

Finding Aid MS-004

BARBARA SOUTHGATE PARKER COLLECTION

MS-004

International Women's Air and Space Museum  
Burke Lakefront Airport  
1501 North Marginal Road, Cleveland, OH 44114

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## INTRODUCTION

The Barbara Southgate Parker Collection was accessioned into the International Women's Air & Space Museum in December 1991. The box of memorabilia is from the estate of Mrs. Parker and was donated by her step-niece and co-executor, Myra Bowers. Included was a note to IWASM indicating that "it was her [Mrs. Parker's] wish that these be forwarded to you."

The material in the collection is dated from 1928 to 1948. This material documents her flying experiences in the 1930s and is highlighted by her record dawn-to-dusk flight on December 8, 1934. The papers fill one Hollinger box and eight file folders. They are organized into two series:

1. Scrapbooks Albums
2. Other Papers

There are no restrictions on the use of these materials.

The New England Air Museum holds a collection of photographs from the estate of Barbara S. Parker. In this collection are over 550 prints and negatives. Most were taken locally in New England and New York.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Barbara Southgate Parker (BSP) was born in Newton, Massachusetts and lived for most of her life in the greater Boston area. She died on April 2, 1991 at the age of 83. She was married to Charles H. Parker, who died in 1985.

Barbara Southgate graduated from Massachusetts Agricultural College (now the University of Massachusetts) in 1928 with a bachelor's degree (BSC) in animal husbandry. Her first job was managing the dairy farm at the Framingham Reformatory for Women (now the Massachusetts Correctional Institute for Women).

Her introduction to flying was with barnstormers, first in the summer of 1929 at a field in Bolton, MA and then in 1930 at Greenfield, MA. When the Framingham Airport opened across the street from the Reformatory, she took her third ride and decided to learn to fly. Starting on July 2, 1931, she took lessons in a Kinner Bird, soloed on August 14, 1931, and earned her Private license #23240 on November 14, 1931. Flying the Kinner Bird, a low wing Spartan, a high wing Fairchild 22, and a Kinner Fleet #711V, she built her hours and received a Limited Commercial license on May 22, 1933. As she wrote, it "took me a long time to build up the hours, as I only had weekends, and pay (sic) as I went along."<sup>1</sup> She used this license to fly passengers for the E. W. Wiggins Company at the Rhode Island State Airport, Hillsgrove, one of the first women pilots to exercise this privilege.

The well-publicized dawn-to-dusk flight around Massachusetts took place on Saturday, December 8, 1934. Barbara was the pilot and Margaret "Peggy" Kimball of Lexington served as navigator and message dropper. They were accompanied by two observers, Joshua Crane, Jr., and George Mason, who represented the National Aeronautic Association. Crane also supplied the red Waco bi-plane and assisted in planning the flight. The purpose of the flight was three-fold: to promote an Aero Club of Boston dinner on December 14, 1934, to generate interest in National Aviation Day on Monday, December 17, 1934, and to encourage membership in the NAA. The distance was estimated at 800 miles and the flying time at eight hours and fifty-five minutes. Barbara first flew over each airport so that Margaret could drop messages to the airport managers, then returned for a touch-and-go landing. This procedure was repeated at all of the airports in the state (reported as both 51 and 41). With only nine hours and twelve minutes of daylight it was not practical to make full-stop landings except for the lunch and gas stops.

In 1936 she moved to Stamford, Connecticut, went to work at American Cyanamid Corporation as secretary in the research division, and continued to build flying time from "little tiny Norwalk Airport up atop a hill."<sup>2</sup> After she received her commercial rating she bought a one-third interest in a PT-19 based at Armonk. In 1942 she joined the Civil Air Patrol and took a leave of absence from her job to serve for two-months as a radio operator for the Bar Harbor Coastal Service in Maine. She returned to work but continued to serve as

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Barbara Parker to Nancy Tier dated August 7, 1988

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

an officer in the CAP. In 1943 she was hired by Sikorsky Aircraft in Stratford, Connecticut, as a special liaison to analyze pilots' field test reports to identify repetitive engineering failures. She was present when the first production Sikorsky helicopter, the R-4, was delivered.

After the end of World War II, Barbara wrote for Eastern Pilot, a little newspaper about local airports and pilots, flew a Taylorcraft L-2M, and participated in a New England Air Tour. In 1947 she and her husband moved to New Jersey where she sold airplanes for Powers & George, airplane brokers.<sup>3</sup> When the Parkers returned to Springfield, Barbara bought an Aeronca Chief and flew from Palmer Airport for another year before she sold the plane and retired from aviation.

It was then that Barbara decided to practice what she had learned in college and started a kennel for dogs. She developed a major interest in breeding English Springer Spaniels and founded Tamridge Kennels in 1952. During the next four decades she finished 22 of her dogs finished as champions with one as best of show.

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<sup>3</sup> Heyword Powers was from Rye, NY.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of four scrapbook albums and some miscellaneous papers. The covers of the albums were removed and discarded since they had no archival, intrinsic, or personal value. The pages were copied onto archival paper and numbered to preserve the original sequence. The original pages are protected with tissue paper between pages. The page order of the albums is retained in the first series, Scrapbooks Albums. The reminder of the collection is grouped into two subjects in the second series, Other Papers.

Although this collection spans the years of BSP's interest and participation in aviation (1929-48), most of the newspaper articles and photographs are from the early 1930s. The key event in her career was the dawn-to-dusk flight as documented in newspaper articles. Other clippings and many of the photographs were collected because of their local orientation.

The contents of four albums occupy six file folders in the Scrapbooks Albums series. The largest of the albums contained three parts. Each part was moved into a separate folder. The first part contains 4" x 6" and smaller black and white photographs of Framingham, the airport, BSP's instructors, and many of the planes she learned to fly from 1931 to 1934. There is a good 6" x 8" photograph of Margaret Kimball and Barbara Parker in 1934. The second part includes notes written by BSP (dated 1929-33) about learning to fly, her Aircraft Operators Permit No. A8 issued on 1-12-33 by the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles, and many newspaper clippings of aviation activities in the Boston area and friends like Laura Ingles, Margaret Kimball, and Teddy Kenyon. The third part contains loose newspaper clippings (1928-37) most of which deal with fatal airplane accidents including those of F. L. Ames, F. M. Sprout, and Miss Frances Burnett (1932), Joshua Crane, Jr. (1935), and Will Rogers (1935). Other subjects include Aggie coed rifle practice (1928), recognition of BSP as first aviatrix in Framingham (1931), and her friends Teddy Kenyon and Margaret Kimball.

The second scrapbook was received without covers. It features newspaper clippings of air meets and 99s functions mainly during 1933 and 1934. A third scrapbook contains more newspaper clippings from 1934 including a Norwood air show in May and the dawn-to-dusk flight in December. The fourth album is a collection of photographs of airplanes, airports, and pilots of BSP's acquaintance. Some, but not all, are labeled, dated, or identified and most are 4" x 6" or smaller. There is a good picture of Margo Tanner, 1939.

The Other Papers series includes a General Aviation file and a Civil Air Patrol file. The first includes a draft copy of an article by BSP for Sportsman Pilot, "Dawn-to-Dusking Around the Bay State" describing the flight of December 8, 1934; 99 Club minutes for 3-13-37 meeting with vote to send good wishes to Amelia Earhart; and a 15th anniversary [of 99s] commemorative booklet. The second contains two undated photographs of CAP groups (one 8" x 10", one 6" x 8"), four certificates to BSP for serving as Radio Operator (8/26/42 - 10/2/42), appointments as Second Lieutenant (11/9/44) and First Lieutenant (1/18/45) and Certificate of Honorable Service (5/15/48), and a letter placing her in command of the Girls Section of Norwalk Flight.

## BOX, FILE, AND FOLDER LISTING

### Series 1 Scrapbooks and Albums

Folder 1-1 Brown Scrapbook, Part 1; 1931-1934

Black and white photographs of local airports and training planes.

Folder 1-2 Brown Scrapbook, Part 2; 1929-1933

Newspaper clippings primarily of other aviators and fatal accidents.

Folder 1-3 Brown Scrapbook, Part 3; 1928-1937

Loose (not pasted) newspaper clippings.

Folder 1-4 Scrapbook Pages; 1931-1938

Newspaper clippings of BSP participation in aviation events.

Folder 1-5 Black Scrapbook; 1934

Miscellaneous newspaper clippings including coverage of the Dawn-to-Dusk flight.

Folder 1-6 Photograph Album; 1933-1939

Snapshots of airplanes, airports, and pilots.

### Series 2 Other Papers

Folder 2-1 General Aviation; 1934-1941

A carbon draft of article by BSP and a few items related to 99s.

Folder 2-2 Civil Air Patrol; 1942-1948

Documents received and photographs taken during service with the CAP.