



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Alexandria's favorite son takes the oath of office

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Image: Friendship Fire Company in front of Christ Church, 1889. Photo, Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial of Historic Alexandria, Va., Past and Present, by Alex J. Wedderburn, Courtesy, Office of Historic Alexandria.

On the morning of April 30, 1789, a small crowd gathered around the New York residence of George Washington in advance of his first inauguration. At noon, Washington emerged and the entourage accompanied him on his way to Federal Hall, then the U.S. Capitol and now the site of the New York Stock Exchange, where he met with members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate in the cramped Senate chambers.

Soon Vice President John Adams, who had already been sworn in, called for the inauguration to begin, and Washington proceeded to the second floor balcony overlooking Wall Street where he took the oath of office in front of cheering throngs of well-wishers.

After a short address in the Senate Chambers, the dignitaries proceeded to nearby St. Paul's Chapel, for a divine service officiated by the Right Rev. Samuel Provoost. This same structure would be used 212 years later as a place of respite and sanctuary for workers involved with the months-long search for remains at the collapse of the World Trade Center after the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, directly across Broadway at Church Street.

In 1798, the inaugural festivities lasted only one day, although a ball in the new president's honor was held one week later.

One hundred years after Washington's simple inauguration, major American cities celebrated the event with fanfare and fireworks. Events in New York were presented on a grand scale, with three days of activities including parades, historical displays and social gatherings.

The celebration began with then-President Benjamin Harrison reenacting the last stages of Washington's travel from Virginia, crossing the Hudson River from New Jersey by boat and arriving in Manhattan at the foot of Wall Street.

After proceeding to another religious service at St. Paul's, the new Commander-in-Chief moved on to the site of Federal Hall where the first oath was replicated and official festivities began.

This April 1889 image, taken on Columbus Street in front of Christ Church, shows the men of the Friendship Fire Company with their 1851 Rogers Suction Engine preparing to leave Alexandria to





**Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia**

participate in one of the New York centennial parades to honor the inauguration. Dressed in their best uniforms and helmets, the firemen displayed the best of Alexandria in honor of the city's favorite son.

"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.