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

**Total Boxes: 3  
Linear Feet: 1**

**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 Library.

Restrictions on access: This collection is open for research.

## 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) see Books She Owned at the end of the collection.

## 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.

Books She Owned

Box	Folder	Description
		Correspondence
1	1	Correspondence, 1978-1993 & Undated Writings
		Writings
	2	Art Buchwald Interview, 1980-81 and undated
	3	Music, When I Set Out for Lyonnaise, 1947
	4	Notes on Other's Writings
	5	Poems, Drafts, Notes, Multiples
		Poems
	6	By title or first line
		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
		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

Box	Folder	Description
1	6	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) Etymology Everyman (3) Footnotes (4) For Dylan Thomas in Response (3) For Sodom (2) Gas crunch Genetic Engineering Ghostwriters Giants (2) Gladys D. Chapman Glossary Grape, The Great, The Guilt Complex

Box	Folder	Description
1	7	Gulliver's Hill (3)
	8	H-K Heritage (2) How many? House Hurdy-Gurdy (4), see also Reel Identity (3) Ideology (2) I Don't Like (3) Infirmary (2) In Response (3) Interview with the King of the Hobos In Winter (2) Jellyfish, why are you jealous? (first line) Kitten (2) Krushchev (3)
	9	L-P Life Span (2) Little crystal bell (first line) Little Green man (3) Lines to a Corsage Little Red Riding Hood's (first line) Loneliness Lot's Wife (2) Lullaby Lullaby for a baby computer Man in Automobile Man in Office (2) Mathematician (2) 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)

Box	Folder	Description
1	9	<p>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  Suggestions For Car-Manufacturers (4)  S &amp; L Cemetery (2)  Super Market</p>
	11	<p>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)</p>



Box	Folder	Description
1	11	<p>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</p>
	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
	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 Wizeded Harvest and documents, 1969-78 & undated
	22	Slide Rule leaflets, undated
	23	Telephone/Address Book

Box	Folder	Description
2	24	Notes, undated

3 Books She Owned

Kaufman, Gerald Lynton. Geo-Metric Verse: Poetry forms in Mathematics Written Mostly for Fanatics. New York: The Beechhurst Press, 1948

Sagoff, Maurice. Shrinklits. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1970

Graustein, William C. Differential Geometry. New York: MacMillan Company, 1935.

O'Brien, Katharine. Excavation and Other Verse. Maine: Anthoensen Press, 1967.

