

# The Debs Foundation Newsletter

PO BOX 9454 ■ TERRE HAUTE INDIANA 47808-9454

Fall/Winter 2020

## The Debs Home: Preserving 130 Years of History



The Debs home as it appeared c. 1920

When Kate and Eugene Debs first purchased a residential lot on North 8th Street in Terre Haute, they had no way to anticipate that their nascent home would, within mere decades, become a nationally recognized site of pilgrimage, and education, and preservation. They built a fine house, not a museum, but the Debses' combined contributions to their causes are more than deserving of such commemoration.

"We have lately moved into our new home and nothing would afford us more pleasure than to have you visit with us—Mrs. Debs joins me in cordially extending the invitation." Debs' friend and fellow Hoosier James Whitcomb Riley received this first recorded invitation to visit the house on North 8th Street in April of 1890. The Debses made their home in this Queen Anne Victorian for the rest of their lives. Later residents included a

college professor and his family, then Theta Chi Fraternity at Indiana State University. Our organization's founding members began their work protecting the future of the building in the early 1960s, opening the museum in 1965 and securing its status as a National Historic Landmark in 1966. Thanks to their efforts, thousands of guests have streamed through the museum, leaving with a new appreciation for Debs' continuing impact on our lives today.

Time, unfortunately, takes its toll on any building. Major restoration efforts are now underway, beginning with high-priority projects to protect the house and its contents from the elements. The speed with which the restoration proceeds depends upon funding. We understand, though, that this year presented new challenges for our entire community. Failures in leadership and shirking of collective responsibility allowed the coronavirus to spread practically unmitigated, exacerbating existing inequalities and forcing untold numbers of workers to choose between their health and their paychecks. Eugene Debs would likely be appalled yet unsurprised by the events of 2020. He witnessed firsthand the conflict between profit and dignity, sacrificing his own health and freedom in his efforts to unite the working class on a platform of peace, justice, and equality.

(continued on next page)



451 North 8th Street Today

## The Debs Home

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This history matters, perhaps now more than ever. Restoring and renovating the Debs home will improve its accessibility, appeal, and longevity. It is only with your generous support that the foundation can keep the Debs legacy alive, ensuring that generations to come have the opportunity to learn from this rich past, shedding light on our shared struggles, both present and future.

### EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Fall 2020

Published by

The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

Box 9454

Terre Haute, IN 47808

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The Debs Foundation Newsletter is published twice yearly for distribution to supporters and friends of the Foundation. The Eugene V. Debs Foundation is a non-profit, private organization which maintains the home of Eugene and Kate Debs as a museum and shrine to labor, and carries on educational and informational programs which aim to honor and promote the goals for which Debs struggled: industrial unionism, social justice, and peace. For those wishing to become supporters, a donation form is provided elsewhere in this issue.

The Eugene V. Debs Foundation gratefully acknowledges donations made in memory of Christopher Jamison.

### Tour the Debs Museum Virtually

Visit the Debs Museum from the safety of your home. Write to [museum@debsfoundation.org](mailto:museum@debsfoundation.org) to schedule your individual or group tour today. Tours are always free — we suggest a donation of \$5 per person.

## Monthly Recurring Donations Now Available

You've surely read about the restoration project going on to restore the Eugene Debs home and museum in Terre Haute. This work would not be taking place without the generous assistance our supporters. Thank you to everyone who has supported the foundation in the past.

We can now accept monthly recurring donations. If you would like to give to the foundation on a regular basis, there are a number of advantages to doing it this way — for you as well as for the foundation.

We often get notes from supporters asking when they last donated or whether they have donated yet this year. With a subscription of this kind, you will be billed automatically each month and receive a receipt via e-mail each time you are billed, so you are kept informed of each debit. A recurring donation also allows you to make smaller donations throughout the year, which may be more convenient for you.

Cancelling recurring donations is easy — it is done directly through the payment processor, so there's no need to reach anyone at the foundation if you decide to end your subscription.

Recurring donors help the foundation because it gives our finance committee a better idea of what our monthly revenues will look like, and that helps with planning and budgets. It also helps us ensure that those supporters who intend to give us continued support can do so without interruption, which is obviously to our advantage.

While the foundation gets the benefit of donations that people would otherwise have forgotten to send, admittedly, there will be a few from people who haven't gotten around to cancelling their subscription. In that case, we will surely refund any donation made in error.

Please follow the link below to sign up for monthly recurring donations if you are interested:

[https://donate.debsfoundation.org/monthly\\_donations](https://donate.debsfoundation.org/monthly_donations)

## Convict 9653 at 100



It's not every day that a Hoosier Socialist runs for president — let alone from a prison cell.

100 years ago this season, Eugene V. Debs made his fifth and final bid for the presidency as Convict No. 9653. Such a centennial deserves recognition, but how to mark it without putting supporters at risk in the midst of a pandemic? A virtual program was the clear solution.

On October 11<sup>th</sup>, a community of Debsians gathered on Zoom and Facebook Live for the centennial event "Convict 9653 at 100." After opening remarks from foundation president **Noel Beasley**, the event commenced with a partial screening of WFY's Emmy Award-winning documentary, *The Revolutionist: Eugene V. Debs* (for more on the film, see the

Spring/Summer 2020 edition of the Debs Foundation Newsletter). Esteemed guests joined the event for a panel discussion on Debs' legacy and relevance today. **Kim Jacobs**, writer and producer of *The Revolutionist*; **Clayola Brown**, National President, A. Philip Randolph Institute and 2012 Debs Award honoree; and **Ernest Freeberg**, historian and author of *Democracy's Prisoner: Eugene V. Debs, the Great War, and the Right to Dissent*, all provided insightful comments and conversation on Debs' political impact and significance a century later. "The fight is still fresh," said Brown, emphasizing the continued need for decisive progressive action today.



Virtual panelists described Debs' impact

In the weeks leading up to the program, we asked social media followers to record videos of themselves describing what Debs means to them today. Responses included "class solidarity," "decency, empathy, and compassion," "humanity," and "hope for a world where economic justice is possible." With submissions from Seattle to Atlanta, the compiled videos imparted a collage of personal meaning to the program.



Acclaimed duo Magpie closed the program

Labor folk duo **Magpie** took the virtual stage to close the event. **Terry Leonino** and **Greg Artzner**, who have provided entertainment at multiple Debs Awards Dinners in recent years, gave stirring performances of an original Debsian song, "Canton, 1918" and the Wobbly favorite "Solidarity Forever."

An added benefit of virtual programming is continued access after the event's conclusion. To view a captioned recording of "Convict 9653 at 100," follow this link: <https://youtu.be/9Lilki6z9uE>. While there's no telling what circumstances will characterize the bicentennial of Debs' 1920 campaign, your support for the Debs Foundation will help ensure that Debs' legacy will be preserved and promoted for the next 100 years and beyond.

Virtual Program ▪ Save the Date

**The Forgotten Comrade:  
Margaret Haile**

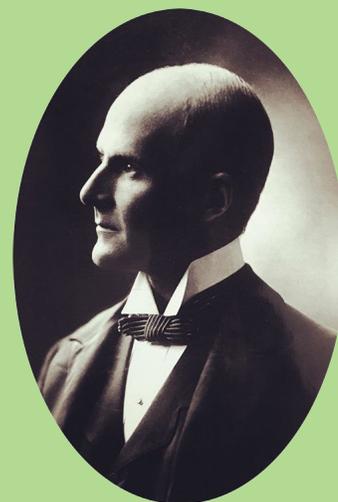
January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021

Presented by Cindy Ringer  
See website for details

## In Debs' Words

From his 1918 Statement to the Court Upon Being  
Convicted of Violating the Sedition Act

"When the mariner, sailing over tropic seas, looks for relief from his weary watch, he turns his eyes toward the southern cross, burning luridly above the tempest-vexed ocean. As the midnight approaches, the southern cross begins to bend, the whirling worlds change their places, and with starry finger-points the Almighty marks the passage of time upon the dial of the universe, and though no bell may beat the glad tidings, the lookout knows that the midnight is passing and that relief and rest are close at hand. Let the people everywhere take heart of hope, for the cross is bending, the midnight is passing, and joy cometh with the morning."



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### Support the Eugene V. Debs Foundation

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Please make checks payable to:

Eugene V. Debs Foundation ▪ PO Box 9454 ▪ Terre Haute, IN ▪ 47808

The Eugene V. Debs Foundation is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit educational organization. Your contributions are tax-deductible. The Foundation owns and maintains the Eugene V. Debs Home and Museum and offers educational and cultural programs.

**Your Continued Support Makes It Possible!**