Buracker & Boraker

Family History Research Newsletters

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A Tribute to Rear Admiral William Houck Buracker 1897-1977

Buracker's Memories In Book

Rear Admiral William Houck Buracker has varied memories of World War II, but unlike many others, part of his memories are recorded in a popular book.

The Luray native figures prominently in the book, "Leyte Gulf: The Death of the Princeton," the story of a famous naval battle of the war and the aircraft carrier which Adm. Buracker commanded.

The retired naval officer, who now resides in Winchester, Mass., visited his hometown last week where he spent some time with relatives, including his cousin, Mrs. Ailene Black, and friends in the area.

The book, written by Edwin P. Hoyt as part of Lancer's Photobook History of Modern Combat, recounts Adm. Buracker's distinguished naval record in its 158 pages relating the historic Leyte Gulf battle and the aircraft carrier's destruction.

In February, 1944, the book notes, then-Captain Buracker assumed command of the Princeton from Captain George R. Henderson, who was promoted to a new command.

"To succeed Captain Henderson, William Buracker was an admirable choice," the book says. "He was a Virginia boy, soft-spoken, of medium height and build, neither handsome nor unhandsome, with a square jaw and the look of determination in eyes that otherwise might seem very mild."

In a brief biography, the book recounts that Buracker was born in Luray July 25, 1897, the son of Mr. and Mrs. William S. Buracker. He went to public schools here and in 1916 received an appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy.

"He went to Annnapolis, but in 1917 found himself at sea, serving that summer on the battleship, Texas," the book reports.

"Back to school at Annapolis for the winter and then to sea again the following spring, on the New Hampshire this time, one of the old battlewagons, one of the training grounds for young officers of the surface fleet," the account continues.

"After graduation from the Academy, Buracker was assigned to the USS Mississippi, another battleship, but in 1920 he went to destroyers, to the USS Woolsey and to the Pacific, which meant calls at exotic places, and headquarters in San Diego in those days.

"For two years he served mostly on detroyers, the old four-pipers burning their foul-smelling coal, and dirtying up the pristine whites of the most fastidious officers with their smoke.

"Then in 1922 he was returned to the Continental United States from sea duty, for he had requested and been granted flight training. He had been watching the growth of air power in the world, and was one of those who wanted to be a part of naval air.

"At Pensacola, Ensign Buracker took the usual ground course of ground and air training, and soloed, and satisified his instructors that he could fly. He was designated a Naval Aviator on Dec. 21, 1922 and got his gold wings. After leave he was assigned to Scouting Squadron One, and later went to the Naval Air Station at Pearl Harbor, where he stayed until 1928.

"His work was good and well appreciated in the Navy—he was selected for the postgraduate course at the Naval Academy, and in 1928 went there to study aeronautical engineering. He was an apt student, and soon was sent to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he was given the degree of Master of Science.

"Always he was a leader. He served again with a patrol squadron in the big flying boats, but then went to Washington with the Plans Division of the Bureau of Aeronautics. While there he distinguished himself as one of the pilots of the six navy patrol planes to make a non-stop flight from Hampton Roads, Virginia to the Canal Zone. That was an accomplishment in 1933, and it was all done in formation, too.

"For this job, Buracker received personal commendation from President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

"In 1934 Buracker was a member of an observation squadron attached to the West Virginia; two years later he had his first command, "Torpedo Squadron 2-B, based on the carrier Saratoga. This was his first carrier experience down from the big flying boats to the smaller planes.

"He led the squadron for a year, then was selected for the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island in the summer of 1937. There followed a tour of duty with the Army Air Corps at its tactical school at Maxwell Field, Alabama. Back in carriers, he served as navigator of the Enterprise, and then took a staff job with the commander of aircraft of the battle force, and that is where he was when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

"Captain Buracker had won the Silver Star, one of the nation's highest medals, for his conduct in the early raids on Marcus and the Marshall and Gilbert Islands, when the United States was fighting on a shoestring.

"He was given credit for saving the carrier from harm in the Marshall's engagement, 'largely due to his skill and determination under fire.'

"But after this commendation and a Unit Commendation, Captain Buracker got a shore job—the bane of the existence of fighting sailors and airmen....

"He was a bright officer. His record showed it, for the was being groomed for high command," the book adds.

The book continues to recount the Princeton's brilliant war record under Capt. Buracker's command up to the infamous battle and the time when "the Princeton, brave and mighty ship, went to her grave deep in the Philippine Sea," after she had been badly damaged and evacuated.

In an epilogue, the author notes that Captain Buracker won the Navy Cross and the Purple Heart for his actions and his injuries. He went back to duty as senior navy air instructor at the Army-Navy staff college in Washington, and then continued in training work until he retired in 1947 as Rear Admiral.

W. H. Buracker

Funeral services for Rear Admiral William H. Buracker (Ret) of Winchester, Mass., cousin of Mrs. Lynn Black and Mrs. H. K. Hinde of Luray, were held Wednesday, March 9 in the Church of the Epiphany in Winchester.

Adm. Buracker died Sunday, March 6.

He was born in Luray and graduated from the US Naval Academy in 1920. Adm. Buracker was a pilot during the early days of flying.

During his war service he was awarded the Silver Star, Legion of Merit and the Navy Cross.

Surviving, besides his cousins, are his wife, Dorothy M. Martin and a daughter, Mrs. Christopher R. Amussen of Wellesley.

The main article was published in the *Page Courier & News* in September 1975. The obituary notice was in the edition for 24 March, 1977.

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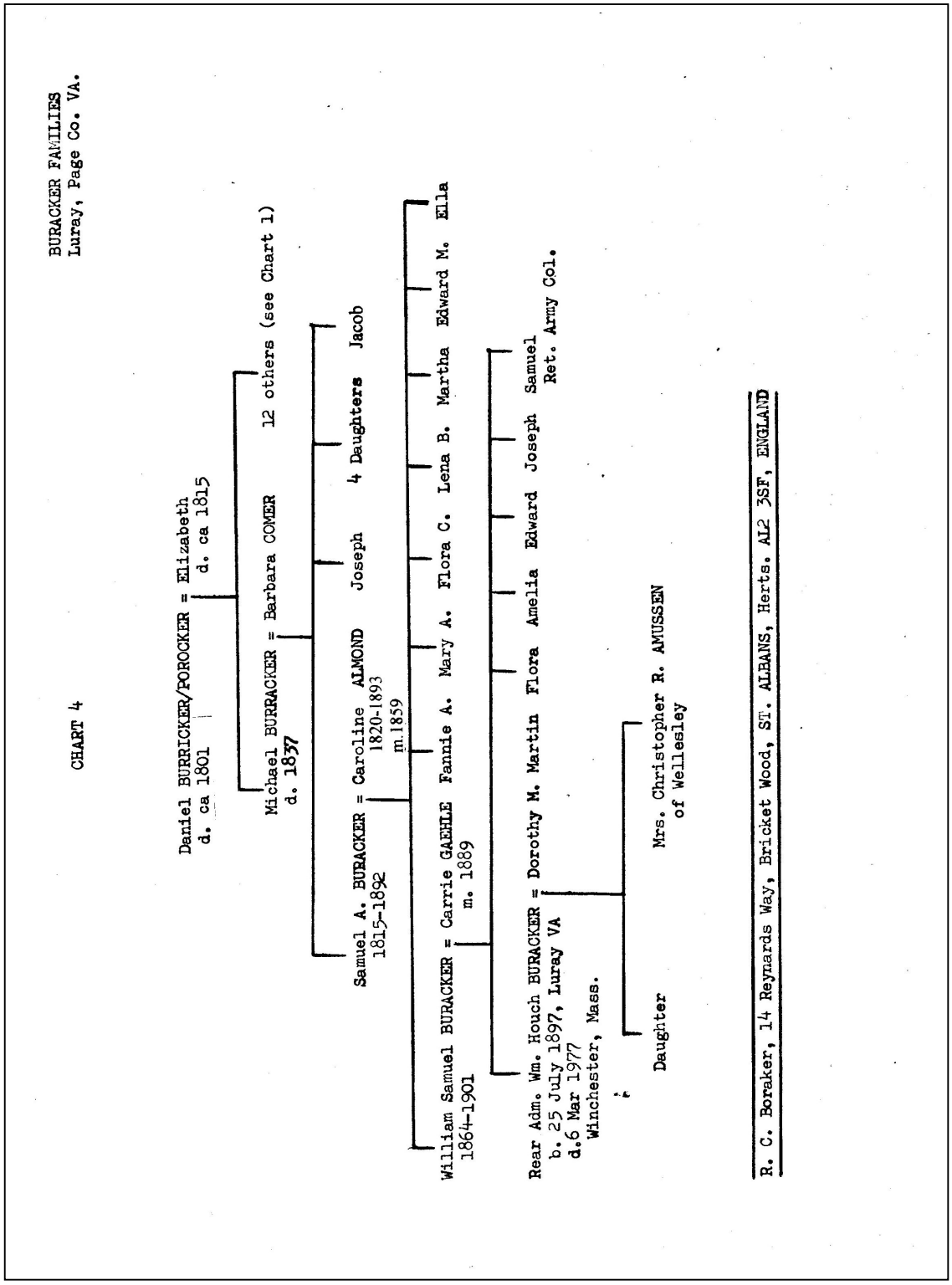
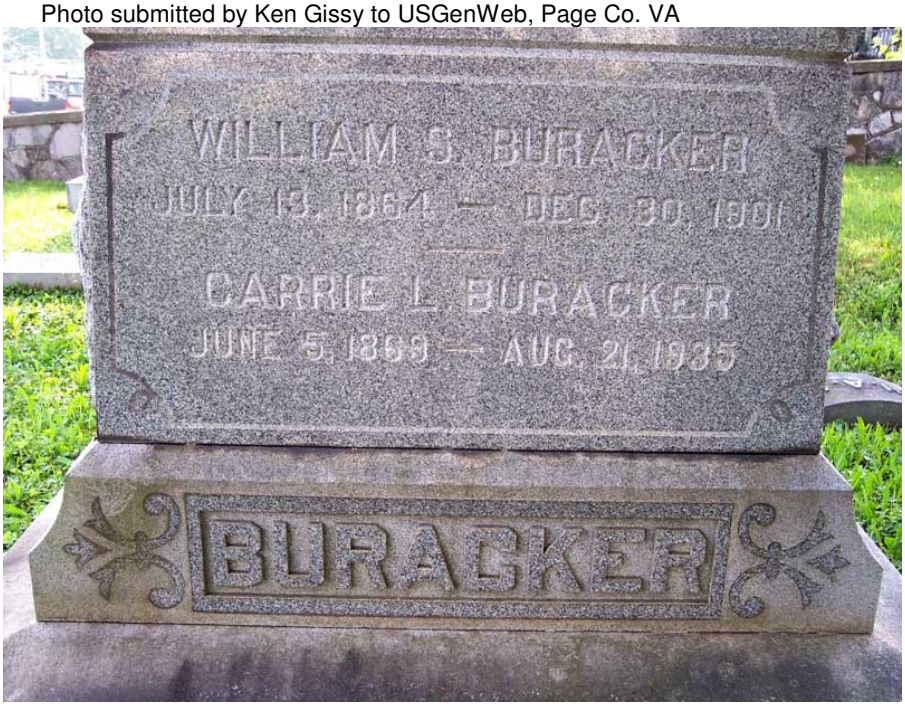

BURACKER FAMILIES
Luray, Page Co. VA.
CHART 4
Daniel BURRICKER/POROCKER = Elizabeth
d. ca 1801 d. ca 1815
Michael BURRACKER = Barbara COMER 12 others (see Chart 1)
d. 1837
Samuel A. BURACKER = Caroline ALMOND Joseph 4 Daughters Jacob
1815-1892 1820-1893
m.1859
William Samuel BURACKER = Carrie GAEHLE Fannie A. Mary A. Flora C. Lena B. Martha Edward M. Ella
1864-1901 m. 1889
Rear Adm. Wm. Houch BURACKER = Dorothy M. Martin Flora Amelia Edward Joseph Samuel
b. 25 July 1897, Luray VA Ret. Army Col.
d.6 Mar 1977
Winchester, Mass.
Daughter
Mrs. Christopher R. AMUSSEN
of Wellesley
R. C. Boraker, 14 Reynards Way, Bricket Wood, ST. ALBANS, Herts. AL2 3SF, ENGLAND

Page News & Courier, September 1975:

LOOKING BACK—Rear Adm. William Buracker, a Luray native who now resides in Winchester, Mass., looks over a copy of "Leyte Gulf: The Death of the Princeton," the story of the aircraft carrier he commanded during World War II. The retired naval officer visited his cousin, Mrs. Ailene Black, and other relatives and friends in Luray last week.

These are the parents of Rear Adm. William H. Buracker

Photo submitted by Ken Gissy to USGenWeb, Page Co. VA



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