

## **LOYALIST HALL OF HONOUR INDUCTEE: Lt. Col. EDWIN ALBERT BAKER CC OBE, MC, UE**

Edwin Albert Baker was born in Ernestown Township on January 9, 1893. He attended Queens University in Kingston and graduated as an electrical engineer in 1914. He enlisted as a Lieutenant with the 6<sup>th</sup> Field Company of the Royal Canadian Engineers in Ottawa on February 8, 1915 and sailed for overseas in April. Less than one month after arriving in France in September 1915, Baker was totally blinded when struck by a sniper's bullet. Baker was awarded the Military Cross on January 14, 1916 and the French Croix de Guerre in March of 1916. After his initial treatment, he was sent to St. Dunstan's Hospital for the War Blinded in London run by Sir Arthur Pearson. It was there that Baker learned various skills to facilitate his return to society, such as reading braille and typing. While at St. Dunstan's, Sir Arthur Pearson was amazed at the unprecedented recovery and ability that Baker had in coping with his visual impairment. He returned to Canada in August of 1916. He continued to study braille, typing and business administration and in addition to this work, he also did wood carving, fencing and skulling.

Baker was a life-long advocate for the visually impaired. In 1918 he helped to found the Canadian National Institute for the Blind along with six other individuals and was appointed as Vice-President, serving in that position until 1920 when he was made the Managing Director and General Director. During his service in this role until retirement in 1962, Baker raised awareness of the challenges and triumphs of the blind throughout the world. For his efforts, Baker was bestowed honorary doctorates from Queen's University and the University of Toronto, he was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) in 1935, and a recipient of the French Croix de Guerre and received the Order of Canada in 1967. In 1949 he founded the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind which still operates in Toronto as the World Blind Union. He received many awards for his work including the American Association for the Blind's Migel Medal and the Helen Keller Award for Distinguished Service to the Blind.

He was married on December 16, 1919 in Toronto to Jessie Robinson and they had three sons and a daughter. On his retirement from the CNIB, he moved back to his ancestral home. Baker died in Collins Bay on April 7, 1968 and was buried in Cataraqui Cemetery, Kingston, Ontario. An Ontario Historic Site marker was erected in his memory along the Loyalist Parkway. He was a direct descendant of Loyalist Gilbert Purdy UE. Edwin Albert Baker was inducted into our Loyalist Hall of Honour at our executive meeting held on October 14, 2020.

