9-1999

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
Linear Feet: 0.75

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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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.


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are of single poems, but there is a more extensive typescript and notes for *Poet's Holiday: An Anthology*, an unpublished book.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.

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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Correspondence, 1978-1993 &amp; Undated Writings</td>
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**Correspondence**

**Writings**

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

**Poems** (By title or first line)

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
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| 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) |
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<td>Life Span (2)</td>
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<td>Lines to a Corsage</td>
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<td>Little Red Riding Hood’s (first line)</td>
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| 1   | 9      | 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  
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| 10  |        | Q-S  
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       |         | Reel (2, see also Hurdy-Gurdy)  
       |         | Reminder (2)  
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       |         | Senior Citizen (2)  
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       |         | Shingles (2)  
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       |         | Sibling (3)  
       |         | Six Ways of Looking At Grandma  
       |         | Spratts, The  
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| 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 |
| 13  |        | Photographs  
Bowdoin College Commencement, 1965 |
<p>| 14  |        | House, undated |
| 15  |        | University of Maine Commencement, 1960 |
| 16  |        | Eleanor Fischer Flannery (2) &amp; Catherine Higgins O’Brien |
| 2   | 17     | Sebago Cottage, undated |</p>
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<td>Folder 23: Telephone/Address Book</td>
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