

In 1921 the USS *Olympia* was detailed to a special mission: bring home the Unknown Soldier that was to be selected in France in October. Known for the Battle of Manila Bay, and with an impressive combat record as well as presence within the US Navy, the *Olympia* prepared for her mission while docked in Virginia, brining on supplies for the long journey.

The minesweeper USS *Quail* transferred a special detachment of US Marines to the *Olympia* as she was berthed in Hampton Roads, VA. On September 28th the *Olympia* headed for Melville, Rhode Island to refuel with additional coal before transiting the North Atlantic for Plymouth, England. *Olympia* and her Marines would arrive in Plymouth on October 14th to take part in ceremonies where General Pershing presented the British Unknown Warrior the Medal of Honor.

From here the *Olympia* would depart England on October 23rd, and head to Le Havre, France to await the Unknown Soldier who would be selected by Sergeant Edward Younger on October 24th.



To learn more about this story, visit our website and read the article “With the Hand of God” written by former Marine J.R. Neubeiser.

https://tombguard.org/assets/images/products/With-the-Hand-of-God_v4.pdf



On September 27th the flag was hoisted on the USS *Olympia*, marking the 100th anniversary of the start of her journey to bring home the World War I Unknown Soldier. The ceremony started with the lowering of the US Flag already on the fantail of the *Olympia*, and the Society team moving into position. They then removed the flag from the special carrying case and raised it on the flagpole at the fantail of the *Olympia*.

James Livingston (1999-01), Jake Hammond (2019-21), and Pasquale Varallo (1947-48) were the Society’s representatives during this ceremony, with Assistant Quartermaster David Hathaway leading the detail. They were joined by members of the Independence Seaport Museum.

Some thoughts from those present:

“One couldn’t help but feel that the spirit of the Unknown was present. The setting was different from most ceremonies, there were no grand military bands playing or soldiers standing tall, however there was unique silence during the ceremony. At 11:50 hours, one could feel the presence of soldiers from the past standing on deck beside them to honor the occasion. As the flag was raised a slight breeze came from the water to fully extend it in all its glory. It would

make you truly believe it was spirits of those soldiers and sailors of 100 years ago blessing the ceremony and standing tall with us. It was truly a humbling experience.”

- James Livingston (1999-01)



L-R: James Livingston (1999-01), Pasquale Varallo (1947-48), and Jake Hammond (2019-21).

"The image of three generations of Tomb Guards standing on the exact location where the casket of the WWI Unknown was lashed to the deck of the Olympia was an emotional moment for all in attendance. For the Tomb Guards, the feeling of standing on that spot and listening to the museum's historian tell them about the role that the USS Olympia had in the journey from France, must have been overwhelming."

- David Hathaway

"It was extremely humbling to be a part of something so historical and to have a chance to see, essentially, where our mission began was incredible. The USS Olympia is a living piece of history that I think every Tomb Guard should experience."

- Jake Hammond (2019-21)

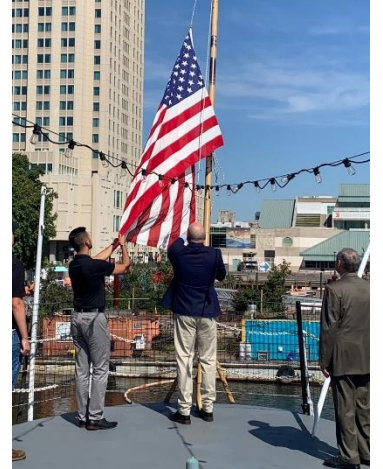
"It was a simple ceremony with just a few attending. The Olympia personnel were gracious and welcoming. They did everything to felicitate our taking part. James and Jake represented the Society as one would expect them to. They did good! Personally, I was proud to have been in attendance. Thank you and the Society for the privilege."

- Pasquale Varallo (1947-48)

"The ceremony on the Olympia was magnificently touching. Watching one of the oldest retired Tomb Guards as well as a current guard both handling the American flag so reverentially was a powerful experience. It linked the century-long story of the Unknown Soldier in a very visible way for everyone. We are very proud to be part of this commemoration and to highlight the role that the cruiser Olympia played in the story."

-Peter S. Seibert, President & CEO, Independence Seaport Museum

The next stop for the Centennial Flag is to travel to France and be flown at each American Battle Monuments Commission cemetery that candidates were selected from in 1921, starting with the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery on October 21st. This will be followed by ceremonies in Chalons-en-Champagne, Le Havre, and Paris.



The difference between the Fire Department Case that was the inspiration for our case. Pictured (L-R): Matthew Wiles, Loudoun County Fire & Rescue; Maria Scherer, Dale City Volunteer Fire Department; Corporal William Jeffs and Specialist Samuel King, Tomb Guard Platoon.