



# **NEW YORK STATE BOARD AOH**

## **SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION**

### **STUDY GUIDE MATERIAL**

***FRIENDSHIP, UNITY AND TRUE CHRISTIAN CHARITY***

## THE AOH

- The Ancient Order of Hibernians in America (from here on referred to as the AOH) is the oldest Irish Catholic Fraternal Organization in the USA. It was founded concurrently in 1836 in New York City (St. James Church on May 4<sup>th</sup>) and in the coal mining region of Pennsylvania.
- The organization was formed to protect the clergy and churches from the violent American Nativist mobs that attacked Irish Catholic immigrants and Church property.
- The Purpose of the AOH is:
  - To promote its motto, *Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity*;
  - To foster and sustain loyalty to country and community;
  - To aid and advance by all legitimate means the aspirations and endeavors of the Irish people for complete and absolute independence, promoting peace and unity for all Ireland;
  - To foster the ideas and perpetuate the history and traditions of the Irish people;
  - To promote Irish culture;
  - To encourage civic participation;
  - To encourage an equitable U.S. immigration law for Ireland, and to cooperate with groups for a fair American Immigration Policy;
  - To accept and support, without prejudice, the concept of free expression of religious practice for the people of the world; and
  - To protect and defend all life, born and unborn.
- The basic unit of the AOH is known as a Division.
- To be a member of the AOH one must be a male residing in the United States; must be a practicing Roman Catholic; must prove his Irish ancestry or be a member of the Catholic Clergy or be enrolled as a Seminarian regardless of ancestry if they meet all other requirements: be of good character: and be not less than sixteen years of age.

## IRELAND: BASIC FACTS

- Ireland is the third largest island in Europe and the twentieth largest in the world.
- There are four provinces in Ireland: Munster, Leinster, Ulster, and Connaught.
- The basic subdivision of local government is the county of which there are 32.
- 26 Counties comprise the Republic of Ireland while 6 still remain part of the United Kingdom
- While it is commonplace to refer to the six counties controlled by the United Kingdom as Ulster, this is incorrect. The province of Ulster has 9 counties, 3 which are members of the Republic of Ireland.
- Dublin, where almost 1/3 of Ireland's population resides, is the capitol of the Republic of Ireland.
- The longest river in Ireland is the River Shannon.
- Gaelic is the native language of the Irish and the Gaelic name for Ireland is Eire.
- The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is a volunteer led, community based organization that promotes Gaelic games such as Hurling, Football, Handball and Rounders. The GAA has as its headquarters in Croke Park in Dublin.
- The President of Ireland (Gaelic: *Uachtarán na hÉireann*) is the head of state of Ireland. The President is usually directly elected by the people for seven years, and can be elected for a maximum of two terms. The current President is Michael D. Higgins. In 1990, Mary Robinson was elected the first female president of Ireland. In 1997, she was succeeded by Mary McAleese. This was the first time in world history that two female presidents have held successive terms.



## ST. PATRICK

St. Patrick was born in Great Britain where he was captured at the age of 16 and brought to Ireland as a slave. He escaped back to Britain but returned to Ireland where he is credited with spreading Christianity throughout the country. St. Patrick used the shamrock to illustrate the concept of the Holy Trinity to the pagan Irish. He is the author of an autobiography, *Confessio*, as well as *Letter to Coroticus*, which spoke against British mistreatment of Irish Christians. He is believed to have died on March 17th; around 460 A.D. St. Patrick is the patron saint of the archdiocese of New York.



## St. Columcille of Iona

In the years following the missionary work of St. Patrick to Ireland, mainland Europe continued to slip further and further into the gloom of the Dark Ages. Only Ireland, which had transferred its ancient traditional love and appreciation of learning to the new faith and its classical traditions, was the flickering flame of civilization kept alive. Here it could have remained, at the edge of the known world, a fragile light that one strong wind could extinguish. Instead through the example of one man the light was returned to Europe where it would once again enlighten a continent. That man was St. Columcille, (Latinized to St. Columba).

Columcille was born in Donegal in the year 597 A.D., some fifty years after the death of St. Patrick, in an Ireland that still had strong echoes of its Druid past as indicated by his birth name Crimethann (“the Fox”). He was of royal blood: a nephew of the current Ard Ri (High King of Ireland), his father a powerful Tyrconnell Chieftain, his mother the daughter of a Munster Chieftain. With such a pedigree and connections, young Crimethann could one day claim the high kingship for himself. He was schooled as a Bard and was considered one of the finest poets of his age. His love however was the Church, and it was from this love he was bestowed the name Columcille, translated “the dove of the Church.”

Columcille studied under St. Finian at Clonard until plague ravaged the area and forced the closing of the school. He returned home where his kinsman, the Prince of Tyrconnell, gave him land where he opened his famous monastery of Derry. Here Columcille showed both the unconventional oneness with nature that marked Irish Christianity, and perhaps evidence that there was still a bit of “the proud prince” in the young Abbott. Columcille built his church without the traditional alignment to face the rising sun so that he could preserve a stand of oak trees. By the time he was forty, Columcille had founded some forty churches.

Columcille had another passion: books. As the great libraries had vanished from Europe with many of their books burned, scholars from the classical world fled to Ireland bringing their books with them. The Irish Monks and Monasteries preserved books and copied them, even adding to them the first written copies of the early history of Ireland and its legends which had previously relied on oral tradition. Columcille’s love for books was such that it blinded his judgment: when visiting his teacher St. Finian, Columcille made a secret copy of one of his books, a rare copy of the Book of Psalms (called a Psalter) When St. Finian learned of the copy he demanded its return, Columcille refused. They agreed to have the dispute resolved by the High King Diarmuid. St. Finian argued that he should be able to decide when his book was copied and be allowed to ensure the copy was accurate (some copiers were not above adding their own embellishments); Columcille argued that books and their knowledge should be shared, and he did no harm to the value of the original book. Diarmuid reached a decision which still echoes today “To each cow its calf, to each book its copy.” It is the first recorded example of copyright law.

Though Columcille and St. Finian reconciled, some at the High King’s court appeared to have taken pleasure in seeing that the successful young monk was shown his place, and there was still enough of the noble in Columcille not to forget such a slight. When a short time later Diarmuid forcibly took into custody a young man who had been granted sanctuary in one of Columcille’s churches, it was the last straw. Columcille called upon his kinsmen and met Diarmuid and his followers in the battle of Cuidremne where Columcille was victorious but at a tremendous cost in lives.

Columcille realized the tremendous human cost of his pride and repented in a full confession. The penance he received carried a severity to match his sin: he was to leave the Ireland he loved and never see it again and he was to claim as many souls by conversion to the Church as he had caused to be lost in battle. Columcille and

twelve companions boarded a coracle and sailed north till they found an island from which Ireland could no longer be seen: Iona off the coast of Scotland.

The humbled Columcille created a monastery and center of scholarship at Iona the likes of which had no parallel in Europe. Like Patrick had preached to the Irish, Columcille began to preach to the Picts and Scots. He was able to bring to bear his previous knowledge of royal politics, his bardic respect of their traditions and Christian compassion. His fame soon spread, and he quickly claimed as many souls as had been lost at the battle of Cuilcubne and many times more. So successful was his Monastery at Iona, Columcille had to limit the numbers of monks to 150. However, rather than simply turning applicants away, Columcille came up with a more generous solution: when the number of monks reached the limit, he made room by dispatching “twelve and one” monks with a mandate to found a new monastery. By the time of Columcille’s death over sixty monastic communities dotted the coast of Briton, each one carrying books and the flame of learning back to a darkened Europe, helping the Western World reclaim her lost past; an act for which all people, and not just the Irish, should remember him.



## St. Oliver Plunkett

It is somewhat strange that the media, which loves to tell stories of injustice, shies away from Ireland and its troubled history though there is plenty of material to choose from. One story in particular from Ireland's past stands out as having all the elements that would make for a Hollywood Oscar winner, a story of a good man condemned by a government conspiracy using fraudulent evidence and the testimony of a man as evil as the victim is good. It is the story of St. Oliver Plunkett and Titus Oates.

Oliver Plunkett was born in county Meath in the year 1629 into a well-connected and propertied family. At the age of sixteen he left for Rome to study for the priesthood, little realizing that his way home would soon be blocked by the conquest of Ireland by Oliver Cromwell, whose prohibitions against the Catholic Church in Ireland made being a member of the Catholic clergy a capital crime. In exile, Plunkett entered the Irish College in Rome where he was described as "amongst the foremost in talent, diligence, and progress in his studies....a model of gentleness, integrity, and piety." He was ordained a Jesuit and became a professor of Theology while simultaneously being unceasing in pleading the cause of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

The Restoration of Charles II after the collapse of Cromwell's commonwealth appeared to usher in a new period of religious toleration. Plunkett was appointed Archbishop of Armagh and primate of Ireland. Upon his return to Ireland in 1670, Plunkett set about reorganizing and reforming a ravaged church. He rebuilt schools and instituted reforms amongst the clergy whose discipline had lapsed in the years without a central authority. In four years Plunkett confirmed over 40,000 people, helping restore the faith in Ireland Cromwell sought to destroy. Plunkett established a Jesuit College in Drogheda in 1670. A year later 150 students attended the college, of which no fewer than 40 of whom were Protestant, Plunkett's college was the first integrated school in Ireland. Such was the esteem that Plunkett was held in by all members of the Irish community, irrespective of faith.

If there was a man who was the polar opposite to Oliver Plunkett it was Titus Oates. Described by classmates as "the most illiterate dunce", he was expelled from Cambridge and drifted into becoming an Anglican minister. Involved in a conspiracy to bring false charges against a local schoolmaster, he was convicted of perjury. Escaping prison, he secured a position as a chaplain on a Royal Navy ship only to be expelled within twelve months. Oates then converted to Catholicism and enrolled into two different Jesuit colleges only to be expelled from each in a matter of months.

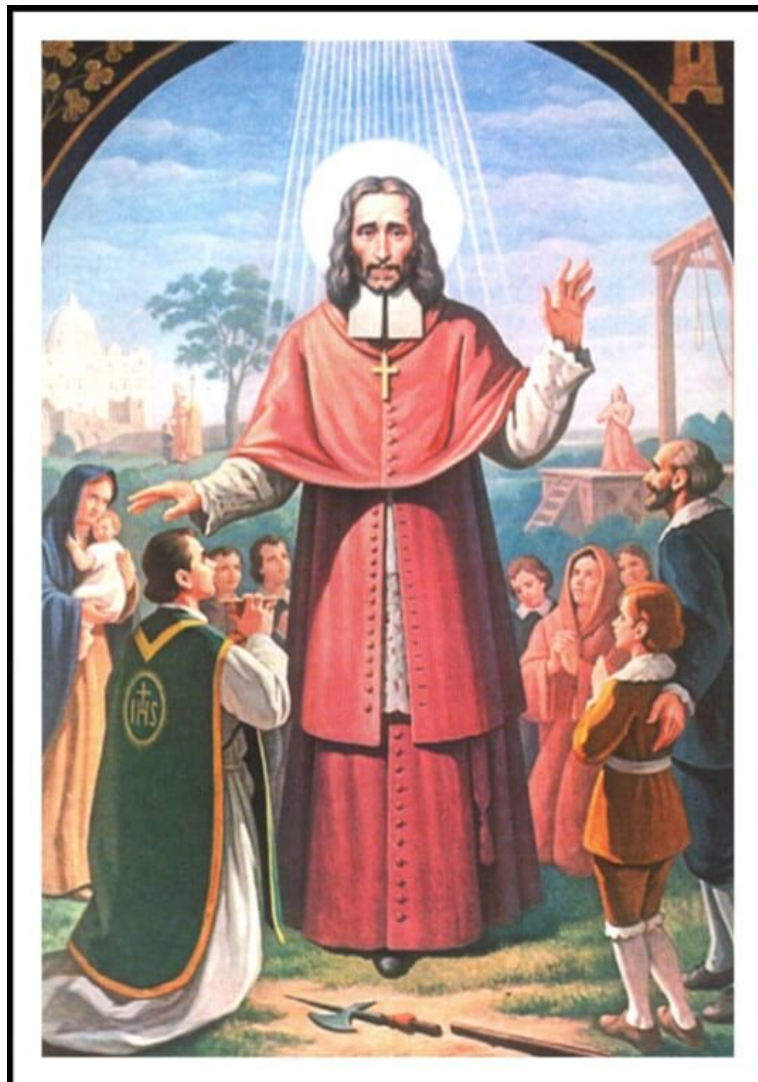
Oates then met Israel Tongue, a rabid anti-Catholic puritan. Between the two of them they created what was to become known as the "Popish Plot", which centered on an alleged conspiracy to assassinate Charles the II, to be followed by an uprising in Ireland supported by an invasion of French and Spanish forces. Oates claimed that his conversion to Catholicism and time in Jesuit colleges had been a pretense to gather information. Measures were taken to hide a copy of the "plot" and then "discover it". While many were skeptical of the "plot" from the beginning, far more were willing to use the "plot" as a means to end what they saw as the threat of religious toleration to a Protestant England. With the mysterious murder of a magistrate who had heard testimony regarding the "plot" (which some believe was staged to give credibility to its existence), England went into an anti-Catholic frenzy similar to the Salem Witch Trials. Anyone suspected of being a Catholic was driven out of London. A "Test Act" was instituted that would ban Catholics from holding public office which had devastating effects for the native Irish to govern in their own land. While the King himself had questioned Oates and caught him in several lies, he did not have the courage to put an end to the madness for fear of losing his newly restored throne.

Among those implicated was Archbishop Oliver Plunkett, accused by Oates of training an army of 70,000 Irish men and conspiring with the French. The charges were so absurd, that when Plunkett was tried before an exclusively Protestant jury in Dundalk Ireland, no cause was found against him (in fact it was observed by several jurors that many of the witnesses should themselves be on trial). However, bent on satisfying public hysteria, Plunkett was transported to

England where he was tried again. But this time, he was barred from bringing up the criminal record of many of the crown's witnesses and was not allowed time to bring his own witnesses from Ireland. The verdict was a foregone conclusion. However, the chief magistrate reveled in sentencing Plunkett, the true reason the Archbishop was on trial, not for a "conspiracy against the crown" but for helping restore the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Archbishop Oliver Plunkett was hanged, drawn and quartered. Witnesses recorded that he faced his death with the serenity of a man of faith and the death of this innocent man finally caused people to denounce the "Popish Plot" for the fraud it was, but not before 24 innocent men were killed as the result of Oates lies. Oliver Plunkett was the last Catholic martyr to die in England.

Oliver Plunkett was raised to the sainthood in 1975 by Pope Paul the VI, becoming the first new Irish saint in almost seven hundred years. St. Oliver Plunkett's head is venerated at his shrine in St. Peter's, Drogheda and St. Oliver Plunkett is recognized as the patron saint of Peace and Reconciliation in Ireland. It would be hoped that one could say that Titus Oates fate was as fittingly just as St. Oliver Plunkett's vindication was glorious, but such would not be the case. Though his reputation was forever tarnished, it was not until he attempted to concoct another fictitious conspiracy naming the King's brother as a traitor that he was finally jailed. He was later pardoned when William of Orange came to the throne and received a substantial pension. It is hard to see this as anything but a reward for the furtherance of state policy through perjury at the cost of innocent lives. This was not the last time that forgery and perjury would be used as weapons against Ireland and her people. This is why we must be mindful of the past in the present, for if we forget it we shall surely relive it.





## Commodore John Barry, Hero of the American Revolution

Born in County Wexford in 1745, little is known of John Barry's early life. His father was a poor Catholic tenant farmer who was evicted by his landlord, forcing the family to relocate to Rosslare. There Barry's uncle was a captain of a fishing skiff, apparently imparting to young Barry a love of the sea. Barry signed on as a cabin boy at an early age and must have shown great aptitude as a seaman; he obtained his first command, The Barbadoes out of Philadelphia, at the age of 21. He quickly earned an impressive reputation as a ship's master and was soon sought out by the leading merchants of Philadelphia. As captain of The Black Prince, Barry set the record for the fastest day of sailing ever recorded in the 18th century.

When war with England appeared imminent in 1775, Barry immediately offered his services to the fledgling congress. He was given the important task of outfitting merchantmen as the first Continental Navy Ships and readying them for sea. Among those converted was his own Black Prince, rechristened Alfred. It was aboard the Alfred that a Lt. John Paul Jones would be the first to hoist the flag of the new nation aboard a ship of the Continental Navy.

Barry's efforts at creating the first ships of the Continental Navy were soon rewarded with his own command, the Lexington, which was the first in a series of successful commands he was to hold during the Revolution. Space does not permit a full account of all of Barry's service during the revolution, but in summary:

- Barry was the first to capture a British war vessel on the high seas
- Barry captured the most ships (prizes) of any captain during the revolution.
- When deprived of a ship when the capture of Philadelphia seemed imminent, Barry formed a regiment of sailors and marines and fought at the battles of Trenton and Princeton
- Barry captured two British ships after himself being severely wounded
- Barry fought the last naval action of the Revolution

Barry's most famous naval encounter, and the one that most truly shows his character, was while commanding the Alliance where he fought the two British Sloops Atlanta and Trepassy. During the battle, Barry received several wounds and was taken below deck for treatment. Barry's second in command soon appeared before him to tell him that the ship was severely damaged and asking permission to strike the colors. A furious Barry replied, "No Sir, the thunder! If this ship cannot be fought without me, I will be brought on deck; to your duty, Sir." At that point the battle dramatically turned, and both British ships surrendered. The British Commander was brought to the wounded Barry and presented him his sword. Barry received it and then immediately returned it; "I return it to you, Sir. You have merited it, and your King ought to give you a better ship. Here is my cabin, at your service. Use it as your own."

After the Revolution, Barry would become the first commissioned officer of the United States Navy. It would be under his direction that the great frigates of the United States including the USS Constitution would be built. Under his tutelage, the great naval heroes who checked the most powerful navy in the world in the War of 1812 would be trained. Barry was also well known for his charity, supporting funds for the care of widows and orphans of sailors and a leading member of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick.

Barry would die in 1803 from the complications of Asthma. Dr. Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence gave his eulogy and fittingly summed up Barry's life and service: "He fought often and once bled in the cause of freedom, but his habits of War did not lessen in him the peaceful virtues which adorn private life."

The paternity of the US Navy is often hotly debated. In fact, the U.S. Navy explicitly states that no one man can be the Father of the US Navy, this may be the only battle the Navy has ever shied from. The case of Barry and Jones both have merit, but if a father is someone who stands by and cares for their "child" until it is self sufficient, then certainly Barry has the better claim. Irrespective of titles, we must ensure that the patriotism and devotion of John Barry to his country is never eclipsed.

# History



*John Hughes, Fourth bishop and first Archbishop of New York. It was the symbol of the Cross in his signature that gave rise to his nickname "Dagger John"*

## Bishop John Hughes

*Historian - Neil Cosgrove*

John Hughes was born in June 27, 1797 in Annalougham, Co. Tyrone to a poor tenant farmer. The anti-Catholic Penal Laws had a profound effect on the young Hughes; he later noted that for the first seven days of his life he enjoyed full civil and legal rights, but lost them upon his baptism into the Catholic Church. However, the event that would transform him into a crusader against oppression occurred when his younger sister died in 1812. As the family went to bury the child, the Catholic Priest was barred by British officials from entering the cemetery. Improvising, the Priest had the 15-year-old Hughes bring him soil from the gravesite, which he blessed, and Hughes then brought back to be sprinkled on his sister's grave so that she could be buried in consecrated soil.

Hughes emigrated to America at the age of 20 and secured employment as a gardener at Mount St. Mary's College and Seminary in Emmitsburg, MD. Hughes wished to enter the priesthood, but he was turned down due to his lack of formal education. However, he met the future St. Elizabeth Ann Seton when she visited Mount St. Mary's and through her influence he was admitted to the Seminary in 1820. He was ordained in 1826.

Fr. Hughes was first assigned to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. It is here he would prove an eloquent spokesman for the rights of Catholics. He engaged in an editorial campaign against newspapers that all too frequently featured stories of the "threat" that "popery" and Irish Catholics posed to the nation. In one case Fr. Hughes wrote a series of letters to a Nativist Newspaper under an assumed name detailing fictitious and absurd charges of the threats

posed by the Catholic Church to America. After the editor published them and complimented the writer for his "righteous vigilance", Hughes then in another newspaper revealed it was he who wrote the letters and exposed the paper in question as the mechanism of hate it was. It was actions such as these that would have one newspaper observe "(Hughes was) more a Roman gladiator than a devout follower of the meek founder of Christianity."

When a Cholera epidemic swept the city of Philadelphia, many of the city leaders who had railed against the threat of "traitorous popery" fled the city, while Fr. Hughes and the Sisters of Charity cared for the city's sick without regard to their own safety. When the epidemic had passed, Fr. Hughes was quick to publicly point out how loyal the followers of "traitorous popery" had been to the citizens of Philadelphia while many of the Catholic Church's detractors had fled. Fr. Hughes accepted a challenge to debate the prominent clergymen John Bekenridge that drew national attention. Against Bekenridge's lurid images of the Spanish Inquisition, Fr. Hughes countered with his own experiences of protestant persecution in Ireland. Hughes concluded "I am an American by choice, not by chance... I know the value of that civil and religious liberty, which our happy government secures for all."

It was however in New York and as Bishop, that Hughes would gain his renown. His congregation was described as 'the debris of the Irish Nation'; the poor, the uneducated and the orphaned driven to America by persecution and famine. Drawing upon his own experience, he realized that education was the answer. He took on, in alliance with New York's Jewish community, the public school system which at the time was run with state funds by the private Protestant Public School Society. Hughes vehemently objected to curricula which featured books such as "The Irish Heart" which taught that "(Irish Immigrants are) in many cases drunken and depraved... a subject for all our grave and fearful reflection." While Bishop Hughes's intent was to gain equal funding for Catholic Schools, the result of his campaign was the Maclay Bill which barred all religious instruction from public schools and provided no state money to denominational schools. Having at least secured that prejudice was mitigated in the public schools, Hughes set out to build the parochial school system of New York, which would become a model for the nation. Knowing that in the school house lay the future of Irish Americans "build your own schools; raise arguments in the shape of the best educated and most moral citizens of the Republic, and the day will come when you will enforce recognition".

Hughes work for the Irish immigrant community was untiring, both in their development to good citizens and in protecting their rights in an increasingly hostile nativist environment. He was a founder of the Emigrant Aid Society which would eventually become the Emigrant Bank. He encouraged self-help groups in all his parishes. At the height of the "Know Nothing" activities when several Catholic

### Did you Know that....

- At the time when Fr. Hughes was elevated to Bishop in 1838, the diocese covered all of New York State and a large part of New Jersey. It contained 200,000 Catholics for which there were but twenty churches, no seminaries nor Catholic Universities.
- Among the school founded by Bishop Hughes were four colleges: St. Johns (later to be renamed Fordham University), Manhattan College, Marymount and Mount St. Vincent's.
- New York City's first Cathedral Church was Old St Patrick's at the corner of Prince and Mott Streets. Built in 1815, it would be the seat of the Archdiocese until 1879 with the completion of the Cathedral of St. Patrick at 50th Street and Fifth.
- During the American Civil War, Bishop Hughes at the request of President Lincoln, made a tour of Europe to help gain support for the Union cause at a time when there was a considerable fear that Europe would officially recognize and aid the Confederacy.
- So successful was Bishop Hughes parochial school system that it was adopted by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 for parishes across the nation.

Churches were burnt in Philadelphia, New York City Officials ironically appealed to Hughes to issue a pastoral letter, asking for the Irish community to show "restraint" should similar Catholic Church burnings occur in New York. Hughes was infuriated that the city administration's first thought was to restrain the Irish Community from reprisal rather than to exercise its responsibility to protect the property of Catholic citizens. Hughes response was characteristic and legendary "if a single Catholic church is burned, this city will become another Moscow" referring to when the citizens of Moscow burned their own city rather than see it occupied by Napoleon's troops. Several times, he called on the Irish community, in particularly the Hibernians, to defend church property where the show of strength was sufficient to deter violence before it started. Bishop Hughes' zealotness in defending his flock caused his opponents to seize on the shape of the cross Hughes made nest to his signature when signing letters and dubbed him "Dagger John".

Bishop Hughes became the first Archbishop of New York in 1850. Though he started the "new St. Patrick's Cathedral" he would not live to see it finished, that would be the work of his successor, Archbishop McCloskey. However, Archbishop Hughes did not need a Cathedral to be his monument. His true monument was that through his leadership and the dedication of the Irish community, the children of "the debris of the Irish Nation" that he had found on his arrival in New York were by the time of his death protecting New York as Police and Firemen, healing the city's sick, educating the young, and leading her government.