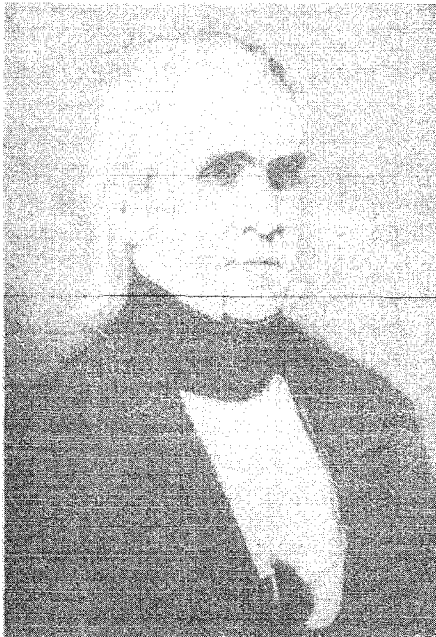


# James K. Polk and the Expansionist Spirit

Harlan Hague



James K. Polk, 1795-1849. (Daguerreotype by Mathew B. Brady)

Only days after his inauguration in March 1845, President James K. Polk announced to Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft: "There are four great measures which are to be the measures of my administration: one, a reduction of the tariff; another, the independent treasury; a third, the settlement of the Oregon boundary question; and lastly, the acquisition of California."<sup>1</sup> It was the last two of his "great measures" that elected Polk, for he was swept into the White House by an expansionist fervor that peaked at his election. As President, Polk did not initiate a policy toward the West; he inherited one, based on the tenets of Manifest Destiny.

There was no doubt during the campaign where candidate Polk stood on the expansionist issue. In the spring of 1844, he called publicly for the annexation of both Texas and the Oregon country.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, Martin Van Buren, the assumed presidential candidate of the Democratic Party, announced his opposition to Texas annexation on grounds that it would mean war with Mexico.<sup>3</sup> Andrew Jackson, determined that the United States should have Texas, threw his support behind his fellow Tennessean for the Democratic Party nomination. In the end, Polk was nominated on the ninth ballot, as a compromise after the convention deadlocked on a choice between Van Buren, the lackluster ex-President whose political sun was setting, and Lewis Cass, an expansionist zealot who had won the support of many Westerners and Southerners and the enmity of multitudes. The Whig candidate, Henry Clay, had long opposed annexation of Texas, and the Whig platform ignored the issue. Polk's election assured the admission of Texas, and on 1 March 1845, the Lone Star Republic was invited into the Union by a joint resolution of Congress.

Upon his inauguration, the new President set to work on satisfying his campaign pledge. Polk was particularly concerned that the United States control important West Coast ports. He was not the first American leader to demand that a settlement of the Oregon question must give the United States control of Puget Sound, a region dominated by Britain's Hudson's Bay Company. A port on the Sound would be an Ameri-

can window on the Pacific, a jumping-off point for the Asian trade. Great Britain was just as determined that it would surrender no land north of the Columbia River. Logic seemed to support the British view. British settlement, chiefly the works and farms of the Hudson's Bay Company, was located north of the Columbia in present-day Washington, while American settlement was located south of the river, chiefly in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

Since 1818, the United States and Britain, by agreement, had jointly occupied the Oregon country. During the negotiations that had established joint occupancy, the United States had proposed a division of Oregon at the 49th parallel, but Britain, preferring the Columbia River as a boundary, rejected the offer. The American claim was subsequently pushed northward until it rested at 54°40', the southern limit of Russian claims which had been established by treaty between Russia and the United States in 1824.

By the early 1840s, interest in a settlement of the Oregon question had increased in both Great Britain and the United States. As presidential candidate in 1844, Polk accepted the demand of the Democratic Party leadership for a boundary at 54°40' but only as a political expedient. Indeed in July 1845, after only a few months in office, he offered Richard Pakenham, the British minister in Washington, a boundary settlement at the 49th parallel. Privately, Polk acknowledged that American interests would be protected because the boundary would leave the United States in control of Puget Sound. Pakenham re-

jected the offer since it did not include free British navigation of the Columbia, a long-standing British condition. When London later showed interest, nevertheless, in the offer, Polk refused to renew it.<sup>4</sup>

The following December, the President explained rather weakly in a message to Congress that he had made the 49th parallel boundary offer only from respect for his predecessors, who had long favored that compromise. Perhaps, though unstated, he had also feared war with Britain. Now, in December, Polk vowed that he would make no other offer. Rather than accommodation, he recommended that notice of termination of joint occupancy be delivered to Britain. At the expiration of the agreement, he said, the United States would pursue its interests aggressively in the Oregon country. London favored accommodation and suggested that the issue be submitted to arbitration. Polk rejected arbitration on grounds that the British had no just claim to Oregon.<sup>5</sup>

The President's rhetoric was mostly bluff and bluster. It was directed as much at the British government and public as American. Polk's objective was more pacific than his words. He simply wanted to stimulate negotiations and to force the British to take the initiative. To Louis McLane, the American minister in London, Polk intimated that he would be receptive to a British restatement of his original proposal, that is, a 49th parallel boundary, though Britain could have all of Vancouver Island, but no free British navigation of the Columbia.<sup>6</sup> Polk expected that his belligerent posture would force the issue.

Many congressmen were alarmed at Polk's notice proposal, fearing that it could lead to war with Britain. Congress debated the proposal for over four months and finally, in April 1846, enacted a measure to give Britain notice to terminate joint occupancy.

In the end, the settlement of the Oregon question may be attributed less to belligerence than to a lack of zeal.<sup>7</sup> By the end of 1845, the British public and the larger part of the government were little interested in Oregon. They were preoccupied with the specter of famine at home because of the potato blight in Ireland and light harvests in Britain.

Great Britain now needed American wheat, and trade relations in general improved in early 1846, leading many, including Polk, to hope for a lowering of tariffs. Furthermore, the fur trade was declining in Oregon, and British leaders were hard pressed to justify defense of a claim to the region below the 49th parallel at the risk of war. Finally, British leaders were convinced that sufficient British access to the sea would be secured if an agreement on a 49th parallel boundary left Britain all of Vancouver Island.

Accordingly, London tendered a proposal to Washington, and a treaty was concluded on these terms in June 1846. Both sides breathed a great sigh of relief. The signing came none too soon, particularly for the United States. Fighting had already begun on the disputed Texas border.

Polk's views on Oregon were contradictory at best. His obligation as leader of a party that was committed to having all of Oregon often conflicted with his own view. His involvement stemmed from political necessity, not personal interest, and he did what he had to do.

A Southerner, Polk was more interested in Texas and California. He was personally and passionately committed to American domination in the Southwest. The Oregon question settled, Polk turned to the Texas question.

Trouble between Mexico and the United States had been brewing since 1836 when Mexico blamed the United States for its loss of Texas. Mexico had never acknowledged the loss and warned the United States not to interfere, a warning that Polk ignored. He had no more sympathy for the arguments of anti-imperialists and anti-slavery leaders who spoke out against Washington's growing interest in Texas.

Polk dispatched agents to the Lone Star Republic in early 1845 to gather information and encourage Texans to call for annexation.<sup>8</sup> Following annexation in March, he sent William S. Parrott to Mexico City with instructions to convince the Mexican leadership to accept the finality of the American annexation of Texas and to resume diplomatic ties with the United States, which the annexation had ruptured. The shaky gov-

ernment of José Joaquín Herrera, mindful of the growing public clamor in Mexico against the American annexation of Texas, was noncommittal. Herrera preferred a British plan that included Mexico's recognition of Texas in return for the Lone Star Republic's rejection of annexation.<sup>9</sup>

Polk applied pressure. His administration accepted the Texas claim to the Rio Grande River boundary, and he moved to reinforce the claim. In mid-June, he ordered Zachary Taylor to move his troops from Louisiana to Texas where they installed themselves on the south bank of the Nueces River, thus inside the disputed territory between that river and the Rio Grande. Polk vowed that no invading force would be allowed to cross the Rio Grande.<sup>10</sup> In spite of the belligerent tone, he considered the Army's deployment a defensive move. Polk was an expansionist, but he was no fool. He did not shrink from the necessity of war, but he sought none, at least not until other measures were exhausted.

Mexico indeed appeared prepared to settle differences amicably. In August from Mexico City, Parrott notified Polk that the government seemed prepared to receive an American emissary. Polk appointed John Slidell his secret agent—during his presidency, Polk would appoint an abundance of secret agents—and instructed him to secure Mexico's acceptance of the Rio Grande boundary and a promise to pay the claims of American citizens against Mexico. And the pièce de résistance: He was to offer Mexico as much as \$40 million for California and New Mexico. At the same time, Polk warned Mexico—and Britain and France, as well—against any plan for a European protectorate for California. The Monroe Doctrine would be enforced. Polk's prohibition of European protectorates, a new factor in American hegemony, in time became called the "Polk doctrine."<sup>11</sup>

The Slidell mission was doomed from the start. The Herrera government fell on 2 January to a new revolutionary movement under General Paredes y Arrillaga. Anticipating that the new administration would be no more stable than the former, Polk toyed with the idea of asking Congress for a secret

fund of \$500,000 to a \$1 million which he would transfer to Paredes to strengthen his government during negotiations. He abandoned the scheme when he could not win sufficient support among Democratic leaders.<sup>12</sup>

In early 1846, Polk was intrigued by the possibilities suggested to him by one Alexander J. Atocha. A naturalized American citizen, Atocha was a friend of ex-President Antonio López de Santa Anna who was overthrown in 1845. Atocha had recently visited General Santa Anna in Havana. He believed that Santa Anna would soon be once again in power and that the general favored a treaty in which Mexico would cede New Mexico and California to the United States. Santa Anna, he said, had told him that \$30 million would be a satisfactory sum to conclude the deal, but that the United States must take action to pose such an armed threat that Mexican citizens would be convinced that the cession was the only alternative to destruction.<sup>13</sup> Polk concluded that Atocha was probably not reliable, but the President continued to pursue the diplomacy-by-bribery scheme off and on. Nothing came of it.<sup>14</sup>

Polk's fears for the stability of the new government were well founded. He learned in early April 1846 that Arrilaga, certain that he would be removed from office by an angry citizenry if he agreed to negotiations, had refused to receive Slidell. War now seemed likely. That same day, Polk had told his cabinet that if Mexico rejected his envoy, the American leaders must "take the remedy for the injuries and wrongs we had suffered into our own hands."<sup>15</sup> He now "saw no alternative but strong measures towards Mexico."<sup>16</sup> Slidell counseled Polk that war now was probably the best course.<sup>17</sup>

War was not long in coming. By early May, Polk had decided that war would be necessary to achieve his objectives, which included California and New Mexico and perhaps additional northern Mexican states. He prepared a message for delivery to Congress on 12 May, a delicately worded message, for he was asking Congress for authority to initiate war. Three days before the scheduled delivery date, Polk learned that a Mexican patrol had crossed the

Rio Grande and fired on American troops. In Polk's view, Mexico had invaded American soil. He changed his message, and on 11 and 12 May, Congress, by huge majorities, declared war.

Polk soon clarified his war aims, privately at least. Shortly after the declaration of war, he read a dispatch that Secretary of State James Buchanan planned to send to European governments to notify them of the declaration. Polk was not pleased; he ordered the Secretary to strike from the message a statement that the United States had no intention "to dismember Mexico or make conquests . . . [and] that in going to war we did not do so with a view to acquire either California or New Mexico or any other portion of the Mexican territory." Polk told Buchanan that we would seek indemnities, and Mexico had no other way of indemnifying the United States, save in territory. Buchanan said that unless the assurance that he recommended was included in the message, both England and France would join the war on the side of Mexico. Polk replied testily that before he gave this assurance, he would "meet the war which either England or France or all the Powers of Christendom might wage. . . ." He would stand for no interference.<sup>18</sup> He had long since given his pledge to the American people, at least those of the public who counted, in Polk's estimation. Those who did not support his policy he branded as disloyal and hinted that such behavior was treasonous.

Polk had not forgotten that other prize that must come in a contest with Mexico: California. Polk's initial interest in the Mexican province was the same as his interest in Oregon; that is, its ports. For a while, it seemed that California might fall quietly to the United States. Thomas O. Larkin, American Consul to Mexican California, was making headway in convincing Californians that their destiny lay in an association, initiated by themselves, with the United States.<sup>19</sup> By the mid-1840s, however, there was reason for haste. American immigrants entering California overland were arguing belligerently for a "Texas solution" for California.

In 1845 affairs appeared to take an ominous turn in California. Larkin had written frequently to Washington from Monterey during the past year, telling of the revolutionary ferment among *Californios*. Some *Californio* leaders, said Larkin, favored associating a liberated California with the United States. On the other hand, the Consul warned of apparent British and French intrigues in the province and the interest of some California leaders in seeking protection from a European country.<sup>20</sup> Polk was convinced that Britain wanted California, and he was determined that the United States would not permit Britain or any other foreign power to possess it.<sup>21</sup>

The President was impressed by Larkin's revelations. In October 1845, Polk appointed him his confidential agent with instructions to inform the Californians that though the United States would not interfere in any conflict between California and Mexico, Americans would not permit California's becoming a colony of Britain or France. The United States would not leave its neighbor unprotected. Indeed, Larkin was to assure the Californians that an application for admission into the American union by a free California would be most welcome.<sup>22</sup>

Acting on Larkin's information, members of Polk's cabinet, unquestionably at the President's direction, strengthened American preparedness. Secretary of War George Bancroft ordered Commodore John D. Sloat, commander of the American fleet off the Mexican coast, to be ready to blockade or seize California ports at the first sign of hostilities.<sup>23</sup> Secretary of State Buchanan alerted the American ambassador in London and briefed John Slidell on Larkin's correspondence.<sup>24</sup> Bancroft dispatched Commodore Robert F. Stockton to the West Coast to deliver the letters containing Sloat's new orders and Larkin's appointment. At the same time, Buchanan sent a copy of the appointment letter to Larkin by Marine Lieutenant Archibald H. Gillespie, who was to travel in disguise across Mexico. Gillespie, another of Polk's secret agents, also was ordered to deliver an informational copy of Larkin's letter to

Brevet Captain John D. Frémont, who was exploring in California.

Frémont's role in California affairs was stormy, controversial, and contradictory.<sup>25</sup> Frémont had arrived in California with an expedition of 60 well-armed mountain men early in 1846. He soon offended California authorities and was ordered to leave. Instead, in March he erected barricades atop Hawk's Peak in the Gavilan Mountains near Monterey where he was besieged by a *California* force. Frémont soon withdrew, realizing that the affair was essentially personal and that his action could jeopardize Washington's plan to acquire California.<sup>26</sup>

Three months later in the Bear Flag affair, Frémont took a belligerent stance that angered *Californios* more than did the Hawk's Peak incident. He even arrested General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, who favored an association of California with the United States. By then, Frémont had seen the copy of Buchanan's letter to Larkin, and he was confident now that he was acting in the best interests of the United States. Questioned by Commodore Sloat in July 1846 about his part in the Bear Flag incident, Frémont replied that he "had acted solely on my own responsibility, and without any expressed authority from the Government to justify hostilities."<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps Frémont responded to a higher authority. "How fate pursues a man!" he had observed earlier, upon learning that Gillespie was on his trail.<sup>28</sup> Fate perhaps was on his side, but not his commander in chief. Polk later confided to his diary that Frémont had acted without authority.<sup>29</sup>

During the war in California, Frémont led his own men under the overall command of Commodore Stockton, who had replaced Sloat. When General Stephen Watts Kearny arrived from Santa Fé with an advance unit of his Army of the West, carrying orders that designated him governor of California, Frémont refused to recognize his authority.<sup>30</sup> A court-martial board in Washington the following January found Frémont guilty of mutiny and ordered him discharged from the service.

After a review of the court record and consultation with his cabinet, Polk con-

cluded that the facts of the case did not prove mutiny. He dismissed that conviction, but let stand conviction on two lesser charges: disobedience of orders and conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline. The President, influenced by the cabinet, also thought the sentence of dismissal from the Army too severe. Accordingly, he set aside the sentence and ordered Frémont to report for duty. The decision, he groaned, was "a painful and a responsible duty."<sup>31</sup> Frémont rejected Polk's clemency, for to accept would be to acknowledge guilt. He resigned from the Army and returned to California.

In the heated controversies between Kearny and Stockton and between Kearny and Frémont, Polk sided with Kearny. After a full examination of the correspondence in May 1847, Polk concluded that he was "fully satisfied that General Kearny was right, and that Commodore Stockton's course was wrong. Indeed, both he [Stockton] and Lieut.-Col. Frémont, in refusing to recognize the authority of General Kearny, acted insubordinately and in a manner that is censurable."<sup>32</sup>

At war's end, there was some concern in California that Washington would not insist in the peace treaty on retention of the province. Those that knew something of the origins of the New York Volunteer Regiment, which arrived in California in spring 1847, were less fearful. Polk had directed Colonel Jonathan D. Stevenson to recruit mechanics who would agree that they would, at war's end, accept their discharges and settle in California or the closest United States territory. The Eastern press, from the regiment's inception, guessed that its principal purpose was colonization rather than war.<sup>33</sup> Shortly before the end of the war, Polk confided in a letter to his brother that California indeed would be retained, and New Mexico as well, as war indemnifications. Furthermore, the longer Mexico continued hostilities by its "stubbornness," said Polk, the greater the indemnities.<sup>34</sup>

Publicly, Polk said little about California's destiny, for he did not wish to enter the debate on whether the United States intended to retain Mexican territory. He was no longer stating publicly,

as he had before, that the United States had no intention to retain Mexican properties after the signing of a peace treaty.<sup>35</sup> His reluctance to make his position known baffled and angered the public. The public should have remembered that Polk at the outset of the war had similarly refused to clarify his war objectives.

At war's end, when it appeared that Polk might be forced to bow to powerful elements in the Democratic Party who were arguing for annexation of all of Mexico, Nicholas Trist signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo for the United States, which established a boundary just south of San Diego Bay, virtually the same boundary that Polk had sought in the Slidell mission. The President's well-known quarrel with Trist would be overlooked, and the administration, according to the New Orleans *Picayune*, would be content to "swallow its disappointment, and California and New Mexico at the same time."<sup>36</sup>

Polk left to his successors the question of slavery which would become central to the issue of Westward Expansion for the next 15 years. During his presidency, Polk adopted a position that could have prevented sectional crisis if his successors had been so wise. He understood better than his contemporaries, and successors as well, the true nature of the issue of slavery in the Western territories. He assailed fellow Southerner John C. Calhoun for his extremist stance on the expansion of slavery. At the same time, he rejected the Wilmot Proviso which would have prevented slavery in any territory acquired from Mexico at the end of the war. Indeed, he favored the extension of the 1820 Missouri Compromise line of 36°30' to the Pacific.

Polk saw no contradiction in his position. He was simply convinced that slavery would never exist in the territory south of the 36°30' line.<sup>37</sup> A Southern man who wished to be president to all the people, he would permit slavery in the federal territories since he believed that it would never take hold there. If this view had prevailed, there might have been no Civil War.

Polk decided that he was going to enjoy retirement more than the presidency, and he left the office without regret. He was dismayed, however, to be succeeded by a Whig, especially by Zachary Taylor, whom he held in low regard. His opinion of Taylor undoubtedly reached rock-bottom during a coach ride to the Capitol on inauguration day. Polk was shocked when the President-elect, in the course of polite conversation, said that Oregon and California should establish an independent government, since they were so far removed from the United States. Polk, for some time, had been anxious that Congress form a government for California, fearing that otherwise the territory could be lost to the Union by the formation of a separate government, precisely the course the new President seemed to advocate. Polk concluded that Taylor was a "well-meaning old man," though uneducated and politically ignorant.<sup>38</sup>

If Polk's election in 1844 can be traced at least partly to the American people's expansionist spirit, then it can be argued that the voters' rejection of the Democrats in 1848 can be interpreted as a repudiation of the siren song of Manifest Destiny.<sup>39</sup> Yet, Polk's contributions, the fruit of the expansionist spirit, were embraced and defended. His "Polk Doctrine," which warned Europe not to interfere in the affairs of the North American continent, was subsequently embraced by the American people. During the four-year tenure, over one-half million square miles of territory were added to the United States, a number second only to Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase.<sup>40</sup> Even ill-gotten gains, like horse thieves and harlots in the family tree, can be accepted with resignation or amusement, even some pride, when separated by a sufficient lapse of time.

### Notes

1. James K. Polk, *Polk: The Diary of a President, 1845-1849*, Allan Nevins, ed. (New York, 1952), xvii.
2. See, for example, Polk to Chase *et al.*, 23 Apr. 1844, in James K. Polk, *The Correspondence of James K. Polk*, Wayne Cutler and James P. Cooper, Jr., eds. (Nashville, TN, 1989), 105-106.
3. Polk, *Diary*, xxiii.

4. Frederick Merk, *The Oregon Question: Essays in Anglo-American Diplomacy and Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 1967), 410; Jesse S. Reeves, *American Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk* (Gloucester, MA, 1967, a reprint of the 1907 publication of The Johns Hopkins Press), 252-253.
5. Merk, *The Oregon Question*, 219-220.
6. *Ibid.*, 343.
7. For an elaboration of the view following, see Merk, *The Oregon Question*, 415-416, and Norman A. Graebner, *Empire on the Pacific: A Study in American Continental Expansion* (Santa Barbara, CA, reprint, 1983), 137-140.
8. Commodore Robert F. Stockton, the most energetic among the agents, appeared bent on provoking a war with Mexico. See, generally, Glenn W. Price, *Origins of the War with Mexico: The Polk-Stockton Intrigue* (Austin, TX, 1967). Texas President Anson Jones, who later wrote an account of the intrigues of Stockton and his Texan and American cohorts, charged that Polk secretly sought to provoke war at the point, 112.
9. Charles Sellers, *James K. Polk: Continentalist, 1843-1846* (Princeton, NJ, 1966), 259.
10. Neal Harlow, *California Conquered: War and Peace on the Pacific, 1846-1850* (Berkeley, 1982), 55; Paul H. Bergeron, *The Presidency of James K. Polk* (Lawrence, KS, 1987), 62.
11. Polk, *Diary*, 10; Bernard DeVoto, *Year of Decision: 1846* (Boston, 1942), 16-17. Slidell's mission was to be kept secret to prevent foreign powers, particularly Britain or France, from interfering with it. Polk, *Diary*, 10.
12. Graebner, *Empire on the Pacific*, 121.
13. Polk, *Diary*, 50-53; Sellers, *Polk: Continentalist*, 401.
14. Polk, *Diary*, 53; Bergeron, *Polk*, 70-71, 83, 103; Sellers, *Polk: Continentalist*, 427-428, 430-431.
15. Polk, *Diary* (4-7-1846), 69-70. Polk believed that the British ambassador had influenced the Mexican government to reject Slidell. *Ibid.* (4-18-1846), 71-72], perhaps assuming that the Mexican issue would be sufficiently irritating to the United States to encourage the settlement of the Oregon question.
16. Polk, *Diary* (4-18-1846), 71.
17. Graebner, *Empire on the Pacific*, 152.
18. Polk, *Diary* (5-13-1846), 90-92.
19. For Larkin's role in trying to persuade Californians, see Harlan Hague and David J. Langum, *Thomas O. Larkin: A Life of Patriotism and Profit in Old California* (Norman, OK, 1990), especially chapter 7.
20. Larkin's role in the approach to war with Mexico is told in *Ibid.*, chapter 7.
21. Polk, *Diary* (10-14-1845), 19. Spence and Jackson indeed conclude that Polk's concern about British designs on California became "one of the cornerstones of his foreign policy." John Charles Frémont, *The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont: The Bear Flag Revolt and the Court-Martial*, Mary Lee Spence and Donald Jackson, eds., vol. 2 (Urbana, 1973), xxi. If that is true, then Larkin's influence on American foreign policy during Polk's presidency looms large. Polk's fear of European interference would extend to the end of the war. As late as December 1847, he argued that a premature withdrawal of the American Army from Mexico might open the way to European intervention. Robert W. Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York, 1985), 304.
22. Buchanan to Larkin, 17 Oct. 1845, in George P. Hammond, ed., *The Larkin Papers: Personal, Business, and Official Correspondence of Thomas Oliver Larkin, Merchant and United States Consul in California*, 10 vols. (Berkeley, 1951-1968), 4: 44-46.
23. Bancroft to Sloat, 17 Oct. 1845, in Robert E. Cowan, ed., "Documentary," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 2 (July 1923): 167-170.
24. Buchanan to McLane, 14 Oct. 1845, cited in Robert Glass Cleland, "The Early Sentiment for the Annexation of California: An Account of the Growth of American Interest in California, 1835-1846," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (Jan. 1915), 243; Buchanan to Slidell, 10 Nov. 1845, cited in Howard William Gross, "The Influence of Thomas O. Larkin Toward the Acquisition of California," M.A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1937, 112.
25. For an overview, see: Harlow, *California Conquered*, principally chapters 6-8; Hague and Langum, *Thomas O. Larkin*, 120-130, 136-139.
26. John Charles Frémont, *Memoirs of My Life* (Chicago: Belford, Clarke & Company, 1887), 460.
27. Frémont, *Memoirs*, 534. In later life, Frémont, probably influenced by Jessie, his wife, claimed that the letter from Buchanan that was shown him in spring 1846 was actually meant for himself not Larkin, that he, not Larkin, had been appointed Polk's confidential agent. The record does not support his claim. See Hague and Langum, *Thomas O. Larkin*, 128-130.
28. Frémont, *Memoirs*, 486.
29. Frémont, *Expeditions*, 2: xxix.
30. This tangled story is best told in Harlow, *California Conquered*, chapters 14, 15.
31. Polk, *Diary* (2-16-1848), 303. See also Frémont, *Expeditions*, 468n, 469n.
32. Polk, *Diary* (5-4-1847), 226.
33. Graebner, *Empire on the Pacific*, 156.
34. *Ibid.*, 158-159.
35. *Ibid.*, 161-162.
36. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 213-214.
37. Polk, *Diary*, xvi, 189-190, 376.
38. *Ibid.*, 389.
39. This argument is suggested in Graebner, *Empire on the Pacific*, 227.
40. Polk, *Diary*, xvii.

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