

11/18/55

REAR ADMIRAL R. S. GRIFFIN
U. S. NAVY, DECEASED

Robert Stanislaus Griffin was born in Fredericksburg, Virginia, on September 27, 1857, and died in Washington, D. C., on February 21, 1933.

He was appointed Cadet Engineer from the First District of Virginia in October 1874, and entered the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, at the age of seventeen. Completing the four year course in 1878, he was commissioned Assistant Engineer in 1880; Passed Assistant Engineer in 1889; Chief Engineer in 1898; and was transferred to the Line of the Navy on March 3, 1899, at which time his rank was changed to Lieutenant. He was promoted to Lieutenant Commander on March 3, 1901; to Commander on January 22, 1906; to Captain on January 9, 1910; and to Rear Admiral on May 17, 1913. He was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy (at statutory retirement age of 64 years) on September 27, 1921.

His early service in the Navy included assignments at sea on board the USS QUINNEBAUG, USS TENNESSEE, USS PHILADELPHIA, and the USS VICKSBURG. He also served as Inspector of Machinery on board the USS BANCROFT in 1892, and several times had duty in the Bureau of Steam Engineering, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. During the Spanish-American War he served in the USS MAYFLOWER, which fitted as a gunboat, assisted in the blockade of Cuban ports. From September 1899 until November 1901 he again served in the Bureau of Steam Engineering.

Duty afloat in the USS ILLINOIS and the USS CHICAGO preceded duty from September 1904 until April 1905 on board the USS KEARSARGE, in charge of the Department of Engineering and as Fleet Engineer of the North Atlantic Fleet. He again served in the Bureau of Steam Engineering, this time as Assistant to the Engineer in Chief, and on May 17, 1913, he was commissioned Engineer-in-Chief and Chief of the Bureau of Steam Engineering. This appointment carried the rank of Rear Admiral for a term of four years.

He continued service as Chief of the Bureau of Steam Engineering until his retirement in September 1921. During the period he was in the Bureau, 1913-1921, he fought successfully to retain the Naval Reserve oil lands, and it was not until after his retirement that private interests were able to drain them (Fall-Doheny), although there were many efforts to do so before then. He also was very active in the shift from coal to oil, and to electric drive, and assumed much of the responsibility for these developments.

Rear Admiral Griffin fought successfully as Assistant Chief of the Bureau and later as Chief of the Bureau to retain for the Navy the Naval Oil Reserves, the importance of which he fully realized due to the responsible role he had taken in the transition of the ships of the Navy from coal to oil. It was also during his tenure of office that electric drive was adopted for propulsion of the capital ships of the Navy.

Rear Admiral Griffin was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for outstanding services during World War I, as set forth in the following citation: "For exceptionally meritorious service in a duty of great responsibility as Chief of the Bureau of Steam Engineering in connection with the design, building and upkeep of machinery for new vessels and vessels in commission."

In addition, the French Government bestowed upon him the dignity of Grand Officer of the National Order of the Legion of Honor, with the accompanying rank of Commander. He also held the Sampson Medal (USS MAYFLOWER, May 14, 1898); the Spanish Campaign Medal; and the World War I Victory Medal.

Admiral Griffin's wife was the former Helena Laubey. He is survived by a son, Vice Admiral Robert Melville Griffin, USN, Ret.

