Guide to the Papers of

P. H. Polk

Prepared by Dana Chandler, 2011

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**Tuskegee University**

**Archives**

**Tuskegee, AL 36088**

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**Collection Summary**

**Creator:** Tuskegee University Archives

**Title:** Papers of Prentiss H. Polk

**Dates:** 1976-1985

**Quantity:** .666 cubic feet

**Identification:**

**Abstract: Prentiss H. Polk** documented life in the Alabama Black Belt, while he served as a teacher and the official Photographer for Tuskegee Institute for nearly 50 years.

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**Administrative Information**

**Preferred Citation**

Papers of Prentiss H. Polk (1874-1950)

**Acquisition Information**

No information available

**Processing Information**

The papers were received for processing in various containers, with the documents in folders prepared by archivist Daniel Williams. From their arrangement in the containers, the folders were not arranged any particular order. Many of the folders were not labeled, or were mislabeled in reference to their actual contents.

In processing the collection, original folders were replaced with acid-free folders. Folders were labeled, either following the original labeling, or in the case of missing or incorrect labels were assigned folder titles. All metal fasteners were removed.

**Index Terms**

The papers are indexed under the following headings in the Tuskegee University Library’s online catalog. Researchers seeking materials about related subjects, persons, organizations or places should search the catalog using these headings.

**Subjects:**

African-Americans -- Alabama -- History

African-American photographers -- History

Portrait Photography -- United States

**Persons:**

Prentiss H. Polk

**Biography**

Prentiss H. Polk (1898-1984) was born in Bessemer, Alabama. At the age of eighteen he came to Tuskegee Institute hoping to study art. He eventually studied photography under noted Black photographer C.M. Battey. After finishing Tuskegee, Mr. Polk apprenticed with Chicago photographer Fred Jensen. He returned to Tuskegee in 1927, joined the Photo Department Faculty in 1928 and became Department Head in 1933. From 1939 until his death he was the official photographer for Tuskegee Institute.

**Scope and Contents**

The papers of Prentiss H. Polk consist of documents spanning 1975-1985, and include documents concerning exhibitions of Polk’s photographs.

**Arrangement**

The papers are arranged into one series.

**Restrictions**

**Restrictions on Access**

There are no restrictions on access to these papers.

**Restrictions on Use**

Researchers are responsible for addressing copyright issues on materials not in the public domain.

**Inventory**

**Box Folder**

1 1 Autographed Catalog Listing P. H. Polk April 25, 1976

1 2 1985 Josephite Black Arts Calendar “P. H. Polk- The Man and His Works”

1 3 Grants Application for P. H. Polk Collection

1 4 Letters and Correspondence to contributors of the P. H. Polk Room 1985

1 5 Letters from Good and Super and P. H. Polk Agreement

1 6 Letter to Dr. Payton from University of Delaware P. H. Polk Exhibit

1 7 Newspaper Clipping “Eloquence with Warmth”

1 8 Newspaper Clippings P. H. Polk

1 9 P. H. Polk Exhibit Catalog Autographed to Danny Williams

1 10 P. H. Polk “Lest You Forget”

1 11 Take My Picture, Mr. Polk’ by Pearl Cleage Lomax Forrest Avenue Consortium December 1979

**Box Folder**

2 1 [The Legacy of an Artist-The Contributions of P. H. Polk to Tuskegee University] by Daniel Williams

2 2 1985 Josephite Black Artist Calendar [The Man and His Work]

2 3 Alabama Canter for Higher Education Statewide Oral History Project

2 4 Program [Alpha IX Zeta Chapter and Theta Beta Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. present An Exhibit of Photographs by P.H. Polk ]

2 5 Booklet [The papers of African American Artists Archives of American Art]

2 6 Correspondences from Louise Hutchinson (1 of 2)

2 7 Correspondences from Louise Hutchinson (2 of 2)

2 8 Envelop from George Eastman of Eastman Kodak, Co.

2 9 Letters to Daniel Williams from C.G. Gomillion

2 10 Letters from Dr. Payton to the Smithsonian Institute Traveling Exhibition

Services

2 11 Letters from Jefferson Herring

2 12 Letters from the Anacostia Museum to Daniel Williams

2 13 Letters from the national Air and Space Museum

2 14 Letters from the National Geographic Magazine to Daniel Williams

2 15 Letters to Nexus National Endowment of the Arts

1 16 Letters to South Light Studio from Daniel Williams

1 17 Letters to the Anacostia Museum from Daniel Williams

2 18 Letters to the National Museum of American History from Daniel Williams

2 19 Letters to the Smithsonian Institute

1 20 [Listing of P.H. Polk Negatives Boxes A-E and 4-8]

2 21 Miscellaneous Copies of Photographs

2 22 Miscellaneous Correspondences [Polk Exhibition]

2 23 Newspaper Clippings [P. H. Polk]

1 24 P. H. Polk [As I Knew Him] by Daniel Williams

2 25 Program [A Memorial Service- P. H. Polk 1984]

2 26 [Student Handbook for the Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man’ by the Youth Program and Scholarship, The Boys of Yesteryears, Inc.]

2 27 Talk for the Albin O. Kuhn Library and Gallery on P. H. Polk