

# NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

COMMODORE ROBERT N. S. BAKER, UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

Robert Nicholson Scott Baker was born in Washington, D. C., on February 17, 1894. He attended Force School, Western High School and Columbian Preparatory School, all in Washington, D. C., before his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from New Hampshire in 1911. Graduated and commissioned Ensign in June 1915, he was appointed Assistant Naval Constructor with the rank of Lieutenant (junior grade) on June 30, 1917. He was promoted to the temporary rank of Lieutenant during World War I and, commissioned in that rank on June 6, 1920. He was subsequently promoted to Commander in the Construction Corps of the Navy on June 30, 1935. Transferred from the Construction Corps to the Line of the Navy, he was designated for engineering duty only in 1940 and on July 1, 1941 was promoted to Captain. He served in the temporary rank of Commodore from December 21, 1945 until June 1947 and on October 1, 1948 was transferred to the Retired List of the Navy in the rank of Commodore.

After graduation from the Naval Academy in 1915, he joined the USS ARKANSAS, and served in that battleship, operating with the Atlantic Fleet, until September 1916. He then reported for postgraduate instruction in Naval Construction and Naval Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge. His schooling interrupted in April 1917, by the entry of the United States into World War I, he served in the Hull Division of the Navy Yard, Philadelphia, until October 1919, when he returned to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to complete the course. He received his Master of Science degree in 1920 and was again assigned to the Navy Yard, Philadelphia, where he remained until September 1923.

He was an Instructor in the Department of Marine Engineering and Naval Construction at the Naval Academy from September 1923 until June 1926 and while there co-authored the textbook in Mechanisms used by the Academy for many years thereafter. The following four years he served in the Design Division of the Bureau of Construction and Repair, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., handling the Bureau's participation in the building and trials of the first three classes of the 10,000-ton "Washington Treaty cruisers." Duty as Production Officer at the Navy Yard, Pearl Harbor, territory of Hawaii, from August 1930 to June 1932 preceded instruction in the senior course at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. Returning to the Bureau of Construction and Repair, Navy Department, he served in the Design and Construction Division from June 1933 until August 1936. There he was charged with responsibility for determining the suitability of materials for shipbuilding and the preparation of specifications for their procurement.

He served as Force Constructor on the Staff of Commander Battle Force, U. S. Fleet, when the late Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy, USN, and Admiral (now Retired) Claude C. Bloch, USN, successively commanded

the Battle Force. Relieved of staff duty, he reported in July 1938 as Planning Officer at the Norfolk Navy Yard, Portsmouth, Virginia. While in that assignment, he served as a key figure in the tremendous pre-war and wartime expansion of that naval establishment. During the last eighteen months there he was also in charge of the construction, repair and conversion undertaken for the Navy in private shipyards of the Fifth Naval District other than the yards at Newport News, Virginia and Annapolis, Maryland.

In October 1943 he assumed duty as Manager of the Industrial Department, Navy Yard, Charleston, South Carolina. There he was directly in charge of the Navy Yard's and private yard's greatly expanded program of naval shipbuilding and repair of fighting ships, merchantmen, and ships of the United Nations. Under his supervision, the Charleston Navy Yard changed from destroyer and destroyer escort construction to the building of LSMs and in addition constructed two destroyer tenders, the largest ships ever built in that yard.

After the reorganization of fleet service shore establishments in September 1945, he was ordered in command of the newly organized Charleston Naval Shipyard, where he served in the rank of Commodore. In March 1947 he was ordered to duty as Supervising Inspector of Naval Material, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and on reporting in June 1947, reverted to his permanent rank of Captain. He was transferred to the Retired List of the Navy in the rank of Commodore, on October 1, 1948.

Commodore Baker has the Mexican Service Medal (USS ARKANSAS); Victory Medal (World War I); American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal. The British Government, with the required consent of this Government, appointed him a Commander in the Order of the British Empire (Honorary) "for distinguished service in the Allied Cause."

Upon retirement from active naval service Commodore Baker became Executive Assistant to the Executive Vice President of the Franklin Institute of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and afterwards a Director, Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee, and Chief Administrative Officer, of the Laboratory for Electronics in Boston. Following that he was engaged substantially in the activities of commemorative and charitable agencies. He has been a Governor of the Colonial Society of Pennsylvania; a Commander of Pennsylvania Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States; a Member of the Council of the Pennsylvania Society of Colonial Wars; and, for several years, a Member of the Board of Managers of the Pennsylvania Working Home for the Blind.

His clubs are: The New York Yacht Club; the Racquet, Rittenhouse, Penn, and Merion Cricket Clubs in the Philadelphia area; and the Chevy Chase Club, Army and Navy Club and the Army Navy Country Clubs in the vicinity of Washington.