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Guide to the Bro. Joseph Keenan Papers UA.01.046

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La Salle University Archives

1900 West Olney Avenue
Philadelphia, PA, 19141

archives@lasalle.edu

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Summary Information

Repository: La Salle University Archives

Title: Bro. Joseph Keenan papers

Identifier: UA.01.046

Date: 1980s-1990s

Physical Description: 0.5 Linear feet

Language of Materials: English

Container Information: Box 1 (mixed materials)

Biographical Note

Brother Joseph Keenan taught in La Salle University's Department of Religion from 1963-1971 and 1974-1999. Keenan is best known as the founder of the Japanese Tea Ceremony House on the La Salle University campus.

Keenan first became interested in the Japanese tea ceremony while attending a series of lectures and demonstrations at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. After taking lessons in performing the tea ceremony, he drew connections between the tea ceremony ritual and the Eucharist of the Catholic mass. He writes that he was “taught as a Christian that every moment of the day could be a source of grace”; he saw parallels between this teaching and the way that the tea ceremony considers the importance of each movement.

In 1984, Bro. Keenan introduced The Far East Initiative at La Salle. This initiative proposed sponsoring a branch of the Urasenke tea ceremony school on campus, which is headquartered in Kyoto and originated in the 16th century. President Bro. Patrick Ellis and a group of faculty and administrative advisors gave initial approval the project. After the Grand Master of the Urasenke School in North America visited La Salle and gave his support for the project, official approval was announced by the administration in 1985.

A former tenant farmer’s house on the Belfield property was selected as the site of the tea house. It was renovated into a tea ceremony house by a master Japanese carpenter and was completed in 1987.

Brother Keenan used elements of the tea ceremony in his courses in the religion department at La Salle and also offered weekend and evening classes for members of the public. La Salle became one of the first colleges on the East Coast to offer such a program.

When Brother Keenan died in 1999, two teachers kept the tea house open with the help of students. In 2007, however, the university ended the tea program.

Scope and Content

The Bro. Joseph Keenan Papers document his work on the La Salle Japanese tea ceremony house and tea school. The collection includes planning and research materials related to his proposal of the program,

correspondence, notes, publicity for the school, and his own writings on the subject of the tea ceremony. The collection also includes course descriptions for the classes he taught to the public and in conjunction with the religion department at La Salle.

Arrangement Note

When this collection was accessioned by the Archives, some materials arrived in folders that had been labeled by Keenan and some were loose inside the box. The materials that were in labeled folders were kept together and simply given new folders and relabeled. These include the Yokkaichi, Classes, and Tea-House Planning series. The loose materials were separated into appropriate series according to their form or subject matter. These include the General Correspondence, Publicity, Publications, Research and Notes, Certificates, and Date Book series.

Preferred Citation

Bro. Joseph Keenan Papers (UA.01.046), La Salle University Archives, Connelly Library.

Related Material

Researchers interested in the Bro. Joseph Keenan papers should also consult the Japanese Tea Ceremony Collection held by the Connelly Library Department of Special Collections. It is comprised of books and other materials used for the Japanese tea ceremony courses taught at La Salle, including some written by Bro. Keenan.

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

La Salle University Archives

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archives@lasalle.edu

<https://library.lasalle.edu/university-archives/>

Controlled Access Headings

Collection Inventory

General correspondence,, 1987-1997 and undated

Research and notes,, 1986-1988 and undated

Scope and Content

This file contains Keenan's own research on the tea ceremony. It is composed of articles, pamphlets, flyers, and handwritten notes. It also includes materials gathered during his visit to Japan in 1991.

Tea-House planning,, 1987-1989 and undated

Scope and Content

This file contains documentation of the planning for the renovation and construction of the tea house on campus. It contains correspondence, supply lists, timelines, and notes.

Classes,, 1986-1995

Scope and Content

This file contains course descriptions both for Bro. Keenan's public tea ceremony classes and for his classes in the La Salle Religion department.

Yokkaichi,, 1988

Scope and Content

This series contains correspondence that documents Keenan's relationship with a delegation from Yokkaichi, Japan. This group made a visit to the La Salle tea house during an official trip to the City of Philadelphia.

Publicity

Scope and Content

This series is composed of pamphlets and flyers promoting the La Salle tea ceremony house.

Publications

Scope and Content

This file contains self published works by Keenan on the tea ceremony.

Certificates

Datebook

Classes

Conditions Governing Access note

These materials are restricted.

Objects

Scope and Content

Japanese bamboo flute owned by Bro. Keenan.