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GPB to highlight the life of Crawford Long on his birthday

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Although Dr. Crawford W. Long made history more than 150 years ago by performing the first surgical procedure using ether as anesthesia, some folks still don't know a lot about the late Jefferson physician.

To help educate the masses, the Georgia Historical Society and Georgia Public Broadcasting have decided to use today — Long's birthday — to highlight his achievements. He was born Nov. 1, 1815.

The two entities will highlight Long in a short segment of "Today in Georgia History" that will air tonight on GPB-TV.

"They contacted us about two months ago and said they were interested in honoring (Long)," said Vicki Starnes, who oversees daily operations of the Crawford Long Museum in Jefferson.

"It was completely their idea and we're very excited that they chose to highlight him."

This local segment is a part of a collaborative project that the history society and broadcast network have been producing for some time. Each of the daily installments "focuses on a historical event or person associated with a particular day in Georgia history."

If you miss the original airing, you can see it and all the other archived segments, on the "Today in Georgia History" website. The site also has a resource gallery with discussion topics, primary-source materials and other learning opportunities to help educators incorporate the segments into their classrooms.

Some of the segments have been on well-known entities like Cumberland Island in south Georgia and former President Jimmy Carter.

Other's have spotlighted lesser-known figures like Toccoa-born Paul Anderson, who was once billed as the "world's strongest man."

Starnes hopes the segment helps to bring more attention to the museum, which re-opened after extensive renovations in 2010.

"It's still a challenge for us to get the word out there about such a huge piece of history that's right in the middle of Jefferson," Starnes said.

"There are still some people who live right here in Jackson County who are just finding out about us. There's a lot of history here, and we want to share it."

If having the opportunity to learn more about Long and the history of anesthesia isn't incentive enough, if you stop by the museum this week, you'll get the added treat of a free cupcake in honor of the late doctor's birthday.

The museum at 28 College St. in Jefferson is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays.

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