

Missouri State Archives

Finding Aid 3.12

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

TRUSTEN W. POLK, 1857

Abstract: Records (1856-1857) of Governor Trusten W. Polk (1811-1876) include appointments, incoming and outgoing correspondence, and petitions.

Extent: 0.4 cubic feet (1 Hollinger)

Physical Description: Paper

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Access Restrictions: No special restrictions.

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HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Trusten W. Polk was born on May 29, 1811 in Sussex County, Delaware to William Nutter Polk and his wife, Levinia Causey Polk. He was educated in public schools in Delaware and Maryland before graduating from Yale College in 1831. After studying law with Delaware Attorney General James Rogers, Polk moved to St. Louis in 1835 and established a successful law practice.

Polk embraced the temperance movement and was subsequently elected president of the St. Louis Young Men's Temperance Society in 1836. He married Elizabeth Skinner of St. Louis on December 26, 1837. The couple raised five children.

Polk served as the city counselor of St. Louis in 1843 and was elected a delegate to the Missouri Constitutional Convention in 1845, where he served as chair of the Committee on Education. He favored state funding of free public schools and participated in the debates pertaining to banks and corporations. Polk embraced the proslavery and hard currency doctrines of the anti-Benton faction of the Missouri Democratic Party. Following an unsuccessful campaign for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1854, Polk was nominated for the upcoming Missouri gubernatorial race by the anti-Bentonites. Polk defeated Thomas Hart Benton and R.C. Ewing in 1856 with a 41% plurality.

Governor Polk was sworn in as Missouri's 12th governor on January 5, 1857. Eight days later the General Assembly chose him to succeed Missouri U.S. Senator Henry S. Geyer; and on February 27th, Governor Polk resigned. A strong pro-Southern sympathizer, Senator Polk served in the U.S. Senate from March 4, 1857 until his expulsion from the Senate for disloyalty on January 10, 1862.

During the Civil War, Colonel Polk served as a colonel in the Confederate Army under the command of Sterling Price with the Missouri State Guard; and was named by Jefferson Davis as presiding judge of Trans-Mississippi Department in Arkansas. He served in Arkansas from 1864 to 1865 and fled briefly with Sterling Price to Mexico. When the U.S. Supreme Court declared Missouri's test oath for lawyers unconstitutional, Polk resumed his law practice in St. Louis.

Governor Trusten W. Polk died on April 16, 1876 in St. Louis and is interred in Bellefontaine Cemetery.

Timeline

May 29, 1811	Born in Sussex County, Delaware, to William Nutter and Levinia Causey Polk
1831	Graduated from Yale
1835	Came to St. Louis, Missouri, to practice law
December 26, 1837	Married Elizabeth Newberry Skinner of St. Louis
1843	St. Louis City counselor
1845	Chairman, Education Committee in Constitutional Convention
1848	Delegate to Democratic Convention as a presidential elector
1856	Elected twelfth governor of the state of Missouri
February 27, 1857	Resigned to serve in US Senate
December 2, 1861	Absented himself from US Senate
January 10, 1862	Expelled from US Senate for disloyalty

1864 Taken prisoner by the Union and confined on Johnson's Island, Sandusky, Ohio

April 16, 1876 Died in St. Louis

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Bibliography

Aamodt, David C., "Polk, Trusten W. (1811-1876)," in *Dictionary of Missouri Biography* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1999), pp. 618-619.

Biographical Directory of the United State Congress. U.S. Senate, Trusten Polk
[Congressional Biographical Directory](#)

Donnell, Forrest C., "Trusten Polk," in *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri*, Vol. III (Columbia, MO: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1922), pp. 3-9.

Official Manual of the State of Missouri (Jefferson City, MO: Office of Secretary of State, legislative years 1963-64), pp. 6, 10-11.

Parrish, William Earl, et al, *A History of Missouri* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1971-2004).

Shoemaker, Floyd Calvin, *Missouri and Missourians* Vol. I (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1943), pp. 652-653, 664.

Related Materials

Aamodt, David C. "Conviction of Duty": the Life of Senator Trusten Polk." Master's Thesis, Central Missouri State University, 1994.

Kansas City Public Library, Missouri Valley Special Collections, holds:

James K. Akard Papers, 1861-1917

Includes correspondence with Trusten W. Polk.

Rader, Perry S., *School History of the State of Missouri*, (1891)

Includes biographical sketch of Governor Polk.

The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, holds the Trusten Polk Diary and Papers within the Southern Historical Collection.

RECORDS OF GOVERNOR TRUSTEN POLK, 1856-1857

Scope and Content

The majority of the records remaining from the administration of Governor Trusten Polk relate to political appointments associated with the State Penitentiary system. Materials are arranged by type of document; in chronological order; and thereunder alphabetically. Unless otherwise noted, the date provided is the one upon which the correspondence was written.

When the collection was microfilmed, it was determined that some of the collection required rehousing. As a result, some folder numbers have changed. Original folder numbers are noted within parentheses. Under the folder heading, 7 (5) indicates that the item originally in folder 5 is now located in folder 7.

All references to places are within the state of Missouri unless indicated, and county is specified when known. The spelling of proper names varies greatly. When correct spelling could not be determined the original spelling was retained. Officeholders are Missouri officials unless noted (U.S. Senator, U.S. Secretary of State, U.S. Attorney General, U.S. Supreme Court, etc). State Representatives are referred to as Representative. U.S. Representatives are noted with the title Congressman.

Appointments files include recommendations and supporting petitions, applications and employment requests. Incoming Correspondence pertains primarily to swamp lands; but also includes requests for copies from the Smithsonian Institution; requisitions for Missouri State Guard supplies; the extradition of a Missouri convicted criminal; and the boundary dispute between Kentucky and Missouri over Wolf Island in the Mississippi River. Outgoing correspondence written by Governor Polk on very thin paper is barely legible. Ink on the documents has feathered.

Container List

Location	Box	Folder	Date	Contents
1B/1/1	1	1 (23)	January 5, 1856	Appointments—J.H.E. Edwards, Jefferson City: request for appointment as physician to the state penitentiary
1B/1/1	1	1 (23)	January 8, 1856	Appointments—H. Hough, Jefferson City: recommends Francis C. Hughes, Buchanan County as penitentiary warden

1B/1/1	1	1 (3)	August 16, 1856	Appointments—John Bretz, Marion Township, Platte River, Buchanan County: 1856 election; recommends retention of Major Cochran as penitentiary warden; Thomas Hart Benton; Free states, Free Soilers; Democrats; Know Nothings; Weston, Platte County
1B/1/1	1	1	October 8, 1856	Appointments—Judge W. Halliburton, Milan, Sullivan County: recommending Dr. McClelland, warden of penitentiary in Jefferson City; Carroll County
1B/1/1	1	1 (23)	October 28, 1856	Appointments—Silas Woodson, St. Joseph, Buchanan County: recommending Francis C. Hughes of Buchanan County, penitentiary warden
1B/1/1	1	1 (23)	October 29, 1856	Appointments—Willard P. Hall, St. Joseph, Buchanan County: recommending Francis C. Hughes of Buchanan County, penitentiary warden
1B/1/1	1	2 (1)	November 2, 1856	Appointments—James S. Green, Canton, Lewis County: recommending Dr. McClelland, warden of penitentiary in Jefferson City
1B/1/1	1	2 (23)	November 6, 1856	Appointments—Bela M. Hughes, St. Joseph, Buchanan County: recommending Francis C. Hughes of Buchanan County, penitentiary warden
1B/1/1	1	2 (23)	November 8, 1856	Appointments—James Craig, St. Joseph, Buchanan County: recommending Francis C. Hughes of Buchanan County, penitentiary warden
1B/1/1	1	2 (23)	November 11, 1856	Appointments—J. H. R. Cundiff, editor, St. Joseph Gazette, St. Joseph, Buchanan County: recommends Francis C. Hughes of Buchanan County, penitentiary warden
1B/1/1	1	2 (23)	November 14, 1856	Appointments—S. L. Leonard, St. Joseph, Buchanan County: recommends Francis C. Hughes of Buchanan County, penitentiary warden
1B/1/1	1	2 (1)	November 15, 1856	Appointments—J. R. Clark, Princeton, Mercer County: recommending Dr. McClelland, warden of penitentiary in Jefferson City; Democrat
1B/1/1	1	3 (23)	December 3, 1856	Appointments—J. M. Bassett, St. Joseph, Buchanan County: recommending Francis C. Hughes of Buchanan County, penitentiary warden

1B/1/1	1	3 (1)	December 4, 1856	Appointments—M. Manson, M.D., Jefferson City: application for appointment as penitentiary physician & surgeon
1B/1/1	1	3 (1)	December 6, 1856	Appointments—Mr. Banuim, St. Louis: retention of Major Cochran, as superintendent of the penitentiary
1B/1/1	1	3 (23)	December 10, 1856	Appointments—John F. Hughes, Plattsburg, Clinton County: recommends Francis C. Hughes of Buchanan County, penitentiary; Whigs
1B/1/1	1	3 (1)	December 10, 1856	Appointments—W. C. Young, St. Louis: recommends General Gustary A. Parson, warden of state penitentiary; circuit clerk & recorder
1B/1/1	1	3 (1)	December 24, 1856	Appointments—Thomas H. Price, Alta Villa, Chariton County: recommends Dr. McClelland, warden of state penitentiary; Carroll County
1B/1/1	1	3 (1)	December 22, 1856	Appointments—petition, Bismarck, St. Francois County: recommending Dr. McClelland, warden of penitentiary in Jefferson City
1B/1/1	1	3 (1)	December 25, 1856	Appointments—J. W. Hickman, Columbia, Boone County: recommending Dr. McClelland, warden of state penitentiary
1B/1/1	1	3 (1)	December 25, 1856	Appointments—William H. Lee, Boone County: recommending Dr. McClelland, warden of penitentiary in Jefferson City
1B/1/1	1	3 (1)	December 25, 1856	Appointments—A. Peabody, Columbia, Boone County: recommending Dr. McClelland, warden of penitentiary in Jefferson City; Carroll County, Missouri State Journal
1B/1/1	1	3 (1)	December 27, 1856	Appointments—W. H. Plunkett, Brunswick, Chariton County: recommending Dr. McClelland, warden of penitentiary in Jefferson City
1B/1/1	1	4 (1)	January 8, 1857	Appointments—Representative A. L. Gilstrap, Macon, Macon County: recommends Dr. McClelland, warden of penitentiary in Jefferson City
1B/1/1	1	4 (1)	January 9, 1857	Appointments—Thomas S. Richardson, Jefferson City, Cole County: recommending Dr. McClelland, warden of penitentiary, in Jefferson City

1B/1/1	1	4 (6)	January 20, 1857	Appointments—George W. West, St. Louis: request for his appointment as aide; title was granted January 27, 1857
1B/1/1	1	4 (23)	January 20, 1857	Appointments—State Geologist George C. Swallow, Jefferson City: retention of his position; geological survey; Sterling Price
1B/1/1	1	4 (23)	January 21, 1857	Appointments—petition, Jefferson City: recommending Col. William C. Young as factor of the Penitentiary
1B/1/1	1	5 (23)	February 13, 1857	Appointments—State Geologist George C. Swallow, Jefferson City: nomination of A. Litton as chemist and mineralogist; B. F. Shumard, M.D., as paleontologist; R. B. Price as draftsman, (all appointed by Polk, February 13, 1857)
1B/1/1	1	5 (1)	March 3, 1857	Appointments—petitions, Jefferson City: recommends Dr. McClelland warden of penitentiary in Jefferson City
1B/1/1	1	5 (9)	March 18, 1857	Appointments—Governor Johnson of California, Sacramento: recommending E. Dupre, commissioner of deeds for the state of Missouri in California; Marysville, California; French, Spanish, Italian languages
1B/1/1	1	5 (10)	April 22, 1857	Appointments—Jacob N. Travare, Mobile, Alabama: application for appointment as commissioner of deeds for the state of Missouri in Alabama
1B/1/1	1	6 (4)	January 5, 1857	Correspondence, Incoming—Joseph Henry, Secretary of the Board of Regents, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C: request for copies of his last message and accompanying reports; public instruction of the deaf and dumb, blind; railroads; insurance; State Library, Mr. Carlier of France, U.S. economy
1B/1/1	1	6 (5)	January 6, 1857	Correspondence, Incoming—Major G.D. Ramsay, U.S. Army, St. Louis: shipping of books; Adams Express Company, St. Louis
1B/1/1	1	6 (23)	January 12, 1857	Correspondence, Incoming—President of the Senate Hancock Lee Jackson, and Speaker of the House R.C. Harrison, Jefferson City: notification of the election of James S. Green as Senator

1B/1/1	1	6 (2)	February 5, 1857	Correspondence, Incoming—D. C. Tuttle, register; and Richard Dallas, receiver, St. Louis land office: investigate swamp lands; Franklin County, Gasconade County, Act of September 28, 1850
1B/1/1	1	6 (2)	February 5, 1857	Correspondence, Incoming—Leland Wright, register, and E. E. Buckman, receiver, Fayette land office, Howard County: investigate lands designated swamp lands; Cooper, Randolph, Carroll counties
1B/1/1	1	6 (2)	February 6, 1857	Correspondence, Incoming—Thomas A. Hendricks, commissioner, general land office, Warrensburg, Johnson County: contest and rejection of swamp lands; Palmyra District
1B/1/1	1	6 (2)	February 10, 1857	Correspondence, Incoming—Thomas A. Hendricks, commissioner, general land office, Warrensburg, Johnson County: list of swamp and overflowed lands; Secretary of the Interior
1B/1/1	1	6 (2)	February 21, 1857	Correspondence, Incoming—Thomas A. Hendricks, commissioner, general land office, Warrensburg, Johnson County: correction of earlier transmission; Springfield District
1B/1/1	1	6 (7)	March 3, 1857	Correspondence, Incoming—H. K. Craig, Washington D.C. (U.S. Army): requisition & shipment of 52 Colt pistols from St. Louis Arsenal to General James S. Hackney in Jefferson City; muskets
1B/1/1	1	6 (8)	March 5, 1857	Correspondence, Incoming—Henry J. Leaward, private secretary, Governor of New York: extradition of John A. Kirusus, convicted in St. Louis of burglary
1B/1/1	1	6 (11)	April 23, 1857	Correspondence, Incoming—Governor C. S. (Charles Slaughter) Morehead, Frankfort, Kentucky: lawsuit regarding the jurisdiction over Wolf Island in the Mississippi River; Attorney General
1B/1/1	1	7 (23)	January 13, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—Trusten Polk to Benjamin F. Massey: request for Massey to issue warrants authorizing the election of Green as senator
1B/1/1	1	7 (14)	February 10, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—Col. H.K. Craig, Ordinance Office, Washington D.C: requisition of rifles, muskets, pistols, swords, sabers, to be sent to Maj. Gen. James S. Hackney

1B/1/1	1	7 (12)	February 10, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—Thomas A. Hendricks, land office, Washington D.C: swamp lands in Springfield district
1B/1/1	1	7 (13)	February 10, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—Thomas A. Hendricks, land office, Washington D.C: patents for swamp lands Warsaw district
1B/1/1	1	7 (16)	February 18, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—Thomas A. Hendricks, general land office, Washington D.C: receipt of letter listing rejected swamp lands in Palmyra district
1B/1/1	1	7 (15)	February 18, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—Henry Neal, Maryville, Nodaway County: letter sent by Neal to previous administration
1B/1/1	1	7 (17)	February 21, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—Governor C. S. (Charles Slaughter) Morehead, Frankfort, Kentucky: lawsuit regarding the jurisdiction over Wolf Island in the Mississippi River
1B/1/1	1	7 (18)	February 21, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—President of the Senate, Jefferson City: nominees for appointment to the board of the Asylum for the Blind
1B/1/1	1	7 (22)	February 21, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—President of Senate, Jefferson City: appointment to the board of trustees Asylum for the Blind
1B/1/1	1	7 (20)	February 23, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—Thomas A. Hendricks, general land office, Washington D.C: swamp land sales, Springfield district; land patents
1B/1/1	1	7 (19)	February 23, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—President of the Senate, Jefferson City: appointment of C. Maywood as trustee of the Asylum for the Blind
1B/1/1	1	7 (21)	February 25, 1857	Correspondence, Outgoing—R. P. Clarke, St. Louis: Polk's refusal to pardon Clarke's son