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# GEN MS 01 Katharine E. O'Brien Papers Finding Aid

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**KATHARINE E. O'BRIEN PAPERS  
GEN MS 1**

**Total Boxes: 2  
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**By  
Susie R. Bock**

**Portland, Maine  
September, 1999**

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## Administrative Information

Provenance: These papers were donated in 1999 by O'Brien's executor and came with a collection of her books.

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Cite as: Katharine E. O'Brien Papers, Special Collections, University of Southern Maine Libraries.

## Biographical Note

Katharine E. O'Brien (d. 1998) was born in Amesbury, Massachusetts, but raised in Portland, Maine. A graduate of Deering High School, she later taught mathematics there for over three decades and led that institution to taking first place among Maine schools for 20 years in the National Mathematics Contest sponsored by the Mathematical Association of America. Ms. O'Brien received a BA from Bates College, a MS from Cornell University, and a PhD from Brown University. She lectured at what was then the University of Maine, Portland and at the National Science Foundation Summer Institutes at Brown University. Her many awards include an honorary degree from the University of Maine and the Deborah Morton Award from Westbrook College, now part of the University of New England.

O'Brien's poetry was published in many periodicals, including *Saturday Review*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The New York Times* as well as a book of verse, *Excavation and Other Verse* (Portland, Anthoensen Press, 1967).

## Description of the Papers

The Katharine E. O'Brien Papers span the period 1947-1998 and consist primarily of typescripts of her poems.

Correspondence, 1978-1993 & undated; ca 20 items in one folder.

Letters received and drafts of letters sent, primarily relating to publication of her poetry. There is one excellent draft of a letter from Miss O'Brien dated March 12, 1998 in which she sums up her career.

Writings, 1947, 1980-1981, but largely undated; ca. 300 items in ten folders

Primarily drafts of poems with some other writing; includes one published piece (music) and some correspondence (re the Buchwald Interview) and notes on poetry. Her poetry is both autographed and typewritten and includes changes. The poems are arranged by title and if none, by first line, with many of the poems written on verso of

algebra lessons or tests. There are often several copies of the same poem, each with the same hand annotations or corrections. Each typescript includes her name and address, suggesting that this was the version she sent to publishers. Most of the typescripts are of single poems, but there is a more extensive typescript and notes for *Poet's Holiday: An Anthology*, an unpublished book.

Photographs, 1960, 1965, 1987 and undated, 7 items (three framed) in five folders.

Commencements, including the University of Maine commencement when she received an honorary degree, houses and people.

Miscellany, undated, ca. 17 items in seven folders.

Printed material, correspondence, address/telephone book and notes.

Box	Folder	Description
		<b>Correspondence</b>
1	1	Correspondence, 1978-1993 & Undated Writings
		<b>Writings</b>
	2	Art Buchwald Interview, 1980-81 and undated
	3	Music, When I Set Out for Lyonesse, 1947
	4	Notes on Other's Writings
	5	Poems, Drafts, Notes, Multiples
		<b>Poems (By title or first line)</b>
6		A-B Acorn Alexander and the Gordian Knot Alert, see Reward Alexander Pope (2) Allergy, see verso, The Average Man Anagrammatic Anagrams for our times Ark Audio-visual Average Man, The Bacterium Ball-point Bedtime Story about an Elevator

Box	Folder	Description
1	6	Behind the Desk, see verso, The Average Man Bernoullis, The (2) Between the Big Band and the Whimper (first line) Big-city squirrel Body and soul (3) Bojangles (3) Bookmark Bookworm's-eye view (2) Boston Celtics (3) Bridge-Table Sketch Bright Spot B. Russell et al. Revisited (2) Buffalo, N. Y. Bush After Sleet Buttermilk, see verso, The Average Man
	7	C-G Caesar's Wife Capsule Commentaries (2) Chronicle Ciardi-a Memory (2) Clock Clock Poem Collector Conversation Conversation Piece Cornell Cortege (3) Critic Crossword Crowd in a Telephone Booth Curves Cycle Dagwood and Blondie Daylight Savings Daylight Savings Time De Amicitia Dirge For Thee Future Driftwood Fire Eddie Kopek (4) Elegy Elementary (2) Enigma, The (2) Epitaphs (2)

Box	Folder	Description
1	7	<p>Etymology</p> <p>Everyman (3)</p> <p>Footnotes (4)</p> <p>For Dylan Thomas in Response (3)</p> <p>For Sodom (2)</p> <p>Gas crunch</p> <p>Genetic Engineering</p> <p>Ghostwriters</p> <p>Giants (2)</p> <p>Gladys D. Chapman</p> <p>Glossary</p> <p>Grape, The</p> <p>Great, The</p> <p>Guilt Complex</p> <p>Gulliver's Hill (3)</p>
	8	<p>H-K</p> <p>Heritage (2)</p> <p>How many?</p> <p>House</p> <p>Hurdy-Gurdy (4), see also Reel</p> <p>Identity (3)</p> <p>Ideology (2)</p> <p>I Don't Like (3)</p> <p>Infirmary (2)</p> <p>In Response (3)</p> <p>Interview with the King of the Hobos</p> <p>In Winter (2)</p> <p>Jellyfish, why are you jealous? (first line)</p> <p>Kitten (2)</p> <p>Krushchev (3)</p>
	9	<p>L-P</p> <p>Life Span (2)</p> <p>Little crystal bell (first line)</p> <p>Little Green man (3)</p> <p>Lines to a Corsage</p> <p>Little Red Riding Hood's (first line)</p> <p>Loneliness</p> <p>Lot's Wife (2)</p> <p>Lullaby</p> <p>Lullaby for a baby computer</p> <p>Man in Automobile</p> <p>Man in Office (2)</p> <p>Mathematician (2)</p>

Box	Folder	Description
1	9	<p>Me David  Memo on Thrift (2)  Memo to Mr. Frost  Mirror  Moment of Truth  Morris Bishop, Richard Armour  Murphy's Law  Narragansett in November  Nature's storage stratagem (first line, 2)  New England Inn  North is North  Nostalgia for a Major Triad (2)  Note to Vance Packard (2)  Odd Man Out  Onion Peel  On Writing your Congressman (4)  Orchestra  Out of Phase  Owl  Pale Fire  Pastorale (2)  Penguin or me  Ping-pong song  Play, The (4)  Playoff Basketball-Game  Please  Potato Poem  Puppet (3)</p>
	10	<p>Q-S  Quarrel  Rat-race  Reel (2, see also Hurdy-Gurdy)  Reminder (2)  Re: Saints  Reward (2)  Seasons, The  Senior Citizen (2)  75 vs. 86 (2)  Shingles (2)  Shingles, alternate version (2)  Sibling (3)  Six Ways of Looking At Grandma  Spratts, The  Spray-can caveat</p>

Box	Folder	Description
1	10	Suggestions For Car-Manufacturers (4) S & L Cemetery (2) Super Market
	11	T-Z Talking Back to the Sponsor Tall Tale, A (4) Teacher's Calendar Teacher's Reflections on Graduation Day Teen-Ager This computer has (first line) This Delusive Swan (7) This tree (2) To A Face In The Subway (2) To Get a Job To Quit To Quit Smoking True to Form Two Sailors: Shore Leave TV Drama: Bedtime Story (4) Up to Now (3) What Madness Whale of a Tale, A (2) Why? (3) Wild-Strawberry-Picking Winter Piece Word to Man, A Writing on the Wall (2) Winter Word, The Valentine Vocabulary (2) Vocabulary II (5) You did your stuff in wondrous wise (first line), see Lines to a Corsage
	12	Poets Holiday, An Anthology
		Photographs
	13	Bowdoin College Commencement, 1965
	14	House, undated
	15	University of Maine Commencement, 1960
	16	Eleanor Fischer Flannery (2) & Catherine Higgins O'Brien
2	17	Sebago Cottage, undated



**Yearbooks**

Box	Folder	Description
2	18	The Mirror, Bates, 1922
	19	The College of New Rochelle Annales, 1926
	20	The College of New Rochelle Annales, 1927
		Miscellany
	21	Halit, Stella: The Wizeden Harvest and documents, 1969-78 & undated
	22	Slide Rule leaflets, undated
	23	Telephone/Address Book
	24	Notes, undated