



WHO WE ARE

A History of the LAOH

Compiled by Past National and PA State President Dorothy Weldon

We are a Sisterhood of Irish and Irish-American, Catholic Women, The Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians is a National organization officially recognized in Omaha, Nebraska in 1894 as the "Daughters of Erin." It is felt that the Ancient Order of Hibernians had always had women as a support group, but due to the "Secret" societal aspect of the Order, the men chose not to acknowledge the women. However, being of the "Matriarchal" heritage that is ours, the women sought their own identity and finally at the National Convention in Omaha, Nebraska in May 1894 the men relented and allowed the formation of the "Daughters of Erin." In 1906, the name was changed to "Ladies Auxiliary to the Ancient Order of Hibernians in America". In 1984, the Ladies voted to change their name to "The Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians." In 2004 we have been officially incorporated on our own as Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, Inc.

The Ladies AOH has changed in many ways over the decades but still we hold true to our MOTTO of "Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity. We are pledged to God and Country. The primary purpose of the Ladies AOH was to protect young immigrant Irish girls coming to the United States, to assist them in securing employment, to give them the opportunity to be with their own kind, and to keep them from becoming homesick and discouraged.

The Preamble of our Constitution states that the intent and purpose of the Ladies is to promote Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity among its members; assisting the people of Ireland to establish an Irish Republic which shall include the 32 counties of Ireland, aiding the aged, sick, blind and infirm members and for the legitimate expense of the Ladies, including Missions work and Catholic Action. The Ladies also foster the ideals and perpetuate the history and traditions of the Irish people and promote Irish culture. Our Patron Saint is Saint Brigid of Ireland.

LADIES ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Compiled by Kathleen Diulus

Three years after the Daughters of Erin (DOE) was organized in Omaha, Nebraska in 1897, the first division, Division 1 Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, in Pennsylvania and the third in the Country was established. Shortly thereafter, Divisions were formed in Scranton, Philadelphia, and Wilkes-Barre.

Catholicism and volunteerism have been the guiding strengths for the formation of Divisions. Although pledged to God and to county, the primary obligation was to become volunteers by assisting young Irish immigrant girls to secure employment and to support and guide them to have an opportunity for a new life.

From 1897 to 1910, were years of growth throughout the state. There were seventy-four (74) Divisions in twenty-nine (29) counties by 1902 and approximately one hundred (100) by 1909. In 1914, the Auxiliary was empowered to form Junior Divisions as a way to promote the principles of the Order to young women from ages six (6) to eighteen (18). A Junior Division sponsored by Division #4, Scranton, Lackawanna County was formed. The Junior membership was at an all-time high of eleven (11) Junior Divisions in the late 1950s. In 2020, one Jr Division remains active (Allegheny County, Division 23).

The first Degree Team was formed in 1913 by Division #4, Scranton, Lackawanna County. Today, both Allegheny and Philadelphia Counties have active Degree teams and have exemplified degrees within the State and at various National Conventions.

Anna C. Malia Ruddy of Scranton, Lackawanna County, was elected the first National President of the Ladies Auxiliary Ancient Order of Hibernians (LAAOH) in 1906. To honor an outstanding woman for her contribution to the Order, the Anna C. Malia Ruddy Award has been awarded on a biennial basis since 1989.

Anna C Malia Ruddy helped to establish Division # 1, Dunmore, PA, DOE, in 1897.

The following year, she organized Division # 2, in her parish in Scranton's Southside. She was also active in the blossoming National organization. She was Secretary for the Advisory Board of The Ladies Auxiliary, Ancient Order of Hibernians, when the AOH and LAAOH met in August, 1906, at Saratoga, NY, for the 45th AOH Bi-Annual Convention. Following a spirited election requiring two balloting sessions, she was elected by a slim majority. She held the post of

National President LAAOH for the next six years. Anna C. Malia Ruddy continued to be active in the LAAOH for the remainder of her life, another fifty years.

Other National Presidents from Pennsylvania include:

- 1925 – 1929 Mary Timon Haran of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County
 - 1948 – 1952 Lenora Shea of Homestead, Allegheny County,
- 1998 – 2000 Margaret 'Peggy' Cooney of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County
- 2006 – 2008 Dorothy Weldon of Monongahela, Washington County.

Pennsylvania is proud of its Hibernian history. In 1984, Pennsylvania has the distinction of hosting the Joint National Board AOH and LAAOH meeting in Pittsburgh for the signing of the new Constitution that changed our status to an independent organization as Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians. Although our name has changed multiple times over the years, each change represents progress and a greater legacy for the future generations.

Pennsylvania has been, and will continue to be a viable and strong entity of the Order!

