State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives
403 Seventh Avenue North
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0312

POLK, MARSHALL TATE
(1831-1884)
FAMILY PAPERS
1826-1981

Processed by:

Gregory G. Poole
Archival Technical Services

Accession Number: 1991.134
Date Completed: March 10, 1991
Location: XII-E-3
Microfilm Accession Number: 1279

MICROFILMED

INTRODUCTION

The Marshall Tate Polk Family Papers, 1826-1981, are centered around the Marshall Tate Polk family of Bolivar, Hardeman County, Tennessee. The papers are on deposit by Mrs. Joe Bowman, Franklin, Tennessee.

The materials in this collection measure .42 cubic feet. There are no restrictions on the materials.

Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Marshall Tate Polk Family Papers may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

Mrs. Bowman reserves the right to first publication of materials in this collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Marshall Tate Polk Family Papers, approximately 84 items, spans the period 1826 to 1981. The collection centers around the Marshall Tate Polk family of Bolivar, Hardeman County, Tennessee and includes clippings, correspondence, envelopes, genealogical data, land records, legal documents, military orders and photographs.

The bulk of the collection is comprised of correspondence. The majority of the correspondence is war letters from Marshall Polk to his wife and his father-in-law, Major John H. Bills. These letters give good descriptions of the Far West in the 1850s and details of the infamous Sioux Expedition of 1855. There are several letters from his wife, Eva Bills Polk to Marshall Polk, as well as from Sarah Childress Polk, widow of President James K. Polk, concerning her nephew's capture and release from Johnson's Island Prison. There is some correspondence from Wilson Bills, Eva Bills Polk's brother; one to Clara Bills, Eva Polk's sister; and one letter from Confederate General Leonidas Polk.

Other items in the collection include an indenture (deed) and power of attorney for Marshall Tate Polk, and photocopies of family photographs and notes made by Mrs. Joe Bowman concerning family members.

For further genealogical information the researcher may consult the G.B. Howard Papers, located in the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

The Marshall Tate Polk Family Papers are an important avenue for the study of a prominent family and more generally for antebellum Southern life and culture.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETH

Marshall Tate Polk

1831 May 15, born in North Carolina, the son of Marshall T. Polk (1806-1831) and Laura T. Wilson Polk

1852 Was graduated from United States Military Academy at West Point, New York

1852 Entered U.S. Army as a Second Lieutenant in the Second Infantry

1852-53 Was on frontier duty at Rancho de Jampa, California

1853 Was shipwrecked off the coast of Acapulco

1853 Was stationed at For Miler, California

1854 Stationed at Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

1854-56 Aide-de-camp to Bvt. Major-General Twiggs

1855 Participated in the Sioux Expedition and was present at the Battle of Blue Water, September 3, 1855

1856 April 10, resigned from U.S. Army

1856 January 10, married Evalina McNeal Bills, daughter of Major John H. Bills and Prudence Tate McNeal Bills. The marriage took place at “The Pillars”, the home of Bills in Bolivar.

1856-61 Pursued farming life on his plantation in Hardeman County

1861 Autumn, a captain of Polk’s artillery in the Confederate Army. Was in the Battle of Belmont at Columbus, Kentucky

1862 April, fought in the Battle of Shiloh, where he was wounded and later lost his leg

1878 The Polk family moved to Nashville

1884 Died in Nashville and was buried in the Polk Cemetery in Bolivar, Tennessee

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

1. Clippings – Miscellaneous
2. Correspondence – Bills, Clara – Bills, Wilson
3. Correspondence – Jackson – Kemper
4. Correspondence – Polk, Eva – Polk, Marshall Tate (father)
5. Correspondence – Polk, Marshall Tate to Major John H. Bills
6. Correspondence – Polk, Marshall Tate to Eva Polk, 3-15-1855 to 8-22-1855
7. Correspondence – Polk, Marshall Tate to Eva Polk, 9-2-1855 to 6-18-1861
8. Correspondence – Polk, Marshall Tate to Eva Polk, 7-11-1861 to 4-1-1862
9. Correspondence – Polk, Marshall Tate to Eva Polk, 12-2-1863 to 4-11-1864
10. Correspondence – Polk, Marshall Tate to Eva Polk, 7-12-1864 to 5-18-1866
11. Correspondence – Polk, Marshall Tate to Eva Polk, undated
12. Correspondence – Polk, Marshall Tate to J.L. Shaffer
13. Correspondence – Polk, Marshall Tate to Robert Wood
14. Correspondence – Polk, Marshall Tate
15. Correspondence – Polk, Sarah Childress
16. Correspondence – Richardson – unknown
17. Envelopes – Miscellaneous
18. Genealogical data – Polk-Bills Family
19. Land records – Deed – Bills, John H. to Marshall Tate Polk, 1856
20. Legal documents – Articles of agreement – Campbell, Robert to John H. Bills, 1851
21. Legal documents – Power of attorney – Polk, Marshall Tate to John H. Bills, 1852
22. Military orders – Polk, Marshall Tate, 1862
23. Photographs, drawings, etc. – Polk, Marshall Tate – Bills family

NAME INDEX

This is a name index of the correspondence only in the Marshall Tate Polk Family Papers, together with the dates of the letters and information regarding their contents. The figures in parentheses denote the number of letters, if more than one. The last numbers refer to the box and folder in which the material is to be found.

Bills, Clara to Eva Polk, 1851, re: family news; sickness in family, 1-2

Bills, John H. (2) to Eva Polk, 1851, re: visit to Philadelphia; visit with old friend; investment in U.S. Bonds; visit to New York; life on the plantation at Bolivar, Tennessee, 1-2

Bills, Wilson to Eva Polk, 1853, re: reasons for not writing; setting up of the new store in Jackson Parish; attendance at a railroad meeting, 1-2

Jackson, M.L. to John H. Bills, 1853, re: payment for land, 1-3

Kemper, Andrew C. to Sarah Polk, 1862, re: informs Sarah Polk that Major General Halleck has ordered that Captain M.T. Polk be released from prison on parole, 1-3

Polk, Eva to John H. Bills, 1862, re: visit to Lucius Polk's home; unable to return to Bolivar; family news; condition in war-torn Middle Tennessee; sickness in family, 1-4

Polk, Eva to Marshall Tate Polk, 1862, re: very anxious to see you; will attempt to meet Polk and bring him home (wounded in battle), 1-4

Polk, Leonidas to Marshall T. Polk, 1862, re: discusses wounds of Marshall Polk, promotion to the rank of Colonel; will make Marshall Polk chief of artillery, 1-4

Polk, Marshall T., Sr. to Clarissa Polk McNeal, 1826, re: will attend the Shakespearean play, Richard III; visit with Uncle Hardiman at the play, 1-4

Polk, Marshall T., Jr. (15) to John H. Bills, 1852-1854, re: settlement of business transactions; treatment of slaves; financial dealings; travel to California; visit to San Diego; life in the U.S. Army in 1850; life and culture in early California; transfer to Fort Miller, California; land sale; life at Fort Riley, Kansas Territory; discussion of slavery conflict in Kansas; steam boating; involvement in the Indian Wars, 1-5

Polk, Marshall T. (36) to Eva Polk, 1855-1866, re: family and personal news; will leave army to get married; life in St. Louis; participation in the Sioux Expedition; activities in the Civil War; life at Camp Brown; troop encampment at Columbus, Kentucky, 1-6; 1-7; 1-8; 1-9; 1-10; 1-11

Polk, Marshall T. to J.L. Schaffer, 1854, re: discusses the honoring of a $500.00 bank draft, 1-12

Polk, Marshall T. to Robert Wood, 1856, re: describes his marriage at "The Pillars"; family news, 1-13

Polk, Marshall T. to brother, n.d., re: discusses devastation caused by the war, 1-14

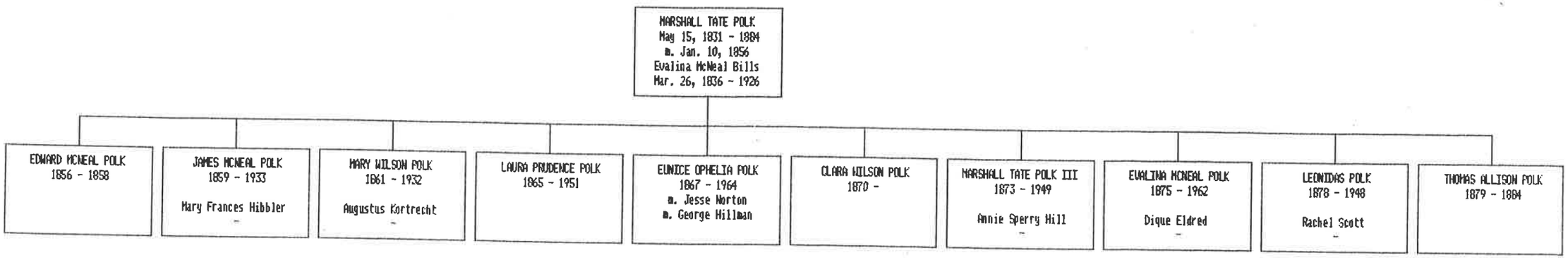
Polk, Marshall T. to cousin, n.d., re: "please do not forget me when I am gone", 1-14

Polk, Sarah Childress (11) to Marshall T. Polk, 1862-1870, re: discusses promotion of Marshall T. Polk; anxious to hear from you since you were taken prisoner; discusses parole for Marshall Polk; will prepare a room at “Polk Place” for your recuperation; family news, 1-15

Richardson, Lyman to Eva Bills Polk, 1862, re: General Wallace will give a pass from Memphis to see Marshall Polk, 1-16

Thayer, J.M. to Eva Bills Polk, 1862, re: will issue a pass to allow Eva Polk to visit her husband, 1-16

Wyman, John G. to John H. Bills, 1862, re: requests payment for a bank draft issued for M.T. Polk, 1-16


MARSHALL TATE POLK
May 15, 1831 - 1884
m. Jan. 10, 1856
Evalina McNeal Bills
Mar. 26, 1836 - 1926
EDWARD MCNEAL POLK
1856 - 1858
JAMES MCNEAL POLK
1859 - 1933
Mary Frances Hibbler
-
MARY WILSON POLK
1861 - 1932
Augustus Kortrecht
-
LAURA PRUDENCE POLK
1865 - 1951
EUNICE OPHELIA POLK
1867 - 1964
m. Jesse Norton
m. George Hillman
CLARA WILSON POLK
1870 -
MARSHALL TATE POLK III
1873 - 1949
Annie Sperry Hill
-
EVALINA MCNEAL POLK
1875 - 1962
Dique Eldred
-
LEONIDAS POLK
1878 - 1948
Rachel Scott
-
THOMAS ALLISON POLK
1879 - 1884