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NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE ARCHIVES
BLANCHE STUART SCOTT COLLECTION

Accession XXXX-0062

National Air and Space Museum
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, DC

Kate Igoe

1997

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BLANCHE STUART SCOTT COLLECTION

1 cubic foot (2 boxes)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Blanche Stuart "Betty" Scott was born April 8, 1889, in Rochester, New York where her father had a patent medicine business. Impetuous by nature, she soon attracted the attention and ire of the local authorities. The Rochester City Council objected to a thirteen year old driving an automobile about their city. However, there was not yet a minimum age for driving; Blanche was able to continue with her motoring trips.

A few years later, she would again make headlines behind the wheel of a car. In 1910, after attending finishing school, Scott became one of the first women to drive an automobile cross-country, travelling from New York to San Francisco. The trip was sponsored by the Willys-Overland Company and the car dubbed "Lady Overland." At the time, there were only 218 miles of paved road outside of the cities of the United States. Scott's trip totaled over six thousand miles, zigzagging between Overland dealers. Scott was accompanied by newspaperwoman Gertrude Buffington Phillips, who did no driving but filed reports as they progressed westward. They left New York on May 16 and reached San Francisco on July 23, 1910.

The trip had given Scott a taste for adventure and publicity. After meeting the press agent for Curtiss, Scott went to Hammondsport, New York in August or September of 1910. She was accepted as Glenn H. Curtiss's first and only female student. Her first flight was on a 35 hp Curtiss pusher fitted with a governor to prevent takeoff on a student's taxi down the field. However, during one of Scott's "grass-cutting" sessions, a gust of wind lifted her suddenly airborne. She achieved a true solo flight shortly thereafter.

There is conflicting evidence regarding the exact date of Blanche Stuart Scott's first solo flight. That date was recognized by the Early Birds to be September 6, 1910. The date is variously given in newspaper accounts as early as August 18, 1910 and as late as mid-October of that year. Unfortunately, a fire reportedly claimed some of Ms. Scott's personal memorabilia during her lifetime. Whether Blanche Stuart Scott or Bessica Raiche was indeed America's first female aviator may never be determined.

After instruction, she joined Glenn Curtiss's Exhibition Team and made her first public appearance in Fort Wayne, Indiana on October 24, 1910. Thus began the career of the woman who indisputably holds the title of America's first female *professional* flier, then billed as "The Tomboy of the Air." During her exhibition career she earned up to five thousand dollars a week, appearing in meets with such luminaries as Lincoln Beachey and Harriet Quimby.

In 1911, Scott found herself in the odd position of inadvertently setting an aviation record. Scott took off from Mineola one afternoon and impulsively flew sixty miles before alighting back at the field. It was the first woman's long distance flight.

Not long after, Scott became the first female test pilot. After contracting to fly for Glenn L. Martin in 1912, she flew Martin prototypes before the final blueprints for the aircraft had been made. In 1913, Scott joined the Ward Exhibition Team. She retired from active flying in 1916.

By the 1930s Scott was working in media, both print and broadcast. She spent nine years in California, writing for RKO, Universal, Warner Brothers and other studios. In a succession of radio shows, Scott appeared as "Roberta" on Hollywood and Rochester area stations, which she wrote and produced. She would also try her hand at stage appearances and short story writing.

On September 6, 1948, Scott was once again achieving distinction. On a flight with pilot Charles E. Yeager in a TF-80C, she became the first American woman to ride in a jet. For the pleasure of his passenger, Yeager included some snap rolls and a 14,000 foot dive.

With her skills and experience, Blanche Stuart Scott was uniquely suited for her next mission. Beginning in 1954, she began work for the United States Air Force Museum. Acting as a travelling public relations unit, she sought to obtain materials related to early flight for that museum's collection.

Blanche Stuart Scott passed away on January 12, 1970. She was a member of the Early Birds, the OX-5 Club and the Long Island Early Fliers Club.

CONTENTS NOTE

The Blanche Stuart Scott Collection (accession XXXX-0062) contains approximately one cubic foot of material relating to the pioneer aviatrix. It includes correspondence, memorabilia and a great many newspaper clippings which have been transferred to acid-free paper.

The National Air and Space Museum (NASM) received this material in 1970. Original order, when identified, has been maintained.

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
1	1	Membership Cards and Tickets
	2	Ribbons and Buttons
	3	Correspondence 1942-1965
	4	Newspaper Articles 1911-1955
	5	Newspaper Articles 1956-1969 and undated
	6	Scripts and Manuscripts
OS	1	Invitation to join National Aeronautics Association Membership certificate OX-5 Club Membership certificate Order of 880 (after trip on Convair 880) Antique Airplane Association's Loyal Order of Wigwammers Certificate of appreciation from Military Order of the World Wars Certificate of appreciation from Worlds Fair Corporation Membership certificate Antique Airplane Association Citation from Air Force Association Certificate of appreciation and recognition from the National Aeronautics Association
	2	Comic strip Hall of Fame of the Air by E. Rickenbacker and Clayton Knight and featuring Blanche Stuart Scott (see copy in newspaper articles for October 15, 1939) Theater placard and program for "Button, Button" with Roberta Copy of 1912 flight meet program
	3	Scrapbook pages (including Early Bird Membership Certificate and 1939 Air Races program signed by Early Birds)
	4	Folded poster from New Gorman Theatre, July 1912, "Manager Miss Blanche Stuart Scott, America's First and Only Living Aviatrix" (torn; serious conservation problem)