



Embassy of the United States of America  
Lisbon, Portugal



# Atlantic Notes

"From our shores to yours"

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## Editorial



"Freedom is never given, it is won," Civil Rights activist Phillip Randolph once said. Indeed, what a long trail from 1619, when the first African slaves arrived in Virginia, to last month's inauguration ceremony of President Barack Obama!

The America of Dr. Carter Woodson (see below), that once wrote History without any

mention of black citizens, has given way to 769,000 Google mentions when you search the expression "famous Afro-Americans." In part, due to men like Carter Woodson, who "invented" February as Black History Month or Abraham Lincoln, whose bicentennial we celebrate this year. In that context, we invite you to visit the bicentennial's website at <http://abrahamlincoln200.org> for this year's program and a re-discovery of the former U.S. President.

But February is also time for Valentine, another

American tradition. In this edition, we bring you a brief peek at the state, whose motto is "Virginia is for Lovers," should you be in the mood for a visit.

Finally we look at transition in between presidencies and share with you trivia on the Inaugural Luncheon.

After all, life lies in the details. ❖

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## Black History Month

In the U.S., February is known as Black History Month because it marks the birthdays of two men who greatly influenced the black American population, Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. Americans have recognized black history annually since 1926, first as "Negro History Week" and later as "Black History Month."

The man who was pivotal to both the study of black history and this month's celebration was Dr. Carter G.

Woodson. Born to parents who were former slaves, he found in his studies that history books largely ignored the black American population. Woodson then decided to take on the challenge of writing black Americans into the nation's history.

He established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915, and a year later founded the widely respected Journal of Negro History. In 1926, he launched Negro History Week as

an initiative to bring national attention to the contributions of black people throughout American history.

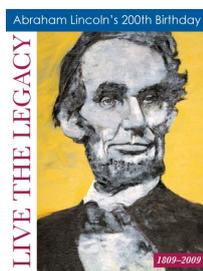
Historically, it was also in February that the 15th Amendment was passed granting blacks the right to vote; first black U.S. senator Hiram Revels took oath; a group of black Greensboro college students began a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter; and activist Malcolm X was shot dead. ❖

### PHOTOGRAPH OF NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT FROM THE 1780s.





THIS YEAR, AMERICA  
CELEBRATES THE 200TH  
ANNIVERSARY OF  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S  
BIRTH.



"I was born Feb. 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. My parents were both born in Virginia, of undistinguished families—second families, perhaps I should say. My mother, who died in my tenth year, was of a family of the name of Hanks... My father ... removed from Kentucky to ... Indiana, in my eighth year.... It was a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods. There I grew up.... Of course when I came of age I did not know much. Still somehow, I

could read, write, and cipher ... but that was all." Abraham Lincoln's life has several of the marks that tell the America story — frontierland memories, the rise from poverty to power, the focus on righteousness, protection of the nation's interests, freedom and public service.

Indeed, a common man forged in uncommon times, Lincoln is the model American leader who has inspired many and continues to serve as a guide to this very new

Administration. On Good Friday, April 14, 1865, lawyer, politician, congressman and president Honest Abe - as he was fondly nicknamed - was assassinated at age 56 by actor John Wilkes Booth, during a theatrical play at Ford's Theater in Washington. Booth thought he was helping the South. The opposite was the result, for with Lincoln's death, the possibility of peace with magnanimity died.

Yet his legacy lingers on.



## ***STATE of mind: VIRGINIA***

Can a single state produce eight Heads of State? Yes, it can! Virginia has the amazing record of having generated U.S. Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, William H. Harrison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor and Woodrow Wilson; as well as various personalities such as actors Warren Beatty and Shirley MacLaine, Jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald, dancer Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson, or Army Surgeon Walter Reed.

Also known as the Old Dominion, the Commonwealth of Virginia is located on the Atlantic Coast of the Southern United States. Its history dates back to the 1607 Virginia Colony, the first permanent New World English colony, its name being traced to Queen Elizabeth I, who was known as the "Virgin Queen" because she never married. At the dawn of its existence, slavery was an important element of this state's economy and politics, and tobacco and cotton plantations were part of the scenery where many Africans, worked day and night. Virginia became one of the 13 colonies in the American Revolution and subsequently joined the Confederacy in the American Civil War.

While recognizing its history, Virginia is now a modern state of superior income, elected by Forbes in 2006 as the nation's best state to do business. It hosts 17 of Forbes 500 largest companies, as well as the headquarters of various federal agencies such as the Pentagon, CIA, or the National Science Foundation. American colonial architecture, historical reenactments, a generous offer of fine and performing arts and stunning national parks will make your visit more than worthwhile. ❖

IT WAS IN  
VIRGINIA THAT  
CAPTAIN JOHN  
SMITH FELL IN  
LOVE WITH  
INDIAN  
POCAHONTAS



For more information, visit [www.virginia.gov](http://www.virginia.gov)



## *Transitioning between Presidents*

American politics abides by plenty of rules. Presidential elections take place every fourth year on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November, the winner taking office, as it is written in the Constitution, “at noon on the 20th day of January.” A uniquely American phenomenon, this gap between election and inauguration goes back to the country’s beginning in the 18th century, when rutted roads made it difficult to quickly assemble a new government.

The first order of transition business is for the president-elect to pick his White House (WH) staff and cabinet. He can fill some 8,000-10,000 positions out of an entire federal government workforce of almost 3 million people, both civilian and military workers. The president-elect casts his net as widely as he wishes, usually including state governors, business and labor officials, academics and members of Congress. The cabinet consists of 15 departments, each headed by a secretary whose appointment must be confirmed by a majority vote of the U.S. Senate before assuming office. The process is slow and can take long months, wiggling between selection and background investigations up to confirmation.

Presidents now make an effort to pick a cabinet that “looks like America” -- a notable change from even

the recent past. Except for one woman in the Eisenhower cabinet, initially cabinets were all composed of white males. It was not until Bill Clinton that only half of his department secretaries were of white European origin. And origin being so important in America, this is where hyphenated words kick in. In the last cabinet were African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and a Lebanese-American.

Before the new team moves in however, transition means massive emptying of the WH people, papers, and electronic records! There is one rule to abide by: “you come in with nothing, you leave with nothing.” According to the 1978 Presidential Records Act, ownership of files belongs to the White House. With the exception of certain “political” records, neither the president nor the staff has a claim to them, whether originals or copies.

After noon of January 20<sup>th</sup>, newcomers are greeted with a smile and offered support by resident WH staff, those who “serve the office and not the man”. Even so, during their first month or so at the world’s most famous house, new incumbents will be overwhelmed with tsunami waves of paperwork, emails and even gifts from the public. Americans have used their creativity to communicate with their presidents -- cans, pieces of wood, zucchinis, and coconuts exemplify the variety of

choices.

The president-elect will be making major process decisions, too. Who reports directly to him, and who reports through his chief of staff? How much tension or conflict does he wish to incorporate into policy-formulating? What new functions or offices does he wish to put in, and what offices might he wish to eliminate? Every president has some special cause that he wants to promote. Richard Nixon’s was Volunteerism; Clinton chose Women’s Initiatives; and George W. Bush added an Office of Faith-Based and Community Outreach Initiatives.

And not all decisions during the transition are momentous. There have been four presidential desks. Which one does he want? Most presidents have hung portraits of past presidents in the Oval Office. To whom should he give the place of honor? And when he takes the oath of office and places his hand on the Bible, opened to a favorite passage, which passage shall it be?

Fortunately, once set in motion, the transition process will follow a fairly well-worn path. As one departee winks to a newcomer and provocatively says “Please take care of the place ... we’ll be back in four years”, one cycle ends, another begins.



IN THE TRANSITION  
PROCESS,  
DEPARTEES AND  
NEWCOMERS ABIDE  
BY ONE MANDATORY  
RULE: “YOU COME IN  
WITH NOTHING, YOU  
LEAVE WITH NOTHING”  
ALL ORIGINALS AND  
COPIES BELONG TO  
THE GOVERNMENT.

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## WE ARE ON THE WEB!

Please visit us

<http://portugal.usembassy.gov>

## Coming up

☞ **Feb. 13** - INETE students visit the embassy for presentation on the "Post-Bush Era"

☞ **Feb 16** - Washington's Birthday federal holiday

☞ **Feb. 19** - Ambassador Thomas Stephenson talks about U.S. National Security Policy at Instituto de Estudos Superiores Militares

☞ **Feb. 22-26** Embassy visit to Madeira

☞ **Feb. 26/28** - "Graphics of the Americas 2009", Miami Beach Convention Center, FL

## @ a Glance: Inaugural Luncheon

A party is party, some will tell you, but you can look at each party from multiple angles. For President Obama and the First Lady, the inauguration was about a lifetime fulfillment; their daughters probably focused on remembering a lot of rules in order to behave impeccably — as they did. For protocol and security, it was the culmination of months of preparation. This text is clearly for the ladies, who look at ceremonies and often wonder "How were they dressed? What did they eat? How did it look?"

After the president takes the oath of office and delivers his Inaugural Address, and following the departure ceremony for the outgoing Presi-

dent, he will be escorted to Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol for the traditional Inaugural Luncheon.



This year's luncheon was served on replicas of the china from the Lincoln Presidency and the menu featured Seafood Stew for first course, a brace of American Birds with Sour Cherry Chutney and Molasses Sweet Potatoes, topped by dessert: Apple Cinnamon Sponge Cake with Sweet Cream Glacé.

Floral arrangements featured roses, hydrangeas and delphinium in a footed brass compote.

During the Inaugural Luncheon it is traditional for the President and Vice President to be presented with gifts by the Congress on behalf of the American people. The President and Vice President were each presented with a framed official photograph taken of their swearing-in ceremony by a Senate photographer, as well as flags flown over the U.S. Capitol during the inaugural ceremonies. The President and Vice President also received one-of-a-kind engraved crystal bowls.



AFTER THE LUNCHEON, THE FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS WERE GIVEN TO THE WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER.