

Bennington Follows Battle Tradition

At least twice in the history of our country the name BENNINGTON has been associated with battle.

The Battle of Bennington was one of the most important of the American Revolution. In denying supplies to the British, it contributed largely to the eventual surrender of General Burgoyne's army at Saratoga and the defeat of the British invasion from the North.

At the end of July in 1777, Burgoyne had reached Fort Edward, with good prospects of joining forces with another British army moving north from New York. Had this happened, the Colonies would have been cut in two. The Declaration of Independence, signed the previous year, might have been a lost cause.

The British were in great need of provisions, and they ordered Colonel Baum to Bennington with 600 men to capture them. Baum and his men were securely dug in before the town and making plans for the capture when a unit of Vermont farmers under General Stark descended upon them on 16 August 1777.

Although untrained and armed only with rifles, the farmers stormed the British positions and after bitter hand-to-hand fighting forced their surrender. British reinforcements arrived, but Stark attacked and drove them off.

In that battle the Green Mountain Boys car-



BENNINGTON FLAG

ried a flag strikingly similar to our present Stars and Striped. On a field of blue, surrounding the figure "76" it bore 13 stars. There were also 13 red and white stripes representing the Colonies. It has been asserted, but never proved, that the Bennington Battle Flag was the true forerunner of the Colors.

The first U.S.S. BENNINGTON was a gunboat rigged as a three-masted schooner.

She was launched 3 June 1890 and commissioned 30 June 1891. She carried six 6-inch guns and a complement of 181 men. Her displacement was 1700 tons and length 230 feet.

It was the first U.S.S. BENNINGTON which, under orders, took possession of Wake Island for the United States in 1899 and surveyed the port of San Uliis d'Apra on the Island of Guam. It was this ship which took part in the operations of General Arthur MacArthur, father of General Douglas MacArthur, during the Philippine Insurrection, and supported the landings of U.S. troops with her guns.

The second U.S.S. BENNINGTON, Essex class carrier CV-20, now joins the greatest fleet in the history of the world to fight for freedom and to add new laurels to a great battle name.

The principal address at the commissioning ceremony was delivered by the Hon. Artemus L. Gates, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air.

