



Harding Home Presidential Site  
380 Mt. Vernon Ave.  
Marion, OH 43302  
hardinghome.org

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# Friends of the HARDING HOME

# NEWS

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## Backstory of ‘unknown soldier’ offers fascinating tale

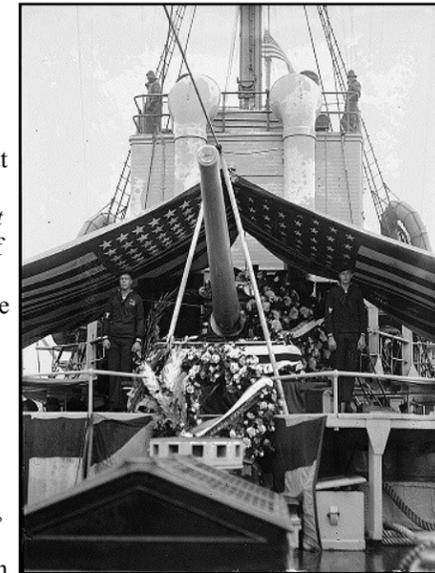
It’s been 100 years since the fighting stopped in the “war to end all wars,” and 97 years since President Warren G. Harding presided over the interment of an unknown soldier in Arlington Cemetery.

In 1921, no one could envision that unknown soldiers from future wars would make their ways there, as well. “There *must* be, there *shall* be, the commanding voice of a conscious civilization against armed warfare,” the president emphatically told the 5,000 spectators in the Memorial Amphitheater.

The body of the unknown soldier, which was indeed unknown in the days before DNA testing became the norm, had traveled 3,910 miles by truck, rail and ship from the tiny village of Chalons-sur-Marne, France to Washington, D.C.

The decision to honor an American unknown was authorized by Congress on Harding’s inauguration day. It followed similar tributes to fallen unknowns by England, France, Italy, Belgium and Portugal.

Four unknown Americans were



*The casket of the unknown soldier was given the highest respect on its trip from France to the United States. The casket was transported on the USS Olympia, shown above. (Library of Congress)*

exhumed from their resting places in France. One came from each of the four

American cemeteries there — and was re-examined to ensure each cause of death was due to a battle wound. Even though “dog tags” had been issued to American soldiers, the bodies chosen had been found without that identification. Final efforts to identify the bodies were exhausted.

On October 24, the four identical wooden caskets were transported to an impromptu chapel banked with American flags and banners in the city hall building in Chalons (now known as Charlons-en-Champagne). One was to be selected for transport to America and burial in Arlington’s amphitheater plaza.

The job of choosing the casket holding the remains of the unknown soldier went to U.S. Army Sgt. Edward F. Younger of Headquarters Company, Second Battalion, Fiftieth Infantry. Younger had been wounded in combat, subsequently highly decorated for valor and was a Distinguished Service Medal winner. He was a native of Chicago.

Non-commissioned American officers guarded the caskets overnight, while members of a French Guard of Honor stood at attention outside the room. The people of Chalons heaped flowers at the feet of the caskets.

At 10 a.m. the next day, the room was cleared of visitors. Sgt. Younger entered, carrying a spray of white and pink roses. He had been instructed to place the flowers on the top of the casket he chose.

“Everyone had been asked to leave the chapel before Sgt. Younger entered,” wrote the Associated Press. “He walked slowly around the four caskets three times, then stopped and placed the roses on the casket facing the entrance to the chamber. He then turned, facing the entrance, saluted and reported to the American officers that he had made his selection.”

Later that day, after several simple ceremonies and a slow ride on a train to the coast, 3,000 French schoolchildren



*President Harding stands near the casket holding World War I’s unknown soldier on the third anniversary of Armistice Day, November 11, 1921. (Library of Congress)*



### Harding Home Presidential Site

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www.hardinghome.org 800-600-6894

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# Thank you!

### From the Director...

In our last issue, we published the names of our *Friends of Harding Home* members, so you could see the support the site has in Marion and well beyond. We also wanted to publicly thank them for their continued belief in what we do to spread the story of President and Mrs. Warren Harding.

In this issue, we want to call your attention to another pool of supporters — the individuals, companies, corporations, foundations and high school classes who are pushing the *Harding 2020* project to completion. If you want your name or business added, jump in!

Donate online through [www.hardinghome.org](http://www.hardinghome.org) (click on the Harding 2020 tab), or send a check (made out to the Ohio History Connection and with Harding 2020 in the memo line to:

Doug Sweeney  
Ohio History Connection  
800 E. 17th Ave., Columbus, OH 43211

Since the Harding site is part of the Ohio History Connection, it holds our Harding 2020 funds in a special account. If you have questions, call us at 740-387-9630 or email through the website.

With the restoration of the Harding Home and grounds well in hand (and slated for a reopening in spring 2020), we are turning our attention to the physical work required to build the new Warren G. Harding Presidential Center just north of the Harding Home.

Thomas & Marker Construction of Bellefontaine, Ohio, is coordinating the building construction, and the OHC architectural team is being assisted by the GPD Group, which has a handy Marion

office. Other consultants are involved in the project, as well.

Utility lines on the building site will be laid in January, and the presidential center should start going vertical in late February or early March. A cornerstone laying ceremony is planned for March 4, 2019, the 97th anniversary of Harding's inauguration.

The building will take about a year to build, with the grounds and parking lot also taking shape. Both the Harding Home and presidential center will open for year-round operation in spring 2020.

The three Harding sites in Marion — the Harding Memorial, Warren G. Harding Presidential Center, and the Harding Home — will be known collectively as the Warren & Florence Harding Presidential Sites.

Sherry Hall

### UNKNOWN, From Page One

solemnly greeted the train as it arrived in the port of Havre. The children, carrying flowers, escorted the casket to the USS Olympia, where it was carefully placed on board. The ship also carried a large box of soil from the American cemetery at Suresnes, France. The soil was to be used to line the bottom of the soldier's grave at Arlington Cemetery.

"American brother, they are taking you back to the land of your birth. We, however, will piously preserve your memory and the land of France will never forget that you confided to her your last dream," said French Minister of Pensions Andre Maginot. (Yes, Maginot was one of the designers of the famous Maginot Line, the series of fortifications built on France's border with Germany to guard against a future German invasion.)

On November 9, the Olympia arrived at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C., where naval officers transferred care of the casket to the U.S. Army. After transport to the U.S. Capitol Rotunda, the casket was

placed on the same catafalque built for President Abraham Lincoln in 1865. It would be used for President Harding's body just two years later.

"As the President and Mrs. Harding came into the dim chamber, Mrs. Harding stepped forward, a wide white ribbon in her hand," stated the *New York Tribune*. "She had stitched it herself, and stepping up on the base of the catafalque, she laid it across the casket. As Mrs. Harding stepped down, the President took her place and to the ribbon pinned a silver shield of the United States, set with forty-eight golden stars. It is symbolic of the heart of the nation that goes with this soldier to his tomb."

Nearly 100,000 people of all walks of life — including soldiers on crutches and in wheelchairs — solemnly made their ways through the Rotunda to pay their respects.

The next day — November 11 — President Harding led the service meant to honor the thousands of American soldiers without names who lay beneath foreign soil.

### The President's Words ...

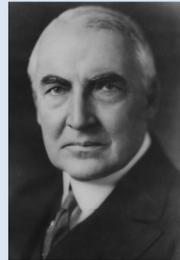
*"On such an occasion as this, amid such a scene, our thoughts alternate between defenders living and defenders dead. A grateful republic will be worthy of them both. Our part is to atone for the losses of heroic dead by making a better republic for the living..."*

*"I speak not as a pacifist fearing war, but as one who loves justice and hates war. I speak as one who thinks the highest function of government is to give its citizens the security of peace, the opportunity to achieve and the pursuit of happiness..."*

*"If American achievement is a cherished pride at home, if our unselfishness among nations is all we wish it to be and ours is a helpful example in the world, then let us give of our influence and strength, yea, of our aspirations and convictions, to put mankind on a little higher plane, exulting and exalting, with war's distressing and depressing tragedies barred from the stage of righteous civilization..."*

*"Standing today on hallowed ground, conscious that all America has halted to share in the tribute of heart and mind and soul to this fellow American, and knowing that the world is noting this expression of the Republic's mindfulness, it is fitting to say that his sacrifice, and that of the millions dead, shall not be in vain. There must be, there shall be, a commanding voice of a conscious civilization against armed warfare..."*

Excerpts from President Harding's eulogy to the Unknown Soldier, November 11, 1921



## Program about Norman Thomas kicks off 2019 schedule of events

Did you know that Warren G. Harding was the first Marionite to run for president, but he wasn't the last? And that, in his younger life, the second candidate had actually worked for Harding as a newsboy? Truth, as they say, is stranger than fiction.

Harding Home researcher Jon Andersen will delve into the story of Marion native Norman Thomas and his six-time run for the White House during the site's 'Fireside Chat' program at 7 p.m. Feb. 21 at the Marion Public Library.

"Norman Thomas: Marion's Other Presidential Candidate" will explore the many facets of Thomas — minister, social worker, Socialist Party member, pacifist and author, as well as the changing views toward Thomas through the decades.

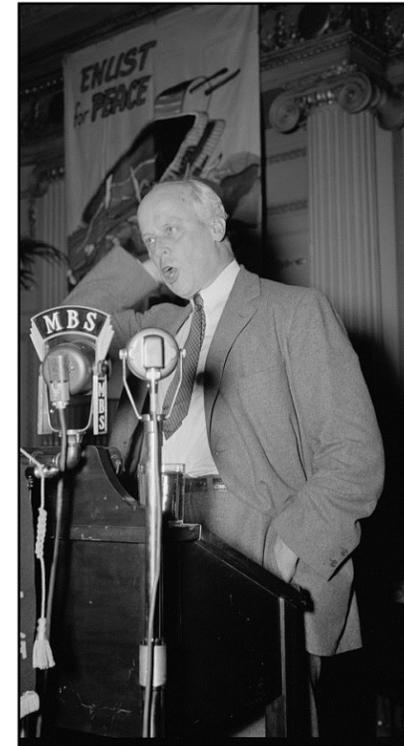
Here are other events we have on tap for you in 2019:

**March 4** – *Cornerstone Laying Ceremony for Warren G. Harding Presidential Center*, time and details to be announced.

**April 13** – *Harding Home Annual Waffle Breakfast*, 8-11 a.m. @ Tri-Rivers Career Center, tickets \$7 at the door, \$5 for children ages 4-12; \$6 and \$4 in advance. Purchase tickets in the online store, [www.hardinghome.org](http://www.hardinghome.org), or call 740-387-9630.

**June 13** – *Archaeology and the Harding Home Restoration*, 7 p.m. @ the Harding Home grounds. Meghan Marley, archaeologist for the Ohio History Connection, talks about the unexpected finds in the grounds surrounding the Harding Home, as well as unique finds in other parts of Ohio. "Meet and Greet" with the archaeologists from the Ohio History Connection for Friends of the Harding Home members, 6:30 p.m.

**July 19-20-21** – *Warren G. Harding*



Marion native Norman Thomas speaks at a peace rally in Washington, D.C., on June 8, 1940. Thomas condemned 'war hysteria' and urged the U.S. to stay out of the war in Europe. [Library of Congress]

*Symposium*. Registration and information available at [www.hardinghome.org](http://www.hardinghome.org), click on "Symposium" tab. Friends of the Harding Home annual brunch, July 21, 12-2 p.m. at OSU Marion's Guthery Room.

**October 13** – *Annual Boy and Girl Scout Pilgrimage*, 3 p.m. @ Harding Memorial Presidential Gravesite, no charge.

**November 7** – *Mr. Teapot Dome: The Story of Albert Fall*, 7 p.m. at the Marion Public Library.

\*Due to the site staff's heavy workload during the Harding 2020 project, the President Harding Golf Outing is taking a hiatus in 2019.

## Jump into the excitement of Harding 2020!

Help finish up fundraising for the Warren G. Harding Presidential Center by donating at [ohiohistory.org/harding2020](http://ohiohistory.org/harding2020)

## Harding 2020 donors make project a reality

Donors to Harding 2020 have pushed the project closer to the finish line. Because of their generosity, the fundraising for the restoration of the Harding Home is complete, and the fundraising for the Warren G. Harding Presidential Center is nearly to the finish line. The list represents those who have donated as of Nov. 30, 2018.

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(Donor List continued on Page 4)