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THE FIRST INAUGURAL

Tomorrow, March 4, marks the anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address. While the remarks of the President on this occasion are of supreme importance and their place among the outstanding utterances of mankind securely established, the atmosphere in which this address was delivered and the personnel of the group in the immediate background of the speaker are also of interest. Some excerpts have been gathered for this number of Lincoln Lore which may help to visualize the setting for this memorable occasion.

A Warm March Day

"But to return to the inauguration of Lincoln . . . I have never seen an inauguration day so warm as the one turned out to be, although a little cloudy in early morning. I started out with a party of friends to go to the Capitol and when we had gone a little way I went back with their wraps to the hotel and brought sun shades instead. A lot of the boys from the Virginia Military Institute, to make a show of the Spring weather we were having, came here in white trousers and straw hats, but I have always had an idea that some of them must have taken back home with them about what we now call the gripe . . . no matter how warm the middle of the day on the avenue may be in March, the weather is very treacherous after the sun goes down. Lincoln's inaugural address was short but impressive and as I heard his closing paragraph I concluded that we had elected a President who was a great, strong man. The parade that followed was short and was more like a trades-procession as I remember it, than a military display. There was a carriage with thirty-four little girls representing the States of the Union, and several features of symbolic interest."

Correspondent "Lincoln," Boston Evening Transcript, February 26, 1897.

Lincoln's Restlessness

"When he (Lincoln) came forward it was evident to those who knew him that he had been elaborately "fixed up" for the occasion by someone with more zeal than reason. He was arrayed in a full suit of regulation black including

a dress coat, an article he had probably never worn before in his life; a brand new silk hat, and a ponderous gold-headed cane completed a costume in which the owner looked, and was, exceedingly uncomfortable and awkward. After standing hesitantly a moment, his cane in one hand and hat in the other, he got rid of the former by thrusting it up in the angle of the railing, but the disposition of the hat evidently puzzled him. There was no room on the small table and he did not like to put it on the floor, so there he stood in the concentrated gaze of assembled thousands clutching the glossy beaver and looking around in painful embarrassment. Douglas occupied a seat not directly behind Mr. Lincoln but several seats in the rear on the end of the bench at the right of the entrance on the platform. He apprehended the situation of his old friend and voluntarily rising, gracefully took the hat and held it until the conclusion of the address. He listened with the closest attention to the address and frequently nodded his head in approbation of the sentiment expressed. That historic document, afterwards shown to a representative of The Republican, was written throughout by Mr. Lincoln's own pen on medium sized paper. The manuscript resembled an ordinary school copy book."

Illinois Journal, October 9, 1879, reprinted from St. Louis Republican.

Buchanan, Taney and Lincoln

"The seats upon the platform were filled by those to whom they had been assigned and a cheer from fifty thousand lusty throats went up as a trio of mental, moral, and physical worth approached the temporary shelter in the immediate center. Venerable indeed was the Chief Justice, Robert E. Taney. What thoughts must have passed through his well-disciplined mind! How, with the eye of a historian, must have run back more than sixty years to the date of his first oath of office as Chief Justice of the United States a fit successor to the great Marshall, then dead. How, as looking during a few moments delay from his elevation upon the vast crowd before him in which thousands of dusty faces, free and enslaved as well, appeared, must have risen before him his famous Dred Scott decision in which he declared negroes as beings of an "inferior order" altogether unfit to associate with the white race through any social or political relations and so far inferior that they had "no right which the white man was bound to respect." And then, as looking at the courtly form and personal dignity of Buchanan on his left and the earnest solemnity stamped on the face of the tall incomer upon his right, must have arisen before him the long line of men to whom he had administered the oath now about

to be taken by Abraham Lincoln. It was indeed a significant moment to Robert E. Taney and he indeed was a fit complement to the two distinguished factors in affairs with whom he appeared, part and parcel of an illustrious trio. The oath being administered, President Lincoln stepped to the front . . . great interest was naturally felt in Lincoln's inaugural address. Horace Greeley says of Lincoln—"His faith in reason as a moral force was so implicit that he did not cherish a doubt but his inaugural address, whereon he had put so much thought and labor would, when read throughout the South, dissolve the Confederacy as the frost is dissolved by a vernal sun. I sat just behind him as he read it on a bright, warm, still, March day, expecting to hear the delivery arrested by the crack of a rifle aimed at his heart, but it pleased God to postpone the deed. Although there was forty times the opportunity to shoot him in 1861 that there was in 1865 and at least forty times as many intent on killing or having him killed." There was no bullet fired. Lincoln's address, although read, produced profound impression. It was heard with perfect distinctness by at least ten thousand, if not fifteen thousand of the people assembled."

Joseph Howard, Jr., in Boston Globe, July 1, 1888.

The Capitol

"The day for inauguration came. Never before had there been so many people in Washington. Soldiers were stationed in groups along Pennsylvania Avenue and on the roofs of buildings. Cavalrymen rode beside the carriage that bore President Buchanan and Mr. Lincoln from Willet Hotel to the Capitol. Not far away artillerymen were sitting on their caissons or on their horses ready to move in an instant should General Scott give the signal. But the conspirators who had plotted the death of Mr. Lincoln did not dare attempt his assassination. Thousands had gathered to witness the inauguration. The Capitol was unfinished. Above the throng rose the huge derrick by which the marble and iron for the construction of the dome were lifted . . . Mr. Lincoln lays his right hand upon the open Bible, a hush falls upon the vast multitude as he repeats after Chief Justice Taney the words—"I, Abraham Lincoln, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Charles C. Coffin, press correspondent, in his book on Abraham Lincoln, page 236.