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Memorial to Rev. Maynard J. Geiger, O.F.M.

On Friday evening, May 13, 1977, death came swiftly to Father Maynard J. Geiger, O.F.M., longtime archivist for Mission Santa Barbara. The noted historian of California's mission era would have celebrated his 40th anniversary as archivist on June 3. The Mass of

Christian Burial was offered in the mission he loved and served so faithfully by His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Manning. Entombment was in the Friars' vaults at the mission.

Born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, August 24, 1901, the son of Joseph and Katherine

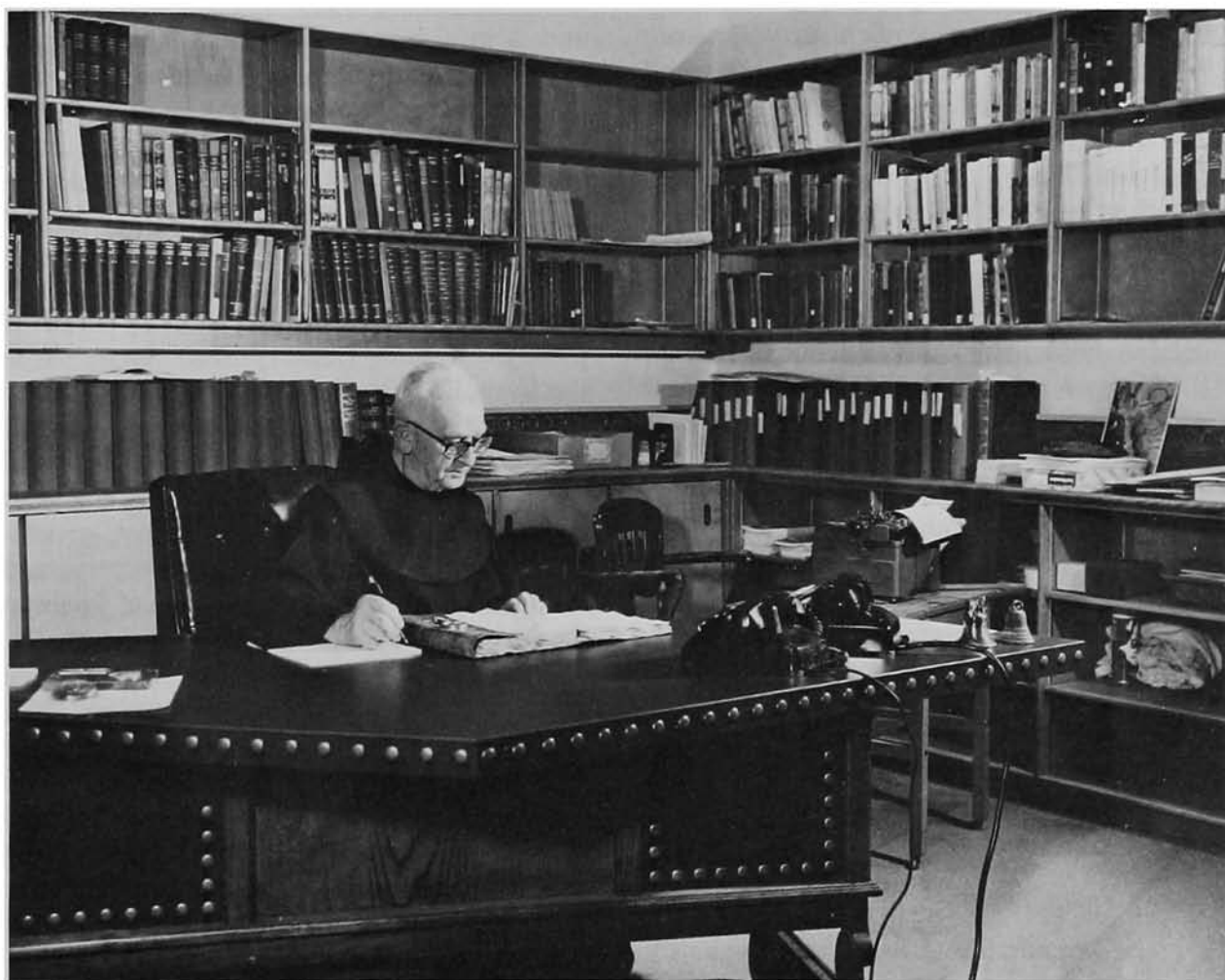


Photo by Karl Obert.

(Kray) Geiger, he came as a youth to Los Angeles when his family moved there a dozen years later. Young Geiger enrolled in Holy Cross School and completed his secondary education at Loyola High School. In 1919 he entered St. Anthony's Preparatory Seminary in Santa Barbara as a clerical candidate for the Order of Friars Minor.

When he was invested with the Franciscan habit, July 15, 1923, he received the religious name of Maynard, which he used for the rest of his life, though his baptismal name, Joseph, was honored by its use as his middle initial in his signature. Upon completion of his philosophical studies at St. Elizabeth's in Oakland, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop John J. Cantwell on June 9, 1929, at Mission Santa Barbara. The following years were spent teaching at St. Anthony's Seminary. Between 1933 and 1937, Fr. Geiger took advanced courses in history at The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., where he received his Ph.D.

Geiger's first scholarly work, published in 1936, was an annotated translation of the *Relación de los Martires que ha habido en las Provincias de la Florida*. Published as volume XVIII in *Franciscan Studies* under the title of *The Martyrs of Florida (1513-1616) by Luis Gerónimo de Oré, O.F.M.*, the book was revised and digested and a new edition appeared a year later as *The Early Franciscans in Florida and Their Relation to Colonial Effort*. He then turned his attention to compiling a *Biographical Dictionary of the Franciscans in Spanish Florida and Cuba, 1528-1841*. Published in 1940, the volume contained sketches of over 700 friars who had labored as missionaries in the two areas. In recognition of his singular contributions to Florida history, on February 4, 1948, the Cervantes Medal Award was bestowed by the Hispanic Institute of Florida.

June 3, 1937, marked the arrival of Fr. Geiger at Mission Santa Barbara as the newly

appointed archivist. He was to serve almost 40 years in that capacity. That record of dedicated service will be remembered by many professional historians and lay people alike, for he was ever ready to serve. It was his habit to answer all incoming inquiries in his mail the day they reached his desk. Each reply was written by hand in a clear and readable script.

As archivist, Fr. Geiger dreamed of a modern facility to house the archive of precious mission-era documents which had been accumulated at Mission Santa Barbara. That dream was realized, thanks to the hard work and generosity of friends and benefactors, when a new archive-library complex was formally dedicated on October 11, 1970.

During the years he presided over the archives, serving each researcher with patience and helpful assistance, answering each mail inquiry with dispatch, he continued to pursue his own research and writing. As a result, ten additional books were added to his personal bibliography. Most noteworthy stands his definitive two-volume biography of *The Life and Times of Fray Junípero Serra, O.F.M., or The Man Who Never Turned Back* (Washington, D.C., 1959). Critical acclaims won him the prestigious John Gilmery Shea Award from the Catholic Historical Society and the Henry R. Wagner Award from the California Historical Society, which also made him a Fellow of the Society. The year previous the Cross of Isabella was awarded by the Spanish government for his interpreting, through writing and lecturing, the cultural contribution of Spain to the New World.

During the years spent in researching the life of Serra, Fr. Geiger held fellowships from the Del Amo and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundations. He also published an annotated translation of *Palóu's Life of Fray Junípero Serra*, (1955). At the same time, he served as editor for the *Provincial Annals*, contributing many important articles to its pages during his fifteen-year stewardship, 1938-1953, and regu-

larly thereafter.

Having completed his work on Serra, Fr. Geiger turned his attention to the history of Mission Santa Barbara. The result was two important works, *A Pictorial History of the Physical Development of Mission Santa Barbara from Brush Hut to Institutional Greatness* (1963) and *Mission Santa Barbara, 1782-1965*, a superb history of the famed mission.

Another major scholarly achievement was published by the Henry E. Huntington Library in 1969, *Franciscan Missionaries in Hispanic California, 1768-1848: A Biographical Dictionary*. This impressive work was hailed as "among the half-dozen most scholarly, useful and colorfully-presented volumes released to commemorate California's Bicentennial."

The last book to be authored by this prolific historian appeared in November, 1976. In collaboration with the distinguished anthropologist, Clement W. Meighan of the University of California, Los Angeles, *As the Padres Saw Them: California Indian Life and Customs as Reported by The Franciscan Missionaries, 1813-1815*, was published.

Not content with writing and publishing thirteen books, Fr. Geiger was a constant contributor to scholarly journals. His bibliography of articles numbers almost a hundred. He also wrote over a dozen pamphlets and brochures.

Up to his seventieth birthday, Fr. Geiger accepted endless invitations to speak before numerous historical groups and meetings. Much in demand, he was a lively and entertaining speaker, compact in his presentation, but always with something worthwhile to say. His keen sense of humor enlivened each talk.

The late W.W. Robinson attested to Fr. Geiger's marvelous sense of humor. He wrote:

Archivist, historian, author, and warm human being, Father Geiger enjoys nothing better than a bit of humor, even at his own expense. A favorite example is the

story of the opening in beautiful quarters of Santa Barbara's expanding historical society. A newly named reporter of the *Santa Barbara News Press*, describing the event, stated that among the celebrities present on the occasion were the Rev. and Mrs. Maynard Geiger. When Father Geiger showed up at another important affair not long after, some good friend—and wit—said to him, "Where is Mrs. Geiger?" The answer from Rev. Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., was "She's home darning my socks."

As his longtime friend and president of the Board of Trustees for Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library, it became my sad task to clear his desk. In doing so, I found a portrait of the man clearly etched in the correspondence he had received in the past several weeks. The bulk of the letters were either appeals for research assistance on some puzzling historical question or letters of appreciation, thanking Fr. Geiger for his help in answering some previously placed query. The letters came from Rome, Madrid, and from all over the United States. One touching letter came from high school students in Glasgow, Scotland, addressed to "Dear Sir or Madam," Santa Barbara Mission, Los Angeles, California, U.S.A., which the Post Office correctly redirected. They wanted "some pictures and information," along with answers to six specific questions. The letter was marked "answered." There was no carbon copy of Fr. Geiger's reply, for such was not his practice.

However, in reading the last volume (Vol. 31) of his personal diary, a diary begun in 1934 and maintained faithfully, even on the day of his death, I found this entry under the date of April 24:

. . . The first thing after breakfast was to write a long letter to a class of high school girls in Glasgow, Scotland, about Juana María, the Lone Woman of San Nicholas Island, reclaimed in 1853. They had read

the fictionalized story in *The Blue Dolphin* and asked questions that could not be answered because [it was] fictionalized, so I sent them, besides the letter, a copy of my printed *Juana María*. Inquiring youth must not be disregarded so I was glad to give them my time & effort.

On his personal cards he had simply printed—

Rev. Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., Ph.D.
Archivist-Historian

Let that be his epitaph. It is a fitting one, well earned, well deserved.

To those who wish to honor the memory of this distinguished Franciscan historian, contributions to The Friends of the Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library in his name will be used to establish an appropriate and fitting memorial tribute. Contributions are tax deductible and may be sent to The Old Mission, Santa Barbara, CA 93105.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY OF REV. MAYNARD J. GEIGER, O.F.M.

Assembled by
DOYCE B. NUNIS, Jr.

From the beginning of his career as a professional historian, Father Geiger was a productive scholar, writing not only for the public at large, but also for his fellow Franciscans. In preparing a bibliography of his writings, a basic dualism clearly emerges: he wrote on the one hand for a scholarly audience; on the other he wrote for the layman. Thus one finds that his authorship extends from heavily researched volumes to articles written especially for the general public. He served both his professional colleagues and the general readership with sustained commitment and production. Regardless, scholarship was always paramount.

What follows is not a definitive bibliography of Father Geiger's writings. All his books, pamphlets and brochures, and articles are listed, but a number of his newspaper contributions are omitted, as are reviews of books. Most of the newspaper articles excluded are in the form of "news releases" rather than articles devoted in depth to a given subject. Less than two dozen such newspaper pieces have not been included. Other than

those omissions, the bibliography is complete.

Several matters require comment for clarity in respect to the bibliography. First, Father Geiger wrote a large number of articles for two publications that may cause some confusion for a potential user. The *Western Tertiary* survived under that title from the date of its first issue, May-June, 1938, until the end of volume seven, January-February, 1950. During the last three years of publication under that title, Father Geiger served as a contributing editor. Beginning with volume eight, the publication was rechristened *The Way*, which was altered in 1960 to *Way/Catholic Viewpoints*. (*The Way* has been consistently used in citations for the latter title.)

After the latter change, Father Geiger began to contribute a column called "Western Vignette." Since all of these columns were given subtitles (with one exception), these items have been listed as such in the bibliography.

Father Geiger served for fifteen years as editor of the *Provincial Annals*, during which

time he made extensive contributions to that journal. These titles have been listed under a separate category. This grouping, under the title of the journal, follows the listing of articles he contributed to other periodicals. It was thought that this manner of organization would shorten a multitude of titles and yet provide the reader with a useful catalog of his articles in the *Provincial Annals*.

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PROVINCIAL ANNALS

In the fall of 1938, Father Geiger was appointed editor of this newly formed publication, a periodical for circulation in the Franciscan Province of St. Barbara. He served in that editorial capacity for fifteen years. Many articles were not signed, but were authored by him. These have been carefully identified. The periodical was first mimeographed, but beginning with volume 10 (July 1947) it was subsequently printed and circulated to Franciscans throughout the United States. Father Geiger's contributions to this periodical were as follows:

Provincial Annals 1 (October 1938):

- Foreword, pp. 1-2.
- The New Provincialate, Oakland, Calif., pp. 2-3.
- Golden Jubilee of St. Joseph's Church, Los Angeles, pp. 3-7.
- St. Mary's High School, Phoenix, pp. 8-9.
- Serra Anniversary, pp. 8-9.
- Short Notices, pp. 15-19.

Provincial Annals 1 (January 1939):

- History of St. Mary's Parish, Phoenix. Dedication of High School, pp. 1-7.
- Fray Marcos de Niza Goes Automobile Riding, p. 9.
- St. Francis Honored in San Francisco, pp. 10-11.

California's First Author Honored (Palóu), pp. 11-12.

- Montecito's Church Consecrated, pp. 16-19.
- St. Barbara's Parish, Old Mission, pp. 23-24.
- Old Mission Santa Barbara, pp. 24-26.
- Old Mission Archives of Value to Students, pp. 26-27.
- Old Town San Diego, pp. 31-32.
- Work of Early Franciscan Padres Discovered in San Diego, pp. 32-33.
- St. Joseph's Hospital, Orange, Calif., pp. 33-34.
- Old Mission College Student Returns to His Alma Mater, pp. 34-37.
- Items, pp. 41-49.

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- Old Mission Santa Barbara, Calif., pp. 16-21.
- Those Birds Again Down Capistrano Way, pp. 50-52.
- Items, pp. 52-59.

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- The Renaissance of San Miguel, the Mission of the Highway, pp. 5-7.
- Building and Alterations at St. Anthony's Seminary, Santa Barbara, pp. 5-7.
- Old Mission Santa Barbara, pp. 10-15.
- Arizona Gleanings, pp. 15-20.
- Garcés Statue Dedicated, Bakersfield, Calif., May, 1939, pp. 20-24.
- Mission San Antonio, Pala, Calif., pp. 38-39.
- St. Raphael's Parish, Goleta, Calif., pp. 39-42.
- In Praise of the Spanish Mission Friars, pp. 42-44.
- Franciscans in the Sacramento Area During Old Mission Days, pp. 44-47.
- The Shades of a Hare, pp. 49-50.
- Father Guadalupe del Río (1854-1939), pp. 50-53.
- Brother Theodore Deunisch (1870-1939), pp. 54-55.
- Items, pp. 55-60.
- An Unsung Historian of the Province of Santa Barbara [Fr. Theodore Arentz], pp. 62-63.
- The Franciscan College, Santa Barbara, Calif., 1868-1877, pp. 63-70.

Provincial Annals 2 (October 1939):

- The Silver Jubilee of Our Province of Santa Barbara, pp. 1-3.

- The Very Rev. Novatus Benzing, O.F.M. (1869-1939), pp. 4-10.
 St. Joseph Apache Mission, Mescalero, New Mexico, pp. 15-18.
 Old Mission Santa Barbara, pp. 23-26.
 Mary Star of the Sea Parish, Oceanside, Calif., pp. 42-44.
 Golden Jubilee of St. Joseph's Hospital, San Francisco, Calif., pp. 55-56.
 The Rev. Edward Lunney, O.F.M. (1870-1939), pp. 55-60.
 Dr. James Alexander Robertson (1873-1939), pp. 60-64.
 Mrs. James McGrath (1887-1939), pp. 64-65.
 Items, pp. 65-68.
- Provincial Annals 2 (January 1940):
 Sixth Triennial Convention of the III Order, Phoenix, Arizona, pp. 8-16.
 The Franciscans on the Oregon Frontier (1907-1923), Burns and Hood River, pp. 16-21.
 Who Built Mission San Xavier del Bac?, p. 27.
 Old Mission Santa Barbara, pp. 27-33.
 The Rededication of Old Mission San Miguel, pp. 53-55.
 Items, pp. 63-66.
 The Franciscan College, Santa Barbara, Calif., 1868-1877, pp. 68-70.
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 History of St. Anthony's Parish, Tigard, Oregon, pp. 5-9.
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 The Rev. Benedict Bartholme, O.F.M. (1892-1940), pp. 57-60.
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