Joseph Warren was a Boston-area physician who became a leading patriotic organizer in the days leading up to the Revolution. As a member of the Boston Committee of Correspondence, he drafted the 1774 Suffolk Resolves in response to Parliament’s Intolerable Acts, outlining the protest movement in Massachusetts. He famously dispatched William Dawes and Paul Revere on their 'midnight rides' of April 18, 1775, to warn Hancock and Adams in Lexington about the approaching British troops. Warren fought in the Battle of Lexington and Concord the next day. He was then commissioned a major general, and again saw action at the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775, during which he was shot and killed.

John Warren was a noted surgeon and the younger brother of Joseph Warren. After studying medicine under his brother, John began a practice in Salem, Massachusetts, and volunteered in Colonel Pickering’s militia regiment as an army surgeon. He saw action at the Battle of Lexington and Concord, but had returned to Salem by the time the Battle of Bunker Hill took place. Upon the death of his brother, John entered full-time army service as head of the hospital at Cambridge. He then followed Washington’s troops throughout their campaigns in 1776–1777, tending to the wounded at the Battles of Long Island, Trenton, and Princeton. Retiring from active combat, Warren resumed practicing medicine in Boston and became a widely respected lecturer. He became a founder of Harvard Medical School in 1782, and he was elected as the new school’s first Professor of Anatomy and Surgery.
John Collins Warren, the son of John Warren, followed in his father’s footsteps as one of the greatest surgeons of the 19th century. He was a founder of the New England Journal of Medicine and served as the third president of the American Medical Association. He assumed the Hersey Professorship of Anatomy and Surgery upon his father’s death in 1815, and was named the first dean of Harvard Medical School shortly thereafter. Warren was an early champion of the use of anesthesia and gave its first public demonstration in 1846. Additionally, he was an organizing member of the Bunker Hill Monument Association, which formed in the 1820s. He helped to select the land and raise funds for the construction of the monument, which was finally completed in 1842.

Henry Jacob Bigelow, a friend and colleague of John Collins Warren, was another surgeon instrumental in the early advocacy of anesthesia. He is also remembered for developing the Bigelow maneuver for hip dislocation, a technique for treatment of kidney stones, and his study of Phineas Gage. Bigelow was a successor to John Warren and John Collins Warren as Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School.

John Collins Warren, Jr., who also went by Dr. J. Collins Warren, was the son of John Collins Warren and grandson of John Warren. He became a noted surgeon whose principal expertise was in the surgical treatment of tumors, and held several positions at Harvard Medical School. He also briefly served as president of the American Surgical Association. In 1906, he served as chairman of the committee that arranged the ‘Historical Loan Exhibition of Medical and Surgical Instruments’ held at Harvard, at which the second of these amputation kits was exhibited.