Crawford Williamson Long was born on November 1, 1815 in Danielsville, Georgia. His father was a wealthy merchant and planter who later became a State senator. At the age of fourteen he applied to the University of Georgia in Athens. Long received his Masters of Arts degree from the university in 1835 at just 19 years of age. In 1836, he began his medical education at Transylvania College in Kentucky, where he studied under Benjamin Dudley, a renowned surgeon. He later transferred to the University of Pennsylvania and earned his medical degree during a demonstrational tooth surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital.

In October 16, 1846, he publically demonstrated the application of ether to remove tumor from the neck of a young man who did not feel any pain. He returned to Georgia in 1841 and settled in the small town of Jefferson, modestly avoiding the limelight that could have been his due. He spent the rest of his life as a simple and humble rural practitioner.

American dentists began using the gas in their practice until it failed to work on a patient in blocking nerve impulses. However, nitrous oxide and diethyl ether gained popularity as two anesthetic agents. In 1849 he presented his findings to the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta. Long did not publish his findings as he wanted to be sure of his discovery. He began writing his own account of his discovery only after an editorial ran in the December 1846 issue of the Medical Examiner about the Boston dentist Morton who claimed to have used ether as an anesthetic. In the honor of his groundbreaking achievement, the day of his discovery is commemorated by a statue in the National Capital's Hall of Fame, he has come to be regarded as the father of modern anesthesiology.

 Others followed suit and dug up other gases like carbon dioxide which produced similar effects. Cocaine injections in the eye, mouth and other areas of body were also found useful in blocking nerve impulses. However, nitrous oxide and diethyl ether gained popularity as two anesthetic agents.

Ether As Surgical Anesthetic

Not too many medical revelations could be termed as significant and elementary as the discovery and development of Anesthesia. It was a turning point for the world of medicine and opened up a new era for medical advances and discoveries.

In Germany Johann Friedrich Dieffenbach (1795-1847), a pioneer in plastic surgery, wrote: "The wonderful dream that pain has been taken away from us has become reality. It is the first time in the history of medicine that the patient has suffered no pain.

In an effort to relieve pain during surgery, surgeons employed all kinds of means they could. Several doctors began experimenting with different gases. Some used derivatives of herbs and plant extracts like opium and marijuana and others preferred alcohol concoctions to knock out a patient. Some even went as far to consider inhale gases such as sulphuric ether to induce euphoria. During one such "ether frolics", Long was somewhat shocked about the power of this gas and its potential.

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