

# **WOMEN OF THE NYPD**

**A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**1891-1995**

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## **Table of Contents**

<b>Preface.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Matrons.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A Transitional Period.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Women's Police Precinct.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Patrolwomen &amp; Policewomen.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Bureau of Policewomen.....</b>	<b>7 - 8</b>
<b>Women as Detectives.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Youth Aid Division.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Modern Era.....</b>	<b>11- 12</b>
<b>Pioneers.....</b>	<b>13 - 22</b>
<b>Female Firsts.....</b>	<b>23 - 26</b>
<b>Sources.....</b>	<b>27</b>

## PREFACE

In the century since women first began working for the New York Police Department, the role of women in policing has undergone significant changes. Women were first assigned as precinct matrons to guard women charged with crimes. Gradually, women took on additional roles as social workers, undercover agents, detectives, and youth counselors. Eventually women were assigned to patrol on equal status with men.

The changes and progress chronicled in this text did not always come easily. The lobbying activity of women's organizations contributed to the appointment of the first police matrons in 1891. For decades, women were prohibited from the supervisory ranks until, in 1964, as a result of the one women's lawsuit, the right for women to take promotional exams was recognized. Until 1973, women were restricted to certain assignments. In that year, the Police Department, responding to federal civil rights legislation, dropped all distinctions between policemen and policewomen by adopting the police officer title and placing both men and women on patrol.

This text sets forth the major chapters of the history of women in the New York Police Department. It also tells the stories of some of the brave pioneers who helped shape that history. The evolution of women's roles in the Department were also influenced by larger historical forces such as the suffrage movement, two world wars, the civil rights struggle, and the modern feminist movement. The events portrayed in this text chronicle a series of hard won victories on the path toward equality.

## POLICE MATRONS

The introduction of the women in the New York Police Department in 1891 was prompted by concern about the treatment of women in police precincts. Until that time, the task of searching female prisoners was performed by male officers, their wives, or by the maid at the police station. Female prisoners were not housed separately from the male prisoners. In addition, men and women (called "casuals") who came to New York City without money were often forced to find shelter at the station houses. In 1887, 42,000 of these homeless women spent at least one night at a station house. This intermingling of the sexes in the station house scandalized many citizens of New York City.

To rectify the situation, the Women's Prison Association of New York and the American Female Christian Temperance Union, petitioned the Board of Estimate and Apportionment for the appointment of the police matrons, and for the creation of separate prison cells for men and women. This movement was given added impetus in 1890 when a police officer attempted to assault a fifteen year old girl at a station house. These lobbying efforts met with success. On March 20, 1891, Governor Hill signed a bill that mandated the hiring of police matrons and the establishment of separate cells for men and women under arrest.

The first civil service test for the position of police matron was offered on May 20, 1891. Applicants were required to be recommended in writing by at least twenty women of good standing. The first prison matrons, Mary Waldron, D.C. Carley, C. H. LeBourbeau and E. Linner (first names unknown), were sworn in on October 5, 1891, and were assigned to the 4th and 6th precincts. Police matrons worked long hours, received one day off per month, and were granted one week's vacation per year. As of 1899, they were paid \$1,000 per year. They did not receive a pay increase until 1918.

## A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

1917-1921

As the nation began preparing for World War I and the Women's Suffrage Movement gained the support of many New Yorkers, a new problem arose that led to the appointment of New York City's first policewomen. Many citizens feared that the concentration of young men at new military recruiting centers posed dangers to vulnerable young girls. To safeguard the girls, women's groups began pressuring the City to appoint women as "protective officers." On August 3, 1917, exercising his war emergency powers to make appointments exempt from civil service system, Police Commissioner Arthur Woods gave special patrolmen's badges to Sara Douglas and Mrs. Joseph Cook ( first name unknown ). Although they were authorized to make arrests, the mission of these two protective officers was to prevent the corruption of young girls.

The newly appointed Police Commissioner, Richard E. Enright, proposed creation of the exempt position "policewoman" to perform the functions of these protective officers. Deputy Commissioner Ellen O' Grady, who headed the newly formed Welfare Bureau, supported his plan.

Enright's plan angered the incumbent police matrons, the women on the long waiting list to become matrons, and the Federation of Women's Civil Service Organizations. Despite this opposition, the first six policewomen were appointed on August 15, 1918. Mary Hamilton, later to become the first director of the Womens's Bureau, was among these first policewomen.

The policewomen were paid \$1,200 a year. They carried a revolver, handcuffs, and a summons book, but they did not wear a uniform. They were assigned to different zones to look after young girls and to respond to domestic disputes.

In 1919, the Police Matron's Association lobbied for legislation giving police matrons the title of policewoman. At the same time, Commissioner Enright sought permanent civil service tenure for the policewomen appointed under the war emergency measure. The legislature enacted both measures. The police matrons claimed victory, because they had won the title of " policewomen ". Yet, at the same time, the former policewomen's title was changed to "patrolwomen." Thus, in some respects, parity between the two groups had been achieved: both positions were civil service and both paid the same salary, but the job requirements and selection criteria for policewomen and patrolwomen remained very different.

## THE WOMEN'S POLICE PRECINCT

1921-1924

In 1921, Commissioner Enright established a central office for women officers assigned to welfare work. The office, known as the "Womens Police Precinct," was located at the former 22nd Precinct at 434 West 37th Street. Because of her prior volunteer experience at the Bureau of Missing Persons, Mary Hamilton was appointed director of the office with Isabella Goodwin as second in command. Twenty patrolwomen and six policewomen were assigned to the precinct. Rather than commenting on the work of these women, news articles at the time emphasized the impact of women, on the physical appearance of the precinct, noting that the precinct had been refurbished with white curtains, a vase with roses, and flower boxes.

One of the most important functions of the Women's Police Precinct was to shelter runaway girls who were not under arrest. A "hostess committee" volunteered to show the runaways the sights of New York City. Runaways frequently stayed at the precinct, whose renown was such that some upper class families established "Mary Hamilton Rooms" for housing homeless girls.

Some women from the Women's Police Precinct were assigned to the "Mashers Squad". Primarily through undercover work, patrolwomen would arrest men who accosted or flirted with young girls. Mary Hamilton frequently advised parents how to protect their daughters and warned women against responding alone to advertisements for job openings.

In 1921 Mrs. George Loft succeeded Ellen O' Grady as Deputy Police Commissioner. In 1923, Commissioner Loft closed the Women's Police Precinct and, in March 1924, created the Women's Bureau which was subsequently renamed the Bureau of Policewomen. Mary Hamilton was named its first director.

## PATROLWOMEN AND POLICEWOMEN

1921-1938

Resentment persisted between patrolwomen (formerly "protective officers") and policewomen (formerly "police matrons"). Different tests were required for each group and, until 1925, patrolwomen were not required to take a physical exam. While patrolwomen were considered to have more investigative responsibilities and thought of themselves as the more elite group, the duties of the two groups had become quite similar. In fact, in 1923, Commissioner Enright used the patrolwomen's list to appoint two policewomen.

From 1925 until 1937, when the consolidation was finally achieved, each police commissioner advocated merging the two positions. Policewomen supported the proposal while patrolwomen, believing that becoming a policewoman was a step down, repeatedly voiced opposition. A first step toward merging the two titles occurred in 1935, when Police Commissioner Lewis J. Valentine approved a single uniform for both policewomen and patrolwomen. Until then, patrolwomen had not been required to wear uniforms and, at the time, the new requirement was correctly perceived as an indication that the patrolwomen position would soon be abolished. The legislature passed a bill in 1937 to abolish the rank of patrolwoman and consolidate the titles.

The first exam for the consolidated title of policewoman was offered on May 21, 1938. About 5,000 women took the exam and 300 passed. The women who passed the exam were like the patrolwomen before them, younger and better educated than the former policewomen. Most of them had college degrees and were initially viewed with some suspicion by these policewomen.



## THE BUREAU OF POLICEWOMEN

1924-1973

The Women's Bureau was established in 1924 and renamed the Bureau of Policewomen six years later. Policewomen assigned to the Bureau performed matron duties, participated in undercover work, investigated charges of sexual assault, searched female corpses, took abandoned babies to shelters, and protected women and children by patrolling in plainclothes at beaches, movie houses, and schools. Some policewomen served on the Bureau's Abortion Squad which arrested doctors and others who performed abortions. Policewomen carried their own .32 revolver which was smaller than the men's .38.

The Bureau of Policewomen also responded to requests for policewomen made by other units of the NYPD. In 1964, for instance, the Bureau received 311 requests. That same year, the Bureau of Policewomen made 1,050 arrests. As Lieutenant Lucy Acerra, who worked in the Bureau, wrote: "The New York Policewomen's Bureau had taken on all the characteristics of a small police department within a larger one."

In 1967, 180 women from the Bureau of Policewomen, were assigned to precincts. The duties of the policewomen at the precincts continued to consist primarily of searching women prisoners, guarding children, and performing clerical work. This decentralization of the majority of policewomen was a precursor of the dissolution of the Bureau which occurred in 1973.

In 1972, Congress amended Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, prohibiting state and local governments from discriminating on the basis of race, ethnicity, or gender. To meet these new legal requirements, the New York Police Department dismantled the Bureau of Policewomen and began to assign policewomen to patrol.

In 1972, Police Commissioner Patrick Murphy initiated a pilot project to put the first policewomen on patrol. Fifteen policewomen volunteered to be part of this experiment. After two weeks of training at the Police Academy, they were assigned to patrol. Rather than assigning men as partners, these women were assigned to patrol in pairs.

In 1972 and 1973, the New York Police Department hired and trained over 350 women, more than half of whom were assigned to patrol duties. On August 15, 1973, the Bureau of Policewomen was abolished. That same year, policewomen and policemen were renamed "police officers". The New York Police Department dropped its height regulations and implemented "unisex" physical tests for individuals competing to become police officers. These actions led the way to the full integration of women into the Police Department.

## WOMEN AS DETECTIVES

Until 1965, women could secure promotions, only through the Detective Division. As early as 1912, Isabella Goodwin had achieved the status of first grade detective, a rank very few women attained. Women who were assigned to the Detective Division were not part of the Bureau of Policewomen. Some policewomen, however, received temporary assignments to one of the bureaus within the Detective Division because of greater opportunities for advancement.

Women detectives often worked among women in situations where a man would be noticed. They were assigned, however, to all parts of the Detective Division. Mary Shanley, the fourth woman to be made a First Grade Detective, was assigned to the Pickpocket Squad.

There was considerable resistance to giving the coveted detective shield to policewomen. One policewoman, for example, served twelve years in the Missing Persons Bureau before being designated a third grade detective. Theresa Melchionne, as President of the Policewomen's Endowment Association and later as Director of the Bureau of Policewomen, sought promotions for women. While she was unsuccessful in opening promotional exams to women, the New York Police Department increased the number of women detectives. In 1950, four women held first grade detective shields, ten women held second grade shields, and ten more held third grade shields. Although this was a victory for women at the time, further progress was slow. In 1978, the Policewomen's Endowment Association and the Police Department entered into an agreement to increase the number of women detectives.

## YOUTH AID DIVISION

Many policewomen held assignments in the Youth Aid Division rather than in the Bureau of policewomen or the Detective Division. Policewomen in the Youth Aid Division worked closely with troubled youth and their families, making referrals to social service agencies and serving as informal counselors. Policewomen patrolled areas where juvenile delinquency was most prevalent, such as beaches and parks.

Policewomen also played an active role in programs to prevent delinquency. Mary Hamilton explained the prominent role of women in working with youth: "With Prevention and Protection as a slogan and the welfare of children, girls, and women for their field of service, policewomen have been given a task to perform quite different from that of their fellow policemen." The Youth Division was the one area outside the Policewomen's Bureau where women were given administrative responsibility. In 1918, Ellen O'Grady, the first woman to serve as Deputy Commissioner, was appointed to head the newly formed Welfare Bureau, which evolved into the Youth Aid Division. Several women succeeded O'Grady in this position, including Deputy Commissioner Theresa Melchionne who was in charge of 600 officers between 1963 and 1965. In addition to protecting youth and preventing delinquency, Melchionne was responsible for tracking and controlling youth gangs.

## THE MODERN ERA

1973-1995

In some ways, the closing of the Bureau of Policewomen signified the beginning of the new struggle for women in the police department. Although the department officially recognized that men and women police officers could serve as equals, the women police officers were convinced that the integration of the police department was a temporary experiment. Some officer's wives were angered by the decision to put women on patrol and, in protest, picketed police headquarters. Some wives felt threatened by the close relationship that might develop between their husbands and a women partner. Others feared that the women might not perform as well, leaving their husband in an added danger.

The fiscal crisis was a major setback for the newly integrated women police officers. The layoffs in 1975, which took the form of "last hired, first fired", resulted in a 55 percent loss of the women who had been appointed in the previous two years. In addition, because of the shortage of women, the woman officers who remained were often assigned matron duty and foot patrol. These assignments prevented them from receiving the equivalent experience of men who spent more time on radio car patrol.

Given the same opportunities as men, experience shows that women perform as well as men on patrol. Several studies have been conducted that compare the patrolling techniques of men and women. The research points to a great deal of similarity in the way both men and women gain and maintain control, how they use force, and how frequently they display a weapon. In the opinion of the community, women and men officers are considered equally competent.

A woman's ability to effectively serve in the upper ranks of the Department was demonstrated in 1978 when Gertrude Schimmel became the first woman promoted to the rank of Deputy Chief. She served in that position until she retired in 1981.

In the latter part of the 1980's the Department took a new direction on women's issues. In 1985, former Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward was the first Commissioner to hold a Women in Policing Conference. This conference demonstrated the Department's commitment to the successful integration of women. Successful programs for the integration of women, and the barriers which the organization faced as it moved toward full integration were discussed. The Women In Policing Conference has become an important event which serves as an information exchange medium, encourages skill development and professional growth, and promotes the expansion of the role that women play in the Department.

The 1994 Women in Policing Conference took on a greater significance when Police Commissioner William J. Bratton asked for an Action Plan on Women's Concerns. Under the direction and guidance of Dr. Elsie L. Scott, Deputy Commissioner of Training, a plan focusing on six subject areas--Professional Development, Equal Employment Opportunity, Pregnancy, Child and Dependent Care, Facilities and Employee Support--was drafted. Commissioner Bratton committed the Department to a number of the recommendations, including the adoption of a pregnancy policy, the establishment of a hotline for job vacancies in specialized units, and the equitable allocation of locker space.

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of women working in the Department. Currently, there are over 4,000 uniformed and 5,500 full time civilian women working in the New York Police Department. Women comprise 14.6 percent of the uniformed ranks and 76 percent of the civilian ranks. There are four female Deputy Inspectors and four female Deputy Commissioners. On January 13, 1995, history was made when Gertrude Laforgia was promoted to the highest rank ever held by a woman: Assistant Chief, Borough Commander.

*"We have been standing on the sidelines,  
suited up to get in the game,  
but we have often found ourselves passed over.  
We need the coaches to give us a chance to play.  
We have often been criticized for not knowing  
how to execute the plays, but how can we know the plays  
if we are excluded from the strategy sessions.*

*How many coaches would have selected Arlene Beckles  
for the play she executed?  
She was just a fragile 5'6", 110 pound woman  
who was an Academy instructor, but she won the game for us.*

*In summary, we are asking for the opportunity to show what we can do.  
We want to become an integral part of the team."*

Deputy Commissioner Elsie L. Scott

# ***PIONEERS***

## ISABELLA GOODWIN

Isabella Goodwin was born on February 20, 1865, just two months before the Civil War came to a close. When her husband, a New York City Police Officer, died, she was left with a young son to support. In 1896, she decided to become a police matron, which at the time, was a civilian position.

In 1911, the Department was besieged by complaints about a gang of con men who were cheating old women out of their savings. Inspector Russell, head of the Detective Bureau, decided to temporarily assign Goodwin to the unit and see if she could uncover the swindlers. She was successful and was rewarded by receiving other undercover assignments. One such case occurred in 1912, when a band of thieves made off with \$25,000 from a pair of bank messengers. Mrs. Goodwin, being familiar with a local stop-over for visiting hoods, decided to disguise herself as a cook and gather what information she could. One night she overheard some men in the next room boasting of the robbery. An arrest followed, and the alert Goodwin was promoted to First Grade Detective on March 2, 1912, the first such promotion for a woman in the Department. She frequently spoke out for the rights of her sister officers by urging they be put on more important assignments. Through her efforts, women were finally given the opportunity to work as officers on the street.



## ELLEN O'GRADY

Ellen O'Grady was the first woman to serve as Deputy Police Commissioner. On January 28, 1918, she became the fifth Deputy Commissioner and was placed in charge of the newly formed Welfare Bureau. Two of Commissioner O'Grady's responsibilities were protecting young women and controlling the white slave trade. In 1918, the New York Police Department described and praised Commissioner O'Grady's activities: " They consist largely of preventative police work...and the supervision of conditions and people that might lead to debauch or pervert women and the young of both sexes. Her field of activity constitutes the most noble of police work, that of protecting the innocent and helpless and shielding the susceptible and ignorant, but it is also the most exciting."

Between 1907 and her appointment as Deputy Commissioner, O'Grady served as probation officer, for the City's Magistrates' Courts. While there she met John F. Hyland. Hyland, who became Mayor in 1918, was dedicated to promoting women within city government. The formation of the Welfare Bureau and the appointment of Commissioner O'Grady resulted from his commitment and from external pressure of civic groups, such as the Girls' Protective League and the New York Probation and Protective Association.

While in office, Commissioner O'Grady served as an advocate for policewomen. She resigned unexpectedly on December 13, 1920, blaming Police Commissioner Richard Enright for undermining her authority. She maintained that Commissioner Enright had transferred her responsibility for the enforcement of welfare laws in movie houses to a citizen who was associated with the motion picture trust. The tragedy of the New Catherine Theatre where panic caused six children to be trampled to death, provoked Commissioner O'Grady's resignation.

## MARY HAMILTON

Mary Hamilton, known to some as "America's Joan of Arc", was the first Director of the Bureau of Policewomen. Trained in social work, her career began when she volunteered in 1917 for the Bureau of Missing Persons of the Police Department. She was assigned to the case of the Ruth Cruger, an eighteen-year-old woman who disappeared. After an extensive search, her body was found buried in the cellar of a motorcycle shop owner who had murdered her. Because of her volunteer work, Mary Hamilton maintained she was the first policewoman.

On August 15, 1918, Mary Hamilton and five other women were appointed as the first policewomen. In 1921, when Police Commissioner Enright established the Women's Police Precinct, Hamilton was made Director. After the Women's Police Precinct was dissolved and the Women's Bureau was created in 1924, Mary Hamilton was named Director. She served in this position until 1926.

Mary Hamilton believed that women were suited for different kinds of police work than men. She was convinced that women should serve a distinct role and did not push for the integration of women into the Police Department. She wrote in her book The Policewoman: Her Service and Ideal (1924), "It is certainly a fact that no woman can really be a good policewoman, unless she works as a woman and carries with her into a police department a woman's ideal. "Mary Hamilton seemed to reflect some of the views of her time when she wrote: "There are without a doubt some police problems, particularly those in which affairs of children, girls and women are involved, that can best be handled by a policewoman, merely because of the fact that she is a woman."

## **FELICIA SHPRITZER**

Felicia Shpritzer paved the way for the advancement of women in the Police Department, through her legal challenge of the Department's policy of prohibiting women from taking the sergeant's exam and other tests for promotion. Shpritzer had a bachelor's and a master's degree when she took the policewoman's exam. Like many of the policewomen of this period, she had graduated from college during the Depression and, despite her education and high ambitions, discovered few job opportunities. She took all the civil service exams and joined the New York Police Department in 1942.

In 1961, after serving almost twenty years as a policewoman in the Juvenile Aid Bureau, in 1961 Shpritzer and five other women applied to take the sergeant's exam. Two weeks before the test, the women's applications were rejected. After encountering resistance from the department and seeking legislative action, Shpritzer sued the New York City Department of Personnel. The New York State Court of Appeals ruled in Shpritzer's favor.

In 1964, Felicia Shpritzer and 125 other women took a make-up sergeant's exam. As a result of that test, Felicia Shpritzer and Gertrude Schimmel, who had supported Shpritzer's lawsuit, became the first women sergeants and later the first lieutenants. In 1973, Shpritzer was assigned to a precinct for the first time. After thirty-four years with New York Police Department, Lieutenant Shpritzer retired in 1976.

## **GERTRUDE D.T. SCHIMMEL**

Deputy Chief Gertrude D.T. Schimmel began her career as a policewoman on June 5, 1940. During the early years she was assigned to the Bureau of Policewomen where she performed a wide variety of duties, including many special investigations for the Police Commissioner's Office and the Chief Inspector. From 1946 to 1965 she was assigned to the Juvenile Aid Bureau.

After a lengthy court litigation that finally opened promotion examinations to policewomen in 1964, Schimmel became one of the Department's first woman sergeants on March 12, 1965. In that rank she was a supervisor in the Bureau of Policewomen. Promoted to Lieutenant on December 19, 1967, another first, she was designated to Commanding Officer of the "Know Your Police Department" program, a police information program for school children.

On August 25, 1971 she was sworn in as the Department's first woman Captain by Mayor John V. Lindsay in a City Hall ceremony. As a Captain, she was in charge of the Policewomen's Section. Upon the request of the Police Commissioner, she and former Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward, at the time a lieutenant, laid the groundwork for the first experiment with policewomen on patrol. Promoted to Deputy Inspector on January 21, 1972, she was designated Commanding Officer of the Youth Aide Division. In November 1972, she was assigned to head the Editorial Review Board, and on April 10, 1974, she was designated Commanding Officer of the Public Information Division. Gertrude Schimmel continued in that position after her promotion to Inspector on November 1, 1974. On March 31, 1978 she was promoted to Deputy Chief and designated Commanding Officer of the Office of the Deputy Commissioner Community Affairs. Deputy Chief Schimmel retired in 1981.

## VITTORIA RENZULLO

In 1976 Vittoria Renzullo was the first woman to become a commanding officer of a precinct. Captain Renzullo was in charge of two hundred officers at the 1st Precinct.

Inspector Renzullo holds a bachelors and a master's degree from Hunter College. She graduated first in her class of three hundred at the Police Academy in 1960. With Felicia Shpritzer's lawsuit opening up promotional exams for women, Renzullo became a sergeant in 1966 and a lieutenant in 1969. She served in the Bureau of Policewomen, the Youth Aid Division, and the Civilian Complaint Review Board. In 1972, she became the last Director of the Policewomen's Bureau.

Renzullo became the Commanding Officer of the 17th Precinct in 1978, after serving as Executive Officer of the 13th Precinct. On June 29, 1979, she was promoted to Deputy Inspector. Two years later Renzullo was reassigned to the Police Academy. She retired in 1983.

## **THERESA M. MELCHIONNE**

Theresa M. Melchionne joined the New York Police Department in 1939 and retired in 1971. She served the Department as Director of the Bureau of Policewomen from 1952 until 1963 when she became Deputy Commissioner of the Youth Program. In 1965, Professor Melchionne was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Community Relations. Professor Melchionne has taught at John Jay College of Criminal Justice since 1972 where she is a member of the Law and Police Science Department.

Theresa M. Melchionne is a life-time member of the Policewomen's Endowment Association and was President of the P.E.A from 1947 through 1952.

## **LILLIAN P. BRAXTON**

Lillian P. Braxton retired from the New York City Police Department at the rank of Detective Investigator after twenty one years of service.

She was among the 350 women hired by the New York Police Department in 1973 that paved the way for the modern era of women police officers. Experiencing the resentment of many male officers of having to work with women for the first time, she was determined to succeed. After experiencing and observing unequal treatment via gender discrimination and sexual harassment, she joined the ranks of women to fight for equality and justice for women in law enforcement. Lillian is a Past President of the Policewomen's Endowment Association and was the first female President of the Committee of Police Societies.

Among her many accomplishments were a successful campaign for women to be promoted while pregnant and the development of the Annual New York Police Department's Women In Policing Conference.

Lillian has lectured in both the United States and Europe on issues facing women in law enforcement. Lillian currently holds several positions one of them being the Executive Director of the International Association of Woman Police.

## **JULIA THOMPSON**

Julia Thompson retired from the New York Police Department at the rank of Inspector. Her last assignment was the Commanding Officer of the 18th Division in Queens, which consists of six precincts within the southeast corner of Queens. She was the second woman to achieve this rank to ever command a division.

The Inspector's eighteen years experience in law enforcement consists of operations, investigations and administration within the precincts and various detailed units, such as Internal Affairs Division, Senior Citizens Robbery Unit, Civilian Complaint Review Board, Office Of Equal Employment Opportunity. Her law enforcement achievements include over 150 decoy arrests, numerous successful Medicaid and fraud investigations, the on line computerization of Civilian Complaint Review Board, the reduction of arrest to arraignment time for prisoners within New York County and the daily operation of the 76th and 6th Precincts.

Inspector Thompson holds a Bachelors Degree and Masters credits in Criminal Justice from John Jay College, and is a graduate of the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy, and the Columbia University Police Management Institute.

## **ASSISTANT CHIEF GERTRUDE LAFORGIA**

Assistant Chief Gertrude LaForgia joined the Department in March, 1966 and began her career on patrol in the 24th Precinct. She was promoted to Sergeant in March, 1978, Lieutenant in August, 1985, Captain in August, 1989, Deputy Inspector July, 1992, Deputy Chief May, 1994, and Assistant Chief January, 1995. Assistant Chief LaForgia has served in the 24th, 26th, 43rd, 45th and 46th Precincts as well as Patrol Borough Manhattan North, the Police Academy, Patrol Borough Bronx and Civilian Complaint Investigation Bureau. She has served as the Executive Officer in the 46th Precinct and Commanding Officer of the 43rd, 45th Precincts and Public Morals Division, as well as the Police Academy's Testing Unit and Recruit Operations Unit. Assistant Chief LaForgia holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from the State University Of New York and is also a graduate of the F.B.I. National Academy. Assistant Chief LaForgia was promoted to her current rank January 13, 1995 and is the Patrol Borough Commander of Patrol Borough Queens North.



## NEW YORK POLICE DEPARTMENT

### FEMALE FIRSTS

1845: **First** women employed as jail matrons.

1891: May 20 - **First** civil service test for police matron

October 5- **First** four women hired as matrons - Mary Waldron, D.C. Carley, C.H. Lebourbeau and E. Linner.

1912: March 2- Isabella Goodwin became the **First** female to be appointed First Grade Detective.

1918: January 28- Ellen O'Grady Appointed **First** Female Deputy Commissioner.

August 15- Police Commissioner Richard E. Enright appoints **First** six Police Women as a salary of \$1,200 a year. They were issued a revolver, handcuffs and a summons book but no uniform. Mary Hamilton who later became the First Director of the Women's Bureau was among them.

1919: Matrons became policewomen and policewomen became patrolwomen, both at same salary, no physical exam, and both were civil service.

1921: Police Commissioner Enright formed the **First** Women's Police Precinct located at 434 West 37th Street. Mary Hamilton was appointed First Director and Isabella Goodwin was second in command. Twenty patrolwomen were assigned.

1922: **First** specialized short term courses for policewomen by the New York School of Social Work and the American Social Hygiene Association.

1924: May 11- **First** woman in the United States killed in the line of duty in Wilimington, Delaware- Mary T. Davis.

- 1924: **First** Director of the Bureau of Police Women Mary Hamilton from the class of August 15, 1918. She served in that title until 1926. The New York Police Department's Women's Bureau was established  
Mary Bemby was the **first** female shot in the line of duty.
- 1934: Women have pistol practice with male officers.
- 1935: February 7- P.C. Lewis J. Valentine establishes **First** uniform for both titles  
- hat (overseas cap of blue serge, seal of City embroidered in yellow silk on left side), Summer jacket (double breasted blue serge with three brass buttons on each side), tie (same as men), shoes ( low ,black with medium heel), stockings (silken beige ), coats ( pocket on each side with flaps held down by brass buttons), jacket and winter coat (formfitting with shoulder straps), skirt ( blue serge, length = ten inches off the ground, top pockets and separate cash pocket).
- 1938: May 21- **First** Civil Service test for title of Policewoman taken by 5,000 women including a doctor, a boxer, a engineer, an attorney, several dancers, a writer for "True Detective," a newspaperwoman and a private investigator.
- 1939: March- **First** class of female policemen were sworn in. Base salary was \$2,000 a year which was the reduced for probationary officers to \$1,200 by Mayor LaGuardia.
- 1942: **First** requirement of college degree for female officers
- 1943: September 28- Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia issued **First** black combination gun and makeup shoulder bag designed and donated by former P.C. Grover A. Whalen, then Chairman of the Board of Coty, Inc. It contained a holster for a .38 revolver, a lipstick in medium red, a compact with loose powder in soleil d' or shade and a red plastic case of dry rouge. Mayor LaGuardia stated, "Use the gun as you would your lipstick - use it only when you need it, and use it intelligently. Don't overdo either one. Be quick on the trigger when you have to be."
- 1964: As a result of a lawsuit, 126 policemen took the Sergeant's exam for the **First** time. Among those who passed were Felicia Shpritzer and Gertude Schimmel.
- 1965: Felicia Shpritzer and Gertude Schimmel became the **First** female Sergeants.
- 1970: **First** females allowed to take the test for Police Administrative Aide.

1972: January 21- Gertrude Schimmel became the First Deputy Inspector.

Vittoria Renzullo (the last Director of the Women's Bureau in 1973) became the First female in the United States to attend the F.B.I. National Academy

Maragret Hopkins became the First female police officer assigned to the Rape Investigation Analysis Section.

First females were hired from the Police Administrative Aide list.

1973: First gender-neutral civil service exam for police officer.

First female partners on patrol were P.O. Lucille Burrascano and P.O. Mary Salzano.

1974: November 1 - Gertrude Schimmel became the First female Inspector.  
First female Detective in Crime Prevention was Lucille Burrascano.

First Female P.B.A. Delegate was Police Officer Molly Gustine.

1975: First Women's Advisor under the Mayor's Women's Advisor Program was Lt. Lucy Acerra with Assistant Advisor Ingrid S. Balady.

1976: Captain Vittora Renzullo became the First female Commanding Officer of the 1st Precinct.

1977: First nine females assigned to the Homicide Unit Stephanie Duke, Carolann Natale, Hester Bellomo, Marie Castoire, Hilda Hubbard, and Marion McKenna.  
Three Police Officers Rosalind Lunetta, Martha Miranda and Maria Silva.

1978: Gertrude Shimmel became the First Female Deputy Chief.

1980: First Females assigned to Emergency Service were Anne Morrissey and Helen Knedlhans

1981: First female to receive the Combat Cross was Suzanne Medicis.

First females to receive the Medal of Honor were Sharon Fields and Tanya Braithwaite.

1984: **First** female civilian hostler was Denise Heimerle.

**First** Female assigned to Highway was Christine Legrottaglie

1985: **First** female police officer assigned to the Mounted Unit was Alice Sherman and Louise Wilson.

**First** female assigned to Special Operations Division/Harbor Patrol was Sgt. Carol Grace Walker

**First** Women in Policing in Conference.

1988: **First** female police officer assigned to the Aviation Unit was Mary Lowery.  
**First** Commanding Officer of a Detective Squad was Sgt. Helen Rinaldi.

1991: **First** African-American female Detective assigned to the Latent Print Unit was Eileen Barrett.

1992: **First** female Commanding Officer of the Mounted Unit was Deputy Inspector Kathy Ryan.

1994: May 27 - **First** female African-American Captain was Joyce A. Stephen.

## SOURCES

Theresa Melchionne's Master's thesis, "Policewomen: Their Introduction into the Police Department of the City of New York", was the major source of information for the texts of this exhibit. Other sources include: "From Matron to Commanding Officer: Women's Changing Role in Law Enforcement" by Lucy Acerra, The Policewoman: Her Service and Ideals by Mary Hamilton, Women in Law Enforcement by Peter Horner, Women on Patrol: A Pilot Study of Police Performance in New York by Joyce Sichel, Lucy Friedman, Janet Quint, Michael Smith, and the Vera Institute of Justice, New York Times articles, and interviews.

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