

# James K Polk

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a biography of the eleventh president of the united states with information on his childhood family political career presidency and legacy

when he was elected president in 1845 james k polk was only 49 years old at that time the youngest president ever to be elected he faced a conflicted nation on the verge of tremendous territorial expansion james k polk s four years in office marked the greatest period of territorial acquisition in the history of the country what new york journalist john o sullivan termed as the manifest destiny of the united states to expand across the continent by the end of polk s presidency in 1849 u s possessions included the california oregon and new mexico territories in addition texas had

become part of the union this book analyzes polk s political career and his role in each of these territorial expansions james k polk a clear and unquestionable destiny shows that they were far more complex than the moral crusade that had been labeled manifest destiny southern planters wanted to protect their peculiar institution of slavery by adding new territories from which slave states would be carved commercial interests feared that war with england over any of these territories would adversely impact upon the nation s trade although the oregon boundary dispute was settled with little friction the mexican war erupted after the annexation of texas this fascinating biography of our eleventh president and his successful efforts for expansion of u s territory will be of interest to students studying united states history foreign policy and the massive territorial expansion in the 1840s known as manifest destiny

this a z encyclopedia provides a detailed overview of america s 11th president and connects polk s public and personal life to his historical significance in 1844 james k polk was not a promising presidential nominee he was not popular charismatic or even well known but by the time he left office in 1849 he had acquired the enormous oregon territory by negotiation and had taken by force more than half of mexico s territory an area of about 500 000 square miles yet polk s territorial successes inspired the rancorous debate over whether slavery should be allowed in the new territories a debate that ended in civil war modern critics charge that polk s actions toward mexico were amoral if not immoral in this comprehensive examination of polk s life and career our 11th president emerges as a complex man and a skillful politician who pursued power relentlessly

with a unique style this book explores the life and accomplishments of james k polk the 11th president of the united states raised in tennessee polk became a lawyer by trade and a politician by the will of the people success in state politics led to a job as one of tennessee s representatives in congress where he continued to lobby for the interests of the common man in 1844 he was unanimously nominated and subsequently elected to be the chief executive of the nation though he served only one term as president in that time he brought texas most of the southwest california and the oregon territory into the nation to make our country what it is today the united states of america from sea to shining sea

james k polk was one of the strongest and most active presidents ever to occupy the office in the nineteenth century only jefferson jackson and lincoln matched his overall leadership and domination of national government bergeron s crisp insightful narrative shows how and why polk achieved such stature and yet failed to attract the kind of popular support or retrospective recognition granted other presidential luminaries a native of north carolina polk prepared for the presidency by honing his leadership skills as a seven term congressman speaker of the house and governor of tennessee bergeron s summary and analysis of those years shed light on the foundations of the presidency that followed he provides

fresh new perspectives on polk s relationship with his cabinet his skirmishes with congress over domestic economic legislation and the curse of presidential patronage but perhaps the most fascinating portions of this study are devoted to polk s role as the western expansionist by the end of his term the united states had acquired enormous territories in the southwest and far west bergeron demonstrates that polk adroitly used both war and diplomacy to acquire and protect these lands when the annexation of texas led to the outbreak of war with mexico polk was forced to become commander in chief of the american forces in contrast the potentially explosive dispute with great britain over oregon s borders was settled through purely diplomatic means norman a graebner in america s top ten presidents declares polk s achievements in diplomacy were among the most remarkable in american history drawing upon a careful review of the extensive literature on our eleventh president as well as polk s personal diary bergeron has written a significant and balanced reassessment of the polk presidency in the process he has also created a revealing portrait of a complex man who led the nation with imperial determination tempered with compassion generosity and even humor

this biography introduces readers to james k polk including his early political career and key events from polk s administration including the oregon treaty the mexican war and the treaty of guadalupe hidalgo information about his childhood family personal life and retirement years is included a timeline fast facts and sidebars provide additional information aligned to common core standards and correlated to state standards big buddy books is an imprint of abdo publishing a division of abdo

presents the life and accomplishments of the eleventh president whose term in office saw many western states added to the united states

this definitive biography of james k polk the second of three projected volumes covers the most important years of polk s political career from a twice defeated gubernatorial candidate in tennessee to dark horse candidate for the presidency and one of the most successful first eighteen months of any american president the months of polk s administration covered here contain the bulk of his expansionist program the annexation of texas the settlement of the oregon boundary with great britain and the war with mexico that led to the acquisition of california and new mexico this period also covers the first session of the 29th congress which produced under polk s guidance the most important domestic legislation of any congress of the century originally published in 1966 the princeton legacy library uses the latest print on demand technology to again make available previously out of print books from the distinguished backlist of princeton university press these editions preserve the original texts of these important books while presenting them in durable paperback and hardcover editions the goal of the princeton legacy library is to vastly increase access to the rich scholarly heritage found in the thousands of books published by princeton university press since its founding in

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the story of a pivotal president who watched over our westward expansion and solidified the dream of jacksonian democracy james k polk was a shrewd and decisive commander in chief the youngest president elected to guide the still young nation who served as speaker of the house and governor of tennessee before taking office in 1845 considered a natural successor to andrew jackson young hickory miraculously revived his floundering political career by riding a wave of public sentiment in favor of annexing the republic of texas to the union shortly after his inauguration he settled the disputed oregon boundary and by 1846 had declared war on mexico in hopes of annexing california the considerably smaller american army never lost a battle at home however polk suffered a political firestorm of antiwar attacks from many fronts despite his tremendous accomplishments he left office an extremely unpopular man on whom stress had taken such a physical toll that he died within three months of departing washington fellow tennessean john seigenthaler traces the life of this president who as truman noted said what he intended to do and did it

a biography of the eleventh american president whose term in office saw great expansion of the western frontier

excerpt from james k polk a political biography in the two standard sets of american biographies namely the american statesmen series and the american crisis biographies the name of james k polk does not appear in the list of titles evidently the editor of the first set did not consider mr polk to have been a statesman worthy of serious consideration and the editor of the second set seems to have been unaware that polk had played a conspicuous part in any of the crises of american history although it is not my purpose to criticize the selection made by these editors i believe that the character and success of polk s political career entitled him to a place in either series i believe that the following pages will show mr polk to have been a constructive statesman a statesman possessed of vision sound judgment and unusual executive ability surely he was a crisis president he extended our national boundaries to the pacific ocean and determined the political destinies of the future population of the vast area lying west of the louisiana purchase his request for an appropriation with which to conduct negotiations with mexico called forth the wilmot proviso and this proviso precipitated the irrepressible conflict which was one of the greatest crises in american history when nominated for the presidency in 1844 polk was neither unknown nor inexperienced in national affairs he had been selected to conduct jackson s bank war in the house of representatives and he had performed this task to the entire satisfaction of the president and the democratic party about the publisher forgotten books publishes hundreds of thousands of rare and classic books find more at [forgottenbooks.com](http://forgottenbooks.com) this book is a reproduction of an important historical work forgotten books uses state of the art technology to digitally reconstruct the work preserving the original format whilst repairing imperfections present in the aged copy in rare cases an imperfection in the original such as a blemish or missing page

may be replicated in our edition we do however repair the vast majority of imperfections successfully any imperfections that remain are intentionally left to preserve the state of such historical works

in the second half of 1845 the focus of polk s correspondence shifted from those issues relating to the formation of his administration and distribution of part patronage to those that would give shape and consequence to his presidency the admission of texas preparation for its defense restoration of diplomatic relations with mexico and termination of joint occupancy of the oregon country for the most part the incoming letters tended to urge rather more militancy on the texas and oregon questions than polk would adopt and notions of national destiny registered a singular theme of buoyant confidence in taking on both mexico and great britain if military action should be required president polk and secretary of state james buchanan succeeded in both using and controlling the surge of nationalism that heightened expectations for expansion westward polk and buchanan agreed on the importance of reestablishing diplomatic relations with mexico but the president chose to take a personal hand in managing the selection and instruction of john slidell whose departure for vera cruz would not be made public until he had arrived in mexico polk wanted to give the fledgling mexican administration of jose joaquin herrera a chance to compose mexico s differences with washington free of contrary pressures from great britain and france and he fully understood the price that herrera might pay for a peaceful settlement of the texas question if mexico required more than 6 million for the purchase of their two most northern provinces as provided in his instructions slidell might agree to any reasonable additional sum slidell s mission probably never had much chance of success for without control of his military the herrera administration could neither give up its claim to texas nor overcome british opposition to the sale of new mexico and upper california within but a few days of slidell s arrival in the mexican capital mariano paredes y argilla organized a military coup put the herrera government to flight and on january 2 1846 declared himself interim of president of mexico polk left on the table his predecessor s initiative to divide the oregon country at the 49th parallel with all of vancouver island going to the british the summary rejection of that offer by the british minister to washington richard packenham so angered polk that on august 30th he formally withdrew all prior offers to settle the dispute the british foreign secretary lord aberdeen disavowed and assured the u s minister to britain louis mclane that no ultimatum had been sanctioned by his government buchanan tried in vain to soften polk s decision to initiate further negotiations but he had determined to give the required one year advance notice prior to abrogating the treaty of joint occupancy accordingly in his first annual message to congress polk asked for a joint resolution terminating oregon agreements with great britain polk received high praise for his message and its hard line on texas and oregon in addition to the texts briefs and annotations the editors have calendared all of the documents for the last six months of 1845 entries for unpublished letters include documents dates addresses classifications repositories and precis the polk project is sponsored by the university of tennessee and assisted by grants from the national historical publications and records commission the nations endowment

for the humantines and the tennessee historical commission the authors wayne cutler is research professor of history at the university of tennessee he earned his bachelor s degree at lamar university and his master s and doctor s degrees and university of texas at austin professor cutler became director of the polk project in 1975 served as associate editor in 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

during his one term as president james k polk helped expand the united states so that it stretched from the atlantic ocean to the pacific ocean but what else do you know about our 11th president in this fascinating introduction young readers will learn about polk s early life his achievements as president and the ways he is remembered today each 24 page book in this series features controlled text with age appropriate vocabulary and simple sentence construction the lively text colorful design and rich photos and illustrations are sure to capture the interest of emergent readers

soon after winning the presidency in 1845 according to the oft repeated anecdote james k polk slapped his thigh and predicted what would be the four great measures of his administration the acquisition of some or all of the oregon country the acquisition of california a reduction in tariffs and the establishment of a permanent independent treasury over the next four years the tennessee democrat achieved all four goals and those milestones along with his purported enunciation of them have come to define his presidency indeed repeated ad infinitum in u s history textbooks polk s bold listing of goals has become u s political history s equivalent of babe ruth s called home run of the 1932 world series in which the slugger allegedly gestured toward the outfield and on the next pitch slammed a home run but then again as tom chaffin reveals in this lively tour de force of historiographic sleuthing like ruth s alleged called shot of 1932 the four measures anecdote hangs by the thinnest of evidentiary threads indeed not until the late 1880s four decades after polk s presidency did the story first appear in print in this eye opening study tom chaffin author historian and since 2008 editor of the multi volume series correspondence of james k polk dispatches the thigh slap anecdote and other misconceptions associated with polk in the process chaffin demonstrates how the four measures story has skewed our understanding of the 11th u s president as president polk enlarged his nation s area by a third thus rendering it truly a coast to coast continental nation state indeed the anecdote does not record and effectively obscures complex events including notable failures such as polk s botched effort to purchase cuba as well as his inability to shape the terms of california s and the new mexico territory s admission into the union cuba would never enter the federal union and those other tasks would be left for successor presidents indeed debates over the future of slavery in the united states debates accelerated by polk s territorial gains eventually produced perhaps the central irony of his legacy a president devoted to national unity further sectionalized the nation s politics widening geopolitical fractures among the states that soon led to civil war engagingly written and lavishly illustrated met his every goal intended for general readers

students and specialists offers a primer on polk and a revisionist view of much of the scholarship concerning him and his era drawing on published scholarship as well as contemporary documents including heretofore unpublished materials it presents a fresh portrait of an enigmatic autocrat and in chaffin s examination of an oft repeated anecdote long accepted as fact readers witness a case study in how historians use primary sources to explore and in some cases explode received conceptions of the past

james k polk is one of the few american presidents who was able to achieve all of his stated political goals in one year alone he reduced the tariff established an independent treasury and negotiated the boundary of oregon with the successful conclusion of the mexican war polk achieved his final goal of acquiring california and all of present day texas this book details the life of the eleventh president who though virtually unknown became the first dark horse candidate to be elected

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james knox polk 1795 1849 is often considered the last strong pre civil war executive and is well known for both his annexation of texas and the mexican american war prior to being elected president polk served as governor of tennessee and as the speaker of the house of representatives this work brings together president polk s four state of the union addresses delivered between 1845 and 1848

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