



MARINE BAND INAUGURATION HISTORY

The Marine Band is believed to have made its inaugural debut in 1801 for Thomas Jefferson, the first President to be inaugurated in Washington, D.C. “The President’s Own,” a moniker Jefferson is credited with giving the band, likely performed “Jefferson’s March” and other airs for the President at his hotel before he walked the short route to the Capitol for his swearing-in. For his second inaugural, workers from the Washington Navy Yard, accompanied by military music, marched with the President. This was the first-ever inaugural parade on Pennsylvania Avenue.

After performing at James Madison’s inaugural in 1809, the Marine Band is believed to have ushered in the first inaugural ball, playing for Thomas Jefferson and James and Dolley Madison as they entered the crowded room at Long’s Hotel. The band played “Jefferson’s March” when the former president arrived and “President Madison’s March” when President Madison and his wife, Dolley, entered the ball.

In 1817 James Monroe’s inaugural ceremony was held in Congress Hall, also called “The little Brick Capitol.” This was the temporary home for Congress following the burning of the Capitol in 1814 on a portico erected outdoors in front of the hall. This was the first outdoor inaugural ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Monroe’s second inaugural ceremony, in 1821, was held at the rebuilt U.S. Capitol. The Marine Band played music to accompany his arrival and at the conclusion of the ceremony.

The Marine Band in 1825 heralded the arrival of John Quincy Adams as he entered the House Chamber at the Capitol for his swearing-in. The National Intelligencer reported, “...the march of the troops, announced by the Band of the Marine Corps, was heard ... and many a waving plume and graceful head within [the Chamber] beat time to the martial sounds.”

At the conclusion of the inaugural ceremony in 1837, the band played “Hail to the Chief” as government leaders congratulated Martin Van Buren. This may have been the earliest use of “Hail to the Chief” at a presidential inauguration.

The Marine Band led a festive procession to the Capitol for the 1857 inauguration of James Buchanan.

[Francis Scala](#), Marine Band Director from 1855-71, wrote a march for Abraham Lincoln’s first inaugural in 1861 called “President Lincoln’s Inauguration March,” also referred to as the “Union March” or the “Inaugural March.” The Marine Band sat on the inaugural platform to President Lincoln’s left.



The scene at the inaugural ball that evening was described by historian William H. Crook in his book “Memories of the White House” as a “most brilliant affair, held in a temporary wooden structure erected for the purpose in Judiciary Square. ... At eleven o’clock, the Marine Band announced the arrival of the Presidential party.”

“The President’s Own” was on hand for Ulysses S. Grant’s inaugural reception at the White House in 1869. Reported the National Intelligencer, “music from the Marine Band enlivened the occasion, and in a measure, consoled those who could not dance.”

Ulysses S. Grant’s second inaugural parade in 1873 was the coldest ever as the temperature hovered around zero with sleet, snow, and fierce winds. Nonetheless, the Evening Star reported, “The Corps carried a beautiful silk American flag and was preceded by the Marine Band. ... The Drum Major led with majestic mien, wearing a towering bearskin cap and wielding a ponderous gilt staff. The beauty of the uniform ... elicited universal admiration.”

In 1877, Rutherford B. Hayes was escorted to the Capitol by members of Congress and the Marine Band. After the oath of office and inaugural address, President Hayes and former President Grant were escorted in a parade back to the White House.

The Marine Band’s most famous Director [John Philip Sousa](#) led the band from 1880-92. Under his leadership, “The President’s Own” performed at the inaugurals of James Garfield, Grover Cleveland, and Benjamin Harrison.

Following [James Garfield’s inauguration ceremony](#), John Philip Sousa and the Marine Band led the inaugural parade in 1881 down the newly-paved Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House.

Grover Cleveland’s ball in 1885 was held in the new and unfinished Pension Building in Washington, D.C. The Marine Band played waltzes, polkas and promenades as 9,000 revelers joined the president in dancing.

Following a rainy ceremony, approximately 12,000 people attended Benjamin Harrison’s inaugural ball where Sousa led the Marine Band in his composition “Presidential Polonaise.” Sousa composed “Presidential Polonaise” as the request of President Chester Arthur as an alternative to “Hail to the Chief.” It was used for a time but never fully replaced “Hail to the Chief.”

At Grover Cleveland’s ball in 1893, the Marine Band performed “The Great Republic,” composed for the ball by Marine Band Director [Francesco Fanciulli](#).



A powerful snow storm in 1909 forced William Howard Taft's inaugural ceremony to be held in the Senate Chamber of the U.S. Capitol, the first time in 76 years that the ceremony was held indoors.

The year 1921 marked the first time in our country's history that a President-elect rode to his inaugural in an automobile as Woodrow Wilson traveled with Warren G. Harding from the White House to the Capitol. Harding's inaugural address was amplified for the first time in inaugural history, enabling the crowd to hear every word. Immediately after the presidential oath, the Marine Band played "The Star-Spangled Banner" and the crowd responded with loud cheers. At the conclusion of the inaugural address, the Marine Band performed "America."

At Calvin Coolidge's inauguration in 1925, millions of Americans listened to the inaugural ceremonies over a nation-wide radio broadcast for the first time.

The band performed in each of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's four inaugurations. Roosevelt heard selections such as "Row, Row, Row with Roosevelt" during the musical prelude to his first Inauguration Ceremony. Roosevelt's second inaugural was the first to be held on Jan. 20. The constitutional change of Inauguration Day from March 4 to Jan. 20 in 1937 posed new weather-related challenges for its participants. A steady rain soaked the president and the thousands of attendees. Comments written in the band's leader log by the 20th Director [Captain Taylor Branson](#) recounted the day as the worst weather of any inauguration in his time. Because our nation was at war and because of health concerns for President Roosevelt, the 1945 ceremony was held on the White House portico with music provided by the Marine Band. Notes in the Marine Band's log indicate the ceremony took only 14 minutes.

In 1949 for Harry S. Truman's inauguration, viewers across the nation watched the event on television for the first time.

Accompanied by the Marine Band, Metropolitan Opera soprano Leontyne Price sang "America, the Beautiful" at Lyndon B. Johnson's inauguration in 1965.

During the parade of Ulysses S. Grant's second inauguration, the bitter cold caused the valves on brass instruments to freeze as the band tried to perform. To combat this problem, former Marine Band Chief Arranger Master Gunnery Sgt. Thomas Knox, USMC (ret.), composed a march called "Frozen Horns" for Jimmy Carter's 1977 inaugural parade.

In a remarkable coincidence of timing during President Ronald Reagan's 1981 Inauguration Ceremony, Marine Band vocalist Master Gunnery Sgt. Michael Ryan sang



“America, the Beautiful” with the band as 52 American hostages were released after 444 days of captivity in Iran.

Jan. 20 fell on a Sunday in 1985, and the [Marine Chamber Orchestra](#) performed at a private White House swearing-in ceremony as President Ronald Reagan took the oath of office. The next day, as temperatures hovered near zero, President Reagan directed all outdoor events for his inaugural be canceled or moved indoors. Members of Congress, the Supreme Court, the Diplomatic Corps, distinguished guests, and the Marine Band gathered inside the U.S. Capitol Rotunda to witness the President’s public swearing-in and hear his Inaugural Address.

The Harlan Boys Choir of Harlan, Ky., and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir joined the Marine Band at George H. W. Bush’s inauguration in 1989.

At President Bill Clinton’s 1993 Inauguration Ceremony, mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne joined “The President’s Own” in Aaron Copland’s “Simple Gifts” and Portia Nelson’s “Make a Rainbow.” The band also premiered Marvin Curtis’ “The City on the Hill.”

For President Bill Clinton’s second Inauguration Ceremony in 1997, members of “The President’s Own” accompanied acclaimed soprano Jessye Norman in a medley of patriotic music entitled, “O, Freedom!” The band also marched in the parade and played at several inaugural balls, sustaining a tradition that stretches to the earliest days of our nation’s history.

The Marine Band accompanied the duPont Manual High School Choir during the 2001 inauguration of George W. Bush, and mezzo-sopranos Susan Graham and Denyce Graves in 2005.

Barack Obama’s 2009 inauguration took place before a crowd of nearly two million people, which extended down the National Mall and past the Washington Monument. The Marine Band took its place at the base of the Presidential Podium and performed such pieces as Washington’s Grand March from 1784 and “President Lincoln’s Inauguration March” from 1861, as well as marches by [John Philip Sousa](#). Guest artists included Yo Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, Anthony McGill, and Gabriela Montero who performed “Simple Gifts” arranged by legendary composer John Williams. For Obama’s second inauguration in 2013, the Marine Band performed then-Marine Band arranger [Staff Sgt. Ryan Nowlin’s](#) arrangement of “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” with Kelly Clarkson.