starts here in Boston.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 00:43

[Intro music fades in] This is Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai.

Cassie Cloutier 00:59

This is Cassie Cloutier.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 01:01

And this is The Object of History, the podcast of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Since 1791, the MHS has sought to collect, preserve and communicate the building blocks of history. Each episode examines an object, document or set of items from the society's millions of manuscript pieces and artifacts. We take you on a behind the scenes tour of our stacks to explore the incredible stories held within our collections.

Cassie Cloutier 01:28

In this episode, we visit the Bullfinch Building at the Massachusetts General Hospital to examine one of the most, if not the most significant, discoveries in modern medicine. Sarah Alger, the director of the Paul S. Russell, MD Museum of Medical History and Innovation, shows us the hospital's Ether Dome, where the first public surgery using an anesthetic was performed. Back at the MHS, we sit down with Chief Historian Peter Drummey and Curator of Art and Artifacts, Emerita Anne Bentley, to learn more about the contentious history of this innovation. We first met

with the director of the Russell Museum for a tour of the space where this discovery was first publicly debuted.

Sarah Alger 02:17

I'm Sarah Alger. I'm the director of the Paul S. Russell, MD Museum of Medical History and Innovation at Mass General. Welcome to the Ether Dome. We are at the top of the Bullfinch Building, which opened to patients in 1821. We are standing on the floor of the dome, currently. We're facing pretty steep bank of seats. Seats about 100 people. And above us is a dome that has not only one bank of windows with a louver attached, but also there's a cupola with copper on the inside that also has windows to admit as much light as possible for the surgeons in the early days. And then we also have in the room, we have a an oil painting that depicts what happened here on October 16, 1846. We have also the mummified remains of an Egyptian man and his inner sarcophagus. There's also a mid-1800s teaching skeleton, and there is a plaster cast of the god Apollo. And lastly, we have a case of medical and surgical instruments from the mid-1800s. In the days before anesthesia, surgery wasn't undertaken very often, because surgery was a pretty difficult business for both the patient and the surgeon. So, every surgery that happened was considered a learning opportunity, and so these seats would often be populated by students and surgeons. So, if you were to spend any time in these seats today, even though they have cushions, they're not super comfortable. But talking with someone about the early days, they said, 'Well, you know, people would have been craning their necks to see, and plus, surgeries didn't take very long because they couldn't,' and so people would be standing most of the time, like you see it here.

Speaker 1 04:17

Do you like talk a little bit about the museum and what your mission is there, and what you try to do?

Sarah Alger 04:21

The Russell Museum celebrates not only our 200 plus year history, but also innovation going on in the present day. So, the four missions of the hospital are care, research, community and education.

So, we have a lot of ground to cover. I know, I know. We have a lot of ground to cover past, present and future, which is really terrific. So of course, we talk about ether in the museum, but for example, we also try to talk about things going on within the hospital's vast billion dollar plus research enterprise that people might not be as familiar with as they are with the care they get in the hospital and so we have not only museum exhibits, we have evening lectures about medical history, cutting edge research, medical humanities, all kinds of things.

Sarah Alger 04:22

Tell us about the building. This is the Bullfinch Building. So, I assume [Charles] Bullfinch designed it.

Sarah Alger 05:16

He did. So, Charles Bullfinch, who's known for designing a whole lot of things in the early 1800s in Boston. He is chosen to design this hospital. It's the first hospital he designs. There are two general hospitals that predate Mass General, one's in New York, the other's in Philly [Philadelphia]. So Bullfinch visits both of those and a psychiatric hospital in Baltimore for inspiration. And so, he comes back from his trip and says, 'I know the brick is cheaper, but I think this really should be a grand granite building,' and that's how he designed it, with four columns in the front, pretty advanced ideas about ventilation and heat for the time period. Just above the dome here, there are four chimneys that you can't see from the inside. Some people complain that they were ugly from the outside, but they were actually better for the comfort of the patients and the staff in the building. And also, if we walk down the stairs afterward, what was apparently a big deal at the time is that the stairs are made of granite and they're cantilevered, so they're entirely gravity based. That's allowing them to stay into place, no cement or anything like that. So that was like, that was really cool back then.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 06:33

And MGH [Massachusetts General Hospital] was a teaching hospital?

Sarah Alger 06:37

MGH is the oldest and largest teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School. And in fact, that was one of the arguments that the co-founders of the hospital made to their friends and neighbors to say, 'Hey, we should have a general hospital.' One of those arguments was, Harvard Medical School is here, already churning out graduates, but all of those graduates flee to Europe because Europe is considered the pinnacle for medical and surgical training at that time, like even [John Collins] Warren and the other co-founder [Charles Thomas] Jackson, they spend time in Paris. Others go to like London and Edinburgh, and then they come back eventually to the US to practice. But they said, shouldn't we have a teaching hospital to actually train our graduates here and keep them here and their other appeal was this line that you hear often at MGH even now, when in distress, every man becomes our neighbor, making a charitable appeal.

Cassie Cloutier 07:31

We then sat down with Peter Drummey, Chief Historian at the MHS, to learn more about the invention of anesthesia.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 07:38

We are talking about an invention that was not all that significant. I mean, how could it be, it puts people to sleep!

Peter Drummey 07:47

People are often surprised when working in a place that's surrounded by all these enormously important political and military and social events. We think of ourselves here in Boston as being essentially the hub of the solar system, doesn't seem quite enough to sort of describe, but in fact, I argue that the most important historical event that took place here in Boston is not the things that we associate out of the national history, but the public demonstration of a medical procedure, which is so profound that billions of people have, in fact, had anesthesia as part of a medical procedure, and the public knowledge and reception of this and spread of information about it starts here in Boston. That is, there are people who have experimented with ether, the gas, ether as an

anesthetic. Ether has been known for quite a long time, and is actually a drug of choice for young, sophisticated people who breathe it in and then get sort of Ether Happy at parties. You know that has the all the connotations of slightly reckless drug use that we associate with things in our own time. So ether is there known of and there's certainly people who understand its anesthetic qualities, but they're not people who are necessarily circulating that information or demonstrating it in public or especially to an audience that can understand it and realize its implications and to use it as the device, a sponge, essentially a glass container that to use it effectively as an anesthetic, sort of requires those things coming together, and that happens here in a public demonstration of it, and then in an extraordinary way, because of changes that are taking place in the world, steamships, telegraphs, especially wide circulation, publishing all those things mean that within a relatively short time we're talking about from October of 1846, and within an extraordinarily rapid time, this has overspread much of the world, carried everywhere information about it, I think, used some battlefields during the Mexican War in such a short period of time.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 10:47
It started in 1846.

Peter Drummey 10:48
Yeah, almost impossible to understand how rapidly that happened. Not always effectively turned out to be both dangerous in its own right and dangerous in the implications of being able to use it in surgical operations, but this public recognition of it and recognition of it here is quite extraordinary as well. There is both the kind of personal drama of this intense competition first to a dentist and a chemist, but a person working at the Harvard Medical School or working in the sort of medical establishment along one line, and then someone who's from a different field, but, and it's certainly the case that people also understood how important this would be in dental procedures as well, to have anesthesia.

Cassie Cloutier 11:45

Anne Bentley, Curator of Art and Artifacts, Emerita, showed us the items in our collection related to this invention and told us more about its complicated history.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 12:03

Well, okay, so I'm a little confused, because there are two medals, but we have multiple cases out here. Talk about the background first, and then we'll see how these fit in.

Anne Bentley 12:13

We talk about the ether discovery, the discovery of the anesthetic properties of ether, and that devolved into a 21-year war between three claimants. So, we'll start with the cast of characters. First, we've got Horace Wells, who lived from 1815 to 1848, and he was a dentist in Hartford, Connecticut, who was very good at manufacturing his own tools, and was very popular dentist, and he started using nitrous oxide on his patients, his dental patients. This is at a time where most treatments for cavities was simply to pull the tooth. And as you got old enough, and your cavities became more prevalent, the only solution was to pull every tooth in your mouth and have dental plates made. And Horace Wells developed a non-corrosive adhesive that became very, very widely used and helped him in his practice. He had a very, very flourishing practice there in Hartford.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 13:21

As you remember, we did an episode about George Washington's teeth...

Anne Bentley 13:24

Exactly.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 13:24

and how he only had one by the end of his life.

Anne Bentley 13:28

Yes, because he was using nitrous oxide successfully. He tried to make a presentation at Mass General Hospital, which failed miserably, and he was sort of laughed out of the hospital. He went to Europe in the hopes of promoting nitrous oxide there, failed, came back very, very disappointed, and his disappointment led to depression, which was probably not helped by an addiction to chloroform. And in his depression, he committed suicide in 1847. So that is Horace Wells, and he had started using nitrous oxide in 1844. Dates are important here. Now William Thomas Green Morton enters our list here. He lived from 1819 to 1868. He was a troublesome youth in the 1830s. He was born in Charlton, Massachusetts, but he moved to, I think it was Schenectady, New York, the West at that time, and had a very checkered career in the 1830s there in the West. He made partnerships and in various endeavors, East India merchant, grocer, just, merchant, whatever, and it all, they all wound up in disastrous swindling of his partners and his criminal pursuits caught up with him, and so he would move from town to town to town and start over again until finally, detectives in St. Louis, Missouri were after him for forgery, and he managed to decamp just ahead of the detectives, and when they examined his lodgings, they found in his material left behind forged printing plates for bank notes on one of the local banks and the farmers bank, and various other proofs of his illegal activities. So, from St. Louis, he moved back to the east and set himself up as a dentist in Farmington, Connecticut.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 15:40

With no training?

Anne Bentley 15:41

With no training. He claimed to have matriculated from the very, very first dental college in the United States, which was in Baltimore. But later the head of the college said no that he did not have a degree from he had never attended the college.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 15:58

Not surprising for a con artist.

Anne Bentley 16:00

Exactly. He also, at one point, he claimed that he was the nephew of Perez Morton, who was the governor of Massachusetts. Governor Morton, again, no knowledge of this guy. He's not on our family tree. So, Morton was a rather unsavory character, but he wanted to make his name as a dentist, but mostly he wanted to make a fortune. His eye was always too financial gain whatever he did. So, he actually worked briefly with Horace Wells and interned with him a bit, and they went into a very short-lived partnership where Wells is adhesive and Morton's gold plate base for these teeth. They offered these in tandem. And again, Morton's inclination for things not quite on the up enough made Horace Wells dissolve the partnership. Nevertheless, he still took him on as an intern. As long as long as Morton was paying him, he was willing to teach Morton about the more intricate dentistry that he would need. Charles T. Jackson winds up being the third person in our story here. He lived from 1805 to 1880 now he was a polymath physician. He was a geologist, a gemologist, a surveyor and a professor of chemistry, and he was really, really brilliant in theory, but he never bothered to put his theories into practice so that they would be something practical. For he had all these wonderful ideas, but he was content with the theory. Before the ether controversies, he was embroiled in a controversy with Samuel F. B. Morse, the telegraph guy, because he and Morse were returning from Europe on the Sully in 1832 and at the time, electromagnetism was all the rage in Europe, and experiments with electromagnets, and so Jackson, in his scientific interest, had purchased an electromagnet, which is in our collection.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 16:10

Okay, another episode.

Anne Bentley 17:49

Because we have Jackson's papers. We have Morton's papers. This is how we have all of this ether stuff. So, on this trip, while discussing theoretical uses of electromagnets, Jackson demonstrated the use of his electromagnet that he had with him. And this, of course, intrigued Morse, because he made the observation that if you could conduct electricity through it, you could also conduct other

things through it. You could turn that electricity into words, if you just knew how. So, he tinkered and tinkered and tinkered and tinkered until he was satisfied with his machine and he could introduce the telegraph to the world. Well, as soon as he applied for a patent for his telegraph, Charles T. Jackson sued him, demanding credit for his part in quote, 'our telegraph.' And he continued to badger and sue and defame and just harass Morse until finally, in 1854 the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in favor of Morse, who was exasperated and called him that mono-maniac. So, Jackson comes into the ether story with a history of claiming credit for other people's work.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 19:39
Well, neither Jackson nor Morton seem like particularly nice, upstanding gentlemen at this point.

Anne Bentley 19:44
No, they're men with feet of clay, definitely, but I think that Jackson has the edge on Morton in that for 21 years, Morton's sole aim was to monetize this discovery of ether anesthesia. While Jackson wanted this discovery to be free to the world.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 20:07
There are egos that need to be stroked.

Anne Bentley 20:11
There are egos involved. So, Morton and Jackson obtained patent 4848, on November 12, 1846, and that patent declared that their invention consisted of the discovery that sulphuric ether vapors could be administered to the point of insensibility, also that that discovery improved existing surgical methods enabling patients to undergo an operation with little or no pain. Big deal. So, Jackson was not interested in making money, but in keeping his place in history. For that reason, he sold his rights under the patent to Morton for $1 and Morton spent the next 21 years trying to monetize his either patent and discovery until his death, July 15, 1868. While Jackson became a campaign to publicly denounce Morton for seeking to profit off of Jackson's discovery and Wells

who had committed suicide in 1847 just after this, the first use of ether and the announcement of the discovery. He had his supporters who joined the fray trying to obtain recompense for Wells's widow and son. So, we have three major persons here in this 21-year battle, each claiming to be the discoverer of anesthetic ether.

Cassie Cloutier 21:41
Let us return to the conversation in the Ether Dome with the director of the Russell Museum, Sarah Alger.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 21:48
Peter Drummey, our Chief Historian and Librarian, says that this discovery of ether is probably the most important discovery ever made in Boston. What are your thoughts on that?

Sarah Alger 22:02
I might get in trouble from some other Bostonians, but considering the fact that it affected many people, maybe most people who would come thereafter, not only with the birth of anesthesiology, but also with surgery being allowed to blossom. I'm biased, but I'm inclined to agree with Peter, and I'm gonna get in trouble with somebody.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 22:31
So, it's a discovery that affects millions and millions of people and is like the foundation of modern medicine.

Sarah Alger 22:41
That's absolutely right and anesthesiologists from the world overcome here, but so do surgeons from the world over because they were given the gift of time. In the early days, amputations were very common among the surgeries that were done, and also the other surgeries. They had to be quick. So, they tended to be more literally superficial.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 23:04

So, we've got this painting here, which would you say is a relatively accurate representation of what happened?

Sarah Alger 23:12

This is a depiction that was created in like 1999/2000 and the artists took pains to be as historically accurate as possible, so they visited the hospital's archives and consulted other materials. They consulted surgeons and anesthesiologists here at the time to figure out for sure who was here in the room at that time. What exactly would the surgeon have been doing? Where would have his hands have been? What instruments would he have been using for this surgery? What would other people in the room have been doing? So, they really, really did as much as they could to be as accurate as possible.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 23:51

So now are the depictions here in the painting. I assume that's Warren in the center who's doing the cutting, and that's probably Morton with the inhaler. Are there any other characters we should know from the painting?

Sarah Alger 24:03

The only other person I can point out to you is, do you mind if we travel, this guy, Eben Frost. He was one of Morton's dental patients who had successfully had ether. So, Morton brought him along to sort of give [Edward Gilbert] Abbott a boost to say, 'Trust me, it worked on me. It'll work with you, too.' A fun thing to note about this painting is that you might have seen another famous painting that was by an artist named [Robert] Hinckley that was enormous, even bigger than this painting that was meant to be a depiction of ether day. However, it was painted several decades after it happened, and also possibly for political reasons, he painted in people who weren't actually there that day. And actually, the ether dome looks very different from how it really is. The hospital decided to commission this painting to try to be as accurate as possible and what they did was they cast MGH staff members in the historical roles, and the artists kind of ended up keeping, sort of,

the faces of those MGH staff members, some of whom are still here. They borrowed costumes from the drama department at Emerson [College], gathered everyone here on a Saturday, dressed them up, put fake facial hair on them, and all that posed them, and then they hung this blank canvas here, and the artist painted it on site. People could watch him paint. So, the patient was a young printer named [Edward] Gilbert Abbott who had a vascular tumor on the floor of his mouth and the side of his neck. I should say that the surgeon was John Collins Warren. He was both the co-founder of the hospital and also the head surgeon. He could reputedly amputate a limb in 40 seconds, because, like I said before, speed was of the essence at the time, and you had to have nerves of steel, and he clearly did. And so, he chooses Abbott, and the date is set for October 16, 1846.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 26:11
There had been a demonstration a year earlier, right, and that did not go well.

Sarah Alger 26:16
Right!

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 26:17
And was Warren involved with that?

Sarah Alger 26:18
He was not. So, there was a dentist named Horace Wells from Hartford, Connecticut, who had been to a kind of carnival side show where people took nitrous oxide for amusement. And he found that people didn't seem to feel pain under its influence. So, he experimented with it. He found that it worked. He came up to Boston, filled a hall with an audience and attempted to demonstrate nitrous on a young patient who needed a tooth pulled. We don't know exactly what happened, but the patient cries out and people yell 'Humbug!' at him. And so, he returns to Hartford, but he has this business partner named William Morton who has been to other amusements that are called ether frolics, where people take ether for fun. A similar story, where he finds that people under the

influence don't seem to feel pain, and so he experiments with it on a goldfish for some reason. I don't recall why, his dog, himself and some of his dental patients. And he has the benefit of a friend who's a surgeon here at the hospital. And he asks this friend for help. 'Do you think Dr. Warren would allow me to demonstrate this on a surgical patient in the operating theater?' And so, Warren took the chance on him, and Morton arrives half an hour late on October 16, toting this glass globe that he's had specially made. The device looks a little like something else that might be familiar to modern audiences. It's basically a glass globe with a stem that has a mouthpiece at one end, and on the other is this kind of brass fitting that you would use to open up and pour the ether into so the ether is liquid at room temperature, but can become a gas very easily, and there's a sea sponge inside the globe. So, Morton gives the ether to the patient, Abbott falls unconscious, but he does make some sounds and some movements during the procedure. Morton has to give him more ether a few times. So, it isn't until the operation is done that they can ask, 'Did you feel any pain?' At first he said, 'Oh, did the procedure begin yet?' And at that they said, 'Do you mean you didn't feel any pain?' He said, 'Well, I felt a dull scratching on my neck.' And so Warren turned from his patient to the crowd behind him and said, 'Gentlemen, this is no humbug!' In counterpoint to what everyone saw in Wells's failed demonstration of nitrous oxide. And I'm fond of pointing out the fact that this is still a very active educational space. And also, the artist figured out the operating chair where Abbott was was probably over here somewhere because they figured out where the October sun would have been. And the fact that people just kind of walk across this all day, people sit, people stand, people look around. The FedEx guy comes through. It's really fascinating that you can stand on the very spot where history changed for most people thereafter. In terms of the media coverage, there was kind of a pamphleteering war and sort of like war in the news among the four men who wanted to claim the credit for it. So, this is October 16, someone here writes a letter to someone in London. First used in London in December. Robert Liston is a British surgeon who's actually even swifter than Warren. He at first, calls ether the Yankee Dodge.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 29:55

The Yankee Dodge?

Sarah Alger 29:56

And then, and then he uses it, and he's like, 'Oh, I guess it's okay after all.' And it's adopted there. But word spreads very quickly. But not long after October 16, Wells says, 'Wait, I should get the credit.' Morton, of course, says, 'I should get the credit.' Charles Jackson is a really interesting figure. He had advised Morton about the kind of ether to use because he seemed to have an inkling that it could kill pain, although he had not acted on that information himself. He comes out of the woodwork and says, 'Well, Morton's not too bright. I'm really the one responsible for the discovery.' And then there's a surgeon in the state of Georgia named Crawford Long who says, 'I've been using ether on my patients since 1842 shouldn't I get the credit?' But because it was this successful demonstration that was published about mere weeks after this happened, Morton is formally awarded the credit, but we try to tell the stories of all four of the men from this time period.

Cassie Cloutier 30:59

We then returned to our conversation with Anne about the items in our collection.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 31:05

So, this is Morton's medal with a gold collar.

Anne Bentley 31:09

The actual metal is in the center. I would say it two and a quarter inches diameter. The collar is five inches in diameter. This is solid gold and yeah, he liked shiny things. Jackson has more medals, but Morton has bigger, shinier one. Okay, the papers and the medals for both gentlemen came from their families. The Morton medals were the gift of Mrs. W. T. G. Morton in 1870 which was a, really, a magnificent gift, because here's this lady whose husband died in bankrupt, just making whatever money she could have sold these and turned them into very, very much needed income for herself and her family. But she knows she deposited the medals and the affidavits and paperwork and papers, all the legal papers about this, these cases to us, as I say, in 1870 and the Jackson medals all came to us through his daughter and granddaughter in 1915 with his certificates

and affidavits. Morton's to Sweden and Norway Order of Vasa is a lovely thing. It's not on its ribbon anymore, but it's a lovely Maltese cross boutonniè with the buttons on the points and a lovely 3D crown as its suspension loop.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 32:44
That's gorgeous.

Anne Bentley 32:45
This is the Russian Order of Saint Vladimir. It's hard to see, but the reverse, of course, the Russian medals were made in Paris, but a lot of them have this on the arms of the crosses, the surface is textured, very textured, and then the colored enamel overlay is clear, so that you can see the texture underneath. And on the reverse, which is the black side that has the date 22 September 1782 in Cyrillic characters. You can see on the upper arm, under the enamel the Russian Eagle engraved in the arm. It's so cool to be able to see those things.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 33:37
Alright, so let's talk about some of Mr. Jackson's medals here You have a lot of them here. We've got 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9!

Anne Bentley 33:46
He's got his two French Legions of Honor, one under the Republic and one under the Second Empire. They essentially look the same. The difference is in the suspension loop. Under the Republic it's just a plain loop.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 34:00
That's beautiful!

Anne Bentley 34:01

It is lovely. These decorations and awards are just gorgeous. They aren't of solid silver or gold, but they are of gilded bronze as a base, usually. And they have all enamels, all colors. The French Republic has Napoleon Bonaparte as consul on the obverse. It's a pattée cross with little balls at the ends of the points of the five arms, and the reverse is...

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 34:34

French flags.

Anne Bentley 34:35

Yeah.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 34:36

And would these have been sent over? Was there a ceremony that one had to go collect this?

Anne Bentley 34:42

I'm sure it's like today that they would have been sent in diplomatic courier, you know, to the embassy or the consulate, and that the representative of the government would present that with the paperwork. So that's the Legion of Honor.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 34:57

That's beautiful.

Anne Bentley 34:58

Oh, this turns out to be the Second Empire, and you can see the difference. Now, all of a sudden, Napoleon is the emperor on the obverse, and the hangar is a three-dimensional crown.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 35:14

Oh, yes, we've had a slight change in the government. Very nice too. Similar design.

Anne Bentley 35:21

Yeah.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 35:22

You see the evolution of the French government as well in the presentation of these medals.

Anne Bentley 35:28

This is the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus Victor Emmanuel to the king of Sardinia conferred this on Jackson. And it's quite simple. It's a white cross with green inlaid arms.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 35:45

That's beautiful.

Anne Bentley 35:45

It is. It's just very, very simple.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 35:49

Wow and all these came with certificates?

Anne Bentley 35:52

Yes, those are upstairs. Some are fancier than others. This is the Prussian Order of the Red Eagle, 1857, [Frederic] William IV, King of Prussia. It is silver, and the center circle is a button that has an enameled Red Eagle, which gives the order its name. And the reverse is silver with the cipher of the king.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 36:15

Wow! There's a whole different language here. There's a whole world of symbolism and imagery.

Anne Bentley 36:22

So, this is our most exotic one, the Order of the Medjidie. I apologize to those who speak Arabic because I'm sure I'm not pronouncing it in any good fashion. It's Fifth Class Sultan Abd-ul-Medjid of the Ottoman Empire, 1852. This is the one for use of ether among his troops in the Crimean War. And it is a silver starburst with Arabic [Turkish] on the obverse. The reverse is blank, and the suspension loop is crescent and star from the ribbon and the decoration, the presentation parchment is amazing. It's in gold leaf and black in Arabic. This lovely air flowing Arabic scroll. It's just a beautiful thing.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 37:12

Wow, the ether wars and the war of the medals. My goodness.

Anne Bentley 37:16

Yeah, yeah. So, Jackson went for quantity over quality, and Morton considered he went for quality over quantity.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 37:23

But we all live in the world that they help create, and we are grateful.

Anne Bentley 37:36

We are grateful to both, to all who...

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 37:39

Tried to alleviate pain.

Anne Bentley 37:41

Tried to alleviate pain, and experimented and tested and came up with solutions. We are indeed in their debt.

Cassie Cloutier 37:53

[Outro music fades in] To look at the items discussed in today's episode, visit our show website at www.masshist.org/podcast. The Object of History was produced by the research department at the Massachusetts Historical Society. We would like to thank Sarah Alger, Director of Mass General Hospital's, Paul S. Russell, MD Museum of Medical History and Innovation. Peter Drummey, Chief Historian at the MHS, Anne Bentley, Curator of Art and Artifacts, Emerita and Sam Hurwitz, Podcast Producer at the MHS. Music in this episode is by Ketsa Music and Chad Crouch. See our show notes for details. Thank you for listening, and please rate, review and subscribe to both the MHS produced shows wherever you listen to podcasts.