

# America's Archives

Stories of our country's historic documents—and how things that may have once seemed rather ordinary can turn out to be national treasures. Sometimes such documents are first found in private hands—perhaps in an attic or old album. On other occasions, they immediately become artifacts of history the minute they were created.

## Presidential Inaugurations Often Become Great Moments in History

In the middle of the 20th century, four consecutive presidents took office at critical periods in American history. On each occasion, the American people seemed to pause and contemplate what kind of country we might have after "this particular new president" was inaugurated. The material shown on this page is retained in the U.S. National Archives.



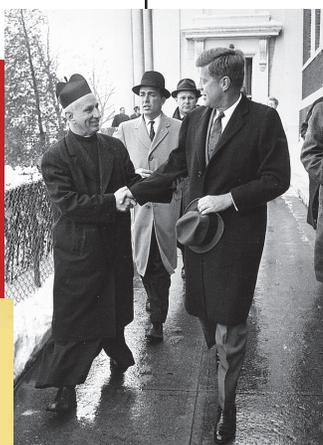
President Herbert Hoover joins his successor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, for the ride to the capitol on March 4, 1933. America was in the heart of the Great Depression and Hoover was known to have hated FDR for remarks the latter made in blaming him for the country's plight.



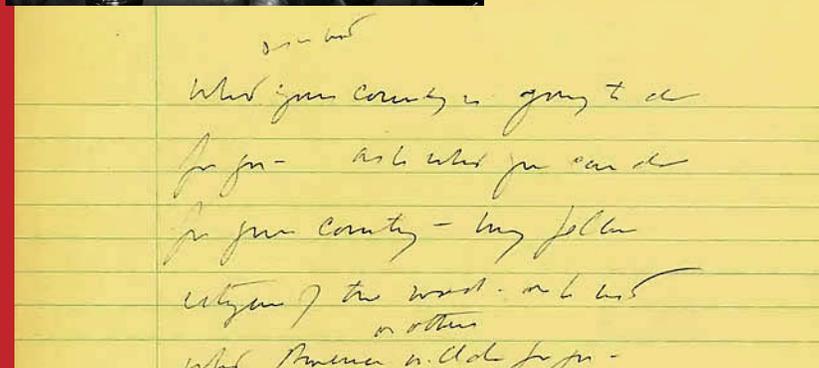
In the middle of the Korean Conflict, World War II hero Dwight D. Eisenhower succeeds President Truman after promising that, if elected, he "...will travel to Korea myself to end this war." And that was pretty much the way it turned out.



President Harry S. Truman is sworn in hours after the death of FDR on April 12, 1945. Millions didn't think he was up to the job during World War II, but he was to dramatically prove them wrong.



President-elect John F. Kennedy shakes hands with Father Richard J. Casey, the Pastor, after attending Mass at Holy Trinity Church ... prior to inauguration ceremonies, January 20, 1961.



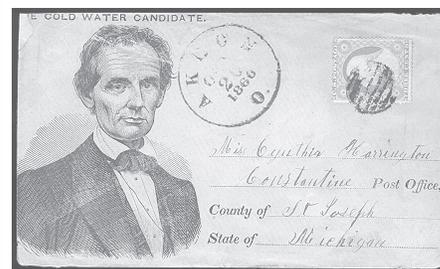
Draft of inaugural address, in Kennedy's hand, on yellow foolscap paper, ca. January 20, 1961. Material from John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library and Museum, Boston, Massachusetts. Over the years (and quite similar to the situation surrounding Lincoln's drafts of his Gettysburg Address), some historians questioned whether JFK did, in fact, compose his famous inaugural address. This handwritten draft is of major importance in disproving this contention.

## Fred Schmitt's PERSPECTIVE

(Continued...)

But Douglas's picture on the old cover kept staring out at its modern-day owners and, finally, a young boy in the family took it to school and showed it to his 5th grade teacher. That's when it was discovered to be a political campaign cover sent in late October 1860—the year that Illinois Senator Douglas ran against his old political rival, Abraham Lincoln, for the presidency.

This old relic, of course, is a piece of American history, both important and highly prized. When the desk drawer was further searched, some additional 1860s covers turned up and the owners found themselves in possession of more than \$10,000 in postal history.



From the same election year—and even more important—is this unusual "beardless" Lincoln cover from the railsplitter's own 1860 campaign. Since it shows Lincoln without his famous facial growth, it is considered one of the rarest of political postal history artifacts. The Lesson: never throw our any kind of political artifact.