

**Absolute Power:**  
**President James K. Polk and the Mexican War**

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**THESIS:** President James K. Polk in the Mexican War used the power of the office to its fullest, as well as being a liberator and a manipulator; this is the tension of presidential power.

**OUTLINE:**

- I. Introduction
- II. James K. Polk
- III. Expansion
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- V. Conclusion

## I. INTRODUCTION

“Foreign powers do not seem to appreciate the true character of our government. Our Union is a confederation of independent States, whose policy is to extend the dominions of peace over additional territories and increasing millions.”

-James K. Polk<sup>1</sup>

“By carrying the flag to the Pacific [Polk] gave America her continental breadth and ensured her future significance in the world. Polk’s aggressive course toward Mexico outraged moralists at the time and since, but no responsible person has yet proposed that his work be undone.”

-Arthur Meir Schlesinger<sup>2</sup>

Presidents of the United States come and go every four years or so. Some have made lasting impressions to both the nation and the world. Some became footnotes in the pages of history. Some came into office and accomplished great things. Some unexpectedly were thrust into the office. Some men have been good, and others have been bad, both in the sense of their character and their actions. James Knox Polk, the eleventh President, was a mixture of those things.

Polk was a man that can be categorized under the different types of Presidents listed above. He made a lasting impression to the nation, and yet he almost became a footnote in history. He came into the office with an agenda and accomplished it.

Presidential power defines which category a President will be placed under. The power of the President has gone up and down over the course of time. Power can be shown by a President during war; Polk presided over the nation during the Mexican War. I will use the Mexican War and President Polk’s role in the war as a backdrop to show the power the office holds, and the tension that the office holder must carry with him.

President James K. Polk in the Mexican War used the power of the office to its fullest, as well as being a liberator and a manipulator; this is the tension of presidential power. Polk came into office knowing what he wanted to accomplish, which was to extend the nation to the Pacific. He accomplished it by using the power of the office to its fullest extent. The Mexican War was fought as a reason to extend the boundaries of the nation. Polk did not want it to come to war with Mexico, he would have rather negotiated with Mexico for the land. When Mexico would not give up the land, Polk was ready to use force.

The war would have repercussions on the Presidency and the nation itself. The power of the President, after Polk, would go down until Abraham Lincoln. The nation grew even more volatile on the issue of slavery, because of the outcome of the Mexican War. With the expansion of the nation, it would cause the dispute over free and slave states and how they should enter into the Union. However, Polk would circumvent the issue of slavery, and deal with the acquiring of land he so desired. The issue of slavery would be left for another time, as well as another President, who will follow Polk in the use of power the office offers, and see to what extent he can use that power.

Polk used the power of the office to his fullest accomplishing his goals in a single term. A feat that other Presidents are not able to attain, whether because they feel the term of office is too short, or they do not use the powers of the office as Polk did.

## II. JAMES K. POLK

“Napoleon of the Stump”<sup>3</sup>

“Young Hickory”<sup>4</sup>

James Knox Polk nominated as the first dark horse candidate. The man who would become President of the United States was an unknown individual to most Americans, with the exception of the politicians. Polk was a member of Congress representing Tennessee in the House of Representatives. Polk later rose to the Speaker of the House, he held that position from 1835-1839. He then went on to become the Governor of Tennessee.

During his time in the Tennessee legislature, Polk earned the nickname “Napoleon of the Stump.”<sup>5</sup> It would come to mean so much more when he reached the Presidency. Just as Napoleon wanted to expand his nation, Polk promised to expand the United States. “His belief in the rightness and expediency of nation expansion.”<sup>6</sup> This quote shows a belief of Polk’s. The majority of Democrats supported the ideas of expansion, and Polk was a staunch Democrat.

By the time of the election of 1844, Polk had been out of politics for four years.<sup>7</sup> With the support of Andrew Jackson, Polk got the nomination of the Democratic Party. Originally, Polk was to be nominated as the Vice President on a ticket with then former President Martin Van Buren. Annexation of Texas became a big issue during the election year. (Texas would eventually be annexed just as President Tyler would be leaving office, giving him the credit, and giving Polk one less thing to lay claim to as President). Southerners supported the annexation as a way to spread slavery. This made it a heated

topic in the North, and that made Van Buren “to come out publicly against immediate action on the issue.”<sup>8</sup>

The candidacy of Polk appealed to all factions within the Democratic Party, making him the logical choice at the convention.<sup>9</sup> Polk ran against Henry Clay, the Whig candidate for President, in the general election. At the outset of the election it was wondered if Polk would stand a chance against Clay. Even the Democrats recognized the difference in the two candidates. “Our opponents are welcome to all their pride in their chief as a ‘great man’ – we are content with ours as a good one, and great enough for all practical purposes.” The Democrats made sure the election would be about the issues and not about the prominence of the man running for office.<sup>10</sup>

The victor was Polk in the election of 1844. He ran on the annexation of Texas, and the right to Oregon. All of these things were near to Polk’s heart especially, “American expansionism and ‘manifest destiny.’”<sup>11</sup> By expanding to both Oregon and Texas, Polk would be balancing out the country on the issue of free states versus slave states. Oregon is part of the Northwest, and Texas is part of the Southwest. Another goal was that Polk wanted to obtain the Mexican owned California, which was linked to the Texas issue.<sup>12</sup>

Polk came into the Presidency with his goals for the nation clearly outlined and ready. On Inauguration Day he had four great measures for his administration. “The reduction of the tariff, the re-establishment of the independent treasury, the settlement of the Oregon question, and the acquisition of California.”<sup>13</sup> Polk, filled with determination, set out to accomplish these goals. By the time he left office he had accomplished all four of his great measures for his administration. The reason he was able to do such a thing

was his involvement in everything he set out to do, as well as using the power of the office of the President to its fullest. He did not simply rely on others to perform the tasks needed to reach his goals.<sup>14</sup>

Polk involved himself in the day-to-day actions surrounding the acquisition of New Mexico and California, and eventually the war. When the time came to deal with Mexico, they would not negotiate. Polk did not want it to come to war. "The acquisition of New Mexico and California was the primary policy objective of the Polk administration, and it was to attain this end that all the military movements planned by the President were directed."<sup>15</sup> This quote shows how involved Polk was in the policy objectives he set out for himself and the nation. He did not simply give an order, but saw to its proper execution. This in effect shows that he was both a manipulator and a liberator, and carried forth every aspect of commander-in-chief.

Even before he took the oath of office as President, he had a helping hand in the Texas matter. President Tyler finally signed the annexation of Texas in his final days in office.<sup>16</sup> Polk had a hand in the legislative outcome of Texas, since it was brought up in the House upon his arrival to the capital that February prior to the swearing-in.

It is undeniable that he dipped his oar into the streams of the Texas controversy upon arriving at the capital in mid February; but what is debatable is to what extent he did so during those anxious days.<sup>17</sup>

Even if it is debatable to the extent of Polk's involvement, it does show that he had some involvement, and that would be in Polk's nature to be involved, since he was an active President.

Polk never rested while in office. He did his job to the fullest extent, as well as being involved in the daily operations in the war with Mexico. "Driving himself relentlessly, and taking on the work of many of his cabinet members, Polk became the first president to remain all summer in the White House."<sup>18</sup> Polk himself felt that he had no reason to rest while in office. He noted in his diary:

No President who performs his duty conscientiously can have any leisure. If he entrusts the details and smaller matters to subordinates, constant errors will occur.

I prefer to supervise the whole operations of Government myself.<sup>19</sup>

This quote shows that he shows himself to be involved, whether it was with a cabinet member or dealing with military operations.

Glenn W. Price, author of *Origins of the War with Mexico: The Polk-Stockton Intrigue*, observes that contemporaries viewed Polk as uninvolved throughout his term in office. "A judgment prevailed in Washington during Polk's term, it seems, that he was not in effective control of his own Administration. The evidence disproves this, however; Polk dominated his Cabinet."<sup>20</sup> Price shows that Polk made sure he had a hand in everything. The key word is "dominated," and that is what Polk did. Polk was essentially like a modern President involved in every aspect of governing as his modern counterparts have been, from legislative matters to dealing with matters on the world stage.

Frederick Merk, author of *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation*, points out that Polk followed two programs to implement "Manifest Destiny." "Leisurely in time schedule, unaggressive in temper, allowing for the niceties

of international conduct. The other was ... immediate, realistic, aggressive.”<sup>21</sup> Both of these ways of implementation go along with Polk and the way he approached things.

To say that Polk was both a manipulator and a liberator is true. We needed to look back upon his previous positions to see to the extent of his involvement in other things. This gives us good judgement in the role he would perform during the Mexican War, that he would be both a manipulator and a liberator, and use his power as President to its fullest. He will do all it takes to obtaining the goals he set forth. “To get Oregon and Washington he risked the threat of war with Great Britain. And he did go to war with Mexico to acquire California and most of the territory of the present states of the Southwest.”<sup>22</sup>

### III. EXPANSION

“Let us expand to our true and proper dimensions”<sup>23</sup>

“Peace, plenty, and contentment reign throughout our borders, and our beloved country presents a sublime moral spectacle to the world...”

-James K. Polk<sup>24</sup>

To discuss the Mexican War and Polk's involvement in it, American expansion must be looked at. President Polk and his role in the second greatest expansion of the country does not stand up to the greatness of the Louisiana Purchase, which extended the country from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains. The circumstances differed with both expansions. The Louisiana Purchase is looked upon as the greatest real estate deal in history<sup>25</sup>, while the expansion gained in the Mexican War is not looked upon as great, do to the morality of how the land was obtained.

From the Mexican War, the United States gained the land, which would later be filled by the states of: California, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, and Arizona. The only amount paid to Mexico was that of fifteen million dollars, which ironically was the same amount in the Louisiana Purchase. The Louisiana Purchase was not made with any bloodshed, that was the difference in the acceptance of the land gained from the two events.

Prior to the war with Mexico, the United States attempted to purchase some of Mexico. The thought of even acquiring all of Mexico came up as well. Joel Poinsett, United States Minister to the Republic of Mexico, offered the Mexicans money for some of their territory in 1827.

He privately hinted that the United States was prepared to offer a substantial money consideration he was told that neither the executive office nor the Mexican

Congress would consent to the sale or dismemberment of Mexican territory, which, in fact, was prohibited by the Constitution.<sup>26</sup>

Poinsett never ended up offering the money to Mexico. He ended up being replaced by Anthony Butler, as Minister to the Republic of Mexico. The goal still remained to obtain a portion of Mexico for the United States.

Polk's goal was to expand the nation's boundaries. Just before entering office, the outgoing President, John Tyler, completed the annexation of Texas. Polk then only had to worry about the Oregon Territory and the Mexican owned California.<sup>27</sup>

Polk went to any extreme to obtain California. According to Paul H. Bergeron, author of *The Presidency of James K. Polk*, it is not known to the extent of the orders given to John C. Fremont by Polk regarding California. Fremont was an army officer on a scientific expedition. "Therefore, contemporary persons, as well as later historians, have busily constructed various possibilities, which largely depend upon attitudes about Polk and his aims in California."<sup>28</sup> It can be interpreted that Polk wanted Fremont to incite a revolt among the Californians, since it is known that Polk wanted to acquire California. Fremont did just that, and the idea of adding California to the Union came even closer after that revolt.

During the 1840s expansionism gained a new name for itself. It was called "Manifest Destiny." "It meant expansion, prearranged by Heaven, over an area not clearly defined. In some minds it meant expansion over the region to the Pacific; in others, over the North American continent; in others, over the hemisphere."<sup>29</sup> With Polk's desire to see the nation acquire the Oregon and California, "Manifest Destiny" quickly became linked to his name and his administration.

The idea of “Manifest Destiny” quickly gained national attention, as well as a following. “Manifest destiny conveyed a vision of greatness in all aspects of American life, from the immensity of the nation’s territory open for exploration and extension, to its internal development and the quality of its government and civilization.”<sup>30</sup> This belief was what the majority of Americans wanted. “Manifest Destiny” was an important part of the Mexican War. The reason for the war was to obtain the land President Polk sought, and Mexico stood in the way.

One aspect of “Manifest Destiny” that did not play an important part in the Mexican War was the role of the United States to assimilate the conquered. There were the exception of those who lived in the New Mexico and California Territory that would become United States citizens, but there was the opportunity to assimilate the entire people of the defeated country. “One other text was part of the gospel of Manifest Destiny – the duty of the United States to regenerate backward peoples of the continent.”<sup>31</sup> The reason there was no assimilation of the Mexican people to the United States was as in any time, the racist views of the American people.

The diplomacy of the United States with Mexico reflected the prevailing judgment of the American people on Mexicans. The attitude was that there was very little difference between an Indian and a Mexican; serious and respectful diplomacy was out of place in either case.<sup>32</sup>

#### IV. THE MEXICAN WAR

“The doctrine of no territory is the doctrine of no indemnity, and if sanctioned would be a public acknowledgment that our country was wrong and that the war declared by Congress with extraordinary unanimity was unjust.”

-James K. Polk<sup>33</sup>

“Mexico is an ugly enemy. She will not fight – and will not treat.”

-A Whig Senator<sup>34</sup>

President Polk campaigned on acquiring California. Polk, as well as the country, believed the borders of the nation should extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific. To accomplish this Polk did not sit back and let events, as well as history, unfold.

After Polk's inauguration, the Mexican envoy to the United States resigned in protest.<sup>35</sup> He believed that Polk's support of the annexation of Texas would result in an invasion of Mexico. Diplomatic relations between the two nations had broken off by the end of the inaugural month. “The threat of war was in the air, but no hostile acts occurred during the remainder of the year.”<sup>36</sup> No matter Polk continued his goal to acquire New Mexico and California.

Polk made an offer to the Mexican government. He soon realized that force would be necessary. Polk believed as most Democrats did in the 1840s, that it was their right to own the land of New Mexico and California. The idea of force being used was just an alternative, if a peaceful negotiation could not be reached. The dispute over the Texas-Mexico boundary helped bring the hostilities to life.<sup>37</sup>

It is very clear in Polk's diary that he wanted war, since the two nations were on the verge of war. Polk could not obtain New Mexico and California through diplomatic channels. It would be through war that the land in question would be obtained. Polk

wanted to wait for Mexico to strike, and then declare war against that government. He also had this to say to his cabinet:

I said that in my opinion we had ample cause of war, and that it was impossible that we could stand in *statu quo*, or that I could remain silent much longer; that I thought it was my duty to send a message to Congress very soon and recommend definite measures.

He also felt that if he did nothing he would not be doing his duty as President of the United States.<sup>38</sup>

It was in that same entry in his diary that the President asked his cabinet what they thought of Polk himself just asking Congress for a declaration of war, without Mexico making the first attack. "Whether I should make a message to Congress on Tuesday, and whether in that message I should recommend a declaration of war against Mexico."<sup>39</sup> His entire cabinet agreed with the exception of the Secretary of the Navy. This shows that Polk would have been willing to start the war with Mexico to obtain the land he so desired. He was spared the responsibility of the first strike later that evening.

He received word from front lines that the Mexican army made the first attack. "The commanding general of the Mexican forces ... crossed the river, invaded our territory and commenced hostilities," Polk wrote.<sup>40</sup> The Congress declared war four days later, and the battle for the west had begun.

To only think that Polk just started a war is wrong. Polk wanted war because a hostile situation was in place on the Texas boarder. "It has ever been our cherished policy to cultivate peace and good will with all nations, and this policy has been steadily pursued by me."<sup>41</sup> This quote by Polk shows that he and the United States have a policy

of peace. It came down to war because of the tense situation on the border. It is the tense part of being President, to attempt to preserve the peace when at the same time a war is brewing.

Secretary of State James Buchanan wanted President Polk to add the following line to his annual address to Congress. "The war which Mexico has forced upon us would thus be converted into an enduring blessing to herself."<sup>42</sup> This line made it seem like the United States government wanted to show that Mexico forced this war on the United States. Through the eyes of the Mexicans it might look different.

Price insists that it was all Polk's manipulation that caused the war. "Polk 'precipitated hostilities,' by marching troops into a strip of land claimed by both countries, and when the Mexicans resisted he blamed them for starting the War."<sup>43</sup> Polk's precipitation of hostilities can be looked at from his desire to acquire land from Mexico as well as recognizing the borders of Texas. He eventually would have started the war had Mexico not made the first move.

Polk blamed the Mexicans for the war, but even those among the army disagreed with the idea of the war. "Ulysses S. Grant described the war as 'the most unjust' in American history."<sup>44</sup> Grant, a lieutenant in the war, thought as many others did in Congress that this war was simply a war of conquest.<sup>45</sup>

Frederick Merk, author of *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism 1843-1849*, suggests the following:

Critics in the United States and in Europe believed the war had been provoked.

That belief spread as reassessment of the events preceding the skirmish on the Rio

Grande was made and as excitement over the shedding of American blood gave way to revulsion against the war.<sup>46</sup>

This suggestion shows that the war with Mexico was provoked. Polk provoked much of the war. He was the one who placed troops on the boarder of Texas, which was Nueces River according to the Mexicans, but Polk wanted the Rio Grande to be the boarder as was intended when Texas declared themselves an independent republic. Merk suggests that the spilling of American blood gave way to war. Even if American blood was not spilled, Polk would have started the war himself.

Merk goes on to talk about what Polk wanted.

Polk had wanted a war – a short war, one just long enough to require a peace.

Among expansionists, however, the view was that the war, regrettable to be sure, would at last resolve in an acceptable manner the old Del Norte issue and the British threat to California, and would bring to an end, once and for all interferences and intrigues by Europe in these two sectors of the American perimeter.<sup>47</sup>

I believe Polk wanted the war, a short one as Merk suggests, just to obtain the land he wanted. He goes on to say that the war was regrettable, but it helped in acquiring the land, as well as ending a British threat of obtaining California forever ending Europe's hold in America's sector of power.

Just as much as Polk wanted war, he wanted peace. He had attempted to end the war by offering Mexico \$2,000,000. "Within several weeks of President Polk's request for \$2,000,000, news from across the continent undeniably confirmed what the Two Million Bill had clearly suggested."<sup>48</sup> This suggested that this was a war of conquest, and

the land on the other side of the continent was what Polk wanted and he was offering the warring country a certain amount of money for the land as well as to end hostilities between the two nations. That however did not happen.

In February of 1848 a peace treaty was signed ending the war with Mexico. General Winfield Scott had captured Mexico City in September of 1847. Article ten of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo says, "In consideration of the extension acquired by the boundaries of the United States, the Government of the United States engages to pay to that of the Mexican Republic the sum of fifteen millions of dollars."<sup>49</sup> The United States paid the Mexican government fifteen million dollars for more than half a million square miles of land.<sup>50</sup> Polk had an opportunity to take all of Mexico but did not.

Polk did not attempt to take all of Mexico, even though the United States had the ability to do so. "Many officials in Washington were seeking harsh terms, including annexation of all of Mexico – *even* the extinction of the Mexican people. Polk accepted the treaty because it conformed to his publicly announce goals."<sup>51</sup> The extinction of the Mexican people would have meant they would have been absorbed into American society. Even though Polk essentially took the land away from Mexico by force, he accepted the treaty and its terms.

Polk would have rather had a different treaty than the one that was made, but agreed to it, since he announced the war was to obtain just New Mexico and California.

It was a work of deliberate disobedience, indeed, defiance, of orders. It brought far less than it should have in its territorial gains. To spurn it might be worse than to accept it. If it were rejected, ... the Mexicans could probably not be prevailed upon to concede more territory.<sup>52</sup>

If Polk had rejected the treaty, and sent it back to be revised, the Mexicans might not have ceded the same amount of land and not accepted the same payment that was included. Polk may not have liked it but accepted it.

Nicholas P. Trist, the chief clerk of the State Department, drafted the treaty. He felt that since he was there in Mexico he had a better understanding of the situation than those in Washington did. "Mr. Trist has acted very badly, ... if on further examination the treaty is one that can be accepted, it should not be rejected on account of his bad conduct."<sup>53</sup> Polk eventually would accept the treaty, but did not like the fact that Trist acted on his own. This shows just how much involvement Polk wanted in every aspect of the war and of expansion.

Polk wanted New Mexico and California. He waited for Mexico to make the first strike, when it looked as if they were not going to he was ready to make it. Polk went to war and fought it through to a victorious end. Extending the boundaries of the nation just as Jefferson had done decades earlier with the Louisiana Purchase, albeit through a different approach.

## V. CONCLUSION

“Within less than four years the annexation of Texas to the Union has been consummated; all conflicting title to the Oregon Territory south of the forty-ninth degree of north latitude, being all that was insisted on by any of my predecessors, has been adjusted, and New Mexico and Upper California have been acquired by treaty ... the territories recently acquired, and over which our exclusive jurisdiction and dominion have been extended, constitute a country more than half as large as all that which was held by the United States before their acquisition, and including Oregon, nearly as great an extent of territory as the whole of Europe, Russia only excepted The Mississippi, so lately the frontier of our country, is now only its center....”

-James K. Polk<sup>54</sup>

The above quote shows all that was accomplished by Polk, with the exception of the annexation of Texas, which goes to President Tyler. It shows that Polk set forth goals to be met and they were in one single term as President. He took the reigns of power and guided his goals to their completion. He used whatever means necessary to obtain the goals he set forth. In obtaining Oregon he went through peaceful channels. In acquiring New Mexico and California he attempted peaceful means of negotiation, but eventually those offers of a peaceful negotiation fell onto deaf ears. War broke out between the nations of Mexico and the United States. It eventually was seen as a war of conquest. The conquest that Polk so desired, that of obtaining New Mexico and California from the Mexican government, finally happened via war with Mexico.

After Polk left the Presidency, the office, which he commanded so greatly in those four years, fell second to the authority of the Congress. The remaining Presidents of the nineteenth-century, with the exception of Abraham Lincoln, Grover Cleveland, and William McKinley, all presided as weak Presidents to a powerful Congress.

Polk led the nation through a war that he wanted, so his goals may come to life. The war he started, so to expand the nation, ended up having lasting repercussions on the future of the nation. Sure it extended the size of the nation, but it brought up the question of which states, which would come out of this land, would be admitted to the Union as a free state or a slave state. This was something that Polk was aware of, but his first and main concern was acquiring California and New Mexico and dealing with the repercussions later. The repercussion of this would eventually be the Compromise of 1850<sup>55</sup>, which would deal with the issue of slavery. Of course this would then just be another stepping stone to the Civil War, which would begin in 1861.

Those events came from Polk's desire to acquire New Mexico and California from Mexico. The war was unjust, as Grant had said, but Polk like all other Americans believed it was their right to have that land. As Schlesinger said in the quote at the beginning that the war may have been wrong, but nobody has yet to come forth and demand everything undone.

About sixty-eight years after the treaty ending the war with Mexico, the land that the United States and Polk so desired was brought up. Germany saw that a possibility of American involvement in the Great War would seriously hurt them. Germany offered Mexico all the land that was lost to the United States during the Mexican War, if Mexico entered the war on Germany's side. Mexico declined the offer, and the United States used Germany's attempt to incite a war on its southern border, as one of its many reasons to declare war on Germany. The land Polk fought for remained apart of the Union.

Another irony of the new land acquired by Polk, was the discovery of gold almost two months after the signing of the treaty. Centuries before, Spain sent conquistadors in

search of gold in the New World. They came and conquered what they called New Spain, and eventually afterward becoming Mexico after they claimed their independence from the crown of Spain. The Spanish, and then the Mexicans, held that land for centuries, never finding the gold, and unknown to the Americans that gold would be discovered just months after the land officially became apart of the Union.

President James K. Polk in the Mexican War used the power of the office to its fullest, as well as being a liberator and a manipulator; this is the tension of presidential power. The tension Polk faced was attaining his goals through whatever means necessary. He sought out to extend the land of the nation, and wanted to plant the American flag on the West Coast. Polk did so by being a manipulator of events, and being a liberator by means of war. He offered a nation a peaceful settlement to the claims he so wanted. He answered with force when they declined the offer. Polk executed the office of President with greatness, and setting an example his successors would be able to look upon for guidance in the use of Presidential power.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Glenn W. Price, Origins of the War with Mexico: The Polk-Stockton Intrigue, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), 10. The quote is from his Inaugural Address given on March 4, 1845.
- <sup>2</sup> Price, 79.
- <sup>3</sup> David C. Whitney, The American Presidents, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: The Readers Digest Association, Inc., 1996), 97.
- <sup>4</sup> Whitney, 94. Polk is a protégé of Andrew Jackson, "Old Hickory."
- <sup>5</sup> Whitney, 95.
- <sup>6</sup> Price, 82.
- <sup>7</sup> Price, 82.
- <sup>8</sup> Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., Philip B. Kunhardt III, and Peter Kunhardt, The American President (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), 409.
- <sup>9</sup> Kunhardt, Jr., 410.
- <sup>10</sup> Price, 84. The quote comes from the *Democratic Review*.
- <sup>11</sup> Kunhardt, Jr., 410.
- <sup>12</sup> Kunhardt, Jr., 410.
- <sup>13</sup> Charles A. McCoy, Polk and the Presidency, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1960), 50.
- <sup>14</sup> Allan Nevins, Polk The Diary of a President 1845-1849, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), xix.
- <sup>15</sup> T. Harry Williams, The History of American Wars From 1745 to 1918, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 173.
- <sup>16</sup> Paul H. Bergeron, The Presidency of James K. Polk, (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1987), 55.
- <sup>17</sup> Bergeron, 55.
- <sup>18</sup> Kunhardt, Jr., 410.
- <sup>19</sup> Kunhardt, Jr., 410.
- <sup>20</sup> Price, 84.
- <sup>21</sup> Frederick Merk, and Lois Bannister Merk, Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 61.
- <sup>22</sup> Price, 79.
- <sup>23</sup> Norman A. Graebner, ed., Manifest Destiny (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1968), 215.
- <sup>24</sup> Whitney, 98. From Polk's annual message to Congress.
- <sup>25</sup> Jerome Agel, Words That Make America Great (New York: Random House, 1997), 80.
- <sup>26</sup> Price, 19.
- <sup>27</sup> Kunhardt, Jr., 410.
- <sup>28</sup> Bergeron, 73.
- <sup>29</sup> Merk, Manifest Destiny, 24.
- <sup>30</sup> Graebner, 3.
- <sup>31</sup> Merk, Manifest Destiny, 33.
- <sup>32</sup> Price, 17.
- <sup>33</sup> David M. Pletcher, The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War, (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 554.
- <sup>34</sup> Williams, 176.
- <sup>35</sup> Kunhardt, Jr., 410.
- <sup>36</sup> Whitney, 97.
- <sup>37</sup> Whitney, 97.
- <sup>38</sup> Nevin, 81.
- <sup>39</sup> Nevin, 82.
- <sup>40</sup> Kunhardt, Jr., 410.
- <sup>41</sup> Price, 11.
- <sup>42</sup> Pletcher, 553.
- <sup>43</sup> Price, 80.
- <sup>44</sup> Agel, 95.

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<sup>45</sup> John H. Schroeder, Mr. Polk's War: American Opposition and Dissent, 1846-1848, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 51.

<sup>46</sup> Frederick Merk, and Lois Bannister Merk, The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism: 1843-1849, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 160.

<sup>47</sup> Merk, Monroe Doctrine, 160.

<sup>48</sup> Schroeder, 51.

<sup>49</sup> Agel, 96.

<sup>50</sup> Whitney, 97.

<sup>51</sup> Agel, 95.

<sup>52</sup> Merk, Monroe Doctrine, 188-189.

<sup>53</sup> Nevins, 304.

<sup>54</sup> Whitney, 99. From his annual message to Congress.

<sup>55</sup> John Mack Faragher, ed., The American Heritage Encyclopedia of American History, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 189-190.