Collection of William T. G. Morton Materials
Wellesley Historical Society

Repository Identifier
mawelhs

Local Identifier
2016.23

Name and Location of Repository
The Wellesley Historical Society
229 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA 02481
(781) 235-6690
www.wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org

Title
Collection of William T. G. Morton Materials, 1847 - 1990

Date
1847 - 1990

Extent
.5 linear feet, 1 box

Name of Creator
Wellesley Historical Society

Biographical Note
William Thomas Green Morton, August 9, 1819 – July 15, 1868, moved to West Needham in 1845, which was later became incorporated as Wellesley in 1881. His home, which became known as Etherton Cottage stood on the land where the Wellesley Town Hall is now located. Morton was a dentist and manufacturer of artificial teeth. It was his desire to spare his patients from the pain of pulling teeth that led Morton to begin his early experiments with ether. Morton is often credited with being the first to successfully administer ether as an anesthetic during surgery. This is largely due to a demonstration which he took part in at Massachusetts General Hospital on October 16, 1864. The demonstration involved Morton administering ether to a young man undergoing surgery to remove a tumor from his jaw. The surgery and the effectiveness of ether was deemed to be a success.

Despite the success of the ether demonstration, Morton would spend the rest of his life in dispute with others in the scientific and medical community as to whom had made the discovery that ether could be used as surgical anesthesia. Although, Morton is still often credited with the discovery, many historians agree that the story is complex enough to suggest that Morton does not deserve sole credit.
Scope and Content Note
This collection contains materials related to the William T. G. Morton and is work regarding ether. The bulk of the collection is made up of unpublished and published research regarding Morton’s role in the use of ether as anesthesia.

Index Terms
Anesthesia — History
Clippings
Ether — History
Massachusetts — Anniversaries, etc.
Massachusetts — Wellesley
Wellesley (Mass.) — Biography
Wellesley (Mass.) — History

System of Arrangement
This collection is organized into four series arranged by subject:
   I. Personal Items; undated
   II. Visual Materials; undated
   IV. Published & Unpublished Writings Regarding Morton & Ether; 1847 – 1987, & undated

Conditions Governing Access
The collection is open for research purposes by appointment only. Please contact the Wellesley Historical Society for more information.
info@wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org
(781) 235-6690

Physical Access
Some of the materials are fragile.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use
Copyright restrictions may apply.

Languages and Scripts of the Material
English

Immediate Source of Acquisition
B.21

Accruals
The Historical Society may add materials to the Papers in the future; however, no further accruals are currently expected.
Description
Processing of this collection was made possible through a grant from the Wellesley Community Preservation Committee.

DACS Finding Aid created by Taylor C. Kalloch in August 2016.

Bibliography
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Container List

I. Personal Items; undated

This series contains items which belonged to Morton, such as his bible.

Box 1
Folder 1: Morton’s Bible; undated

Oversized Box
Folder: Oversized Personal Materials

II. Visual Materials; undated

This series contains visual materials related to Morton. Of note is a map detailing the location of his grave in Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Box 1
Folder 2: Images of Morton; Photographs, Drawings, Etc.; undated
Folder 3: Mount Auburn Cemetery, Morton Grave Location and Map; undated

Oversized Box
Folder: Oversized Visual Materials


This series contains unpublished research information concerning Morton and his discovery. This series includes correspondence discussing Morton and his work.

Box 1
Folder 4: Bibliographic Information Regarding Morton; 1970, & undated
Folder 5: Correspondence Regarding Morton; 1946, & 1960 - 1990

IV. Published & Unpublished Writings Regarding Morton & Ether Discovery; 1847 – 1987, & undated

This series contains published research materials regarding Morton and his discovery of Ether.

Box 1
Folder 6: Discovery of Anesthesia Anniversary and Remembrance Information; 1933, 1946, & 1972
Folder 7: “The Discovery of Anesthesia” by Elizabeth Whitman Morton, McClure’s Magazine; July 1896
Collection of William T. G. Morton Materials
Wellesley Historical Society

Folder 8: Further Study of Morton Field Land by Katherine Healy, Published in Townsman; January 11, 1959
Folder 9: Newspaper Clippings; bulk undated
Folder 10: “Memoranda Relating to the Discovery of Surgical Anesthesia, and Dr. William T. G. Morton’s Relation to this Event, by William James Morton, M.D.; 1905
Folder 11: Published Writings Regarding Morton, Bound, #1; 1947, & undated
Folder 12: Published Writings Regarding Morton, Bound, #2; 1847, & undated
Folder 13: Published Writings Regarding Morton, Journal Articles; 1946 – 1987
Folder 14: Unpublished Writings Regarding Morton; undated
Folder 15: Wellesley Buttonwood Tree; 1902

Oversized Box
Folder: Information about Robert Hinckley’s painting depicting The Ether Experiment
Folder: Oversized Discovery of Anesthesia Anniversary and Remembrance Information