



*The 2013 Cambridge Christmas
Formal Hall in Washington DC*



SIXTH OF DECEMBER

TWO THOUSAND AND THIRTEEN

AT THE COSMOS CLUB

REMARKS BY: HÅVARD HALLAND (WOLFSON)

Good evening.

We have been promoting this event as likely to become the best British party in Washington since the Imperial Army burnt the White House down.

On that August 24th 1814, as the White House was evacuated, President Madison is said to have left for the British invading troops a dinner table sumptuously laid for 40 guests, setting from that day a precedent for British fine wining and dining in Washington.

Here is an account from an eyewitness: When the detachment sent out to destroy Mr. Madison's house entered his dining parlor, they found a dinner table spread and covers laid for forty guests. Several kinds of wine, in handsome cut glass decanters, were cooling on the sideboard; plate holders stood by the fireplace, filled with dishes and plates; knives, forks, and spoons were arranged for immediate use; in short, everything was ready for the entertainment of a ceremonious party.

You will readily imagine that these preparations were beheld by a party of hungry soldiers with no indifferent eye. An elegant dinner, even though considerably overdressed, was a luxury to which few of them, had been accustomed, and which, after the dangers and fatigues of the day, appeared peculiarly inviting.

They sat down to it, therefore, not indeed in the most orderly manner, but with countenances, which would not have disgraced a party of aldermen at a civic feast, and, having satisfied their appetites with fewer complaints than would have probably escaped their rival gourmands, and



partaken pretty freely of the wines, they finished by setting fire to the house which had so liberally entertained them.

Given the subsequent weakness of the Crown, it took almost 200 years to follow up on that precedent, so beware that today we are partaking a historical event as the first Cambridge style Formal Hall ever to be held on the shores of the New Continent we are finally following up on the precedent set by President Madison's rather involuntary hospitality.

On a more contemporary note, I would like to thank another President, namely our Cambridge Society President Blair for all he has achieved for the society. This event would not have been possible without him, Nor without the excellent work of previous Society Presidents, Peter Hansen and Ken Foran.

I would hence like to propose a toast to the four Presidents who brought us here today, Madison, Blair, Peter and Ken, and warmly welcome all our distinguished guests.

