Benjamin Polk Collection, 1938-1993

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Note
Arts and Humanities--Architecture
Benjamin Polk Collection, 1938-1993

Collection Number: 1994-1

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Descriptive Summary
Collection Title: Benjamin Polk Collection,
Date (inclusive): 1938-1993
Collection Number: 1994-1
Creator: Polk, Benjamin, 1916-
Extent: 2 boxes
Language: English.
Access
Collection is open for research.
Publication Rights
All requests for permission to publish, reproduce, or quote from materials in the collection should be discussed with the Director.
Preferred Citation
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Access Points
Architects--California.
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**Biography**

Benjamin Kauffman Polk was born in 1916 in Des Moines, Iowa. He attended Amherst College, the University of Chicago, and studied structural engineering at Iowa State University. In 1952 he earned an equivalent master's degree from the School of Planning, Gordon Square, London, in the field of Research in Regional Development. Polk served in the U.S. Army from 1942 until 1946, and married Emily De Spain, poet, artist, and designer in 1946.

Polk practiced architecture in San Francisco from 1946-1952, and in Asia from 1952-1966. He designed and constructed more than fifty projects during this time. In 1957 he established the partnership of Chatterjee and Polk, which became the largest architecture firm in Asia. His major projects include: The Jallian Walabagh National Memorial in Amritsar, India, the Royal Palace for King of Nepal in Katmandu, and the great Buddhist Tipitaka Library in Rangoon, Burma. He also designed many large commercial and industrial buildings, universities and schools, and a theater in Calcutta, India.

In 1966 he returned to California, settling in Los Osos. From 1966-1980 he was a professor of architecture at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. During these years he also developed an improvisational piano technique, and traveled to Paris in 1977 to study with French composer Nadia Boulanger. After living in Salisbury, England, from 1981-1991, he returned to his home in Los Osos, California.


**Scope and Content**

The Benjamin Polk collection spans the years 1938-1993 and is comprised of his scrapbooks. The collection contains photographs, correspondence, Polk's writings, and news clippings, primarily about Polk's projects. The scrapbooks also include some personal papers, such as biographical information, correspondence, and material about his music.

The collection was donated in 1994 in four binders, and its order has been maintained. The original binder number is marked on each folder.