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INAUGURATION

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The new first family: President-elect Barack Obama, his wife, Michelle, and their daughters, Malia, 10, at left, and Sasha, 7.

An invitation to the inauguration of Barack Obama

President-elect Barack Obama and wife Michelle at the election night rally in Chicago on Nov. 4, 2008.

Barack Obama will take his oath of office on the Bible used by Abraham Lincoln at his swearing-in on March 4, 1861. He will be the first to use it since Lincoln.

Barack Obama: 44th President of the United States

Inaugural history and traditions

The Associated Press

The pressure is on for incoming President Barack Obama to say something memorable in his inaugural address. Not just pretty words that melt like gumdrops but something that will be worth making schoolchildren memorize 100 years from now. Obama can be expected to hit upon traditional themes from the canon of inaugural speeches, such as unity, hope, change, continuity, security and God.

This Currier and Ives print is a reproduction of the scene at Old City Hall in New York on April 30, 1789, as George Washington took the oath of office.

Other traditions surrounding the inauguration of a president have had to move with the times. Harry Truman's 1949 inauguration was the first to be televised; Obama's will be podcast to cellphones and mobile devices around the world. George Washington's swearing-in was capped by roaring cannons. Modern tradition calls for a 21-gun salute from howitzers.

President John F. Kennedy and wife Jacqueline walk outside the White House during inauguration ceremonies on Jan. 20, 1961.

Washington rode nearly 300 miles on horseback to his own inauguration in New York City on April 30, 1789, greeted along the way by cheering crowds. Obama may see similar crowds as he makes his journey to Washington by train for his swearing-in, but amid heavy security. With hundreds of rooftop marksmen and thousands of police and guardsmen deployed throughout Washington, inaugural parade participants have been told not to make any sudden moves or turn their heads to look at Obama as they pass his reviewing stand.

But don't look for any foreign leaders in the crowds; they're not invited. "Invitations are only for the chiefs of diplomatic missions and their spouses," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice wrote in a diplomatic note sent to the embassies. "As in the past, foreign delegations will not be invited to Washington for this occasion," it said.

President Abraham Lincoln stands under cover at the center of the Capitol steps during his inauguration in Washington, D.C., on March 4, 1861. The scaffolding at upper right was used in the construction of the Capitol dome.

The weather forecast for Washington, D.C., on Tuesday looks good, but other presidents weren't so lucky. On Inauguration Day in 1937, 1.77 inches of sleet and freezing rain fell. President Franklin D. Roosevelt rode back to the White House in an open car, which accumulated a half-inch of water on the floor by the time he arrived to watch the parade slog by.

An 8-inch snowfall on the eve of John F. Kennedy's 1961 inauguration left hundreds of cars marooned and thousands more abandoned. An army of men worked all night to clear Pennsylvania Avenue, using flame-throwers.

Ronald Reagan had the coldest inauguration in 1985 when the noon temperature was 7 degrees and the wind chill was minus 20 degrees. The ceremony was moved indoors.

The worst outcome, of course, was in 1841, when William Henry Harrison's swearing-in on a cloudy, blustery day turned tragic. Harrison spoke for more than an hour and rode a horse to and from the Capitol without a hat or overcoat. He caught a chill, which turned into pneumonia, and died one month later.

On March 4, 1933, President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt rides to his inauguration with outgoing President Herbert Hoover.

Associated Press writers Jennifer Farrar, Randolph E. Schmid, Calvin Woodward, Matt Ford and Matthew Lee contributed to this article.

Go for the glitz at inaugural balls

By Laurie Kellman
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — So you're attending an inaugural ball saluting the historic election of Barack Obama in the worst economic climate in three generations. Can you get away with glitzing it up and still be appropriate, not to mention comfortable and financially viable?

Oscar de la Renta design

To quote the man of the hour: Yes, you can. Veteran ball-goers say you should. And fashionistas insist that you must.

"This is a time to celebrate. This is a great moment. Do not dress down," said Tim Gunn, a native Washingtonian and Chief Creative Officer at Liz Claiborne Inc.

"Just because the economy is in a downturn, it doesn't mean that style is going to be in a downturn," agreed Ken Downing, fashion director for Neiman Marcus.

And if anyone does raise an eyebrow at those sequins, remind them that optimism is good for times like these. "Just say you're doing it to help the economy," chuckled good manners guru Letitia Baldridge.

Stylists say to pick a Washington fashion role model and find those looks at retail or consignment stores within your budget. Think Michelle Obama and her sleek silhouettes in rich hues, or House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and her understated, never dowdy, style.

Dress Registry.com President Andrew Jones lets women know they can avoid a social catastrophe by "registering" their inaugural dresses to limit the chances of two women wearing the same gown to the ball.

To be sure, presidential swearings-in are fancy occasions, and there is great speculation over what ensemble Michelle Obama will choose. Clues to what's appropriate and comfortable can be found in her unfussy wardrobe, said Saks Fifth Avenue Vice President Michael Fink.

"Just keep it simple. It's about the body, it's about clean lines. No more ballgowns," Fink said.

But there's more to consider than aesthetics. Outside of the first family and a few select guests, most ball-goers will spend the night on their feet. Their method of transport: Metro, taxi or bus, plus an extended walk or trot through wintery Washington.

Carolina Herrera gown

Then it's in the door of the party venue, through metal detectors and into a crowd of thousands of one's closest friends.

Ball-goers should plan on carrying their coats rather than wait in a supersized coat-check line. They should anticipate being stepped on and be prepared to cope with a drink spilled upon that special dress.

But for now, say those well-versed in occasion dressing, go for the glitz: Put on that brooch and add some embellishment.

Dress well from the waist up, just in case a camera lens sweeps the crowd and one's college friends are watching.

Wear something sparkly.

And for those wearing garments long and dark: consider shoe-booties or high dress boots underneath. They'll give you the extra height as well as warmth.

Celebrities will light up Washington at inauguration events

Associated Press

Sunday afternoon's inaugural celebration at the Lincoln Memorial will feature some of music's top names, including Beyoncé, U2, Bruce Springsteen, John Mellencamp, Usher, Shakira, Sheryl Crow, Josh Groban and James Taylor. Other performers include Stevie Wonder, Renee Fleming, Garth Brooks, Mary J. Blige, Herbie Hancock, Heather Headley, John Legend and Jennifer Nettles. Historical passages will be read by Jamie Foxx, Martin Luther King III, Queen Latifah and Denzel Washington, with other celebrities expected to join them.

Beyoncé

HBO will televise the show, titled "We Are One: The Obama Inaugural Celebration at the Lincoln Memorial," at 7 p.m. Sunday. HBO will offer the showing free to everyone.

The Jonas Brothers, from left, Nick Jonas, Joe Jonas and Kevin Jonas

Miley Cyrus and the Jonas Brothers are slated to perform at a special concert for children on Monday night at Washington's Verizon Center. The "Kids' Inaugural: We Are the Future" will air Monday night on the Disney Channel. The concert honors thousands of military families. Michelle Obama and Jill Biden will host the event with their families.

The Neighborhood Inaugural Ball, which will allow the Obamas to meet some of their new neighbors in the District of Columbia, will be broadcast live on ABC on Tuesday. It will feature Beyoncé, Jay-Z, Stevie Wonder, Mary J. Blige, Mariah Carey, Faith Hill, Alicia Keys and Shakira.

Miley Cyrus

MTV will be broadcasting from the Youth Inaugural Ball on Tuesday, one of 10 official inaugural balls. The ball is for people ages 18 to 35. Tickets cost $75, half the price of most inaugural ball tickets. MTV said the program will feature top recording artists and will include "footage from service activities around the country on Martin Luther King Day, in addition to showing young people imparting change real-time through major service projects taking place in the United States and in Kenya." ServiceNation, a campaign to get more Americans involved in public service, is co-producing the broadcast, called "Be The Change: Live From The Inaugural."

U2's Bono

Associated Press writers David Bauder and Brett Zongker contributed to this article.

Photos by the Associated Press