

P. H. Polk Collection

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History
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Summary Information

Repository	Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History
Creator - Photographer	Polk, P.H. , 1898-1984
Title	P. H. Polk Collection
Date [bulk]	Bulk, 1927-1940
Date [inclusive]	1927-1978
Extent	5.8 Cubic feet 5 Oversize Boxes
Language	English
Abstract	The P.H. Polk Collection is a selection of photographs that sample Polk's lifetime body of work. Included are images of the Tuskegee Institute, George Washington Carver, Henry Ford, Lena Horne, Martin Luther King, Jr., Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, and wonderful illustrations of rural life in the southern United States in the 1930s.

Biography

Prentice H. Polk was born in Bessemer, Alabama on November 25, 1898. In 1916, he matriculated at Tuskegee Institute and there became a trained photographer. His documentation of the faculty and students at the Tuskegee Institute, along with his depictions of rural life in the South during the 1930s and 1940s and George Washington Carver, only added to his international reputation.

In 1919, Polk left Tuskegee but returned in 1927. He became head of the Art department in 1932, and, other than a one-year break in his service to the Institute in 1938, he remained on staff through the tenure of four presidents.

Mr. Polk's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. He received many awards in his lifetime. Polk died on December 29, 1984 and was buried in Tuskegee Institute's historic cemetery on campus.

Scope and Contents note

The P.H. Polk Photographs have been organized into 4 series, Notable Persons, Portraits, Rural Life and the Tuskegee Institute. The selection of photographs is by no means complete, but is comprehensive of Polk's lifetime body of work.

The NOTABLE PERSONS series contains numerous photographs of both internationally and nationally known persons, renowned for their work as business people, as activists for social justice, and as entertainers. This series includes a subseries of George Washington Carver images, in which he appears with Henry Ford, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and other prominent persons. Also of note, are images of Martin Luther King, Jr., Paul Robeson, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

The PORTRAIT series consists of formal portraiture that has been organized by gender and then age, when appropriate. Although the vast majority of these images are studio portraits, there are some less formal portraits in the series.

RURAL LIFE contains some posed photographs but does more to capture the working life of African Americans in the South during the 1930s.

Finally, the TUSKEGEE INTITUTE series has been divided into graduation, faculty and student subseries. The graduation photographs are candid photographs of students and faculty in commencement regalia. The faculty and student images are for the most part posed images of classes, departments, or organizations. Included in this series is a photograph of Lena Horne and the Tuskegee Airmen.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

Custodial History note

The collection of photographs by P.H. Polk were donated to the Charles H. Wright Museum by Delano Willis in two parts. The first installment arrived at the Museum in 1984 and the second in 1991.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Tuskegee University.

Personal Name(s)

- Carver, George W., Dr., 1864-1943 -- Pictorial works
- Dawson, William Levi, 1899-1990 -- Pictorial works
- Ellington, Duke, 1899-1974 -- Pictorial works
- Ellison, Ralph, 1914-1994 -- Pictorial works
- Ford, Henry, 1863-1947 -- Pictorial works
- Handy, W. C. , 1873-1958 -- Pictorial works
- Horne, Lena, 1917- -- Pictorial works
- Moton, Robert Russa, 1867-1940 -- Pictorial works
- Newman, Theodore R., 1934- -- Pictorial works
- Robeson, Paul, 1898-1976 -- Pictorial works
- Rogers, Will , 1879-1935 -- Pictorial works
- Roosevelt, Eleanor, 1884-1962 -- Pictorial works
- Turner, Charles Henry, 1867-1923 -- Pictorial works
- Willis, Delano A.

Notable Persons

Collection Inventory

Notable Persons				
	Box	Folder	Box	Folder
George Washington Carver	3	3	1	1-3

Martin Luther King, Jr.

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	3	4

Gerald Ford

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	3	4

Booker T. Washington

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	5	1

Eleanor Roosevelt and Chief Anderson

Tuskegee Institute

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	5	1

Ralph Ellison, 1955

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	5	1

Paul Robeson, 1942

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	5	1

Tuskegee Institute

Faculty and Students

	Box	Folder
Graphic materials	2	1

Graduation

	Box	Folder
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Portraits

Graphic materials

2

2

Notable Persons

Graphic materials

Box

Folder

3

2

Portraits

Mixed Subject Portraits

Graphic materials

Box

Folder

3

1

Box

4

Young Couple

4

Children

4

Women

4

Young Men

Rural Life

4

Elderly Men

Rural Life	Box	Folder	Box	Folder
	3	5	5	2-3