

# Guide to the Leonidas Polk Family Papers

MS 468



compiled by Janet Elaine Gertz

August 1981

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
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**CALL NUMBER:** MS 468

**CREATOR:** Polk, Leonidas, 1806-1864

**TITLE:** Leonidas Polk family papers

**DATES:** 1825-1939

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 2.25 linear feet

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The collection consists of papers relating to several generations of the family of Leonidas Polk (1806-1864), Episcopal bishop and general in the Confederate army. Correspondents include Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, James T. Holly, first black Episcopal bishop of Haiti, and several Confederate military leaders.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0468>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0468>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Conditions Governing Access

The entire collection is available on microfilm. Patrons must use HM 276 instead of the originals. The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

Unpublished materials authored or otherwise produced by the creator(s) of this collection are in the public domain. There are no restrictions on use. Copyright status for other collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

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## Preferred Citation

Leonidas Polk Family Papers (MS 468). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Existence and Location of Copies

Entire collection is also available on microfilm (171 frames on 1 reel, 35mm.) from Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, at cost. Order no. HM276.

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## Biographical / Historical

### LEONIDAS POLK

Graduated from West Point in 1827; ordained as an Episcopal priest in 1831; appointed missionary bishop of the Southwest, 1838; in 1841 appointed bishop of Louisiana; helped found the University of the South, 1856-1860; commissioned into the Confederate Army in 1861 and was made lieutenant-general in 1862.

\* \* \* \* \*

FRANK LYON POLK, B.A. 1894. Born September 13, 1871, in New York City; died February 7, 1943, in New York City. Father, William Mecklenburg Polk, LL.D. (M.D. Columbia 1869), a physician and surgeon in New York City; professor of obstetrics and gynecology and dean Cornell Medical College; served in Confederate Army in Civil War; son of Right Rev. Leonidas Polk, D.D., LL.D. (grad. U.S. Military Academy 1827), and Frances Ann (Devereaux) Polk of Tennessee and Louisiana. Mother, Ida Ashe (Lyon) Polk; daughter of Francis Strother and Sarah Serena (Glover) Lyon of Demopolis, Ala. Yale relatives include a brother, John M. Polk, '96 S.

Groton (Mass.) School. Freshman Football Team and Freshman Crew; Class crew three years; substitute University Football Team Freshman year; Class cup committee; member University Club, Hé Boulé, Psi Upsilon, and Scroll and Key.

Attended Columbia University School of Law 1894-1897 (LL.B. 1897); admitted to the bar 1897; lawyer in New York City 1897-1943; clerk Evarts [William M., B.A. 1837], Choate [Joseph H., LL.D. 1901] & Beaman 1897-1900; partner Watriss & Polk (later Alexander, Watriss & Polk) 1900-1914 and Stetson, Jennings & Russell (successively Stetson, Jennings, Russell & Davis [John W., LL.D. 1921], Davis, Polk, Wardwell [Allen, '95], Gardiner & Reed [Lansing P., '04]) 1914-1943; member Board of Education, New York City, 1906-1907, and Municipal Civil Service Commission 1907-1909 (president 1908-1909); treasurer Bureau of Municipal Research 1911-1913; Collector of Port of New York 1913-1914; corporation counsel City of New York 1914-1915; counsel Department of State of the United States 1915-1919 and Under Secretary of State 1919-1920; Acting Secretary of State December 4, 1918-July 18, 1919; appointed Commissioner Plenipotentiary to Negotiate Peace July 17, 1919, and chairman American delegation to Peace Conference July-December, 1919; served with Troop A, New York Volunteer Cavalry, April, 1898; appointed Captain and assistant on Quartermaster Staff of General Ernst's Brigade, June 19, 1898; stationed at Chickamauga, Ga., Charleston, S.C., and in Puerto Rico; honorably discharged November 30, 1899; vice-president Kips Bay Neighborhood Association 1913-1914 (president 1915), Pan-American Society 1931-1935 (honorary president 1936-1943), and Church Pension Fund of Protestant Episcopal Church 1933-1943; elected vice-president

British War Relief Society January, 1943; chairman American Friends of Yugoslavia, Inc., 1941-1943; national director Paderewski Fund for Polish Relief, Inc.; trustee New York Orthopedic Hospital 1905-1923 (vice-president 1924-1943), United Hospital Fund 1910-1916, New York Public Library 1921-1943 (secretary of board 1923-1932, second vice-president 1928-1932, president 1932-1943), United States Trust Company 1923-1943, Bowery Savings Bank 1928-1943, Woodrow Wilson Foundation 1929-1934 and 1937-1942 (president 1937 and 1938, vice-president 1931, 1932, 1933, 1941), Cathedral of St. John the Divine 1929-1943, Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York 1930-1943, and Metropolitan Museum of Art 1931-1937; M.A. Hon. Yale 1918; D.C.L. University of the South 1928; LL.D. Rollins College 1930 and New York University 1935; created grand officer Order of Leopold (Belgium) 1920 and Légion d'Honneur (France) 1926; awarded Grand Cross of Order of the Crown of Roumania, and Order of Polonia Restituta (1st class); received Heraldic Order of Cristóbal Colón (Dominican government) 1940; chairman Atlantic division Yale Endowment Fund Campaign 1926; on advisory committee Human Welfare Group; member council Yale-in-China 1927-1931; president Kingsley Trust Association 1926-1928; governor Yale Publishing Association; councilor American Geographical Society; on board of governors New York Hospital 1923-1943; member Bar Association of the City of New York, New York County, New York State, and American Bar associations, National Civic Federation, National Municipal League (president 1924-1927, honorary vice-president 1929-1941), The Pilgrims, Sons of the Revolution, Society of the Cincinnati, Southern Society of New York, Tennessee Society, and Church of the Heavenly Rest (Episcopal), New York City.

Married January 27, 1908, in Philadelphia, Elizabeth Sturgis, daughter of James and Elizabeth (Sturgis) Potter. Children: John Metcalf, '3r; Elizabeth Sturgis, the wife of Raymond R. Guest, '31; Frank Lyon, Jr., '34; James Potter, ex-'38; and Alice Potter, the wife of Winthrop Rutherford, Jr. (B.A. Princeton 1928)

Death due to coronary occlusion. Buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, New York City. Survived by wife, children, and eight grandchildren.

*From Yale University Obituary Record.*

\* \* \* \* \*

JOHN METCALFE POLK (1875-1904), younger son of William Mecklenburg Polk, M.D., LL.D., Dean of Cornell University Medical College, and Ida (Lyon) Polk, and grandson of the Rt. Rev. Leonidas Polk, D.D., LL.D., first Bishop of Louisiana, and one of the founders of the University of the South, was born at Demopolis, Ala., on May 6, 1875. While in the Sheffield Scientific School he was Vice-President of the University Club, and a member of the Class Committee at graduation.

After graduation he took a course in the Cornell University. Medical School, in New York City, receiving the degree of M.D. in 1899. He then entered Bellevue Hospital as interne on the Medical Side and served two years. He spent 1902 mainly in Vienna, studying pathology and medical diagnosis. In January, 1903, he entered upon his duties as Instructor in Medicine and Physical Diagnosis in Cornell Medical College. In this connection, he was appointed Adjunct Assistant Visiting Physician to Bellevue Hospital.

While studying in Europe, Dr. Polk became specially interested in the blood changes produced by infectious diseases, particularly influenza, and the pneumonias associated with influenza. Continuing his studies in this direction, he had succeeded, at the time of his death, in making observations of much value, his paper upon the subject being included in the original articles published annually by the Pathological Department of the Medical School. He had already shown himself to be an instructor of great efficiency.

While making an autopsy he became chilled, acute pneumonia developed in a few hours, and from this he died, on March 29, 1904, in the 29th year of his age.

*From Yale University Obituary Record.*

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## Scope and Contents

This small collection contains correspondence and other papers relating to several generations of the family of Leonidas Polk, Episcopal bishop and general in the Confederate army. Of particular interest are letters from two presidents of the United States, Andrew Jackson (1825) and James K. Polk (1848), letters

from a number of Confederate military leaders including Pierre G. T. Beauregard, Nathan B. Forrest, Josiah Gorgas, William J. Hardee, and Earl van Doren, and a letter from the first black Episcopal bishop of Haiti, James T. Holly.

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## **Arrangement**

Arranged by record type.

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## Collection Contents

b. 1, f. 1-6reel 1U	Correspondence	circa 1825-1939
b. 1, f. 7reel 1U	John M. Polk, medical certificates and diplomas	1898-1899
b. 2, f. 1reel 1U	Oversize	1896-1902
b. 1, f. 8reel 1U	"Sacred to the Memory of Ezekial Polk" English	undated
b. 1, f. 8reel 1U	"The Death of Dr. John M. Polk" English	1904
b. 1, f. 8reel 1U	Newspaper clippings re: death of Leon Polk, Ida Lyon Polk	undated
b. 1, f. 8reel 1U	Photograph of Brig. Gen. "Stonewall" Jackson (reproduction)	1862

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## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### Subjects

Clergy  
Families

### Occupations

Soldiers

### Names

Beauregard, G. T. (Gustave Toutant), 1818-1893  
Forrest, Nathan Bedford, 1821-1877  
Gorgas, Josiah, 1818-1883  
Hardee, William Joseph, 1815-1873  
Holly, James Theodore, 1829-1911  
Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845  
Polk, James K. (James Knox), 1795-1849  
Polk, John Metcalfe  
Polk, Leonidas, 1806-1864  
Polk, William, 1758-1834  
Polk, William Mecklenburg, 1844-  
Van Dorn, Earl, 1820-1863

### Families

Polk family

### Corporate Body

Confederate States of America. Army  
(Officers)