

0. Fast Facts about First Ladies - Story Preface

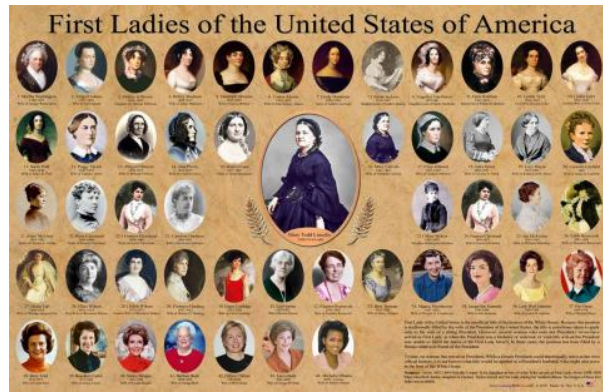
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This illustration, from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, depicts America's "First Ladies" from Martha Washington through Michelle Obama. The print is [available for purchase via the Library and Museum Store](#).

What are Some Fast Facts about First Ladies at Inaugurations?

- It wasn't just [Martha Washington](#) who didn't attend her husband's inauguration. [Abigail Adams](#), [Dolley Madison](#), [Elizabeth Monroe](#) and [Anna Harrison](#) were also absent from their husbands' inaugurations. Martha Jefferson died eighteen years before her husband, Thomas, became America's third president.
- [Sarah Polk](#) was present at the inauguration, and she attended the Inaugural Ball, but [dancing at the ball was stopped](#) in deference to her religious beliefs.
- Jane Pierce [did not attend her husband's inaugural](#) and there was no inaugural ball. She and her husband had lost their son, in a train accident, months before. She also refused to fulfill her White House duties so a relative handled those for her.
- [Mary Lincoln](#) was in attendance and is said to have danced with her husband's opponent, Stephen Douglas, at the Inaugural Ball.
- [Julia Grant](#) attended.
- [Lucy Hayes](#) was at the Inauguration.
- [Lucretia \(Crete\) Garfield](#) was there and made a startling statement as she proclaimed how "almost superhuman" her husband looked—see *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Their Legacy*, by Lewis L. Gould, [at page 158](#)—only to have him shot four months later (at the hands of an assassin) and die eighty days after that (when [doctors repeatedly treated him in unsterile conditions](#)).
- Grover Cleveland was a bachelor at the time of his inauguration. A year later, the 49-year-old president married a woman named Frances Folsom who was 28 years younger. When Cleveland lost the election of 1889, [Frances vowed to return as First Lady](#). She did precisely that, four years later, after Cleveland became the only U.S. President to be re-elected after first sustaining a loss.
- [Caroline \(Carrie\) Harrison](#) was at the event.
- [Ida McKinley](#) witnessed the swearing-in of her husband but fell ill at the Inaugural Ball.
- [Edith Roosevelt](#) watched Theodore's swearing-in ceremonies.

- [Helen \(Nellie\) Taft](#) was there for William's inauguration.
- [Ellen Wilson](#) was in attendance, but she died during her husband's first term. Woodrow Wilson remarried and his second wife, [Edith](#), attended his second inauguration.
- [Florence Harding](#) was very active in the Inaugural.
- [Grace Coolidge](#) not only witnessed the ceremony, but she also talked with Nellie Ross, the nation's first woman governor.
- [Lou Hoover](#) was late to the ceremony.
- [Eleanor Roosevelt](#) watched her husband take the oath of office four times.
- [Bess Truman](#) was there and hosted the first integrated inaugural ball.
- [Mamie Eisenhower](#) was there and was kissed by her husband.
- The "First Lady" Inauguration - in 1961 - has that name because several past, present and future first ladies were alive and attended some of the inaugural festivities. They included: Edith Wilson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bess Truman, Mamie Eisenhower, [Jackie Kennedy](#), Lady Bird Johnson, Pat Nixon, and [Betty Ford](#).
- [Lady Bird Johnson](#) was there and was the first wife to hold the Bible while her husband took the oath of office.
- [Pat Nixon](#) was there but was forced to sit down, during the drive back to the White House, as protesters threw rocks. This happened at both inaugurations. Later, after the Nixons left the White House, [Pat predicted that Donald Trump would win the election](#) if he ever decided to "run for office."
- Richard Nixon later became the first president to resign after the Watergate affair became public. He was replaced by Vice President Gerald Ford and there weren't inaugural festivities for his wife, Betty Ford, to attend. There was just the official swearing-in.
- [Rosalynn Carter](#) was there. With her husband, Jimmy Carter, she left her chauffeured car and walked during the parade. According to C-SPAN, she later became the initial "First Lady" to make a foreign-policy trip.
- [Nancy Reagan](#) was there, reportedly in very expensive clothes, and watched her husband, Ronald, take the oath on the west side of the Capitol. During Reagan's second inauguration, the event was held in the Capitol Rotunda due to freezing weather.
- [Barbara Bush](#) was there both times and walked back to the White House.
- [Hillary Clinton](#) was there and walked back to the White House with her husband, William Jefferson Clinton.
- [Laura Bush](#) was there both times that her husband took the oath.
- [Michelle Obama](#) was there both times as her husband, Barack Obama, took the oath of office.

For more information read *First Ladies*, by [Carl Sferrazza Anthony](#), America's national expert on U.S. First Ladies (and the roles they have played throughout history). For the facts relied upon in this chapter, see "[Information on First Ladies and Their Roles at the Inaugurations](#)."

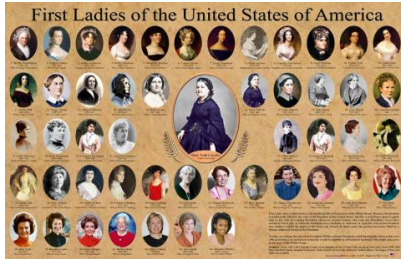
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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Fast-Facts-about-First-Ladies-Fun-Activities-and-Facts-about-the-Presidential-Inauguration>

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Media Stream



First Ladies of the United States

This graphic, depicting America's First Ladies from Martha Washington through Michelle Obama, is online via the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

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Pat Nixon and Donald Trump

Image of a letter, written by former President Richard Nixon to Donald Trump, maintained at the Nixon Presidential Library. Public Domain.

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