



# Centennial Flag Project

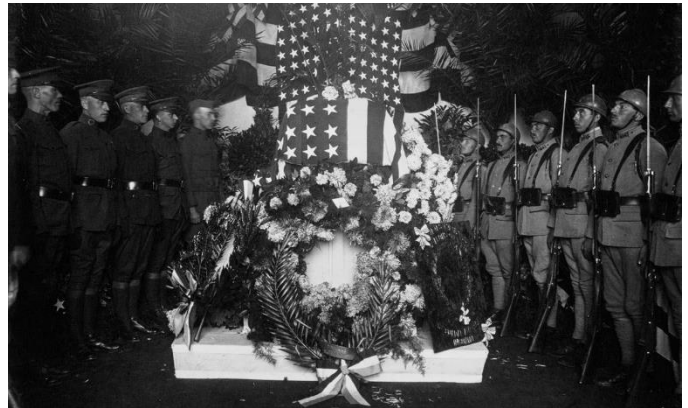
## Stage 8

Leading up to the national commemoration of the Centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier the Society of the Honor Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (SHGTUS) proposed that a special flag be flown at key locations surrounding the World War I Unknown Soldier selection and journey home from France to the United States in 1921. The idea was that this special “Centennial Flag” would be flown at key locations in the history of the World War I Unknown Soldier as part of the historic pilgrimage that was planned for October 2021.

**October 24, 2021** – The flag was last used during the vigil the night before at the Hotel de Ville in Chalons-en-Champagne, France.

On October 24, 1921, the four candidates had been watched over throughout the night by a joint honor guard of French and American Soldiers. Now as the pallbearers formed, the officer in charge pulled Sergeant Edward F. Younger from the detail and informed him that he would be making the final selection for the US Unknown Soldier.

Sergeant Younger was a veteran of World War I and wounded multiple times, having fought in three of the four areas where the unknown candidates fell. Before he would make the selection, he was handed a spray of white French roses and asked to use those to make the final selection. The Frenchman who given Sergeant Younger the flowers had lost two sons in the war, and it was fitting that flowers from France where the Unknown Soldier fell would be used to make the selection.



Sergeant Younger entered the Hotel de Ville, and after a prayer and contemplation of his task selected the third casket from the right as the US Unknown Soldier to represent all who had fallen in the war.

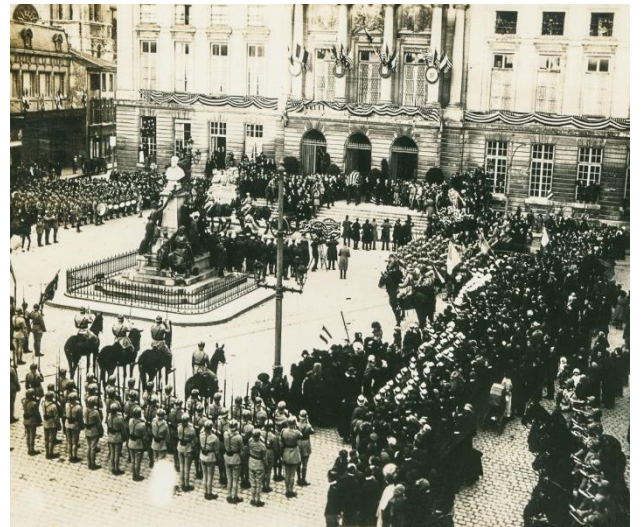
In 2021 the city started the ceremonies promptly at 10:00am and brought French military units into Palace Foch. These units were then joined by US active duty units assigned to the European Command, along with both French and US veterans including the pilgrimage delegation.



Following a meeting with Mayor Benoist Apparu, the dignitaries exited city hall and made their way to pay respects to both nations' colors. Present for the official party were the Consul General of the United States in Strasbourg; Defense Attaché of the US Embassy; Deputy Commanding General for Europe, General Officer of the Eastern Defense and Security Zone, and the Society President. Following the inspection of troops, the dignitaries then moved back to the steps where Mayor Apparu spoke about the importance of this commemoration saying, *"We need to celebrate this for the younger generation, so that they do not forget what happened here."*



At 11:25am the US flag draped casket, carried by Re-enactors from the Les Soldats de Plomb Association arrived where it had remained overnight and was placed on the caisson. 1921 historically correct music (Chopin's *Funeral March*) was played by the French Band, followed by *Journey Home* written by Sara Corey of The United States Army Band (TUSAB).



The troops formed up and led the procession of dignitaries, veterans, and pilgrimage members along the same route that the Unknown Soldier took in 1921 down the Rue de la Marne towards the rail station.

Unlike in 1921 when the Unknown Soldier was transferred to a special trail heading to Paris, the cortege stopped at the War Memorial (Monument aux Mort). Here the official party and dignitaries placed wreaths to honor those who had fallen during the war. Each pilgrimage members were then able to place a single white rose at the memorial in remembrance.



With the official ceremonies at an end the flag team followed the caisson back to the city center where they removed the Centennial flag and returned it to the travel case. The team consisted of former Tomb Guards Lonny LeGrand (1981-83), George March (1063-65), James Livingston (1999-01); and the Society's Assistant Quartermaster and first responder David Hathaway.





*“There are no words to adequately describe this experience. I can’t even talk about it with friends without crying. It was so emotional! As flag bearer, I had a bird’s eye view at the ceremonies. Wow is all I can say. Craig Fallon and I had an over-the-top experience being in the alley before the ceremony at Chalons-en-Champagne. We were asked to move over and as we looked back, we could the dog patrol had assembled. They began their “song” and with the acoustics in that alley, it was overwhelming, beautifully eerie, and something I won’t forget. The view we had from the steps was magnificent. We could see everything. I’m so overwhelmed knowing that we stood and paraded where other Patriots did 100 years ago! A once in a lifetime experience.”*

- Sarah Taylor, American Gold Star Mother

*“Our experiences walking in the path of the WWI Unknown Soldier and traveling the pilgrimage of our founding a Gold Star Moms was a profound experience. I am privileged and blessed to have had these experiences with a group of people who understand service, sacrifice, and love of country as you all do.”*

- Cindy Kruger, American Gold Star Mother

**The next stop** for the Centennial Flag is the city of Le Havre on the afternoon of October 25<sup>th</sup>.



For more information on the selection of the World War I Unknown Soldier visit:

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[www.tombguard.org/tomb-of-the-unknown-soldier/world-war-i](http://www.tombguard.org/tomb-of-the-unknown-soldier/world-war-i)

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