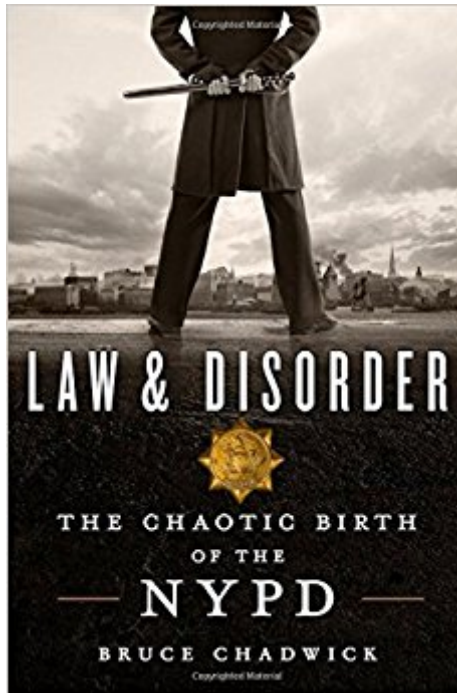




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# Law & Disorder: The Chaotic Birth Of The NYPD



## Synopsis

Nineteenth-century New York City was one of the most magnificent cities in the world, but also one of the most deadly. Without any real law enforcement for almost 200 years, the city was a lawless place where the crime rate was triple what it is today and the murder rate was five or six times as high. The staggering amount of crime threatened to topple a city that was experiencing meteoric growth and striving to become one of the most spectacular in America. For the first time, award-winning historian Bruce Chadwick examines how rampant violence led to the founding of the first professional police force in New York City. Chadwick brings readers into the bloody and violent city, where race relations and an influx of immigrants boiled over into riots, street gangs roved through town with abandon, and thousands of bars, prostitutes, and gambling emporiums clogged the streets. The drive to establish law and order and protect the city involved some of New York's biggest personalities, including mayor Fernando Wood, police chief Fred Tallmadge, and journalist Walt Whitman. *Law and Disorder* is a must read for fans of New York history and those interested in how the first police force, untrained and untested, battled to maintain law and order.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Bruce Chadwick has brilliantly presented a Dickensian picture of a corrupt, violent, and lawless antebellum New York City and the efforts to rein it in through the creation of what eventually became the viable and dedicated NYPD. A terrific read."—Michael Aaron Rockland,

professor of American Studies, Rutgers University, and author of *The George Washington Bridge: Poetry in Steel*"Bruce Chadwick brings to life the untold story of the violent, chaotic, and colorful birth of one of the world's most-famous police departments. This book is chock full of incredible characters and events that make it read like a novel, but it's all true and it's all based on the author's deep knowledge of policing, crime, and the real-life battle that took place on the streets of New York a century and a half ago."--Terry Golway, author of *Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics*"Bruce Chadwick gives us an epic, richly anecdotal history of crime and law enforcement in New York City from the 1830s to the eve of the Civil War. Along the way, he shares a cornucopia of outrageous, violent, hair-raising, and sometimes darkly comic stories of human misbehavior among both criminals and the supposed guardians of law and order as the city tried desperately to become a civilized metropolis--a goal it wouldn't begin to achieve until the late 1800s."--Mark Caldwell, author of *New York Night: The Mystique and Its History*"Chadwick brings New York's past back to life via infamous crimes and the colorful people who crusaded for the city's modern police force."--Dan Kaplan, Booklist"Colorful...Chadwick tells the story of New York in those murderous decades through the prism of how it policed itself, or at least tried. Anyone like me who relishes New York history will enjoy this highlight reel."--New York Times Book Review

BRUCE CHADWICK is the author of more than twenty-five books. A noted historian, Chadwick taught at Rutgers University and New Jersey City University. He covered crime for many years as a reporter for the New York Daily News. He holds a PhD from Rutgers and he lectures on the history of crime and forensics all over the world.

Great book for those that are interested in the history of policing and how so many different elements contributed towards forming modern professional police department. However, I take exception with the authors use of the title NYPD. The term simply did not exist prior to the 1970's and in fact the corporate name of the NYPD continues to be "Police Department City of New York"

new upon receipt

very well researched but it seemed to repetitive

Brice Chadwick's is less about the NYPD and more about what a mess New York

City was in the 1800s. The author prefaces the book by telling us that crime levels in pre-Civil War NYC were six times what they are today, even more at the time than London and Paris (not sure I agree with that one.) Regardless, the city was known for bad behavior, and the chance of getting robbed and murdered was high. There wasn't much in the way of law & order, and the police were never much help. Chadwick's first chapter discusses the constant rioting in downtown New York (well there wasn't much of an "uptown" yet) and the Black churches, schools, and homes were a favorite target. The first great riot of the city was not the famous Draft Riot of the Civil War, but the Summer Riot of 1834 (seems like the trouble in this city is always worse in the summer) where the abolitionist meetings were attacked. The few police available did try to stop the riots, but with no results. There wasn't much that ten cops (with limited armament) could do against 300 violent men, especially when those men had no qualms about killing the police. Maybe those cops just weren't willing to risk their lives for the miniscule pay they got. Riots in New York City happened every time the poor got mad, whether it was the use of unclaimed bodies in medical schools (the Doctor's Riot) or the high price of flour, or the killing of stray dogs, or the impounding of stray pigs. In one forgotten 1833 incident, stonemasons stormed a workshop and smashed the place, because the contractor was using cheap marble from Sing-Sing. Apparently, NYU couldn't afford the craftsmen's price, so they opted to use cheaper stonework made by convict labor (NYU always seems to piss everyone off when they build a new wing.) As for the police, they were driven away by the stonemasons (leave it to your imagination who was physically stronger) and the militia had to be called in. That alone almost caused another riot; ever since the American Revolution 50 years earlier, nobody wanted to see armed troops in the city. I will hand it to Bruce Chadwick for mining some unbelievable resources for this book. In the chapter on the Hellen Jewett murder, he brings to light some old first-person accounts of the city in the 1830s, most of which I'd never heard of. Some were written by professional writers who toured the city, others are scholarly academic studies on crime. According to the sources, prostitution was rampant (not surprising, as the respectable classes did not engage in casual sex) and some women found it more respectable than being a domestic servant. Chadwick credits Fernando Wood with improving things. He was trusted and respected by the police captains, and he appointed the ones who could gain the trust of the rank-and-file. As long as there was no dissent within the ranks, the police would at least be unified. Unfortunately, there was no way for patrolmen to communicate with HQ (radios not invented yet) and few would risk their lives by going into certain areas (no way to call for backup.) When the

old Metropolitan Police were scrapped and reorganized, the city had the Police Riot, where the old cops and new cops battled each other in the street. The anti-crime reformers clashed with the police as well as the crowds, because the reformers all came from the same class and school as the abolitionists. Lydia Child, for instance, was a Conservative educated Bostoner, and John McDowall was a divinity student from Princeton. They both criticized the police for the prostitution problem, since the madams were paying off the police captains for every brothel they opened (a fact that the Lexow Committee would concur 60 years later.) Lydia Child found the perfect cause when Amelia Norma murdered a client. The reason *he* reneged on a promise to marry her *was* used by Child to prove her point; men could do whatever they wanted to the women and face no consequence. The author does find one positive thing about the early NYPD, and that is the use of the photograph. When cameras first became available, the NYPD seized the opportunity, creating the world's first "rogue's gallery" with detailed descriptions. Other departments followed suit, as did the FBI and the CIA. Reorganizing the police didn't help that much, and things would still be unsafe in the city. Conflict between the abolitionists and pro-slavery New Yorkers continued, leading to the Draft Riots of the Civil War then the labor union riots, then conflict between the Irish and Italians, and so on. Tearing down the Five Points slum and the old Gotham Court may have helped. It's harder to attack a cop in a dark alley if there are no alleys anymore.

This book suffers from two problems. First, it is more about crime in early New York City than it is about the police force. Riots. Murders. Thefts. Assaults. Prostitution. Okay, I get it. A lot of crime. Constables were ineffective. There was no need to repeat it over and over. Second problem is that the information about the early police department is not very interesting. It seems to be a lot of details thrown together with no driving narrative. This had the potential to be a fascinating history. Unfortunately, not so.

Well, last night I passed the halfway point in this book, and frankly, I've given up. What I've read so far is redundant and repetitive, a constant rehashing of the same crimes over and over again, to the point of utter boredom. It's as if author Chadwick got hold of the crime logs of the era and decided to detail each and every crime that took place in New York City in the first half of the 19th Century, and believe me, that's a LOT of crimes. Page after page of criminal acts, and of course the problem is that, as there are only so many types of criminal activity in the human encyclopedia, it all becomes a repetitive blur, like a "Groundhog Day" of crime. I have to assume that at some point in this tedious

mess he actually starts discussing the actual formation of the NYPD, as promised on the book jacket, but I'm just too bored to stick with it to find out. Once the point had been made that yes, there was a lot of crime in NYC at that time, and the contemporary constable system was corrupt and inept, it was time to move on to the actual formation of the NYPD. Maybe that would have led to a shorter book. In fact, there's no "maybe" about it. The book would have been APPRECIABLY shorter. But I don't buy books by the pound; I buy them to be entertained. This book would have been much shorter, but also much BETTER at the same time. Save your money.

Not worth the money or time, the time line for the history of the nypd is all over the place and hard to follow, if giving the book no stars was an option, that is what this book is worthy of

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