Famous Georgians
DR. CRAWFORD W. LONG

When King Edward the Seventh recovered consciousness after a painless operation, his first question was: "Who discovered anaesthesia?"

"Dr. Crawford Long, your Majesty," was the answer.

Since March 30, 1842, when he first administered sulphuric ether as an anaesthetic, Dr. Long's discovery has been an important answer to pain, an answer that allays fear and forestalls the torture of the operating room.

Crawford Williamson Long was born in Danielsville, Georgia, November 1, 1815, the son of James and Elizabeth Ware Long.

At 14 he entered Franklin College, now the University of Georgia, and in 1835 was graduated, second in his class. After teaching for a year in the academy which his father had founded at Danielsville, he began to study medicine, first under a preceptor, then at Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky, and finally at the University of Pennsylvania, where in 1839 he received his medical degree. After 18 months in New York, where he gained the reputation of being a skilled surgeon, he returned to his native state to practice in Jefferson.

On August 11, 1842, Dr. Long married Mary Caroline Swain, the niece of Governor Swain of North Carolina.

"Laughing gas" was made in the early 1840's and wandering showmen, using volunteer subjects, gave demonstrations of its effect. In January, 1842, after seeing such a demonstration, several of Long's friends persuaded him to have a "nitrous oxide frolic" in his room. No nitrous oxide was available but Long offered a substitute. Later, in writing of the incident for the December, 1849, edition of the *Southern Medical and Surgical Journal,* Long stated: "I informed them . . . that I had a medicine (sulphuric ether) which would produce equally exhilarating effects; that I had inhaled it myself and considered it safe as the nitrous oxide gas."

Under the influence of the ether and the excitement of the moment, the young men engaged in rough play. Young Dr. Long cannily observed that, although many bruises were sustained, none of the young men remembered experiencing any pain.

A few months later, when only 26 years old, he administered sulphuric ether to a patient, James Venable, and removed from this man's neck a cystic tumor. The operation was successful and the grateful patient admitted that the operation was painless. Before September, 1846, Dr. Long performed eight operations in which he administered ether.

Several men have claimed or had claimed for them the honor of being known as the discoverer of anaesthesia, but Long is now firmly established at the head of the list. It is now known that his first operation employing an anaesthetic came nearly three years before that of his closest rival.

In 1850 Long moved to Athens, where he immediately acquired a large surgical practice.

During the War Between the States he headed the military hospital at the University, for which service he was given the Southern Cross of honor.

Dr. Long died June 16, 1878, at the age of 63. He and his wife are buried in the Oconee Cemetery in Athens.

A statue in Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol, markers at the Universities of Pennsylvania and Georgia, an oil painting in Georgia's State Capitol, and a monument at Jefferson, Georgia, serve to remind us of Crawford W. Long. Instead of diminishing the fame of Long, the years are adding to his glory. Already his name is being linked with those of Jenner, Pasteur and Lister in stories of man's humanity to man.