



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

General Benjamin Kelsey Scrapbooks

Kelsey, General Benjamin, Scrapbooks
Melissa A. N. Keiser and Jessamyn Lloyd

2019

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	General Benjamin Kelsey Scrapbooks
Date:	1920-1947 1977
Identifier:	NASM.XXXX.0026
Creator:	Kelsey, Benjamin Scovill, 1906-1981
Extent:	0.65 Cubic feet (2 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection consists of a photo album and a scrapbook kept by Benjamin Scovill "Ben" Kelsey to document his life and aviation career. The collection also includes Kelsey's U. S. Army Air Forces "Air Route Manual: United States to Great Britain," dated May 25, 1942, prepared for use by the first flights of military aircraft across the North Atlantic in support of <i>Operation Bolero</i> .
Digital Content:	Image(s): Benjamin S. Kelsey seated on the edge of the cockpit of a Curtiss P-36A Hawk (Hawk 75L) at Buffalo, New York, following his flight from Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio.: October 26, 1938

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

General Benjamin S. Kelsey, Gift, NASM.XXXX.0026.

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Melissa A. N. Keiser and Jessamyn Lloyd, 2019.

Preferred Citation

General Benjamin Kelsey Scrapbooks, Acc. NASM.XXXX.0026, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Benjamin Scovill "Ben" Kelsey (1906-1981) completed instruction at the Curtiss Flying School in Garden City, New York in 1921 at the age of fifteen. He flew extensively, both commercially and privately, before being commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U. S. Army Air Corps in 1929. Kelsey was initially assigned to Mitchel Field, New York where he worked with the Guggenheim Fog Flying Laboratory. In 1934, Kelsey was transferred to the Materiel Command at Wright Field, Ohio where he served as fighter project officer in the Engineering Section and worked on blind landing and instrument flying development. Kelsey served as assistant military attaché for air in London, United Kingdom for a short time in 1940 and then returned to Wright Field as chief of the Pursuit Branch, Production Engineering Section. In 1942, Kelsey was attached to the Eighth Fighter Command at Dow Field, Maine during which time he served as a Lockheed P-38 Lightning pilot as part of *Operation Bolero*, the movement of U. S. forces across the Atlantic to the United Kingdom in preparation for the opening of a "second front" in northwest Europe that involved a group of P-38 aircraft following a B-17 Flying Fortress pathfinder aircraft across the North Atlantic. In September 1942, Kelsey returned to Wright Field and in 1943 was named chief of the Flight Research Branch, Flight Test Division. Later that year, Kelsey returned to the United Kingdom as the deputy chief of staff of the Ninth Fighter Command and in 1944 was appointed chief of the Operation Engineering Section of the Eighth Air Force Headquarters. In July 1945, Kelsey again returned to Wright Field and was named chief of the All-Weather Operations Section. In December 1946, Kelsey served as assistant deputy commanding general for personnel at Wright Field moving up to be the chief of personnel and administration before leaving for Air Force Headquarters in early 1948 where he served as chief of the Control Group in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Materiel. Kelsey entered the National War College in August 1948, graduating in June 1949, and then staying on as an instructor. Kelsey was appointed Deputy Director of Research and Development in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Development at Air Force Headquarters until retiring from active duty in December 1955. Kelsey was the recipient of numerous awards and honors and was involved in the development of, and/or test flew, numerous aircraft including the Bell XFM-1 Airacuda, Bell P-39 Airacobra, Curtiss P-36A Hawk, and Lockheed P-38 Lightning. Kelsey was also a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, holding a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering (1928) and a master of science degree in aeronautical engineering (1931).

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of a photo album and a scrapbook kept by Benjamin Scovill "Ben" Kelsey to document his life and aviation career. The photo album measures approximately 12.25 by 9.5 inches and documents Kelsey's early flying career and other aviation activities he was involved in from the period of about 1920 to 1932. Many of the photographs were taken around Garden City, New York or in and around Connecticut. Aircraft depicted in the album include the Curtiss JN-4 Jenny, Standard (NJ) J-1, Bellanca WB-2 *Miss Columbia*, Dayton Wright DH-4 Mailplane, Irwin Meteorplane C-C-1, Alexander Eaglerock Biplane, Waco ASO, Martin (Glenn L.) MB-2, Ford 2-AT Air Pullman, Air Transport *John Wanamaker*, Sikorsky Standard-Sikorsky SN-1, Avro 504, Sikorsky S-31, Sperry Messenger, Burnelli (Remington-Burnelli) RB-1, Curtiss Oriole, Curtiss CR-1 Racer, Udet U 12 Flamingo, as well as numerous other models by manufacturers such as Fokker, Curtiss, Boeing, Stinson, and Sikorsky. Besides Kelsey, other notable aviators pictured in the album include Laura Bromwell, Charles S. "Casey" Jones, Lloyd W. Bertaud, Walter E. Johnson, Earl W. Fleet, Robert Stevens Fogg, Gus Graff, Bertrand Blanchard Acosta, Harold T. "Slim" Lewis, Harry Bradford Chin, Thea Rasche, Richard H. Depew, and Leigh Wade. The album also contains aerial photographs.

The scrapbook, which measures 11 by 16 inches, is mainly composed of newspaper clippings, but also includes magazine articles, photographs, correspondence, certificates and other ephemera. It covers the period of approximately 1934 to 1947 and documents Kelsey's military career during this period. Aircraft seen in the scrapbook include the Curtiss P-36 Hawk, Curtiss P-37 (Hawk 75I), Lockheed XP-38/P-38 Lightning, Douglas XB-19 (XBLR-2), Curtiss CW-21 Interceptor-Fighter, Bell XFM-1 Airacuda, and the Douglas C-54 Skymaster.

The collection also contains a U. S. Army Air Forces document, "Air Route Manual: United States to Great Britain," prepared by Air Movements Unit, Operational Intelligence Section AFDIS – A2, May 25, 1942 (Second Revision). This publication is a pilot's briefing document prepared in support of *Operation Bolero*. It was designed for use by a Lockheed P-38 Lightning pilot and provides detailed radio and navigational information for all airfields en route (U. S. and Canada, Greenland, Iceland, and the British Isles) including aerial photographs, prepared strip maps marked with the magnetic course to be flown, and general information. It also contains eight large sectional maps, two American Airlines Radio Range and Mileage Charts, and six Ordnance Survey of Great Britain Aeronautical Maps.

Arrangement

The collection materials are grouped into two roughly chronological scrapbooks and one military document.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Aeronautics, Military
- Airplanes
- Alexander Eaglerock Aircraft Family
- Bell XFM-1 Airacuda
- Bellanca WB-2 "Miss Columbia"
- Curtiss JN-4 Jenny Family
- Curtiss P-36 Hawk Family
- Dayton Wright DH-4
- Lockheed P-38 Lightning Family
- Technical manuals
- World War, 1939-1945

Types of Materials:

- Scrapbooks

Names:

- Acosta, Bert
- Johnson, Walter E.
- Kelsey, Benjamin Scovill, 1906-1981

Container Listing

Box 1, Folder 1

NASM-9A16157: [Album, "Photographs", 1920-1932](#)
Language: English.

Box 1, Folder 2

NASM-9A16158: Scrapbook, "Scrap Book", 1934-1947

Language: English.

Notes: The scrapbook, which measures 11 by 16 inches, is mainly composed of newspaper clippings, but also includes magazine articles, photographs, correspondence, certificates and other ephemera. It covers the period of approximately 1934 to 1947 and documents Kelsey's military career during this period. Aircraft seen in the scrapbook include the Curtiss P-36 Hawk, Curtiss P-37 (Hawk 75L), Lockheed XP-38/P-38 Lightning, Douglas XB-19 (XBLR-2), Curtiss CW-21 Interceptor-Fighter, Bell XFM-1 Airacuda, and the Douglas C-54 Skymaster.

Selected items have been digitized for display.

NASM-9A16158-025: [\[Page 25\] Lt. Benjamin S. Kelsey in Curtiss P-36A Hawk \(photo\) with letter to Kelsey from Burdette S. Wright, 1938](#)

Notes: Photograph at top of page shows Lt. Benjamin S. Kelsey poses in flight clothing seated on edge of the cockpit of Curtiss P-36A Hawk (Hawk 75L) (probably s/n 38-2) upon his arrival at Buffalo, New York, October 26, 1938, following his flight from Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio. Photograph overlays letter dated December 21, 1938, to Lt. Benjamin Kelsey from Burdette S. Wright, Curtiss Aeroplane Division, Curtiss Wright Corporation, Buffalo, New York.

[Page 35, loose photographs] Lt. Benjamin S. Kelsey posed in the cockpit of Curtiss P-36A Hawk (Hawk 75L) upon his arrival at Buffalo, New York, October 26, 1938

[Image\(s\): \[Pages 35-36, loose photographs\] Lt. Benjamin S. Kelsey posed in the cockpit of Curtiss P-36A Hawk \(Hawk 75L\) upon his arrival at Buffalo, New York](#)

Notes: Views of Lt. Benjamin S. Kelsey posed in flight clothing in the cockpit of a Curtiss P-36A Hawk (Hawk 75L) (probably s/n 38-2) upon his arrival at Buffalo, New York, October 26, 1938, following his flight from Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio, at reported speed of 353 miles per hour.

NASM-9A16158-048A: [\[Page 48\] "Air Corps News Letter," issued by the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps, War Department, Washington, D.C., Vol. XXII, No. 15, August 1, 1939](#)

[Image\(s\): "Air Corps News Letter," issued by the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps, War Department, Washington, D.C., Vol. XXII, No. 15](#)

Language: English.

Notes: Issue "commemorating the 30th anniversary of the delivery of the first military airplane to the United States Army."

NASM-9A16158-069A: [\[Page 69\] Group photograph with Lockheed P-38 Lightning, July 28, 1942](#)

Language: English.

Notes: Left to right: Col. John K. Gerhart, Maj. Cass S. Hough, Col. John N. Stone, Col. Benjamin S. Kelsey, and Col. James E. "Buster" Briggs (Operations Officer, Eighth Air Force Fighter Command) pose standing in front of a Lockheed P-38 Lightning on the ground, probably in England after the first crossing on the North Atlantic Ferry Route as part of *Operation Bolero*. Print is autographed by each man above his head, and annotated "July 28, 1942" at bottom center.

NASM-9A16158-095: [\[Page 95, loose certificate\] Croix de Guerre avec Palme, January 29, 1945](#)

NASM-9A16166: [\[Page 97, loose photograph\] Group photograph with Lockheed P-38 Lightning, July 28, 1942](#)

Notes: Left to right: Col. John K. Gerhart, Col. James E. "Buster" Briggs (Operations Officer, Eighth Air Force Fighter Command), Maj. Cass S. Hough, and Col. Benjamin S. Kelsey, pose standing in front of a Lockheed P-38 Lightning on the ground, probably in England after the first crossing on the North Atlantic Ferry Route as part of *Operation Bolero*; circa July 28, 1942.

Box 2

"Air Route Manual: United States to Great Britain", May 25, 1942

Language: English.

Notes: U. S. Army Air Forces "Air Route Manual: United States to Great Britain," prepared by Air Movements Unit, Operational Intelligence Section AFDIS – A2, May 25, 1942 (Second Revision). Pilot's briefing document prepared for use by a Lockheed P-38 Lightning pilot who, with three other members of his Group, would be following a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress pathfinder aircraft across the North Atlantic; provides detailed radio and navigational information for all airfields enroute (US and Canada, Greenland, Iceland, and the British Isles) including aerial photographs, prepared strip maps marked with the magnetic course to be flown, and general information. Eight large sectional maps are tucked inside the back cover of the document: two American Airlines Radio Range and Mileage Charts (Presque Isle to Greenland, and Greenland to England), and six Ordnance Survey of Great Britain Aeronautical Maps (Orkneys & Shetlands, North Scotland, Highlands, The Border, North Sea, and Midlands & Wales). Mission was in support of *Operation Bolero*, the movement of US forces across the Atlantic to the United Kingdom in preparation for the opening of a "second front" in northwest Europe (1943-1944).