

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

REAR ADMIRAL WILLIAM B. FLETCHER
UNITED STATES NAVY, DECEASED

William Bartlett Fletcher was born in St. Albans, Vermont, on January 7, 1862, son of John Bartlett and Louisa Ballard (Williams) Fletcher. He attended junior schools and the Academy in St. Albans, prior to his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from the Third District of his native state in 1877. He completed the four year course there on June 10, 1882, and served the two years at sea, as then required by law, in the USS HARTFORD, before he was commissioned Ensign on July 1, 1884. He subsequently progressed in rank to that of Captain, to date from May 19, 1911. He served in the temporary rank of Rear Admiral from August 31, 1917 until his retirement, December 31, 1921. Retired in his permanent rank of Captain, he was advanced to Rear Admiral on the Retired List, to date from June 21, 1930.

In August 1884 he reported on board the USS PORTSMOUTH, operating with the Training Squadron, Atlantic. Detached from that training ship in May 1886, he had duty with the Coast Survey, in the schooner EAGRE and the steamers ENDEAVOR and GEDNEY, and from December 1887 to May 1889 was Inspector of Steel, New Cruisers, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He next had consecutive service in the USS ADAMS, at Samoa; the USS RANGER, operating along the west coast of Central America, and the Fish Commission's Steamer ALBATROSS, in which he participated in the survey for a submarine cable between the United States and Hawaii and in addition made the first surveys in the harbors and other waters of Alaska.

He had duty at the Navy Yard, New York, New York, between January and May 1893, when he joined the USS SARATOGA, Public Marine School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In August 1895 he reported on board the USS ATLANTA, and a month later was detached to serve in the USS ALLIANCE. He transferred to the USS VICKSBURG in January 1898, and in April of that year, was assigned to the USS MASSACHUSETTS, which operated with Admiral Sampson's squadron during the Spanish American War, participating in several engagements, including the bombardments of Santiago on May 31, and June 6, 1898.

In October 1898 he became Inspector of Ordnance at Lynn, Massachusetts, where he remained until April 1900. Ordered to Asiatic Station, he had consecutive duty as Navigator of the USS CONCORD, Executive Officer of the USS CASTINE and Commanding Officer of the USS QUIROS, all operating in the Philippine waters. Detached from command of the latter in August 1902, he was assigned in October of that year to the staff of the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island.

In August 1904 he joined the USS KENTUCKY as Navigator and in December of that year, became Executive Officer of that battleship. Detached from the KENTUCKY in July 1905, he reported in September as Assistant to the Inspector of the Second Light House District, with headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts. He was again assigned

to the Naval War College, October 1905 until November 1912, interspersed with command of the USS BIRMINGHAM (October 1909-June 1911). He next commanded the USS MONTANA. Under his command that armored cruiser operated on the East Coast with the Atlantic Fleet until early in 1913, when she sailed for the Near East to investigate and guarantee the safety of American citizens. She called at Alexandria, Beirut, and other ports of Asia Minor. In May 1913 he transferred to the USS KANSAS, which he commanded until ordered to return to the United States.

In June 1914 he reported for instruction at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, and upon completing the course there in June 1915, remained for duty on the staff until October 1916. While there he had temporary additional duty, June-September 1916, as Chief of Staff to Commander Atlantic Reserve Fleet during the Fleet Maneuvers that year. Following an assignment, which extended to September 1917, as a member of the General Board, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., and the Neutrality Board, State Department, Washington, D. C., he became Commander Squadron THREE, Patrol Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet (in the rank of Rear Admiral), with additional duty as Commandant of the U. S. Naval Base, Brest, France.

Ordered to return to the United States, he served briefly, November 1917-January 1918, in the Navy Department, prior to reporting as Commandant of the Seventh Naval District, with headquarters in Key West, Florida. In May 1919 he became Commandant of the Fourteenth Naval District, Pearl Harbor, T. H., serving additionally as Commandant of the Naval Station, Hawaii, where he remained until July 1920. The next month he was assigned as Senior Member of the Naval Commission to Brazil (in connection with the Brazilian Naval War College), Rio de Janeiro. On December 31, 1921 he was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy, but continued to serve with the Naval Commission to Brazil until December 15, 1922, when retired. He died on June 29, 1957 at the Naval Hospital, New York.

Rear Admiral Fletcher had the Sampson Medal; the Spanish Campaign Medal; the Philippine Campaign Medal; the Cuban Pacification Medal; and the Victory Medal, Patrol Clasp (World War I).