

From William C. Hazen, September 11, 1844

I know that our friends are sanguine, and so is the press, but I fear they do not look at the matter right. They do not properly estimate the determination of the Whigs, their perfect organization, and their *desperation*

From William E. Venable, September 13, 1844

We raised, last Wednesday, in Winchester, a stately and graceful hickory Pole; at its head, flies a beautiful national flag, 18 ft. by 13, the work of forty four of our democratic ladies. At night we had a delightful democratic reunion, an uncommonly large number of Ladies honoring and blessing the occasion with their presence and their smiles.

To Charles J. Ingersoll, October 4, 1844

You may rely upon the facts which I gave you in my last, and in this letter as correct, though as I desire to avoid appearing before the public, you will not of course, in any thing you may do, have any reference to my letters or to me as the source of your information.

From Adam Huntsman, October 7, 1844

There is a pretty strong objection to you which is well founded, as Washington Madison & Jackson had no children. If you succeed the world will believe that the qualifications of an American President lies *all* in his head, and *none* in his Breeches.

From George M. Dallas, October 16, 1844

If southern politicians could be brought to unite all their strength with the northern democracy—to postpone the everlasting tariff question—until the Country was effectually secured against the alarming strides of abolition and her kindred bigotry—you might achieve an exploit worthy of immortal fame

To William Allen, October 18, 1844

The democracy of Ohio fought nobly, in your late election. The contest has been very close, and it is manifest was finally decided, by a union of the body of abolitionists with the Whigs. Will this union be kept up at the Presidential election, or will any considerable portion of the abolitionists maintain their distinctive organization, and vote for their own candidate?

From Robert Armstrong, November 15, 1844

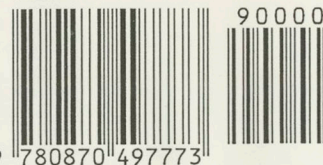
Ewing has been addressing *Thousands* to night from the *Bank Steps* and the Cannon is roaring every *note* of which reaches the Old Chief of the Hermitage who had the News in Two Hours after it arrived here.



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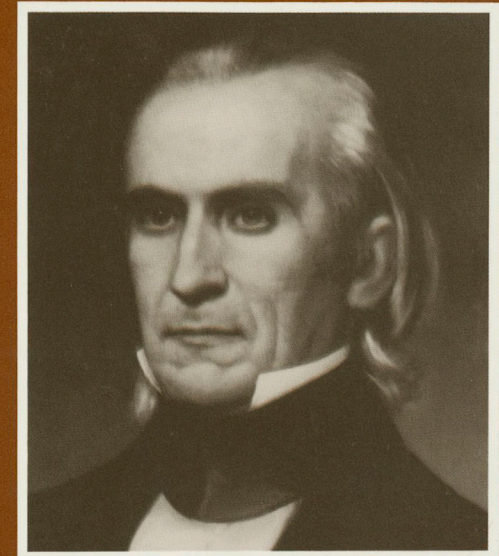


CUTLER
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DEFIORE

Correspondence
of
JAMES K.
POLK

Volume VIII
1844

Correspondence of JAMES K. POLK



Volume VIII, September–December 1844

WAYNE CUTLER

Editor

ROBERT G. HALL II

JAYNE C. DEFIORE

Associate Editors

Tennessee

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JAMES K. POLK

Volume VIII, September–December 1844

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James K. Polk's correspondence during the last ten weeks of the 1844 presidential campaign contains a fairly extensive but unorganized stock of the Democracy's political, economic, and social ideas. Suffused as they are in almost every letter of instruction or advice, these bits and pieces of the Jacksonian perspective provide a somewhat innocent witness to one side of the partisan debate then in progress, the central focus of which was that the Old Democracies north and south must unite to regain control of the general government and block further consolidation of political and economic power at the national level.

At the close of one of the hardest fought political campaigns in American history, the Union stood almost evenly divided as to its choice of directions as well as its leaders. The ticket of James K. Polk and George M. Dallas defeated that of Henry Clay and Theodore Frelinghuysen in the Electoral College by a vote of 170 to 105, but the Democratic electors won only 49.5 percent of the popular vote and gained a plurality of only 39,490 votes. The Liberty party polled 62,103 or 2.3 percent of the popular vote for their candidate, James G. Birney. Although the Native American party did not run a presidential candidate, it did form alliances with the Whigs in both Pennsylvania and New York, thus bringing anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic influence to bear on the electoral voting in two very critical states.

The Democratic victory belonged more to the party than to the candidate, for James K. Polk attended no rallies, made no speeches, and wrote but one public letter throughout the entire course of the campaign. Party ideology rather than candidate personality dominated the Democratic campaign, and in most quarters the electorate knew little more about the Democratic nominee at the end of the campaign than at its beginning. On the other hand, no one of voting age needed to ask who Henry Clay was, for he had glowed in the nation's political spotlight for over thirty years. Yet with each new public letter on campaign issues the "Great Embodiment" appeared more and more soft of center. Clay's defeat probably belonged more to his pen and his past than to his party. Following the election Polk kept close counsel on his preferences for cabinet appointments.

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

The Polk Project is sponsored jointly by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Tennessee Historical Commission.



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.

ROBERT G. HALL II, associate editor of the Polk Project, received his bachelor's degree from Presbyterian College and both his master's and doctor's degrees from Vanderbilt University. He joined the Polk Project staff in 1987 and became associate editor following completion of the series' seventh volume.

A graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, JAYNE C. DEFIORE received both her master's and doctor's degrees from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In 1988 she joined the Polk Project staff and became associate editor after publication of volume seven of the series.