

MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES

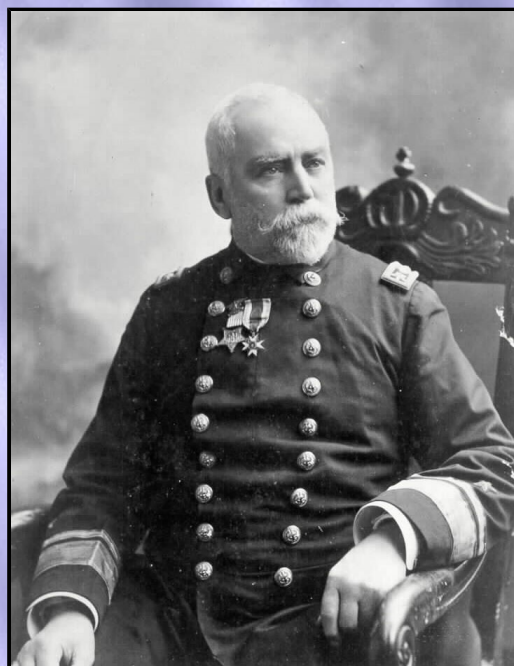


Loyal Legion Vignettes



**Rear Admiral George Eugene Belknap, USN
(1832 New Hampshire - 1903 Florida)
Original Member of the New York Commandery
Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States**

**By
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U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph

Rear Admiral George Eugene Belknap was born on January 22, 1832 in Newport, New Hampshire one of six sons born to Sawyer B. and Martha Mary (Aiken) Belknap. Sawyer was a farmer who moved to Newport, New Hampshire in 1825 but was also a manufacturer and dealer of boots and shoes. As an

officer in the militia was said to be a zealous friend of the military. George's great-grandfather was Ezekiel Belknap, a Sergeant-Major, Welsh's New Hampshire Regiment, during the Revolutionary War and from who's service George joined the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR No. 12,232).

Only 15 years old, George was appointed Midshipman in the United States Navy (USN) on October 7, 1847, Passed Midshipman June 10, 1853, Master September 15, 1855, and commissioned Lieutenant September 16, 1855. He commanded a launch at the capture of the Barrier Forts at the mouth of the Canton River, China, in November 1856, and assisted in undermining and blowing up the four forts. He was promoted to Lieutenant Commander July 15, 1862, Commander July 25, 1866, Captain January 25, 1875, Commodore March 2, 1885, Rear Admiral February 12, 1889, and retired January 22, 1894 after 47 years of service.

During the Civil War, he commanded the boats of the "St. Louis" at the reinforcement of Fort Pickens in April 1861, and was commanding officer of the iron-clad "New Ironsides" in her various engagements with the fortifications in Charleston harbor from 1862 until 1864. He was highly praised by Admirals Dupont and Dahlgren for ability in making the attacks and managing his vessel under fire. In 1864 he commanded the gun-boat "Seneca" of the North Atlantic blockading squadron, and afterward the iron-clad "Canonicus" in the two actions with Howlett House battery in December 1864, and in the attacks on Fort Fisher in that and the following month. After the capture of the fort he went to Charleston, and was present at the evacuation. He commanded the same vessel in Admiral Godon's expedition to Havana in search of the confederate ironclad "Stonewall." His name was associated with those of Commanders Parrott and Calhoun and Lieutenant Weaver in a commendatory letter of Admiral Porter declaring that these officers had given a world-wide reputation to the monitors by their efficient handling of the new type of vessel.

From 1867 - 1868, Commander Belknap commanded the flag-ship "Hartford" of the Asiatic squadron during the Formosa Expedition of 1867; in 1869, he was on navigation duty at the Boston navy yard; in 1874, he was engaged in command of the steamer "Tuscarora" in taking deep-sea soundings in the North Pacific ocean, with the object of finding a route for a submarine cable between the United States and Japan. In 1873, he was ordered to the steamer: "USS Tuscarora" to make deep-water soundings in the North Pacific with a view to submarine cable. His discoveries concerning topography of the ocean bed were recognized by scientists of the world. He was senior officer at Honolulu at the time of disturbances at the election of King Kalukaua. At various times he was in command of U.S. Navy Yards at Norfolk, Pensacola, Mare Island and was the Superintendent of the Naval Observatory at Washington, D.C. He was President of the Navy Torpedo Board and President of the Navy Board of Inspection and Survey. He was in command of the "USS Alaska", in South American waters at the time of the difficulty between Chile and Peru and was Commander of the U.S. Fleet in the Asiatic Station, 1889 - 1902.

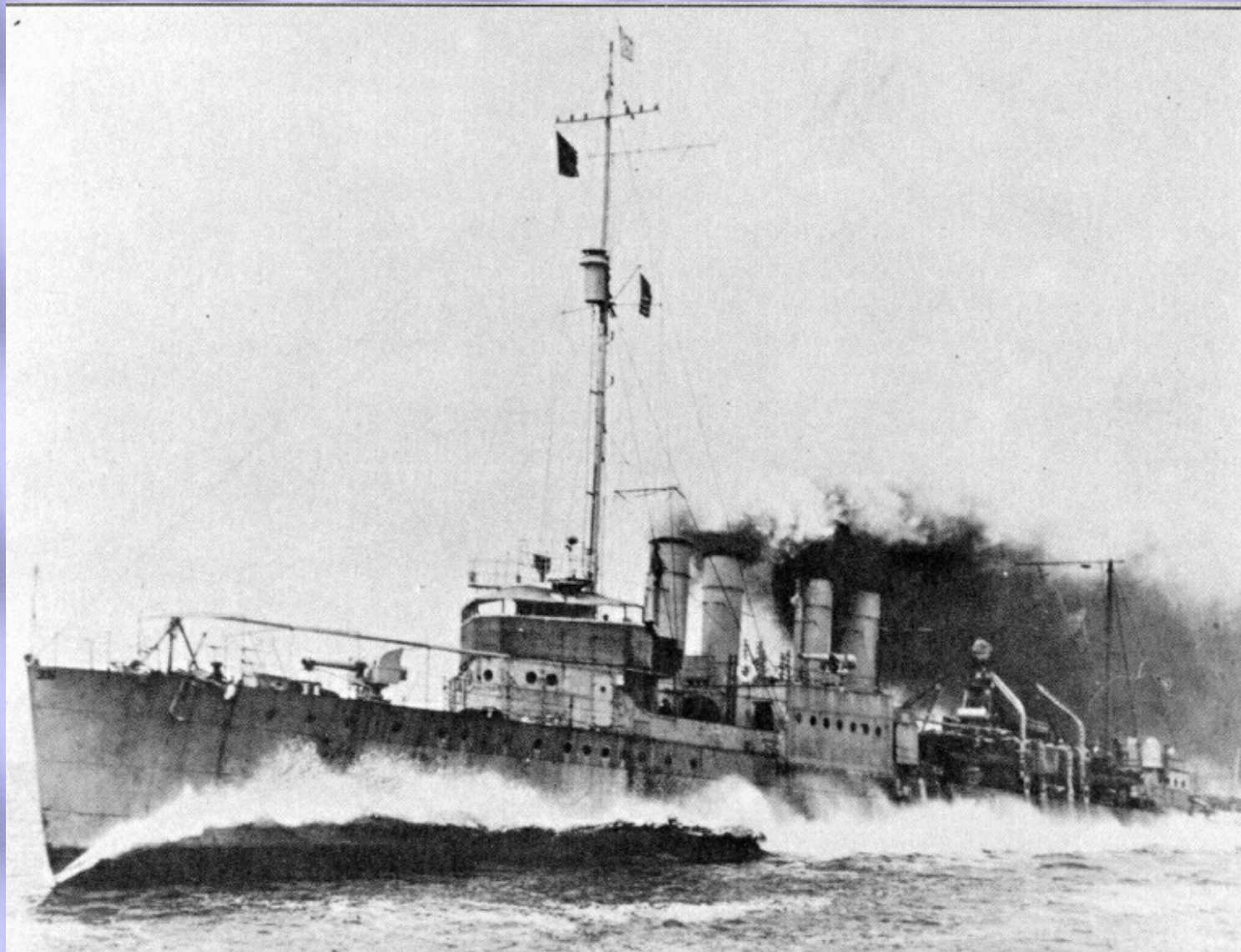
George was an Original Companion of the New York Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS) (Insignia No. 3313). His son, [Reginald Rowan Belknap](#), followed in his father's footsteps both as a Rear Admiral and as a Hereditary Companion of the New York Commandery (Insignia No. 19131) and would serve as Commander-in-Chief of the MOLLUS 1947 - 1951. George also served as Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Massachusetts Nautical Training School, was a member of the Naval Order of the United States, the Sons of the American Revolution, and the Grand Army of the Republic. He wrote a number of naval publications including *Deep Sea Soundings*, was honored by leading scientific societies of Europe and America, and earned a LL.D from Dartmouth 1894.

George was married on December 8, 1861 to Ellen Deborah Reed (died October 28, 1865) and had one child: 1) Alice Maud Belknap (April 29, 1863 - October 27, 1899), married on October 12, 1880 to Samuel Westray Battle, BG USN (August 4, 1854 - April 29, 1927). George remarried on December 23 1866 to Frances Georgiana Prescott (1842 New Hampshire - August 24 1912), then of Calcutta, India and had children: 2) Prescott Hartford Belknap (born March 16, 1869 New York), unmarried; 3) [Reginald Rowan Belknap](#) (June 26, 1871 - Malden, Massachusetts - March 30, 1959 Field Elders, Connecticut), Rear Admiral USN, married March 3, 1900 to Julia Pomeroy Averill (July 2, 1875 - April 13, 1971); and

4) Grafton McAllister Belknap (July 14, 1875 Florida - June 4, 1895).

Rear Admiral George Eugene Belknap died at Key West, Florida, April 7, 1903. He was buried in Section 3 Site 1413-NS with his wife Frances in Arlington National Cemetery under a private memorial which reads, in part: *Died on duty, Key West, 1903*. His son's, Reginald's, MOLLUS application added that he died while on special duty for the Navy Department which overtaxed his strength.

Two USN ships have been named in honor of Rear Admiral George Eugene Belknap:



USS Belknap (DD-251/AVD-8/APD-34), a Clemson class destroyer, was converted into a seaplane tender and later into a high speed transport with service from 1919 to 1945 (NavSource)

See also <http://www.navsourc.org/archives/05/251.htm>

USS Belknap (DD-251) was launched January 14, 1919 by Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corp., Quincy, Massachusetts, sponsored by Miss Frances Georgiana Belknap, granddaughter of Admiral Belknap; and commissioned April 28, 1919, Lieutenant Commander S. Gasse in command.

Following her shakedown cruise, Belknap joined U.S. Naval Forces, Eastern Mediterranean. After several months she returned to the United States and served with Division 28, Atlantic Fleet, until placed in reserve at Charleston Navy Yard in 1920. She was decommissioned June 28, 1922 at Philadelphia Navy Yard and remained there until 1940.

During 1940, Belknap was converted into a seaplane tender (reclassified AVD-8, August 2, 1940) and recommissioned November 22, 1940. She was assigned to Patrol Wing 5 at Hamilton, Bermuda, and remained there until early 1941 when she returned to Newport, Rhode Island. Between May and September 1941 she made three voyages from Newport to Newfoundland and Iceland. She remained at Reykjavik, Iceland, during September 1941 - May 1942 and then went to Charleston Navy Yard for an extensive overhaul. From August 1942 to January 1943, she patrolled in the Caribbean and between February 1943 and January 1944, she served with Bogue (CVE-9), Croatan (CVE-25), and Core (CVE-13) hunter-killer groups in the Atlantic. Reclassified DD-251, November 14, 1943, Belknap received the Presidential Unit Citation for her service with TG 21.12 (Bogue group), April 20 - June 20, 1943. Following convoy duty along the east and Gulf coasts (February - June 1944), Belknap underwent conversion into a high speed transport (reclassified APD-34, June 22, 1944).

Conversion completed, Belknap arrived in the Pacific during September 1944. During October 18 - 22, she served as a screen ship during the Leyte invasion and during January 3 - 11, 1945 as a shore bombardment and beach reconnaissance vessel at the Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, landings. On January 11, she trained all her guns on a Japanese suicide plane which crashed into Belknap's number two stack, crippling her engines, killing 38 men and wounding 49. Belknap remained at Lingayen making emergency repairs until January 18 when Hidatsa (ATF-102) towed her to Manus, Admiralty Islands. Following temporary repairs at Manus, Belknap proceeded to Philadelphia Navy Yard via the west coast, arriving June 18. Decommissioned August 4, 1945, Belknap was sold November 30, 1945 for scrapping.

In addition to her Presidential Unit Citation, Belknap received three battle stars for her World War II service.



**USS Belknap (DLG/CG-26), a Belknap class guided missile cruiser
service from 1962 to 1995 (NavSource, US Navy Photograph)**

For additional photographs, see: <http://www.navsource.org/archives/04/040126.htm>

USS Belknap (DLG/CG-26), named for Rear Admiral George Eugene Belknap USN (1832 - 1903), was a Belknap class guided missile cruiser laid down by the Bath Iron Works Corporation at Bath in Maine on February 5, 1962, launched on July 20, 1963 and commissioned on November 7, 1964. Belknap was severely damaged in a collision with John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1975. A fire broke out on Belknap following the collision, and during the fire her aluminum superstructure was melted, burned and gutted to the deck level. This fire and the resultant damage and deaths, which would have been preventable had Belknap's superstructure been made of steel, drove the U.S. Navy's decision to pursue all-steel construction in its next major class of surface combatants, the Arleigh Burke class large guided missile destroyer. Belknap was reconstructed by the Philadelphia Navy Yard from January 30, 1976 to May 10, 1980. She was converted to a flagship by the Norfolk Navy Yard from May 1985 to February 1986; recommissioned May 10, 1980 and reclassified CG-26; served as Flag Ship of the 6th Fleet; served in the Persian Gulf War. The USS Belknap was decommissioned and stricken from the Naval Vessel Register on February 15, 1995 and sunk as a target on September 24, 1998.

Also see: USS Belknap (DLG/CG-26) Association (<http://www.ussbelknap.com/>)

Sources:

- 1) MOLLUS Records
- 2) *Who's Who v.1 1897-1942*, p.79.
- 3) Arlington National Cemetery, Rear Admiral George Eugene Belknap (<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/gbelknap.htm>)
- 4) USS Belknap (DD-251/AVD-8/APD-34)
(<http://www.navsource.org/archives/05/251.htm>)
(<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ships/dafs/APD/apd34.html>)
- 5) USS Belknap (DLG/CG-26)
(http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/USS-Belknap-%28DLG_26%29)
(http://www.gdbiw.com/image_gallery/Bath_Built_Ships/0342_c_DLG-26/default.htm)

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