

Inauguration of Jefferson Davis



On Monday, February 18th 1861, Jefferson Davis took the oath of office to become the Provisional President of the Confederate States of America. The notice of the inauguration had been announced on Saturday the 16th. The streets were packed with not only the citizens of Montgomery but of people from neighboring states. The crowd was estimated as at least 10,000 people. The crowd was enthusiastic as this day and event arrived. The following is an excerpt from the *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, published on February 20th 1861.

“The procession formed on Montgomery Street, where Gen. Davis took his seat in a magnificent carriage of Col. Tennant Lomax, drawn by six beautiful greys.

On the same seat in the carriage sat Vice President Stephens, and opposite them were Capt. George Jones of Ala., and Rev. Basil Manley, of this city. Then followed successively in carriages, the Congressional, State and City Committees. The citizens on foot and the military escort formed no inconsiderable portion of the procession. The military escort consisted of the “Columbus Guards,” Lieut. Ellis, the “Independent Rifles,” Capt. Farris, the “Eufaula Rifles,” Capt. Baker, and the “German Fusiliers,” Capt. Scheussler, all under Capt. Semmes, of the “Columbus Guards,” commanding the Battalion.”

“As the procession moved up Market Street, amid the roar of cannon, the inspiring, strains of martial music, and the cheers of the multitudes, the scene was grand beyond description. We must not neglect to mention that Col. H.P. Watson, of Montgomery, acted as Chief Marshall, by Congressional appointment. He was assisted by Wm. Knox, Jr., of Ala.; Hamilton Wright, of Florida; Daniel S. Printup, of Georgia; Robert C. Wood, Jr., of Louisiana; Joseph P. Billups, of Mississippi; H.D. Capers, of South Carolina; Phelix H. Roberts, of Texas. The Marshalls and assistants performed their duty well.”

“The vast crowd had soon filled the doors, windows and portico of the Capitol, and spread over the ground in front, when the inauguration ceremony began as arranged on the front steps. The President occupied a seat on the portico, with the Vice President seated at his right, and Hon. Howell Cobb on his left, Gov. Moore occupied a seat on the platform immediately below; where were also seated the members of Congress, facing the Presidents stand. The ceremony was opened with an impressive prayer from the venerable Rev. Dr. Manly. The Hon. Howell Cobb, President of the Congress, administered the oath of office, and the President delivered his Inaugural Address, in a calm and forcible manner - the immense concourse now and then manifesting their approbation by vociferous applause, as he would strike the key - notes of Southern independence.”

“The ladies wreathed him with flowers, and ten thousand hearts beat high with joy, admiration and hope for the administration of the new President. No man, not even Gen. Washington, was ever called to preside over a people with more general acclamation and confidence than Gen. Davis. His past services and spotless private and public character are the surest guarantees that he will not disappoint the just expectations of the country.”