

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 623

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

March 17, 1941

BROADCASTING LINCOLN'S FIRST INAUGURAL

Eighty years ago this month Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated President of the United States. There were no radio announcers to give an account of this epochal ceremony. When Franklin D. Roosevelt was recently inaugurated for his third term, there were some very extravagant statements made over the air in an attempt to create the idea in the minds of the listeners that all other inaugurations fell into discard compared with the setting at Washington on January 20, 1941. We wonder.

Without any attempt to overemphasize some of the episodes associated with Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural, a radio announcer could have portrayed the scene on March 4, 1861, something like this:

Ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience, this is Inauguration Day in the national capital and a very beautiful day it is. We are going to give you a picture of that part of the proceedings which includes the inaugural procession and the inaugural ceremonies. Microphones have been installed here at the Willard Hotel where the President-elect, Mr. Lincoln, will join President Buchanan, and on the newly erected stands in front of the Capitol Building where the oath will be administered.

Never before in the history of the country have so many people crowded into this city as are present today to witness the inaugural ceremonies. Whether or not the rumors that the President-elect will be assassinated before he can be inaugurated have any foundation, it is difficult to learn, but there is great resentment toward him.

Every precaution is being taken to guard Mr. Lincoln. The entire military force of the District of Columbia under the direction of General Scott is available. Scores of heavily armed men, many from Mr. Lincoln's home state of Illinois, are in the city to see that the proceedings shall not be interrupted by violence. The fact that several states have already seceded from the Union creates a tension here that has never before been felt in this capital city.

Regular troops are stationed at intervals along Pennsylvania Avenue, sharpshooters are in strategic positions on the tops of the taller buildings along the route, and mounted officers stationed at every corner to report to General Scott the progress of the procession.

Our microphone is so placed here at the Willard Hotel that we can get a full view of the entire route of the procession until the column approaches the Capitol, and we will attempt to describe its progress. The carriage bringing President Buchanan from the White House is now drawing up in front of the hotel, and we may expect Mr. Lincoln to step out of the entrance at any moment. There is a great throng about the hotel here to get the first glimpse of the President-elect, and it is with some difficulty that the path to the carriage is kept open. Some have predicted that if the life of Mr. Lincoln is threatened, it will be here, and the moment he appears in the open may be the most intense moment of the entire ceremonies.

The milling of the crowd about the entrance indicates that Mr. Lincoln is approaching and here he is, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, the first President to be born west of the Allegheny Mountains. No one has any difficulty in picking him out of the mass of people as he stands above them all. When he stops bowing and puts on his top-hat, his six foot four inch figure will be increased about a foot. He has reached the carriage and has taken his seat beside President Buchanan. Senator Edward Baker and Senator James Alfred Pearce have also entered the barouche and taken seats opposite the President and President-elect.

A guard of honor of the regular cavalry surrounds the carriage. Mounted marshals four files deep give further security to the occupants of the carriage. Behind the carriage march regiments of regulars and marines fully armed. Falling in behind the armed militia are the veterans of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War. Next in line we observe members of the Peace Congress and then follow delegations from the various states, about a thousand of them.

A group of young ladies occupy a float drawn by four white horses. They represent the various states of the Union. We observe some of them are quarreling. A company of Wide-Awakes serves as an escort. Here is a strange sight for Washington to gaze on, a division of colored volunteers, the first colored men ever to march as a unit in a military procession.

The front of the procession has moved up Pennsylvania Avenue without any disturbing incident thus far, and we will now turn you over to our announcer at the Capitol who will give you an account of the proceedings in the Inauguration proper.

The location of our microphones here at the Capitol allows us to get a good view of all that is to take place on this platform erected in front of the eastern portico. General Scott has drawn up his two batteries so that they control the plateau which extends before the east front of the Capitol. Several companies of soldiers are just in front of the platform from which Mr. Lincoln will speak.

President Buchanan, President-elect Lincoln, and the nation's leading officials and diplomats are now taking their positions on the platform. Mrs. Lincoln and several ladies are also observed in the group. An old friend of Mr. Lincoln, Senator Edward Baker from Oregon, is about to introduce Mr. Lincoln.

Mr. Lincoln has just stepped forward, placed the large cane he carries against a railing, and he now seems to be trying to find some place to put his top-hat. Senator Douglas is stepping forward and apparently is going to hold Mr. Lincoln's hat for him. This is a fine gesture on the part of Douglas who debated with Mr. Lincoln in 1858. Mr. Lincoln is putting on some spectacles and is about to read his message. Now back to the speakers' microphone for the Inaugural Address.

"Fellow-citizens of the United States: In compliance with a custom as old as the government itself, I appear before you to address you briefly, and to take in your presence the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United States to be taken by the President 'before he enters on the execution of his office' . . .

"I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

You have just heard the new President-elect of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, deliver his Inaugural Address. He will now take the oath of office administered by Chief Justice Taney. The aged Chief Justice is now stepping forward and the Clerk of the Senate is holding the Bible on which Mr. Lincoln has placed one hand. He has now raised his other hand to take the oath.

Abraham Lincoln is now declared the Sixteenth President of the United States.