



Dagger John: Archbishop John Hughes and the Making of Irish America

John Loughery

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Acclaimed biographer John Loughery tells the story of John Hughes, son of Ireland, friend of William Seward and James Buchanan, founder of St. John's College (now Fordham University), builder of Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue, pioneer of parochial-school education, and American diplomat. As archbishop of the Archdiocese of New York in the 1840 and 1850s and the most famous Roman Catholic in America, Hughes defended Catholic institutions in a time of nativist bigotry and church burnings and worked tirelessly to help Irish Catholic immigrants find acceptance in their new homeland. His galvanizing and protecting work and pugnacious style earned him the epithet Dagger John. When the interests of his church and ethnic community were at stake, Hughes acted with purpose and clarity.

In *Dagger John*, Loughery reveals Hughes's life as it unfolded amid turbulent times for the religious and ethnic minority he represented. Hughes the public figure comes to the fore, illuminated by Loughery's retelling of his interactions with, and responses to, every major figure of his era, including his critics (Walt Whitman, James Gordon Bennett, and Horace Greeley) and his admirers (Henry Clay, Stephen Douglas, and Abraham Lincoln). Loughery peels back the layers of the public life of this complicated man, showing how he reveled in the controversies he provoked and believed he had lived to see many of his goals achieved until his dreams came crashing down during the Draft Riots of 1863 when violence set Manhattan ablaze.

To know "Dagger" John Hughes is to understand the United States during a painful period of growth as the nation headed toward civil war. Dagger John's successes and failures, his public relationships and private trials, and his legacy in the Irish Catholic community and beyond provide context and layers of detail for the larger history of a modern culture unfolding in his wake.

Dagger John: Archbishop John Hughes and the Making of Irish America Details

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From Reader Review Dagger John: Archbishop John Hughes and the Making of Irish America for online ebook

Patricia Senneville says

Interesting read. It has been said, the more we change the more we remain the same. This book could be a good source to prove this statement to be true

Donna Davis says

I received a review copy of this book from Net Galley and Three Hills Publishing, which is affiliated with Cornell University, free of charge. This book is now for sale.

Since retirement, I have often taken my reading outside of my comfort zone, and at times I've been rewarded. I took a chance in requesting this biography because I have a peripheral interest in church history, and American history and Irish history are more direct interests. However, in this case there is too much assumed knowledge to be readily accessible to an acolyte of the region. My only trip to New York was a weekend tourist jaunt, and I have never been to the church in question. However, I am drawn to the resistance he put forth during the "Know Nothing" period of anti-immigrant sentiment, and now is certainly the time to receive such a cautionary tale.

The claim that this man "made" Irish America seems overstated to me.

That's not to say that it won't interest you. The documentation is as unimpeachable as one would expect from a highly regarded university, and scholars with a specialized area of interest will likely find this a treasure because it is so specific. A niche audience may rate this title as four stars; I find it too dry a read to imagine five. But it isn't intended to be a popular read but a scholarly one.

A solid niche read for those with interests that are aligned with the author's.

Mandy says

John Hughes left his native County Tyrone, Ireland and arrived in America virtually penniless in 1817. Through indomitable hard work and ambition he became Archbishop of the Archdiocese of New York in the 1840s and one of the most well-known Catholics of his time, and he remains a larger-than-life character to this day. He was enormously influential and tireless in his efforts for American Catholics who were often reviled and treated with suspicion. He established schools and seminaries and founded St Patrick's Cathedral – although he never lived to see its completion. He was, and remains, a controversial figure, but his efforts would one day make the election of a Catholic President perfectly acceptable. He lived through turbulent times and sometimes created some of that turbulence himself – hence Dagger being added to his name. The book is not just a biography but an in-depth account of the social and political milieu in which he lived and worked. As a biography it is comprehensive, meticulously researched and detailed, although it must be said also dry and academic at times. A worthwhile and interesting read.

