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Last week [1971], Idahoans saw the ceremonial beginning of a new administration in the statehouse. Almost ever since statehood--certainly for more than half a century--the inaugural festivities have been divided into two main parts: the swearing-in ceremony, and a grand reception or inaugural ball or both in the evening of inauguration day.

The inaugural ball is the more colorful event, at least judging by newspaper coverage! The first six such affairs, beginning in 1905, were held at the Natatorium. An interesting photograph in the Idaho Historical Society collection shows that multipurpose building as it was decorated for the inaugural ball of Governor James H. Brady in 1909. The newspaper described this affair as "a long step forward of former like events; a striking social advance in exact keeping with the marvelous material advancement of the people of Idaho." The gold and white colors of the state seal were used with red, white, and blue bunting and American flags in the decorations. Governor Brady was unmarried at this time; his partner in the grand march was Mrs. Frank Gooding, wife of Brady's immediate predecessor, whose ball gown--and those of several other ladies--evoked detailed comments by the reporter. Even the orchestra's playing was described, it being "characterized by a vim and dash never equalled here before."

The first inaugural ball not held in the Natatorium was that of Governor John M. Haines in 1913. A photograph of Mrs. Haines, attired in the elegant ball gown and hair ornament she wore to that festivity, is also in the Idaho State Historical Society files. This ball was held in the new capitol, and the grand march "wound up and over the spacious staircases . . . like a many-colored serpent of varied hues."

Dancing took place in the balcony areas of all three upper floors, while a buffet supper was served on the second and third floors as well (which may have been a bit crowded, since the wings of the Statehouse had not yet been built). Mrs. Haines's gown was of "white net embroidered in mauve and cerise chenille roses, with rhinestone centers over a fourreau of yellow satin." The Statehouse was equally decorative, as can be seen in another photograph, with lights strung up and down the columns and dome.

From the year of Haines's ball until C. A. Robins' inaugural in 1947, the dances were held either in the Statehouse or in the Elks' Temple. Robins' was at the Boise High School gym, a site used also in 1955 for one of Governor Robert Smylie's (the other, on the same evening, being held in the Elks' Temple) and this year for one of Governor Andrus'. Since Smylie's second inaugural in 1959, the Boise State College gym has always been used.

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