

Fr. Eric O'Brien, OFM, Papers

Collection Number MS 23
Santa Barbara Mission
Archive-Library

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Descriptive Summary

Repository	Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library
Creator	Friar Eric O'Brien, OFM
Title	Friar Eric O'Brien, OFM Papers
Inclusive Date	1939-1984
Bulk Dates	1941-1958
Call Number	MS 23
Languages	English, Spanish and Latin
Extent	2.2 cubic feet

Abstract

Fr. Eric O'Brien served as vice-postulator of the Serra Cause from 1941 to 1958. His papers for these years relate to his activities in that office. After 1958 he continued until the end of his life to have occasional involvement with the Serra Cause and with people associated with it. In 1958, he was assigned to the work of director of spiritual retreats. In that role Fr. O'Brien continued to speak about Junipero Serra and he continued his research and writing about California mission history. His personal papers parallel and compliment the records of the Serra Cause Vice-Postulator from his tenure in that office.

Administrative Information

Restrictions to Access

This collection has no restrictions to access

Usage Restrictions

There are no restrictions beyond normal handling

Alternative Form of Material

The Vatican Radio Addresses are published in the *Provincial Annals*.

Acquisitions Information

Upon the death of Friar at Santa Barbara Mission, the Friars held the papers until they were transferred to the Archive-Library.

Processing Information

Assembled by Fr. Virgilio Biasiol, OFM during the 1980s. Finding aid composed by Bro. Lawrence Scrivani, SM in 2008

Preferred Citation

Friar Eric O'Brien, OFM Papers, Santa Barbara Archive-Library

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Catalog Headings

These and related materials may be found under the following headings in online catalogs.

California—History

California Missions
Franciscans—American—History
Franciscans—California—History
Franciscans—Mexico—History
Mexico—History
Missionaries—California—History—18th century
Native Americans—California
O'Brien, Eric, 1912
Palma de Mallorca (Spain)
Santa Barbara Mission
Serra, Junipero, 1713-1784

Related Collections

Serra Cause Vice-Postulator Records
Serra Cause Vice-Postulator Albums
Collection of Serra Cause Photographs

Biographical Note

Fr. Eric O'Brien, OFM, was born in Pomona, California, on 23 July 1912. His academic formation occurred at St. Anthony's Seminary in Santa Barbara, at Mission San Luis Rey, and again at Mission Santa Barbara. He was accomplished in German, Latin, Spanish, Italian, French and Greek. After being ordained in 1938, he taught at St. Anthony's Seminary, Santa Barbara, until 1943.

In 1941 the Franciscan postulator general in Rome appointed Fr. O'Brien vice-postulator for the Serra Cause, a position he held until 1958. In 1950 he took up residence in Rome at the Antonianum until 1954 to work on the Serra cause. During this time he exhausted himself trying to complete a doctorate at the Gregorian University. About his work on the Cause he remarked to the Provincial in 1952: "Where is my ministry to people? Next week I will be 40 and I have relinquished my dreams of other assignments. God must have felt this kind of work was the best I could do. Working always alone is poison for me and produces a glacial attitude towards others."

In 1958 Fr. O'Brien was re-assigned to retreat preaching and eventually served in every retreat house in the Franciscan province between that date and 1975. In 1980 he was assigned to Mission San Luis Rey as associate pastor and hospital chaplain until 1989, the last work of his life.

Fr. O'Brien was present in Rome for the beatification ceremony of Junipero Serra in 1988 although he was then suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Fr. Eric O'Brien died at Old Mission Santa Barbara on 15 September 15 1990. He was buried there on September 20.

Collection Overview

From a letter by Fr. Eric O'Brien dated 15 September 1975 and written to the Very Reverend Father Antonio Cairoli, OFM, postulator general of the Friars Minor:

“Your predecessor sent me a copy of the *Codex pro Postulatoribus* in 1941, and I studied it for guidance. Nine months of interviewing some 350 members of old California families made it clear that we did have a cause supported by continuing *fama sanctitatis et miraculorum* (reputation for holiness and miracles).

“With Fr. Maynard Geiger, OFM, I was next engaged for seven years in many trips throughout the USA and several other countries, to do research in archives and libraries. In 1950 the then *Relator Generalis* of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, Fr. Antonelli, said the Serra Cause was the most heavily documented cause he had seen in thirty years there.

“During those years of research, I was also busy giving some 500 talks on the Cause. But my main and continuing effort was the study of every document in search of answers to the many questions given in the *Codex pro Postulatoribus* regarding the life, work, virtues, death and reputation of our candidate. These answers were typed on large filing cards of different colors, depending on whether the writer quoted was Padre Serra or Padre Palou or some other man. Each citation was listed according to the number of the document, the page, paragraph and line. The documents in the files had all been filed and numbered by the diocesan historical commission. When the study was completed, these notes were organized in two collections; the *Articuli, Series Longior*, some 265 pages typed and the *Articuli, Series Brevior*, only 29 pages without references to document.”

Arrangement of Collection

Series 01: Serra Cause Vice-Postulator, 1941-1958

Series 02: Serra Articuli

Series 03: Historical Research and Writing

Series 04: Later Years, 1958-1990

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series 01: Serra Cause Vice-Postulator, 1941-1958

1-00	Appointment as Vice-Postulator	9 Dec 1941
1-01	Field Research Sierra Gorda (Mexico)—Various Notes	1946
1-02	Field Research Sierra Gorda (Mexico)—Diary	1946

1-03	Diocesan Process (<i>Processus Ordinarius</i>) on “Non Cultu”	1948
1-04	Court Trials (<i>Processus Rogatorialis</i>) on “Fama”	1948-1949
1-05	Fr. Eric’s Talks on Radio Vatican, Rome (11 items)	1950-1951
1-06	Fr. Eric’s Talks on Radio Vatican, Rome (1 item)	12 May 1951
1-07	Field Research Rome, Fr. Eric’s Inventory	1952
1-08	Field Research Rome, Fr. Eric’s Roman Diary	1950-1953
1-09	Sermons to Various Groups (9 items)	1943-1956
1-10	Sermons to Various Groups (8 items)	no date
1-11	Centro Juniperiano de Petra, Mallorca	1958
1-12	Serra Cause Inventory and Audit	1950-1958
1-13	Correspondence with Franciscan Postulator General, Rome	1958
1-14	Correspondence with Franciscan Provincial, Oakland, Calif. 1958-	1959
1-15	Draft Text for History of the Cause	after 1958
1-16	Cause Newsletter: <i>Apostle of California</i> , unbound copies	1957-1959
1-17	Strategy of Promotion, an outline by Fr. Eric	no date
1-18	List of Documents <u>by</u> Padre Serra for Diocesan Process	1940s
1-19	List of Documents <u>about</u> Serra for Diocesan Process	1940s
1-20	Re: Fides, for the Diocesan Process (Latin)	1940s
1-21	Re: Faith, for the Diocesan Process (English translation)	1940s
1-22	Re: Fortitude for the Diocesan Process	1940s
1-23	Serra Cause: Press Release	1945
1-24	Other Franciscan Causes for Sainthood	1940s
1-25	Serra Cause – Lectures and Sermons	1939-1958
1-26	Serra Cause – Lectures and Sermons	1940s-1950s
1-27	Fray Junipero Serra, O.F.M., Apostol de California	Undated
1-28	Virtues: Canonization Questionary	Undated
1-29	Biographies and Tributes	Undated
1-30	Padre Serra was a Lover	Undated
1-31	Selections from “Provincial Annals”	1955-1957
1-32	Serra’s Reputation	1954
1-33	Address to Newman Club of Los Angeles	1942
1-34	JMJF – Notes and Lecture	Undated

Series 02: *Serra Articuli*

2-01	Subject Index to Serra Documents	1940s
2-02	Subjects in Serra Documents with excerpts from documents	1940s
2-03	Serra Topics: Virtues	1940s
2-04	Serra Topics: <i>Vita and Articuli</i> References and Sources	1940s
2-05	“Breve Metodo” by O’Brien in photocopy	1945
2-06	(Bound) <i>Serra Articuli Series Brevior</i> , 29 Photostats, Latin, This is a summary of the “articles” composed by the vice-postulator. The articles are arranged in the eighteen categories used for analysis by the Cause.	1940s
2-07	(Bound) <i>Extracts from Serra Documents for Articuli</i> , documents 001-063, c1940s	
2-08	(Bound) <i>Extracts from Serra Documents for Articuli</i> , documents 065-1320	
2-09	(Bound) <i>Extracts from Serra Documents for Articuli</i> , documents 133-234	

2-10	(Bound) <i>Extracts from Serra Documents for Articuli</i> , documents 234-315	
2-11	(Bound) <i>Extracts from Serra Documents for Articuli</i> , documents 316-405	
	The <i>Extracts</i> are the working documents used by Fr. O'Brien for assembling passages from the documentation about Serra. These passages are arranged according to the eighteen categories used by the Cause. These working documents are written in English and Spanish and are both typewritten and handwritten. They were collected and bound together at some point in the project.	
2-12	<i>Articuli</i> —Notes, Fr. Eric O'Brien, typescript in Span., Eng., Latin	1940s
2-13	<i>Articuli</i> , English Version, First Copies, typescript	1940s
2-14	Second Copies of English Version of <i>Articuli</i> , typescript	1940s
2-15	(Bound) <i>Articuli, Series Longior</i> or, the Virtues of Blessed Junipero Serra	1975
	By Fr. Eric O'Brien, this copy is a facsimile copied in 1975 of the typescript original dating from the 1940s, 265 pages, Latin	

Series 03: Historical Research and Writing

3-01	References to Various Document Indexes	no date
3-02	List of Documents from the College of Zacatecas	no date
3-03	Analysis of Serra Cause Documents	no date
3-04	Serra Topics: Century of Serra	no date
3-05	Serra Topics: Serra's Province—Mallorca	no date
3-06	Serra Topics: Missionary Methods Used by Serra	no date
3-07	Serra Topics: Sayings of Padre Serra	no date
3-08	Serra Topics: Scriptural Passages in Serra's Writings	no date
3-09	Serra Topics: Drama, Art and Liturgy in Serra	no date
3-10	California History, 1540—1826, chronology	1950s
3-11	California Missions, research notes	1950s
3-12	Age at Time of Death of Early California Missionaries	1950s
3-13	Rancherias at Carmel Mission, excerpts for records	1940s
3-14	Santa Barbara Channel in Serra's Writings, excerpts	1950s
3-15	History of Santa Barbara Mission, typewritten draft	1950s
3-16	Research notes	1940s-1980s
3-17	Spanish America	1940s-1970s
3-18	Mexico	1940s-1970s
3-19	Sierra Gorda (Mexico)	1946
3-20	California Missions	1946-1984
3-21	Serra Documents	1940s

Series 04: Later Years, 1958-1990

4-01	Greeting from Amigos de Fray Junipero Serra	1963
4-02	Serra Novena	no date
4-03	Script of "The Mission Play" by J. S. McGroarty	1950
4-04	Letters to Dr. Schwamm from 1946 and 1947 in facsimile	no date
4-05	Correspondence	1974-1975
4-06	Agenda	after 1977
4-07	Reproductions of Articles by O'Brien	1970s
4-08	Harry Downie Eulogy	1980

4-09	Images	_____
4-10	Photostat of letter from Serra to Lasuen for 29 April 1782	no date
4-11	<i>Apostol y Civilizador</i>	1974
4-12	Empty file folder titled: "Articuli and Your Own Life"	no date
4-13	Knights of Columbus Recognition	1980s
4-14	Serra Bicentennial	1984
4-15	O'Brien, Eric – Homily Given at His Funeral	20 Sept 1990
4-16	Copy of Letter from O'Brien to Fr. Virgilio Biasiol, OFM	1984