

A New Look for the John Benjamin Murphy Portrait

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In 2016, the 100th year since the death of J.B. Murphy, MD, LLD, MSc (1857-1916), the library began the process for the care of his portrait.

In late December 2010, the Galter Library was pleased to accept donated materials from Barbara Miller, the great granddaughter of J. B. Murphy. Highlights about the donation and the professional life of J.B. Murphy, a professor of surgery at Northwestern, and chief of surgery at Mercy Hospital, Northwestern's first teaching hospital, were described in a 2011 library website article: [An American Original: John Benjamin Murphy, MD](#). Galter Library displays since 2011 have featured items from that generous donation.

Among the items donated by Barbara Miller was an unframed oil portrait of J.B. Murphy (artist unknown), measuring approximately 67.31 cm by 50.8 cm. In advance of a planned hanging of the portrait on the Chicago campus sometime in 2017, the Galter Library stewarded it through a restoration and framing process that began in mid-2016. Upon the completion of the project, conservator Inez Litas of Litas Liparini Restoration Studio in Evanston, IL, provided a detailed condition report that highlighted the steps of work required to restore the portrait prior to framing. The restoration work that took several months included careful cleaning of the grime and residue accumulated over the years, stretching on a new stretcher support, filling, varnishing, and finally, framing.



In early 2017, the refreshed and rejuvenated portrait of J.B. Murphy was returned to the Galter Health Sciences Library, awaiting relocation to its new home on Northwestern's Chicago campus.

For more information about rare books and artifacts, the history of medicine and dentistry, and the history of the medical school, contact Galter Health Sciences Library Special Collections: gsl-specialcollections@northwestern.edu.

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