



MARINE BAND INAUGURATION HISTORY

Thomas Jefferson was the first President to be inaugurated in Washington, D.C. At his second inauguration, workers from the Washington Navy Yard marched with the President, and they were accompanied by military music. This was the first-ever inaugural parade on Pennsylvania Avenue. An accomplished musician himself, Jefferson was an advocate for the band and is credited with giving the Marine Band its nickname “The President’s Own.”

In 1809, the Commandant of the Marine Corps received a request to provide music to accompany the Volunteer Companies saluting the President on Inauguration day. The Marine Band is believed to have ushered in the first inaugural ball, playing for Thomas Jefferson and James 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”—the temporary home for Congress following the burning of the Capitol in 1814. 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 heralded the arrival of John Quincy Adams in 1825 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.”

In 1829 the Portland Advertiser reported that prior to the arrival of the President-elect, the Marine Band “...played Jackson’s March, sweetly, as they always play; and music exhibited its usual empire, first in animating and then in stilling the crowd.”

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 1861 inaugural ball was "a great success" according to Esther Singleton in "The Story of the White House." "At eleven o'clock the Marine Band played hail to the Chief and Mr. Lincoln entered, accompanied by his family..."

"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 furnished by 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 the van 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 inaugural parade included "the famous Marine Band, the pride and pet of Washington, in scarlet coats, with white belts and trimmings." (The Herald)

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. The Marine Band played "Hail to the Chief" as the presidential party made their way from the White House to the Capitol for the ceremony. (from "A Biography of James A. Garfield" by Benson J. Lossing)

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 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 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, for Jimmy Carter’s 1977 inaugural parade, former Marine Band Chief Arranger Master Gunnery Sgt. Thomas Knox, USMC (ret.), composed a march called “Frozen Horns.”

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.

President 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 Major Ryan Nowlin's arrangement of "My Country 'Tis of Thee" with Kelly Clarkson.

During President Donald Trump's inauguration in 2017, the Marine Band accompanied Ms. Jackie Evancho as she sang the national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." The band also accompanied The Tabernacle Choir as they performed "America, the Beautiful."