

## [CFP: James K. Polk and His Time: A Conference Finale to the Polk Project](#)

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Call for Papers

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Tennessee, United States

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American History / Studies, Political History / Studies, Public History, Slavery, Borderlands

The James K. Polk Project and the Department of History at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, invite paper proposals for "James K. Polk and His Time: A Conference Finale to the Polk Project," to be held at the East Tennessee Historical Society, in Knoxville, on April 12-13, 2019.

Few individuals have impacted the history of North America as visibly as James K. Polk. After turns as Speaker of the U.S. House and governor of Tennessee, he served as president, 1845-49, when the United States became a transcontinental nation. He settled the northwestern boundary with Canada, completed the admission of Texas, and oversaw a war that lost Mexico half its territory. He lowered tariffs, redesigned the federal banking system, and continued removing Native Americans from the east. Railroads, steamships, and telegraph lines increasingly connected the Union while tensions over slavery, heightened by the acquisition of new land and by Polk's ownership of African Americans, threatened to divide it.

In 1958 Herbert Weaver began a project at Vanderbilt University to locate, edit, and publish this consequential and controversial man's letters. The James K. Polk Project, at the University of Tennessee since 1987, has produced thirteen letterpress and digital volumes of the *Correspondence of James K. Polk*. Featuring annotated transcriptions of thousands of letters from 1817-48, they enable twenty-first-century readers to use the nineteenth-century documents and have nurtured diverse scholarship on antebellum America. In 2019 the project will complete work on its fourteenth and final volume, comprising letters from April 1848-June 1849, the last months of Polk's presidency and of his life.

To celebrate this accomplishment, after six decades of work by dozens of faculty, staff, and student editors, we announce a conference on Polk and his time. By bringing together academic scholars, public historians, and community members, we hope to take stock of what we now know about the eleventh president and to assess the contributions of the project to historical study. Amy S. Greenberg will deliver a keynote address, John C. Pinheiro will chair a roundtable on Polk's impact, Brian Rose will screen his documentary on Polk, and directors of Polk house museums will discuss those historic sites.

We invite proposals for individual papers about Polk or antebellum America. We especially welcome papers that draw on the letters published in the *Correspondence of James K. Polk*. Because those

cover diverse topics, ranging from war and diplomacy to race and slavery to science and invention to gender and education, papers may address a wide range of themes. We encourage college professors, graduate students, independent writers, documentary editors, librarians, and public scholars to submit proposals.

Each proposal should include the title of the paper; the name, email address, and institutional affiliation (if any) of the presenter; and an abstract of no more than 400 words. Please submit each proposal as a Microsoft Word or PDF file to project editor Michael David Cohen ([mdcohen@utk.edu](mailto:mdcohen@utk.edu)), with the subject line "Polk Conference Proposal," by September 1, 2018. Contact Dr. Cohen with any questions.

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