



0. Strange Happenings and Unusual Facts - Story Preface

1. What is the Executive Branch

**2. Strange Happenings and Unusual Facts**

3. Fast Facts about First Ladies

4. A Civics Lesson for Your School

5. Presidential Topics at Awesome Stories

When Andrew Jackson was inaugurated, he allowed people "off the streets" to join in the celebrations. A rowdy party ensued at the White House, as imagined in this artistic interpretation by Louis S. Glanzman. Image online via the White House Historical Association.

### What Are Some of the Strangest Inauguration Happenings?

Here is a list of strange happenings that you just "can't make up!"

- In 1865, Andrew Johnson—who became Vice President not long before Abraham Lincoln's shocking assassination—was ill with typhoid fever. He took medication, for that illness, but he also downed three quick shots of whiskey just before giving his acceptance speech (during which he bragged about his humble origins and his triumph over the Confederate aristocracy). Despite the best efforts of those around him, who tried to get him to cut-short his speech, he refused to stop. It is called the "Hungover Speech." President Lincoln watched the disaster unfold with "unutterable sorrow."
- Ulysses S. Grant thought that canaries would add a festive touch to his inaugural ball in 1873. However, the extremely cold March temperatures caused many of the birds, who had frozen to death, to fall on the heads of the people dancing and celebrating at Grant's inaugural party.
- Hundreds of years after Grant's bad experience with birds, Richard Nixon had an idea. Wanting to make sure that pigeons (who roosted in the trees along Pennsylvania Avenue) didn't ruin his second-inaugural day, the incoming president had a chemically based bird repellent (called "Roost No More") sprayed into the trees along the inaugural-parade route. The result? The pigeons didn't cooperate. The repellent was intended to cause the birds to fly away (because the chemical makes their feet itch). Instead, the pigeons ate the spray. Instead of leaving the parade area, the bodies of poisoned pigeons littered the parade route.
- After Andrew Jackson's inauguration, so the story goes, he threw an epic party at the White House. The party was crashed by drunken Jackson-backers who broke windows, china and damaged the drapes. To get these individuals out of the White House, the staff placed a tub—apparently of "booze"—on the front yard of the Executive Mansion.
- When President Herbert Hoover was sworn in, the Chief Justice who administered the oath, William Howard Taft, apparently substituted the word "maintain" for "protect." An eighth-grade girl, named Helen Terwilliger, caught the error and sent Taft a note. He denied it, but the newsreels showed the thirteen-year-old girl to be right.

### What Are Some Additional Interesting Facts about U.S. Presidential Inaugurations?

- George Washington's wife, Martha, did not make the trip to New York City (where her husband was sworn-in).

- Thomas Jefferson was the first president to be inaugurated at the Capitol in Washington, D.C.
- James Monroe was the first president to take the oath out-of-doors in Washington.
- Martin Van Buren's inaugural parade included the first use of floats.
- Franklin Pierce stood up in his carriage, during the parade, and memorized his speech.
- Abraham Lincoln's inaugural was the first to have African-Americans participate in the inaugural parade.
- Rutherford B. Hayes was the first president to take the oath of office in the White House.
- William McKinley had his inaugural recorded on a movie camera.
- Woodrow Wilson's inaugural was the first time that women participated in the inaugural parade.
- Harry S. Truman's was the first inauguration to be televised.
- Lyndon B. Johnson was first to use a bullet-proofed, closed limousine.
- Richard M. Nixon only allowed people holding special invitations, to the ceremony, to be admitted to the Capitol Grounds.
- Jimmy Carter was the first to make provisions for people with physical challenges to watch the parade.
- Ronald Reagan had the first closed-captioning, of the televised inaugural, included to benefit the hearing impaired.
- William J. Clinton's was the first ceremony broadcast live on the Internet.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Strange-Happenings-and-Unusual-Facts-Fun-Activities-and-Facts-about-the-Presidential-Inauguration>

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## Questions 2 Ponder

### Which event did you like the most?

Review the various events and select one you liked the most and create a poem about it for your teacher.

## Media Stream



## President Andrew Jackson's Rowdy Party

This artistic interpretation of Andrew Jackson's inaugural party is by Louis S. Glanzman who created the illustration in 1970. It is online via the White House Historical Association.

View this asset at:

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