In 1857 John B. Murphy was born and became the sixth child of hard working immigrant Irish parents living in a three-room farmhouse outside the town of Neenah, Wisconsin. Wanting more education for their children than a one-room schoolhouse could offer, John was enrolled in Hercules High School in the town of Appleton and boarded at the home of his mother’s cousin. In 1878 John went on to Rush medical School in Chicago, continued his medical education in Vienna and Berlin from 1882 to 1884. Dr. Murphy returned to Chicago with more formal general and medical education than most doctors of that era.

Dr. Murphy’s love was surgery. He ultimately led the nation and world in the understanding of appendicitis and the need for early surgery to prevent its rupture, which, when it happened in those years without the benefit of modern antibiotics, usually resulted in death.

Dr. Murphy further introduced a new technique for the anastomosis in small and large bowel surgery with the “Murphy button” which in his time was used worldwide. He also was a leader in vascular, pulmonary and bone surgery along with the proper use of chloroform and ether as anesthetics.

Dr. Murphy was a professor of medicine at Northwestern Medical School, chief of surgery at Mercy Hospital in Chicago, published widely on multiple subjects through Murphy’s Surgical Clinics published by Saunders Company. Physicians came to Mercy Hospital from all over the United States and the world to observe his surgical techniques. He was friends with and admired by colleagues such as Will and Charlie Mayo, Harvey Cushing and George Crile and was the personal physician for President Theodore Roosevelt.

Dr. John B. Murphy died in 1916 at the age of 59 of coronary artery disease—a condition at the time for which there was little knowledge and for which there would be no effective treatment for another fifty years.