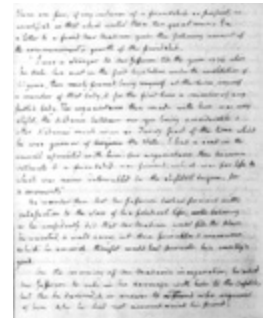


Featured Letter: A Presidential Transition

([https://monticello-www.s3.amazonaws.com/files/old/inline-pdfs/](https://monticello-www.s3.amazonaws.com/files/old/inline-pdfs/MBSMadisonInauguration4Mar09.pdf)

[MBSMadisonInauguration4Mar09.pdf](#)) Thomas Jefferson's second and last presidential term expired on 4 March 1809. On that date he attended the inauguration of his good friend and successor, James Madison, and he was also present that evening at the inaugural ball at Long's Hotel. Jefferson remained in Washington for another week arranging for the shipment of his possessions to Monticello and settling his private affairs, which necessitated negotiation of a bank loan guaranteed by John Barnes and President Madison. In the passage below Jefferson's friend Margaret Bayard Smith describes his avoidance of pomp at the inauguration, attests to his friendly relations with his Washington connections, and remarks on his pleasure and relief in attending his first social function since resuming his status as a private citizen.



Margaret Bayard Smith's Account of Madison's Inauguration and Ball

[4 Mar. 1809]

On the morning of Mr Madison's inauguration, he asked Mr Jefferson to ride in his carriage with him to the Capitol, but this he declined, & in answer to one ¹ who enquired of him why he had not accompanied his friend—he smiled & replied, “I wished not to divide with him the honors of the day—it pleased me better to see them all bestowed on him.” A large procession of citizens, some in carriages, on horse back, & a still larger on foot, followed Mr Madison along Pennsylvania avenue to the Capitol—Among those on horse-back was Mr Jefferson, unattended by even a servant, undistinguished in any way ² from his fellow citizens—Arrived at the Capitol he dismounted & “Oh! ³ shocking,” as many, even democrats, as well as the british minister M. Foster, ⁴ might have exclaimed, he hitched his own horse to a post,

& followed the multitude into the Hall of Representatives. Here a seat had been prepared for him near that of the new President—this he declined—& when urged by the Committee of arrangement, he replied, “this day I return to the people & my proper seat is among them.” Surely this was carrying democracy⁵ too far, but it was not done, as his opponents said, from a mere desire of popularity; he must have known human nature too well, not to know that the People delight to honor, & to see honored their chosen favorite; besides what more popularity could he now desire—his cup was already running over & could have held no more.—No, he wished by his example as well as his often expressed opinions, to establish the principle of political equality.⁶

After the ceremony of Inauguration, Mr Madison followed by the same crowd returned home⁷ to his private house, Where he & Mrs Madison recieved the visits of the foreign ministers & their fellow citizens.

It was the design, as generally understood, after paying their respects to the new President, that citizens⁸ should go to the President’s House & pay a farewell visit to Mr Jefferson; but to the surprise of every one, he himself, was among the visitors at Mr Madison’s. A lady who was on terms of intimacy with the ex-President & could therefore take that liberty, after telling him that the present company & citizens generally, desired to improve this last opportunity of evincing their respect by waiting on him, added her hopes that he would yet be at home in time to⁹ recieve them.¹⁰ “This day should be exclusively my friend’s,” replied he, “& I am too happy in being here, to remain at home.” “But indeed Sir you must recieve us, you would not let all these ladies—all your friends find an empty house, for at any rate we are determined to go, & to express¹¹ even on this glad occasion, the regret we feel on losing you.”

His countenance discovered some¹² emotion—he made no reply, but bowed expressively. The lady had no positive information to give those who had requested her to enquire whether Mr Jefferson would recieve company, but watching his motions, found that after a little while he had silently slipped through the crowd & left the room. This she communicated to the company, who with one accord determined to follow him to the President’s house—It was evident that he had not expected this attention from his friends & fellow citizens, as his whole house-hold had gone forth to witness the ceremonies of the day—He was alone—But not therefore the less happy, for not one of the eager crowd that followed Mr Madison, was as

anxious as himself, to shew every possible mark of respect to the new President.

How mournful was this last interview!—Every one present seemed to feel it so, & as each in turn shook hands with him, their countenances expressed more forcibly than their words the regret they felt on losing one who had been the uniform friend of the city, & of the citizens, with whom [he] ¹³ had lived on terms of hospitality & kindness—

In the evening there was an Inauguration Ball. Mr Jefferson was among the first that entered the Ballroom; he came before the President's arrival—"Am I too early?" said he to a friend—"You must tell me how to behave for it is more than forty years since I have been to a ball."

In the course of the evening, some one remarked to him, "you look so happy & satisfied Mr Jefferson, & Mr Madison looks so serious not to say, sad, that a spectator might imagine that you were the one coming in, & he the one going out of office."

"There's good reason for my happy & his serious looks," replied Mr Jefferson, "I have got the burthen off my shoulders, while he has now got it on his."

MS (DLC: Margaret Bayard Smith Papers, Commonplace Books); entirely in Smith's hand; undated, excerpted from an essay entitled "The President's House Forty years ago" filed in book dated 1826–31, but evidently composed about 1841. Printed in Smith, *Forty Years*, 410–2.

Margaret Bayard Smith (1778–1844), a shrewdly observant leader of Washington society, was also an accomplished novelist and essayist. Born in rural Pennsylvania, she was educated at a Moravian boarding school in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and read widely in the classics, sciences, and literature while living with a married sister in New Brunswick, New Jersey. In 1800 Smith married her second cousin Samuel Harrison Smith and resided thereafter in Washington and at a farm retreat called Sidney. Her publications included *The Diversions of Sidney* (Washington, 1805); *A Winter in Washington: or, Memoirs of the Seymour Family*, 3 vols. (New York, 1824); *What is Gentility?: A Moral Tale* (Washington, 1828); a short biography of Dolley Madison; and numerous articles for periodicals. Smith also supported such civic causes as the Washington Female Orphan Asylum (ANB; DAB; Smith, *Forty Years*; James G. Wilson, "Col. John Bayard and the Bayard Family of America," *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 16

[1885]: 49–72).

About the time Smith composed this memoir, Augustus John Foster, secretary to the British legation, 1804–08, and chargé d'affaires, 1811–12, angered her with the publication of his notes on the United States, in which he criticized TJ's democratic lifestyle as insincere posturing (DNB; *Quarterly Review* 68 [1841]: 12–32). TJ reportedly arrived about noon at the hall of representatives, which was filled to “overflowing” several hours earlier. The inauguration ball, held at Long's Hotel, was attended by more than four hundred people and described as “the most brilliant and crowded ever known in Washington” (Washington *National Intelligencer*, 6 Mar. 1809).

Smith published an account of the same events in a novel, stating that TJ “stole unperceived away” from the ball, at which he “did not stay above two hours, and no one had ever before seen him in such high spirits; his countenance beamed with a benevolent joy. Certainly father never loved son more than he loves Mr. M——n; and it was observed, that every demonstration of regard or respect shewn to him, gave him more evident satisfaction than those paid to himself” (Smith, *Winter in Washington*, 3:281–7).

¹Word interlined in place of “a friend.”

²Preceding three words interlined.

³Smith here canceled “barbar.”

⁴Preceding two words interlined.

⁵Reworked from “democratic equality.”

⁶Reworked from “of equality in that high office.”

⁷Word interlined and next two words, mistakenly canceled but present in Smith, *Forty Years*, here restored.

⁸Word interlined in place of “every one.”

⁹Reworked from “would be at home to.”

¹⁰Smith here canceled “& expressed her surprise at seeing him [‘]I am here too happy, in paying my respects to my friend,’ replied he, ‘to lose this opportunity of joining with my fellow citizens in their demonstration.”

¹¹Word interlined in place of “shew that.”

¹²Preceding two words interlined in place of “expressed.”

¹³Omitted word editorially supplied. Smith, *Forty Years*: “they.”

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