

# Inaugural Balls of the Past

*How shopkeeping Washington evened up on campaign expenses: : Comedy, Tragedy and Splendor have been mingled in this spectacular affair*

**P**RESIDENT WILSON called attention very widely in 1913 to the ancient and honorable custom of holding an inaugural ball to welcome the new president to his job by refusing to sanction the affair. And owing to "pressure of official business" there will be no inaugural ball this year of 1917. In other words, American officialdom is in no mood for gaiety.

The inaugural ball, says the Kansas City Star in a historical article, is not a state function, financed by the Nation, as most of the Nation believes. Undertaken at first as a welcome to the new president by Washington society it has become of late years the business venture by which Washington merchants recover the money they spend to hang the capital with bunting and fire hands and fireworks to make the occasion lively. While the ball costs a large sum of money, the profit from the sale of tickets, priced nowadays at \$5, is estimated at \$20,000, and this profit is distributed among the men who subscribed the funds to make the celebration a success.

But the inaugural ball does cost the Nation something, because it discommodes whatever department of state lends its building for the festivities. Recent balls have been held in the pension building, and a vast deal of trouble and expense has gone into the organization of their gaiety.

There has been balls in the past, like that state's first ball that welcomed President Monroe, notable for the brilliance of the assemblages, the beauty and wit and fashion displayed, truly great social occasions, worthy of the dignity of the occasion they celebrate. And there have been balls of which old timers in Washington still talk, notable for the widespread inconvenience they have caused. For instance, there is the second Lincoln inauguration ball, when Horace Greeley lost his hat and standing on the steps of the treasury building put a curse on the city of Washington lurid enough to set fire to the snowdrifts that blanketed it; then there is the ball that welcomed President Grant, held in a vast pavilion of muslin, unheated, whose walls swayed to and fro in an icy blast that froze dainty ears and finger tips—yes, and noses—and put a damper on the merry-making not to be forgotten.

March 4, 1809, was the sort of chill, damp, uncomfortable day Washington expects for the presidential inauguration, but in this year the inconveniences of bad weather in the new little capital were far worse than they could possibly be today. The sprawling, ragged, unfinished city had no pavements. Roads were so deep in mud that many a coach was mired as it carried its load of distinguished persons to witness the inaugural. There were few hotels and boarding houses, and these were crowded to saturation on the great day.

But the society of the capital and notables from far and near were determined to overcome all handicaps of weather, for this drear evening was to mark the first presidential inaugural ball. An organization of young men, the "Washington Dancing assembly," formed seven years before, had the affair in charge and had secured the assembly room of Long's hotel on Capitol hill.

The "four hundred" in America originated with this first presidential ball. Washington society represented the best of the Nation. The influence of the Southern families of aristocratic tradition was strong. There were few people of wealth, but many of culture; and society was gay without ostentation. The men of the dancing assembly who drew up the list of those who would be asked to buy tickets to the inaugural ball found that four hundred would include all persons of breeding and worth.

When George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were inaugurated they were glad to go early to bed after the day of ceremonies, but on this night ex-President Jefferson, personally opposed to ostentation, appeared in the ballroom promptly at seven o'clock, the time of its opening. He came smiling and happy, glad to see his friend succeed him in the direction of the Nation, happy at having the burden of his own shoulders, as he confided to a friend during the evening.

The orchestra played "Jefferson's March" as the ex-president entered.

"Am I too early?" asked the great Democrat. "You must tell me how to behave, for it is more than forty years since I have been to a ball."

Soon after the musicians played "Madison's March," and the guests flocked about the door to greet the new president, a slight, short figure of a man, whose gray hair was brushed smoothly back from his high forehead and tied with a black ribbon. His small hazel eyes were remarkable for a humorous twinkle, for Madison, in private life, enjoyed a good joke and sprightly banter. His long, pendulous nose came low over a long upper lip. His teeth were noticeably white and even.

The new president wore plain black, with ruffles at the throat and wrists, with black smalls and silk stockings. There were big silver buckles on his shoes.

But it was to Dolly Madison, formerly the fascinating Widow Todd of Philadelphia, that all eyes turned. The new mistress of the White House was a center of attraction wherever she went. Without great beauty of face or figure, she had a manner which won friends instantly. Her ready tact, her good humor, her vivacity, made her easily a social leader and the best-remembered and beloved of the many "first ladies."

Mrs. Madison wore pale buff velvet made very plain, with a long train and no trimmings. Her head was surmounted by a turban from Paris of pale buff velvet and white satin.

When America's first "four hundred" danced at the Madison ball the air of the assembly room became very close and the guests finding they could not lower the window shades broke the glass for ventilation. That is the only recorded inconvenience, aside from the universal inconveniences



these notables experienced in getting to Washington, but the balls held in later years made a less enviable record. Probably the ball held to celebrate the second inauguration of President Lincoln was one of the most notable for the universal distress it caused.

Mary Clemmer Ames, in her book "Ten Years in Washington," says of this exciting carnival:

"The air throughout the entire building was perforated with a fine dust, ground until you felt that you were taking in with every breath a myriad homeopathic doses of desiccated grindstone. The agonies of that ball can never be written. There are mortals dead in their graves because of it. There are mortals who still curse, and swear, and sigh at the thought of it. There are diamonds, and pearls and precious garments that are sought to their owners because of it. The scenes in those cloak and hat rooms can never be forgotten by any who witnessed them. The colored messengers, called from their posts in the treasury to do duty in these rooms, received hats and wraps with perfect facility, and tucked them in loopholes as it happened.

"But to give them back each to its owner, that was impossible. Not half of them could read numbers and those who could soon grew bewildered, overpowered, ill-tempered and impertinent under the hosts that advanced upon them for cloaks and hats.

"Picture it! Six or more thousand people clamoring for their clothes! In the end they were all tumbled over 'promiscuous' on the floor. Then came the siege! Few seized their own, but many snatched other people's garments—anything, something, to protect them from the pitiless morning, whose wind came down like the bite of death. Delicate women, too sensitive to take the property of others, crouched in corners and wept on window ledges, and there the daylight found them. Carriages, also, had fled out of the scouring blast, and men and women who emerged from the marble halls, with very little to wear, found that they must 'foot it' to their habitations. One gentleman walked to Capitol hill, nearly two miles, in dancing pumps and bareheaded; another performed the same exploit wrapped in a lady's sonnet.

"Poor Horace Greeley, after expending his wrath on the stairs and cursing Washington anew as a place that should be immediately blotted out of the universe, strode to his hotel hatless. The next day and the next week were consumed by people searching for their lost clothes, and General Chipman says he still receives letters demanding articles lost at that inaugural ball."

One would suppose that the lesson of the Lincoln ball would have resulted in great reforms when the inauguration ball, which welcomed President Grant, four years later, was held. One reform was notable, a complete checking system for wraps was devised, but on this occasion not a guest parted with his wraps! They did not dare, for as it was, noses and ears were frozen.

The Grant inaugural ball cost \$60,000 and great things were expected of it. A pavilion 350 feet long, with a ballroom 300 by 100 feet, was built in Judiciary square. This pavilion was made of light boards, roofed with tar paper and sealed with pink and white muslin. "The mighty American eagle," to quote the official report, "spread his wings over the president's platform and from his pinions spread streamers 100 feet long, caught up on either side by coats of arms. The president's reception platform was 60 feet long and 30 feet wide. Twelve pillars supported alternate gold figured, red and blue stands, which held pots of blooming flowers. Platform and steps were richly carpeted and thousands of canary birds were placed toward the ceiling to add their chorus to the music. Tickets to this magnificent entertainment cost \$20.

Then came inaugural day with a blizzard and cold wave so severe that marchers in the inaugural procession dropped by the way, overcome by cold! The north wind swooped down on the muslin palace and rattled its flimsy grandeur until the roof was swayed back in one place and ballooned out in another, while the tar paper and loose boards rose in the gusts and rattled down far and wide.

President Grant recovered sufficiently from the exposure of the inauguration to spend a short time at the ball, arriving at 11 o'clock in the evening. He and his brilliant suite of guests, many of them foreign diplomats, and their brilliantly clad ladies,

remained huddled in voluminous wrappings, looking down upon the guests dancing in overcoats and wraps, dancing like mad in order to keep from freezing to death.

The canary birds did not sing. They tucked their heads under their wings and shivered pitifully. The elaborate refreshments froze into blocks of ice. The ball ended before midnight.

The first inaugural ball in the pension building was that held to honor President Cleveland's first inauguration. The building was then unfinished and the courtyard was roofed by temporary construction, elaborately decorated and lighted by the then new electric lamps. The ballroom floor was 316 by 116 feet, and it was crowded. The ticket sale for this ball brought in \$40,000.

It is pleasanter to contemplate more recent inaugural balls. A notably brilliant ball was that which welcomed President McKinley. It was held in the pension building, and for that night the building was transformed by bunting of white and gold. Not a particle of woodwork or original decoration of the building was left uncovered. Elaborate electric lighting (elaborate for 1897) and a huge fountain were notable features of this ballroom. Judging by contemporary accounts this ball was a complete success, socially and financially.

Mrs. William Howard Taft, in her charming book, "Recollections of Full Years," tells the story of the last inaugural ball. Mrs. Taft's account of how the Taft family moved into the White House is thoroughly captivating because of its many bits of domestic color, bits that find an echo in common experience everywhere.

It was at the close of a very busy day that Mrs. Taft put herself into the hands of her nervous hairdresser and sat looking at her new ball gown, spread out on the bed. The ball gown had arrived at the very last minute and the new "first lady" had wondered for several anxious days what in the world she would wear to the ball if the dressmaker failed her.

"It was made of heavy white satin which I had sent to Tokyo to have embroidered," writes Mrs. Taft, "and the people who did the work surely knew their art. A pattern of goldenrod was outlined by a silver thread and cleverly fitted into the long lines of the gown, and no other trimmings had been used except some lace with which the low-cut bodice was finished. It fitted me admirably and I hoped that, in spite of all the mishaps in my preparations, I looked my best as I descended from the White House automobile at the entrance of the pension office.

"The pension office was not built for balls, inaugural or otherwise, and on the evening of March 4, 1909, after a day of melting sleet and snow, the entrance was not especially inviting. Neither was the dressing room which had been assigned to me. I suppose that for years it had rung with the ceaseless click of scores of typewriters and that its walls had held no more elaborate costume than a business blouse and skirt since the occasion of the last inaugural ball which had marked the beginning of the second Roosevelt administration, four years before. But as I needed to do very little 'prinking' it really didn't matter and I quickly resigned the president and proceeded on his arm to the presidential box, this being a small round gallery above the main entrance of the great ballroom, which is itself, in everyday life, the principal workroom of the pension office.

"A brilliant, an almost kaleidoscopic, scene spread before us. The hall is of tremendous proportions, pillared with red marble and with walls tinted in the same color. Every inch of floor space seemed to be occupied. The bright colors and the gleam of women's gowns met and clashed or harmonized with the brighter colors of diplomatic uniforms. Officers of the army and navy in full regalia met and mingled with the hundreds of men in the plain black of formal evening dress. It was a wonderful, glittering throng, more magnificent than any I had ever seen. It was not possible to distinguish individuals except in the spaces directly below the box, but there, as I looked down, I saw a great semicircle of faces—thousands, it seemed to me—smilingly upturned toward us. The din of human voices was terrific; even the loudest band procurable had difficulty in making itself heard. But the scene was so gay in color, and the faces that gazed up at us were so friendly and happy that I felt elated and not at all overwhelmed."

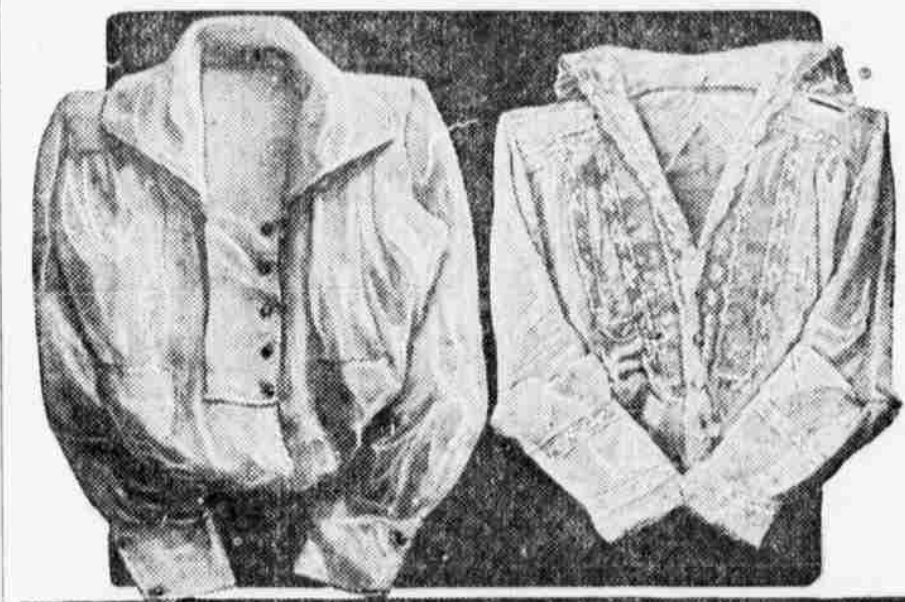
## Fads And Fancies Of Fashion



Plumpness Pleasingly Arrayed.

Now is the day of the round and not too slender figure. Plumpness is pleasing arrayed in a one-piece frock, hanging in straight lines. There has been an individuality of designs, and here is one of them which might be of serge or satin or soft wool material, but the chances are that it is of wool jersey. The skirt has a flat flare at the back and front, and at the sides is laid in groups of narrow flat plaits separated by wider ones. This model fastens at one side on the shoulder and under-arm seam. It is finished with a flat girdele of the material, having the ends embroidered and ornamented with pendant balls covered with small beads.

The latest arrival among fads is a matched set consisting of wide silk girdele, but and bag, or instead of the bag a parasol is brought into the scheme. Since everything is embroidered it is not difficult to harmonize dress accessories by this means, and since Chinese tassels of all sorts are available and fashionable, another way is opened for the woman who understands the value of matching up dress accessories. Tassels may be attached to hats or girdles or bags or parasols by the very simple expedient of such fasteners.



Considering Blouses for Spring

If you have considered blouses for the coming spring you already know that feminine allegiance is divided between the skirted blouse and our older friend that merely reaches to the waistline. The skirted blouse, appearing first with a short peplum, has met with an enthusiastic welcome, and now we have the Russian blouse, in many developments, the chemise blouse, and many overblouses, all covering half the length of the figure. But the practical blouse—the shirtwaist of other days (modified for the house)—goes serenely on its way, which leads it into every wardrobe.

Blouses of today, if well made, are higher priced than they were. Inexpensive ones are attractively designed but poorly made, and the woman of refined taste must either reconcile herself to paying higher prices or make her blouses at home; she cannot reconcile herself to the poor work on the cheaper ready-made articles.

Two new models are shown in the picture. One is of yellow organdie, finished at the edges with black in machine-made buttonhole stitching. As in the majority of new models, the back and front are set on to straight shoulderpieces. There are two small pockets to relieve the plainness of the otherwise undorned fronts.

The white blouse is of India lawn trimmed with val lace and edging. Small tucks and tiny pearl buttons give it very tasteful finish. The sleeves are long, and these models may be ac-

cepted as good examples in practical blouses for the coming summer. Colors promise to be as popular as white, and among them yellow and rose are evidently in high favor.

*Julia Bottomley*

**Runners in Stockings.**

"I saw an item in the paper the other day about stopping a run in a silk stocking by rubbing it with a bit of moistened soap," said a young girl, "but I've discovered that it can be stopped merely by dampening it. You can't always get hold of a piece of soap as soon as you discover a run, you know; but you can always dampen the stitches that are left open at the end of a short 'runner,' and this serves to stiffen the thread until you can get home and catch the runaway stitch."

**Charmeuse in Vogue.**

Charmeuse, which was side-tracked by Dame Fashion for a spell, has been restored to favor for afternoon and informal evening frocks, and many charming models in this supple and becoming fabric have made their appearance this season. One in raven's wing blue was noted in a recent display. It was relieved by embroidery in aluminum tone which outlined the round neck and bordered the wide sleeves in bell design.