

JOSHUA BAKER.

NO. 212. CLASS OF 1819.

Died, April 15, 1885, at Lyme, Conn., aged 86.

JUDGE JOSHUA BAKER was born in the last century, March 23d, 1799, near Washington, Mason County, Kentucky, while the Father of his Country was still living and making earnest efforts for founding this Military Academy, created by the law of March 16, 1802. Baker was consequently three years older than this noble institution, and its senior surviving graduate April 15, 1885, when he died at Lyme, Conn., at the advanced age of 86.

After receiving a good elementary education at Lexington Academy, Kentucky, young Baker entered the Military Academy, October 25, 1817, and was graduated therefrom July 1, 1819, tenth in his class, though, at the time, being fourth in the second class, he having passed through all the courses of instruction in less than two years. His professor—the veteran Colonel Mansfield—in attestation of his superior talents, gave him, December 3d, 1819, the following testimonial:

“The bearer of this, Mr. Joshua Baker, is one of those young gentlemen who have lately finished their course of studies at the Military Academy, and who, in consequence, have been commissioned by the government of the United States.

“During the last year Mr. Baker was under my immediate tuition in the studies of natural and experimental philosophy. With a vigor and strength of mind possessed by few, and a precision of thought and language not less rare, his acquirements, from their application to that science, were luminous and extensive. He has accordingly been selected, from a class consisting of an extraordinary number of young men of brilliant talents, as one of the honorary five, who have the highest standing assigned to merit. A consideration which adds still more to this is, that Mr. Baker, though pre-eminent in the whole course of studies pursued in this Academy, has rendered himself so in the short time of two years, or half that which is allowed and allotted to students in general. The moral qualities of this young gentleman, I have every reason to believe, are not inferior to his high intellectual en-

dowments; and I am persuaded that he is calculated to shine in any situation of life where such qualities are distinguished."

Upon graduation Baker was promoted a Second Lieutenant in the Corps of Artillery, and, after the usual leave of absence, was ordered back to West Point, at the request of Colonel Mansfield, to be the First Assistant Professor in the Department of Natural and Experimental Philosophy. At the end of the academic term he tendered his resignation from the army, which was accepted, to take effect October 31, 1820.

Baker's career in civil life is given in my Biographical Register of the Graduates of the Military Academy, as follows, viz:

"Counsellor at law in Louisiana, 1822-29 and 1832-38; Engineer of Plaquemine Navigation Company, Louisiana, 1827-29; Parish Judge and (*ex officio*) Judge of Probate, Louisiana, 1829-32; appointed United States Surveyor-General for Louisiana March 3, 1831, (declined); Assistant Engineer of the State of Louisiana, 1833-38; Director of the the Board of Public Works of the State of Louisiana, 1840-45; Aide-de-Camp, with the rank of Major, to Major-General Overton, 1826; Colonel, Louisiana Militia, 1826-29, and Captain of Cavalry, 1846-51; Member of the Board of Visitors to the United States Military Academy, 1853; Sugar-planter, St. Mary's parish, Louisiana, 1829-75; Military Governor of the State of Louisiana, 1868."

Though living, during the whole period of the Rebellion of 1861-6, in a seceding State, he continued faithful to the flag of the Union under which he had been educated, and during the period of reconstruction was the zealous and faithful Governor of his state.

Judge Baker was a sound lawyer, a skillful engineer, a successful planter, a genial companion, a warm-hearted friend, and a true patriot. We all know his deep interest in the welfare of the Military Academy, and his constant presence at the reunions of this Association, over which his modesty prevented his presiding, though its senior member and president for several years.

GEORGE W. CULLUM,
Bvt. Maj.-Gen. U. S. A.