



Centennial Flag Project

Stage 9

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 25, 2021 – The flag was last used during 100th anniversary of the selection of the Unknown Soldier at the Hotel de Ville in Chalons-en-Champagne, France on October 24, 2021.

After the selection by Sergeant Younger on that day 1921, the Unknown Soldier departed Chalons-en-Champagne and was transported to Paris by train, where he remained under constant watch through the night by members of the US Army and American Legion.

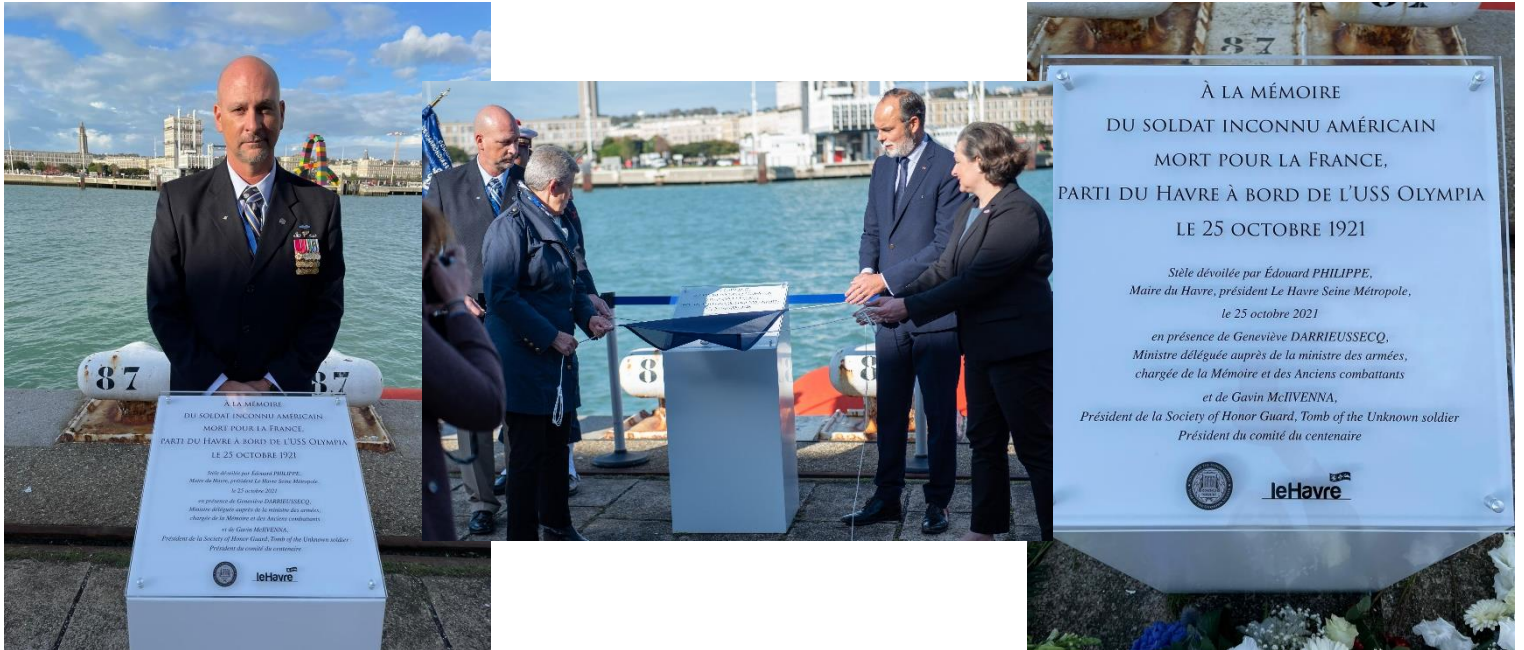
On the morning of the 25th, dignitaries joined the train and began the journey to the port city of Le Havre, where the USS Olympia was waiting to carry the Unknown Soldier home to the United States.

In 2021 the city came out to participate in historical events 100 years ago. The ceremonies started promptly at 3:00pm on the dock where the Unknown Soldier was presented the French Legion of Honor by M. Andre Maginot in 1921.



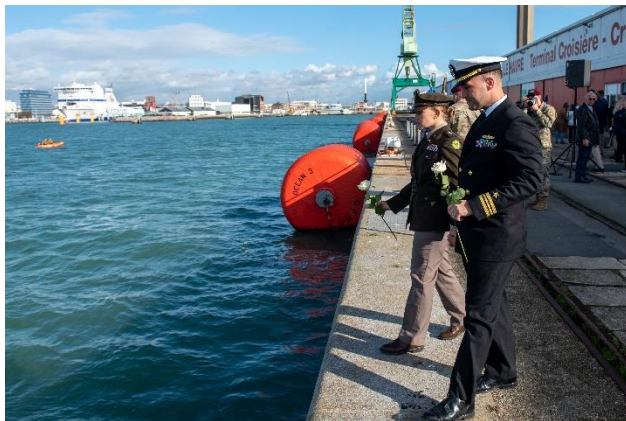
The Society delegation, including American Gold Star Mothers and Daughters of the American Revolution, along with French veterans were present as the official party arrived after meeting Mayor Edouard Philippe.

Wreaths and flowers were presented by the pilgrimage delegation, the city, and assembled dignitaries. The Mayor of Le Havre; Mrs. Geneviève Darrieussecq, the Minister Delegate for Remembrance and Veterans; Ms. Elizabeth Webster, the U.S. Consul for Western France; and the Society President then moved forward to the unveil the historical plaque placed where the Unknown Soldier left France in 1921.



Once the plaque unveiling was completed, the Centennial flag was brought forward by former Tomb Guards Lonny LeGrand (1981-83) and Paul Basso (2000-04, 2015-17); Society Bereavement Director and retired Army Captain Amy McIlvenna; and Society Assistant Quartermaster and first responder David Hathaway. Once in front of the spot where the Unknown Soldier left France for his final voyage home, the flag was unfolded and presented to those in attendance.





After the flag was refolded and returned to its case, members of the came forward to lay special flowers and single white roses. Following a naval tradition of bidding ‘bon voyage’ the single white roses were tossed into the sea.

Speeches by the dignitaries followed with the Society President reminding the audience of what M. Maginot spoke of 100 years ago “M. Maginot, a wounded veteran of the war, spoke about how France “...cannot forget, she will never forget, what you have done for her in the hour of peril.”



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

www.tombguard.org/tomb-of-the-unknown-soldier/world-war-i



“It has been humbling to stand beside you, the people of France, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of these events and remind the world that there is more to the story of the Unknown Soldier than his final resting place in Arlington.”

- Gavin McIlvenna, Society President



The Society President speaks about the bond between France and the US



The Society President presents a special coin to Mayor Edouard Philippe



Mayor of Chalons-en-Champagne Benoist Apparu is presented with the lithograph "A Century of Silence and Respect"



Pilgrimage Tomb Guards stand with the US Consul for Western France



Member of the US Navy pose with the Centennial Flag in Le Havre, France

The next stop for the Centennial Flag is the Navy Yard in Washington DC on November 9th to mark the 100th anniversary of the arrival home of the Unknown Soldier in 1921.