

**Byrne V. Baucom Collection**  
**World War I**

**Biographical Information**

**Byrne Virchow Baucom**

Born: Milford, Ellis County, Texas

June 19, 1892

Died: Near Douglas, Arizona in an airplane accident, May 30, 1928

Education: Milford High School, 1915

University of Texas Arts & Sciences, August 1915 - May 1917

University of Texas Law School, 1920 - 1921

**Aviation Background:**

1915 - 1917 Prior to entering service, Baucom worked as a newspaper reporter and linotype operator in Central Texas. Enrolled in Arts & Sciences, University of Texas from August 1915 until May 1917.

From May 8 - August 15, 1917 attended First Officer's Training Camp, Leon Springs, Texas. At Camp Funston, became a Second Lieutenant of the Third Battalion. Ordered to 343rd Field Artillery, Company B. Transferred to the air service and trained at Kelly Field, San Antonio and as an observer at Post Field, Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

1918 Received overseas orders in April. Trained at Issoudun, France. Arrived at front on June 11 where he worked with a French squadron. Assigned to the Observation Group of the First Army Corps comprised of 1st, 12th, and 50th Aero (Observation) Squadrons. As member of First Aero Squadron, Baucom, observer, flew with W.P. (Bill) Erwin, pilot, on reconnaissance patrol and other missions. During the war Erwin and Baucom flew first in the Spad XI and then the superior Salmson 2A2.

In June and July, Baucom and Erwin flew frequently throughout Chateau-Thierry combat. On July 23 Observer Baucom ordered to carry incendiary bullets to attack captive balloons.

During September 12 to 16 they flew missions in the St. Mihiel sector. On September over Argonne. Baucom and Erwin's engine shot out but the pair landed safely. Two days later Baucom's observation report of (of 26th), because of its completeness, was posted in squadron headquarters as a model for observers. The next day after downing a German plane, Erwin and Baucom were shot down, marking the end of their famous No. 8 plane.

After first week in Argonne, September 26, 1918, Baucom departed for headquarters of First Division, serving as liaison officer. During middle of October, Baucom and Erwin awarded Distinguished Service Cross. After the ceremony the pair set forth across enemy lines and scored another victory. Confirmed report of October 18 credits Baucom and Erwin with having shot down a Fokker in Sommerance. On October 30 question arises of whether Baucom became an ace; see Provenance.

During November the big offensive began. At this time 1st Corps consisted of 77, 78, 80th Divisions. On November 3, Baucom and Erwin received a commendation for "efficient service rendered during the attack of/through November 2, 1918. Particular mention is made of (their) comprehensive and valuable reports..." On November 5 in the Meuse-Argonne battle their plane was shot down 60 yards from enemy lines. Battling the enemy, they escaped and reached Allied lines. Day after war ended, November 12, 1st Aero Squadron was at Julvecourt, Meuse sector. While serving in France, Baucom commissioned Captain.

1920 At his request discharged from the Army. During 1920 he was elected to Texas Legislature from Ellis County. Later that year he resigned.

1921 Married Corinne Connor of Lexington, Lee County, Texas. Re-entered air service. In February trained and became a pilot (at Kelly Field). (In June sent to Langley Field, Virginia and participated in bombing maneuvers with commissioned officers of First Provisional Air Brigade.

1922 From May through August Baucom was member of 94th Squadron, Pursuit stationed at Ellington Field, Texas. In September became Director of Pursuit Training, Advanced Flying School, Kelly Field.

1927-28 On January 21, moved to Bolling Field, Washington, D.D. [According to one source, Baucom served in the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps for 2 years.] On August 13, transferred to and arrived on September 25 at March Field, Riverside, CA as Commanding Officer of the Forty-Seventh School Squadron. On May 30, 1928, he died in the crash of a De Havilland airplane while commanding a squadron of three planes from Kelly to March Field.

Honors While serving in France, the First Aero Squadron was credited with 29 victories, 3 (confirmed) of which were contributed by "Bauc" or "Battling Baucom.

Medals French Croix de Guerre October 1918

Distinguished Service Cross October 1918

## **Provenance**

In 1978 Mrs. Corinne Baucom gave the Byrne V. Baucom Collection to the History of Aviation Collection. The widow's gift to UTD was made possible through the efforts of George H. Williams. The collection contains materials generated by, for, and about Captain Baucom who served as an aerial observer in France during WW I. The First Aero Squadron, in which Baucom served, was credited with twenty-nine victories. Official reports list Baucom with three confirmed victories. Yet a question arises whether Baucom became an ace, the designation requiring five confirmed victories. John Peyton DeWey, in Erwin: From The War Letters and Diary of an American Ace (copyright 1928), suggests in his manuscript (p. 35) that on October 30, 1918, Germany arrived several weeks after the Armistice.

Regardless of whether Baucom achieved official status as an ace, his contributions were valuable. Whether cited for an exemplary observation report or "successfully carrying out missions in the face of heavy odds" while paired with pilot William P. (Bill) Erwin, recognition came. As Lt. Arthur J. Coyle, squadron commander stated, "If I wanted a difficult job done, I gave it to Erwin and Easterbrook, or to Erwin and Baucom. They were fearless." Dubbed "Battling Baucom," the young lieutenant was called "the bravest man in the American Army" by Erwin, credited with eight and the greatest number of victories in the squadron. In October of 1918 Baucom received the French Croix de Guerre and Distinguished Service Cross and prior to leaving France became a captain.

The collection is housed in 2 regular and 1 small manuscript boxes. A box and folder inventory follows indicating the location of regular and oversize materials.

### **Box 1**

- 1 – 3 Biographical information
- 4 Bill to establish Department of Aeronautics Personal & Official Papers
- 5 - 6 Observation report 1918
- 7 Messages and orders 1918
- 8 - 11 Correspondence
- 12 Pilot's book
- 13 - 15 Lewis Machine Gun, Aircraft identification, and scale & dimension:  
Photos
- 16 Negatives and contacts
- 17 Portraits: BVB

- 18 Postcards: BVB at Training Camp, US Artillery, and Kelly Field, San Antonio
- 19 343 Artillery, Leon Springs, Texas
- 20 – 22 Aircraft: DH4, Spad, Salmson, and First Aero Squadron
- 23 German aircraft, German Sgt. Karl Thom, and 1st German plane downed by American aviators
- 24 Football championship of Third Army
- 25 First Aero Squadron insignia and silver cups
- 26 Postcards & snapshots: French scenes, U.S. airmen & aircraft, and British aircraft
- 27 Snapshots: BVB and Europe
- 28 Lt. Arthur E. Easterbrook
- 29 Lt. William P. Erwin, Arthur J. Coyle, John F. Richards, Paul Myers, Coyle & Erwin, Coyle & Easterbrook
- 30 Aviators, Observers, and Squadrons
- 31 Snapshots: Billy Mitchell, R-34, and captive balloons
- 32 Map: St. Mihiel offensive
- 33 Aviation Demonstration Center and Flying Fields in France
- 34 - 40 Aerial: France, Germany, and Rhine
- 41 - 43 Aircraft accidents, war devastation, graves in France (note Lufberry)
- 44 Duplicates

## **Box 2**

- 1 Scrapbook
- 2 Cartoon
- 3 Ellington 1918
- 4 U.S. Official Pictures of the World War [I] Pictorial Bureau: Washington, D.C.

5 U.S. Army Signal Flags

**Box 3**

Uniform Insignia:

4 Metal U.S. Artillery 343

1 Metal U.S. Artillery

7 U.S. Army and Flying Service Patches

Chevrons: Private, Corporal, Sergeant

Wings: Observer and Pilot

Rank Insignia: Lieutenant & Captain

Campaign Ribbons

Signal Flags (Metal)

Decoration:

Distinguished Service Cross

Pins:

American Flag in a Circle

Oak Leaf Cluster

Lapel Buttons:

Victory Button

Masonic Badge

U.S. Air Service Identification Bracelet & Insignia

7 Collar Studs

Miniature Metal Campaign Hat

Metal Bar, Rounded Ends

Arrowhead

Unidentified Object with Small Brushes attached

5 Unidentified Metal Objects

Metal Disk Labeled "Come What May I Don't Want To See It"

Barometer Altimerque (Leather Case)

German:

Iron Cross

German Pilots Badge (Taube Aircraft) 1913 - 1917

German Pilots Badge (Taube Aircraft) tie clasp 1913 - 1917

Observers Badge 1913 - 1917

Badge for Overseas Cap

Brass Belt Buckle: Insignia "Gott Mit Uns"

Pocket Knife labeled "Zur Erinnerung" 1914 - 1916

### **Archives Map Case**

Photograph:

Camp Funston, Texas

343 Artillery

Texas University Boys

Barracks

Barracks & Soldiers, Colonel W.S. Scott

Kelly Field, Texas

2nd Air Park

68th Aero Squadron

Pilots of Planes San Antonio, Detroit (Flagship)

New York and San Francisco

Langley Field, Virginia

Commissioned Officers 1st Provisional Air Brigade 1921

Commissioned Officers 1st Provisional Air Brigade 1921

taking part in bombing maneuvers

Aerial: West of Swippes, 1st and 3rd Lines of Boche 1918

Published Material

Maps

Paris

Paris Monumental de Metropolitan

Carte de France des Frontieres

No. 5, Liege

No. 18, Metz

Prints

2 Paintings by Hans Rudolf Schulze

Objects

2 Signal Flag Holders

1 Propeller Section (wood)