



225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
1789-2014



## Thomas Francis Murphy

**Born:**

December 3, 1905  
New York, NY

**Received Commission:**

July 2, 1951

**Died:**

October 26, 1995  
Salisbury, CT

Thomas F. Murphy, born in Manhattan, was son of the chief clerk of the City's utility department and grandson of a police patrolman. He graduated from Regis High School, Georgetown College (1927) and Fordham University School of Law (1930). For twelve years, he was in private practice with the Alcott, Holmes, Glass & Paul law firm.

In 1942, Murphy became an Assistant United States Attorney in the Southern District of New York, and, in 1944, he became head of that Office's Criminal Division. In 1949, he was lead prosecutor in the perjury case against former State Department official Alger Hiss. After the jury was unable to reach a verdict in a first trial, Murphy retried the case and won Hiss's conviction in early 1950. His closing argument remains a memorable piece of advocacy.

In Fall 1950, New York City Mayor Vincent R. Impellitteri, responding to disclosures of widespread New York Police Department corruption, appointed Murphy to serve as New York City Police Commissioner. In less than one year, Commissioner Murphy reorganized senior staff, replaced every plainclothesman (over 300 officers), and instituted merit promotions. He won widespread praise for his firm actions.

He was thereafter appointed to the District Court. Judge Murphy presided over many notable cases, including a wiretapping prosecution against Teamsters president James R. Hoffa and an obscenity case involving a Swedish film, "I Am Curious—Yellow."

**Sources:**

History of the Federal Judiciary, at [www.fjc.gov](http://www.fjc.gov).

Thomas Murphy, Police Head And Prosecutor of Hiss, 89, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 31, 1995, at A25.