

# **Bernt Balchen Papers**

## **A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress**



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**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.**

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**Revised 2016 November**

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<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009032>

LC Online Catalog record:

<http://lcn.loc.gov/mm81075922>

Prepared by William Parham and Michael Spangler  
Revised by Manuscript Division Staff

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Bernt Balchen Papers

**Span Dates:** 1913-2005

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1928-1980)

**ID No.:** MSS75922

**Creator:** Balchen, Bernt, 1899-1973

**Extent:** 3,300 items ; 15 containers plus 10 oversize ; 7.6 linear feet ; 1 microfilm reel

**Language:** Collection material in English and Norwegian

**Location:** Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Summary:** Aviator, explorer, and air force officer. Diaries, logbooks, correspondence, research files, and scrapbooks documenting Balchen's aviation career.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### People

Balchen, Audrey S. Audrey S. Balchen research file. 1926-1996.

Balchen, Bernt, 1899-1973.

Balchen, Bernt, 1899-1973. Come north with me : an autobiography. 1958.

Byrd, Richard Evelyn, 1888-1957.

Ellsworth, Lincoln, 1880-1951.

Kocivar, Ben. Ben Kocivar interview with Bernt Balchen. 1972.

### Organizations

Josephine Ford (Trimotor)

Norske luftfartselskap.

United States. Army Air Forces.

United States. Army. Air Corps.

### Subjects

Air bases--Greenland.

Search and rescue operations--Greenland.

Transatlantic flights.

World War, 1939-1945--Aerial operations.

World War, 1939-1945--Underground movements--Norway.

### Places

Antarctica--Discovery and exploration.

Arctic regions--Discovery and exploration.

### Occupations

Air Force officers.

Aviators.

Explorers.

## Administrative Information

### Provenance

The papers of Bernt Balchen, aviator, explorer, and air force officer, were given to the Library of Congress by Audrey S. Balchen in several installments between 1979 and 2006. Irene Laune gave additional items in 1987. Further additions were given in 1998 by Bess Balchen Urbahn and Ben Kocivar.

## Processing History

The papers of Bernt Balchen were processed in 1980. The collection was reprocessed in 1996 incorporating additional material received from 1987 to 1996. Material given in 1998 was processed and added to the collection in 2000. Material given from 2001 to 2006 was incorporated into the collection in 2016. The finding aid was revised in 2008 and 2016.

## Transfers

Items have been transferred from the Manuscript Division to other custodial divisions in the Library. Sound recordings have been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division. Most photographs have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the Bernt Balchen Papers.

## Other Repositories

A microfilm edition of the scrapbooks in this collection is available at the National Archives and Records Administration (Record Group 401), Washington, D.C. Other Balchen papers are also located at the National Archives and Records Administration, and at the Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Alabama.

## Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Bernt Balchen is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

## Access and Restrictions

Restrictions apply governing the use, photoduplication, or publication of items in this collection. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division for information concerning these restrictions. In addition, many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

## Microfilm

Microfilm on one reel was received as part of the papers of Bernt Balchen Papers and is listed and described in this finding aid. This microfilm is not available for interlibrary loan.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Bernt Balchen Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1899, Oct. 23	Born, Tviet, Norway
1916	Degree in forestry engineering, Forestry School, Moseby, Norway
1920-1921	Trained as a pilot in the Norwegian Royal Naval Air Force, Horten, Norway
1924	Commissioned flight lieutenant, Norwegian Royal Naval Air Force
1926	Mechanic for Roald Amundson's dirigible flight over North Pole Assisted Richard Evelyn Byrd in preparations for flight over North Pole in trimotor Fokker <i>Josephine Ford</i>
1927	Relief pilot, Richard Evelyn Byrd's transatlantic flight in trimotor Fokker <i>America</i> ; given control of the plane when weather deteriorated and landed successfully in waters off the French coast

1929	Piloted first flight over the South Pole for Richard Evelyn Byrd
1930	Granted U.S. citizenship by special act of Congress
1933-1935	Chief pilot, Lincoln Ellsworth's antarctic expedition
1935-1940	Chief inspector, Norwegian Airlines (Norske luftfartselskap)
1941-1943	Appointed captain in U.S. Army Air Corps and charged with constructing an air base in Greenland to ferry bombers to England
1942	Promoted to colonel; awarded Distinguished Flying Cross
1943-1945	Named chief of the Allied Air Transport Command for Scandinavia and the Soviet Union; actively supported Norwegian underground resistance movement
1946-1948	President, Norwegian Airlines
1948	Returned to active duty with U.S. Air Force; commanded the Tenth Search and Rescue Squadron, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska
1951-1956	Special assistant on Arctic affairs to the secretary of the air force
1951	Project officer for construction of air base at Thule, Greenland
1956	Retired from the U.S. Air Force
1958	Published autobiography <i>Come North with Me</i> . New York: E. P. Dutton and Co.
1959	Consultant, General Precision Laboratory, Pleasantville, N.Y.
1966	Consultant, Engineering and Program Development Department, General Dynamics, New York, N.Y.
1973, Oct. 17	Died, Westchester County, N.Y.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Bernt Balchen (1899-1973) span the years 1913-2005, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1928-1980. The collection is composed chiefly of Balchen's diaries and logbooks, research papers of his wife, Audrey S. Balchen, and a group of scrapbooks. The collection is arranged in the following series: [Notebooks](#), [Research File](#), [Scrapbooks](#), [Addition I](#), [Addition II](#), and [Oversize](#).

Most significant in the [Notebooks](#) series are Balchen's diaries and logbooks. The diaries date from the 1930s and 1940s and include entries pertaining to Balchen's association with Lincoln Ellsworth's Antarctic expedition, his work with the Norwegian Airlines, and the construction of an air base on Greenland during World War II. Many entries are in Norwegian. Prominent among the logbooks is Balchen's log of 1926 for the trimotor Fokker *Josephine Ford*. Balchen later cited this record of the performance of the plane to dispute Richard Evelyn Byrd's claim to have flown the same plane over the North Pole. The Notebooks series also includes autobiographical notes and writings pertaining to his activities in support of the Norwegian underground resistance during World War II.

The [Research File](#) contains papers generated by Audrey S. Balchen primarily after the death of her husband. It documents her administration of Balchen's papers and her research regarding his career. The file includes photocopies of many of her husband's papers with original items scattered throughout the file. Files relating to Richard Evelyn Byrd's North Pole expedition in 1926 contain correspondence with Byrd and Balchen's notes regarding the expedition and their later relationship. Other material related to the North Pole expedition is found in files pertaining to Richard Montague and to Balchen's autobiography, *Come North with Me*, which includes a photocopy of an early unpublished version of his memoirs. Another important file, the military file, contains photocopies of correspondence concerning his military career.

[Oversize](#) scrapbooks documenting the full extent of Balchen's professional life include newspaper clippings, printed matter, telegrams, copies of correspondence, and memorabilia.

[Addition I](#) contains a typescript of corrections and addenda for the biographical sketch "Bernt Balchen: An Outline of His Life," filed in the [Research File](#). A transcript of an interview with Balchen conducted in 1972 by Ben Kocivar is accompanied by newspaper clippings, biographical material, photographs, and printed matter collected by Kocivar as background information for the interview.

[Addition II](#) consists of research files assembled by Audrey S. Balchen about Balchen's life and career. Included is material pertaining to Balchen's rescue operations in Greenland and operations in Scandinavia during World War II; files documenting Byrd's North Pole expedition in 1926 and Balchen's later involvement with the controversy surrounding it; material related to the 1927 transatlantic flight on the trimotor Fokker *America*; and miscellaneous papers. A microfilm reel contains notes for Balchen's autobiography and covers major events in his life before 1949.

## Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in six series:

- [Notebooks, 1917-1970](#)
- [Research File, 1926-1996](#)
- [Scrapbooks, circa 1920-1975](#)
- [Addition I, 1931-1998](#)
- [Addition II, 1913-2005](#)
- [Oversize, circa 1920-1975](#)

## Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-5	<u><b>Notebooks, 1917-1970</b></u> Diaries, logbooks, notes, address books, and technical data. Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material and chronologically thereunder.
BOX 5-11	<u><b>Research File, 1926-1996</b></u> Correspondence, notes, writings, clippings, photographs, and printed matter. Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material and chronologically thereunder.
BOX 11	<u><b>Scrapbooks, circa 1920-1975</b></u> Oversize scrapbooks containing clippings, telegrams, correspondence, photographs, and printed matter. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 11	<u><b>Addition I, 1931-1998</b></u> An interview, clippings, photographs, and biographical material. Arranged alphabetically by topic and type of material and chronologically thereunder.
BOX 12-15	<u><b>Addition II, 1913-2005</b></u> Correspondence, notes, writings, clippings, photographs, and printed matter. A file of notes for an autobiography is available on negative microfilm. Shelf no. 23,139. Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.
BOX OV 1-OV 10	<u><b>Oversize, circa 1920-1975</b></u> Scrapbooks. Arranged and described according to the series and containers from which the items were removed.

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
<b>BOX 1-5</b>	<b>Notebooks, 1917-1970</b> Diaries, logbooks, notes, address books, and technical data. Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material and chronologically thereunder.
<b>BOX 1</b>	Address books, 1931-1932, 1944, undated Autobiographical notes, 1925-1956, undated Diaries 1922, 1932-1934 (4 folders)
<b>BOX 2</b>	1935-1942 (7 folders)
<b>BOX 3</b>	1944-1948 (4 folders)
	Forestry notes, 1917-1923, undated (1 folder)
<b>BOX 4</b>	(1 folder) Logbooks <i>City of New York</i> (bark), 1930 <i>Josephine Ford</i> (airplane), 1926 Various airplanes, 1935-1936 Miscellany, 1917-1937, undated (2 folders) Passports, 1933-1970
<b>BOX 5</b>	Technical data, supply lists, and diagrams, 1928-1942, undated World War II notes, operations in Scandinavia, undated
<b>BOX 5-11</b>	<b>Research File, 1926-1996</b> Correspondence, notes, writings, clippings, photographs, and printed matter. Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material and chronologically thereunder.
<b>BOX 5</b>	Air Force Museum, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, 1969-1981 Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 1974-1979 Apogee Intercept Defense System, 1965 Artwork by Balchen, 1952-1987, undated Awards and memorials, 1953-1993, undated (2 folders) "Bernt Balchen: An Outline of His Life" by Audrey S. Balchen, 1977 <i>See also Container 11,</i> <i>Corrections and addenda by Bess Balchen Urbahn</i>
<b>BOX 6</b>	Biographical material, 1949-1973, undated Byrd, Richard Evelyn Antarctic Expedition I, 1930-1986, undated North Pole flight

## Research File, 1926-1996

### Container

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	Clippings, 1926, 1960, 1971-1996, undated (3 folders)
	Correspondence and reports, 1926-1972, undated (2 folders)
	Printed matter, 1935-1969, undated
	Transatlantic flight, 1927-1991, undated
	Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, Calgary, Alberta, 1973-1977
	Center for Polar Archives, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. 1972-1975
BOX 7	1976-1981, undated
	Clippings, 1931-1991, undated (3 folders)
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BOX 8	Disposition of Balchen's papers, 1974-1993, undated
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	General correspondence
	Balchen, Audrey S., 1973-1993, undated (4 folders)
	Balchen, Bernt, 1930-1973
BOX 9	Innes-Taylor, Alan, 1972-1975, undated
	Isakson, Evelyn Moore, 1972-1976, undated (2 folders)
	Knight, Clayton and Katharine, regarding biography of Balchen, 1949-1954, undated
	Maps, 1932, 1963, undated
	Memorabilia, 1954-1972, undated
	Military file, 1927-1979, undated (2 folders)
	Miscellany, 1931-1980, undated
BOX 10	Montague, Richard, regarding his book <i>Oceans, Poles and Airmen</i> (1971), 1967-1981
	Portrait, 1966, 1979, undated
	Reynolds, George A., regarding "Carpetbaggers" mission, 1978-1982
	Scandinavian Airline System, 1956, 1969-1975, undated (2 folders)
	Sled and tent designs, 1970-1971, undated
	United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo., 1974-1979
	University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska, 1973-1981, undated
	Victoria Films, Reston, Va., 1977-1983
	Writings
	Articles and speeches, 1946-1976, undated
	Autobiography, <i>Come North with Me</i> (1958)
	Corrections, undated
	Correspondence and notes, 1954-1990, undated
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	<p>Uncorrected galleys, 1958</p> <p>Unpublished memoirs, 1926-1949</p> <p>(4 folders)</p>
BOX 11	<p><b>Scrapbooks, circa 1920-1975</b></p> <p>Oversize scrapbooks containing clippings, telegrams, correspondence, photographs, and printed matter.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically.</p>
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BOX 12-15	<p><b>Addition II, 1913-2005</b></p> <p>Correspondence, notes, writings, clippings, photographs, and printed matter. A file of notes for an autobiography is available on negative microfilm. Shelf no. 23,139.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by topic or type of material.</p>
BOX 12	<p>Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., 1974-1978, 1999-2003</p> <p>(2 folders)</p> <p>Alaska, 1950, 1966-1973, 1980, 1994-2000</p> <p><i>America</i> (airplane), 1930, 1950-1954, 1968-1972, 1987-2000, undated</p> <p>Antarctica, 1934, 1962, 1971-1974, 1986, 1996</p> <p>Artwork and exhibits, 1947-1955, 1972-1987, 1997-2000, undated</p> <p>Awards, honors, and memorials, 1927-1931, 1942-1958, 1968-2003</p> <p>(3 folders)</p>
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## Addition II, 1913-2005

### Container

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	Miscellany, 1927, 1950, 1968-1970, 1978, 1987, 1996, 2004
	National Museum of the United States Air Force, Dayton, Ohio, 1969-1982, 1992-1998, 2005
	Norwegian Aviation Museum, Bodo, Norway, 1913, 1926, 1999-2005
	Notes for autobiography, 1975 <i>Available on negative microfilm only. Shelf no. 23,139</i>
	Polar aviation, 1945-1946, 1954, 1964-1979, 1989, 2000
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