

William A. Duer, Description of the Inauguration

The next morning, a procession was formed at an early hour, consisting, besides the different bodies which formed the escort of the day before, of the ministers and other representatives from foreign courts, and the Judiciary of the States in their carriages. After assembling in front of the President's house, it proceeded through Queen (now Pearl) and Wall streets to the "Federal Hall," at the head of Broad street, upon the upper portico of which the oath of office was administered to the President elect, in the presence of both houses of Congress, by Robert R. Livingston, Chancellor of the State. The words of the oath were audibly, distinctly repeated by Washington after the Chancellor, in a solemn and impressive manner, and after he had reverently kissed the book, the Chancellor advanced to the balcony of the portico—and in a loud voice proclaimed to the assembled multitude "Long live George Washington—President of the United States." Till then a silence had been preserved by this immense assemblage in unison with the solemnity of the occasion; but now there burst forth, as if from one voice, such thundering peals, as seemed to shake the foundations of the city; and long and loud were they repeated, as if their echoes never were to cease. The effect, it may well be imagined, was sublime, when it is recollected that the neighboring streets presented to the view dense crowds of people, as far as the eye could reach. It was some hours after the ceremony before the crowd dispersed. Many remained to catch a view of the President as he returned to his carriage after delivering his first speech to Congress,¹ and the few who succeeded, appeared to be wedged in so as to prevent their retiring for some time afterwards, and were only enabled at last to effect their retreat by the departure of those in the rear, who, when they saw the President's carriage drive off, sought to way-lay it, or to reach his house first, and thus secure a sight of him. Of all these circumstances, and especially of the inauguration, I was an eye-witness from an upper window of a house which commanded a view of the interior of the portico, and which stood on the present site of the Mechanics Bank, and they were so indelibly impressed upon my memory, that young as I was then, and old as I am now, they appear before me as distinctly as the events of yesterday.

William A. Duer, *Reminiscences of an Old New Yorker* (New York, W. L. Andrews, 1867), pp. 68-70. This is one of several firsthand accounts of the Inauguration; for others, see PGV

2:155-56 and *New York*, pp. 231-35. Duer (1780-1858), who witnessed the inauguration as a child, was the son of William Duer.

¹ For Washington's inaugural address, see *DHFFC* 1:30-33.

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington

I received your letter of the 23d. of April on the 25th. and am much obliged to you for the information you gave me respecting the non-ratifying States, and for that which I received from the news papers you were so kind as to inclose to me.

This intelligence will be published in the next *Newport Herald*,¹ and pains will be taken to cause it to be properly felt. The duty upon lime, and cheese and barley, and the tonnage upon shipping; especially the former I imagin will have considerable effect upon the Antifeds. in this State, and I hope will induce the Genl. Assembly, which will sit on the first Wednesday in May, to call a Convention.

Was it intended that the duty upon Bohea tea &c. imported from other countries than India and China in vessels the property of citizens of the United [States] should pay 8 cents &c.? If it was, some persons have mistaken the intention of the Committee from I should think an improper mode of expression. It is my opinion that Bohea tea &c. from other countries than India and China in vessels the property of citizens of the U.S. are to pay the duty of 8 cents. Why is there a difference in the description of vessels? of the U.S. In the case of teas imported from China or India [*illegible import*] in ships *built in the U.S.* In the case of teas imported from any other country &c.—which *are not the property* &c. The duty upon molasses is thought to be too high. The Execution of the ordinances which may be passed by Congress, relative to the Impost, will, it appears to me, render it necessary that the Custom-house officers for the several States in the Union should be appointed by the Federal government. The business of Collectors of customs, or *Intend[ant]s*. of trade, and that of Collectors of the Impost must be much, if not altogether, the same. Federal Officers, and State Officers appointed for similar services would probably interfere, and embarrass trade; and besides as the regulation of it, by the present Constitution, is intirely with Congress it would, I think, be improper that the States in the Union should constitute officers for commercial purposes. These thoughts occurred to me upon reading the resolutions of the Committee of the whole, with regard to the Impost. What arrangements Congress will make I don't know; but as the business of the Federal Government is in good hands, and will pass through several digestions, I don't doubt but that all their acts will come forth like