



# 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY NEW YORK CITY POLICE SHIELDS

FROM THE PRIVATE COLLECTION  
OF THE NYPD





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THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

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Patrolman from New York City's Municipal force, ca. 1855.

This 19th century daguerreotype is the earliest photographic image of a New York City police officer, and dates to around 1850. The photo shows a young patrolman from the city's Municipal force (1845-1857) wearing the department's first police shield, an 8-point copper star. The officer sat for the photo session in a gallery at 226 Bleecker Street in Greenwich Village, as indicated at the bottom of the metal case holding the fragile glass plate image.

# INTRODUCTION

A cop's shield is the most visible and recognizable symbol of the profession. It's the way the public recognizes an officer of the law, and it is an important part of how officers regard themselves.

For young officers studying at the police academy, the shield represents the culmination of their efforts to learn the policing trade. For seasoned officers, it is a symbol of the commitment they have made to the city and the years they have served.

New York City police officers have been wearing a shield on their uniforms since 1845, which was then an eight-point copper star, infrequently seen today in daguerreotypes of the era. Numerous local designs continued to evolve until 1903, when the NYPD settled on the shield design we know today.

There was great individuality among New York City police shields between 1845 and 1903, as they represented an evolving force still divided into 22 departments.

Each shield illustrated in this pamphlet was worn before the department's consolidation in 1898. All are in the possession of the NYPD. Some are exquisite, crafted by local jewelers who engraved their hallmarks on the back. Others are more utilitarian.

The diversity in designs is what makes this collection so striking. They vary even within a borough. Their appearance was determined by the district that the officer patrolled, by the officer's rank, and by the decade the shield was worn.

Though not a complete collection by any means, these examples are astonishing for their simple beauty, the quality of their condition, and the breadth of the neighborhoods they represent.

We hope you enjoy looking at these historic examples – and turning back the pages of time to the early days of New York City, when shoe leather, a night stick, and a police shield were all a cop had to get the job done.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dermot Shea". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dermot" being more prominent and the last name "Shea" following in a similar style.

# PRE-CONSOLIDATION POLICE DEPARTMENTS

Modern-day New York City was created on January 1, 1898, by consolidating the existing City of New York with the City of Brooklyn, western Queens County, and Staten Island. The Bronx was annexed from Westchester County by the City of New York in 1874 (west of the Bronx River) and 1895 (east of the Bronx River).

## **NEW YORK COUNTY** (Borough of Manhattan & the Bronx)

City of New York  
New York City Park Police

## **KINGS COUNTY** (Borough of Brooklyn)

City of Brooklyn  
City of Brooklyn Park Police  
City of Brooklyn Bridge Police

*Annexed to the City of Brooklyn between 1886 and 1896:*

Town of New Lots  
Town of Gravesend  
Town of Flatbush  
Town of New Utrecht  
Town of Flatlands

## **QUEENS COUNTY** (Borough of Queens)

Long Island City  
Town of Newtown  
Town of Flushing

- Village of College Point
- Village of Flushing
- Village of Whitestone

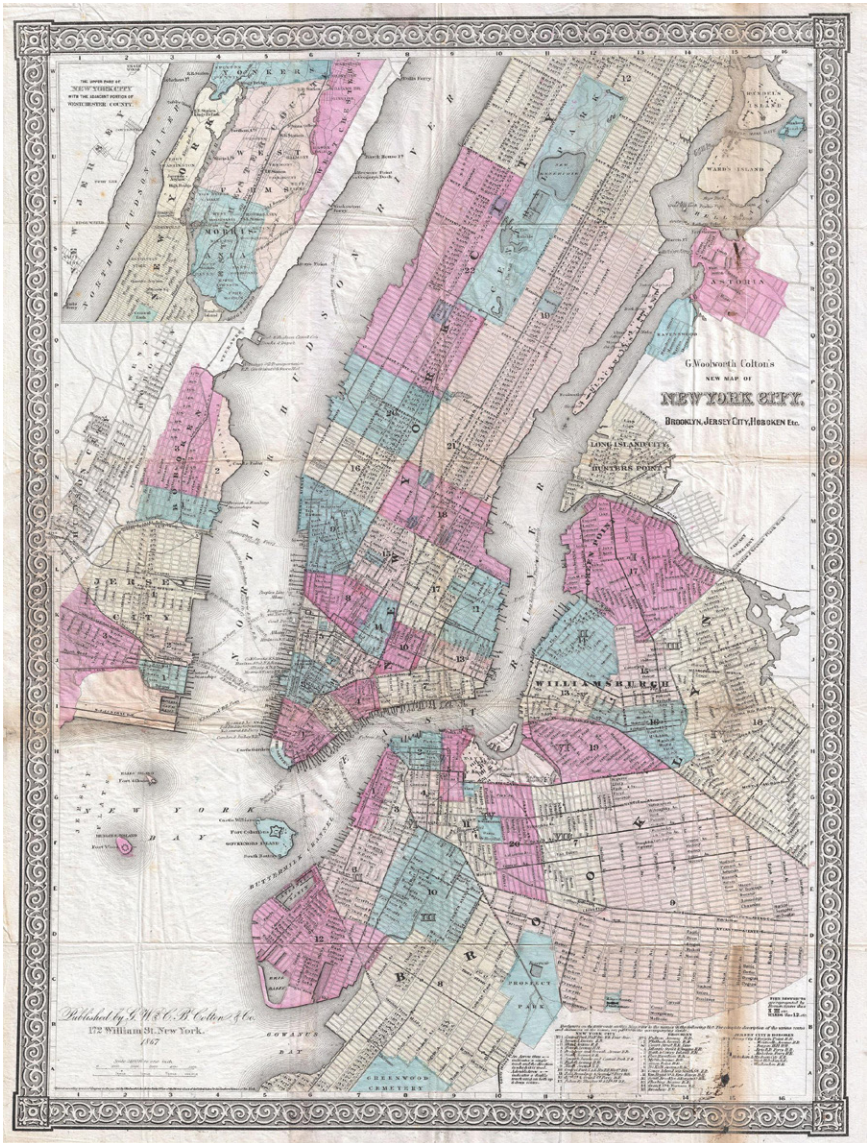
Town of Hempstead (part)

- Village of Far Rockaway
- Village of Rockaway Beach
- Village of Arverne

Town of Jamaica

- Village of Jamaica
- Village of Richmond Hill

## **RICHMOND COUNTY** (Borough of Staten Island)



G. W. & C. B. Colton & Co., 1867



BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN



# BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN



W. Williams, 1847

The police shields depicted in this chapter are among the earliest and most interesting in the collection, as they come from the borough of Manhattan where the department originated. Each shield in this chapter is an icon of law and order, and comes straight from the streets of 19th century New York – a time when the city was never more burgeoning, bustling and unruly. From 1845 to 1898, police shield designs evolved as the department itself evolved. Despite some 22 citywide police departments in five boroughs claiming their own shields, Manhattan cops led the way in how police shields looked over the decades. It all began in 1845 with the 8-point copper star design, seen opposite, and concluded in 1903 with the NYPD shield we proudly recognize today.





**Eight-point Copper Star**

1845-1857



## **Metropolitan Police**

1857-1870

**Hallmark:** *Demarest, Broadway*



**Municipal Police, Detective**  
1870-1872



**Municipal Police, Detective**  
1870s



**Detective, Sergeant**

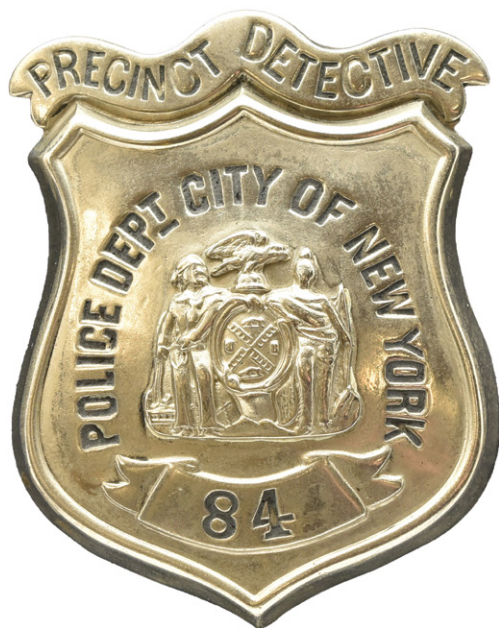
1882



## **Detective Bureau**

1896

**Hallmark:** *S.A. French; N.Y.*



**City of New York, Precinct Detective**  
1897-1902

**Hallmark:** *S.A. French; N.Y.*





**NYPD Detective Adolph Blaha**

NYPD Detective Adolph Blaha is shown here in 1907 wearing the short-lived “Maltese Cross” detective shield worn between 1907 and 1913. The shield’s distinctive design bears an image of the former Police Headquarters building at 240 Centre Street in Manhattan. Appointed on August 12, 1903, Officer Blaha began his career as a patrolman in the 13th Precinct. Three years later he was assigned to the Detective Bureau (see collar brass), where he distinguished himself as a member of the Wiretapping Squad during World War I. On June 29, 1926, Blaha was promoted to sergeant. His last command was the 85th Precinct. Sergeant Blaha served 36 years with the NYPD and retired March 31, 1939, at the age of 63.





**NYC Detective**  
1907-1913



Currier & Ives, 1882

BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN

# BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN



H.F. Walling, 1860

When the British established Kings County in 1683, there were six major towns in the county. The town of Brooklyn, founded as “Breuckelen” in 1636, was one of those six towns. Between 1845 and 1903, each town employed its own unique police shield design, contributing to the diversity of shields we see in this chapter. Finally, on January 1, 1898, the City of Brooklyn and its police department – along with the Brooklyn Park Police and the Brooklyn Bridge Police – united with the NYPD. The current shield design used throughout the city today was adopted in 1903.



**Brooklyn Police, Sergeant**

1892 – 1898



**Brooklyn, “Doorman”**

ca. 1880s





**Brooklyn, "Doorman"**

1884 – 1898







Richmond County police (from Station House No. 1 in Stapleton) sit for a formal studio portrait wearing their pre-consolidation police shields; ca. 1890s.



**Brooklyn Police**

1884 – 1898



**New Utrecht, Brooklyn “Constable”**

1880s



**Gravesend, Brooklyn**

1890s



**Flatlands, Brooklyn**  
1890s





**Brooklyn Park Police**  
1890s



**Brooklyn Park Police, Sergeant**  
1890s



**Flatlands, Brooklyn**

1890s





**Bridge Police, Brooklyn**

1890s

**Hallmark:** *A. Stafford, 105 Fulton St.*



BOROUGH OF QUEENS





**Long Island City, Queens**

1871 – 1898



**Richmond Hill, Queens, Constable**  
1896





**Far Rockaway, Queens, Chief**  
1897

Inscribed: *J.C. Walsh*



**Far Rockaway, Queens**

1897

*Hallmark: N. Stafford, 66 Fulton St.*



**Arverne, Queens**

1897



**Whitestone, Queens**  
1897



**Deputy Sheriff, Queens**

1895 – 1898





NYPD CONSOLIDATION SHIELD  
1898 – 1903

## CONSOLIDATION ERA, 1898 TO 1902



Map of New York City (ca. 1900), from the 10th edition of Encyclopedia Britannica.

On January 1, 1898, the city consolidated its five boroughs to create The Greater City of New York. That is when some 22 independent regional police departments united under one banner known today as the New York Police Department (NYPD). The “Consolidation Era” shield, shown on the opposite page, was worn by patrolmen during the department’s first five years, from 1898 to 1903.



**NYPD Consolidation Shield**  
1898 – 1903

**Hallmark:** *C.D. Reese, 122 Nassau St.*



**NYPD Patrolman Walter W. Barry, ca. 1911.**

The NYPD patrolman's shield was standardized in 1903, and it is the same shield design we recognize proudly today. NYPD Officer Walter W. Barry, shown above, was issued the iconic "No. 1" shield upon his appointment on June 3, 1908. Department personnel records indicate Barry was assigned to the 12th Precinct from October 8, 1910, to December, 1911. The officer's collar brass indicates the photo was taken during this period. Barry wore the coveted No. 1 shield, shown on the opposite page, for 25 years before retiring on July 31, 1933.



**NYPD Shield**  
1903 – Present







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