

From Archibald Yell, January 10, 1844

Your *prominence* is such now, as to render your success more doubtful than I am willing to allow myself to believe, I mean for the V Presidency. The reason of my *doubts* of your Nomination arises from a fear that the candidates for the Presidency in Expectency may take it in their head that you might become a troublesome costomer for the Presidency some 4 or 8 years hence. You are growing in popularity and young enough 12 years hence.

To Salmon P. Chase et al., April 23, 1844

You request from me "an explicit expression of opinion upon this question of annexation." Having at no time entertained any opinions upon public subjects, which I was unwilling to avow, it gives me pleasure to comply with your request. I have no hesitation in declaring that I am in favour of the immediate re-annexation of Texas to the territory and Government of the United States.

To Cave Johnson, May 13, 1844

Genl. J. says the candidate for the first office should be an annexation man, and from the Southwest, and he and other friends here urge that my friends should insist upon that point. I tell them and it is true, that I have never aspired so high, and that in all probability the attempt to place me in the first position would be utterly abortive. In the confusion which will prevail and I fear distract your counsels at Baltimore, —there is no telling what may occur.

From Gideon J. Pillow, May 29, 1844

On this morning we brought your name before the convention for the Presidency Never was there such *unanimity*. Never was there such *enthusiasm* before seen or witnessed in *any body*. I held you up before the convention, as the "*Olive Branch of Peace*," and all parties ran to you as to *an ark of safety*.

From Samuel H. Laughlin, May 31, 1844

Gov. Morton asked me what sort of lady Mrs. Polk was—did she make her butter like Mrs. Clay. I will not say what account I gave of her, only that I made her any thing else to the old frugal Yankey, who has taught his accomplished daughters good House-keeping, than a dashing, extravagant, proud southern woman.

To John K. Kane, June 19, 1844

I am in favour of a tariff for revenue, such an one as will yield a sufficient amount to the Treasury to defray the expenses of the Government economically administered.

From Daniel Graham, August 25, 1844

A portion of the straightouts have been induced to attend your Columbia meeting this week & they set off yesterday with musick and with the Big Bell which Mrs. Bell presented to a Williamson Company at the Convention I would prefer that you may have gone up to the Shelbyville meeting.

CUTLER

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COOPER

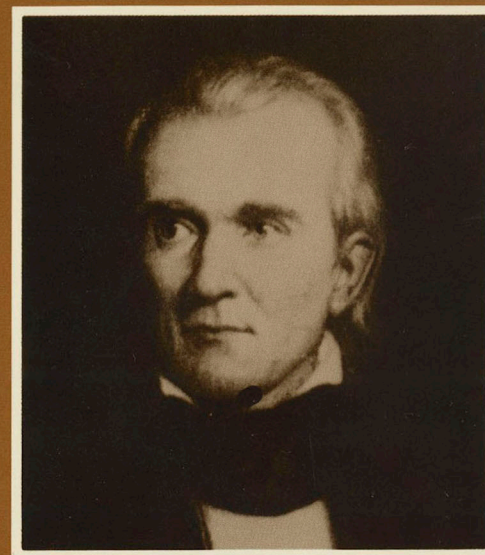
Correspondence
of
JAMES K.
POLK

Volume VII
1844



Vanderbilt

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Volume VII, January—August 1844

WAYNE CUTLER

Editor

JAMES P. COOPER, JR.

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Volume Seven of the correspondence covers eight critical months of Polk's career, January through August of 1844. Holding the Old Democracy's North-South alliance together would require of the party a new and bold strategy for achieving victory in the forthcoming presidential election. Martin Van Buren's friends could not easily detach themselves from the only man who had ever led the northern wing of the party. Nor were there any "safe" states in their half of the Union, for the nomination of John C. Calhoun or a northerner of southern persuasions would diminish prospects for winning state and local elections. For their part, southern Democrats would face equally certain defeat should the party run Van Buren a third time.

Sectional divisions between the northern and southern branches of the Old Democracy begged for a western candidate, but the party's three most prominent westerners could offer little chance of reuniting Jackson's fractured coalitions of 1828 and 1832. Missouri's Thomas H. Benton and Kentucky's Richard M. Johnson might gain northern acceptance because of their antislavery sympathies, but for the same reasons neither could carry the cotton South. Michigan's Lewis Cass might win the support of southern cotton producers because of his low-tariff views, but the same would defeat him in the protectionist states of the North. In 1844 the discordant Democracy divided against all of its prominent leaders; and had it not been for the dreaded fear of a Henry Clay presidency, the contentious factions might never have compromised on an "available," that is, an electable candidate.

In addition to the texts, briefs, and annotations, the editors have calendared all of the documents for the first eight months of 1844. Entries for unpublished letters include the documents' dates, addressees, classifications, repositories, and précis.

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WAYNE CUTLER is research professor of history at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He earned his bachelor's degree at Lamar University and his master's and doctor's degrees at the University of Texas at Austin.

Professor Cutler became director of the Polk Project in 1975, served as associate editor of the fourth volume of the correspondence, and headed the editorial team in the preparation of the series' fifth and subsequent volumes. He began his professional career in 1966 as an editorial associate of the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* and moved to the assistant editorship of the Henry Clay Project in 1970.

JAMES P. COOPER, JR., associate editor of the Polk Project, received his bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama, his master's degree from the University of Alabama, Birmingham, and his doctor's degree from Vanderbilt University. He joined the Polk Project in 1980 as a part-time research associate and became associate editor following completion of the series' sixth volume.

"Over the years since the Polk project began, it has been in skillful and sensitive hands. As the effort approaches the vital presidential years, scholars need have no fear of a deterioration in quality of work. We can all look forward to the remaining volumes." —*Civil War History*

"In a splendid preface to this volume the editors make clear that Van Buren's presidential candidacy in 1844 rested almost totally on his ability to attract southern votes and that that support had virtually disappeared. Long before the Magician wrote his famous Hammett letter on Texas, the impossibility of electing him was becoming increasingly apparent to southern leaders. Still, Polk remained loyal As the volume ends, Polk is maneuvering to assure himself the second slot on the presidential ticket and ever so carefully is grooming himself to become the obvious second choice for first place on the ticket once Van Buren is dropped." —*Journal of American History*

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