

Collection #
SC 3429

**ELECTION OF 1844
CAMPAIGN SONG, 3 DECEMBER 1844**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript folder

COLLECTION DATES: 3 December 1844

PROVENANCE: Gift of Thomas J. Dillingham via Hubert Hawkins, November 1953

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: *Songs America Voted By: With the Words and Music that Won and Lost Elections and Influenced the Democratic Process*, by Irwin Silber. Call number: M 1659.7.S56 S6 1971

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1953.1107

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The United States Presidential election of 1844 hinged upon the potential annexation of Texas after the region declared its independence from Mexico in 1836. Although there was much internal splintering over annexation amongst the major political parties of the day, eventually party lines became established with the Democratic Party and presidential candidate James K. Polk (1795–1849) running a pro-annexation campaign, while the Whig Party and candidate Henry Clay (1777–1852) opposed it.

Opponents of the Democratic Party condemned annexation as a blatant expansion of slavery in the Southern United States. Clay, a slave owner himself, also denounced annexation as potential cause of war between the United States and Mexico, as Mexico still did not recognize the independence of the region eight years after Texas's declaration.

To combat the Whig perception, Polk campaigned on "manifest destiny," or the idea that Americans were destined to expand and settle across the North American continent to consolidate American territory and spread American ideals. He did this by linking the possibility of annexing Texas with resolving the ongoing boundary dispute with the British over the Oregon Territory.

Thus, Polk campaigned on the promise that Southern states would gain a slave state in Texas while Northern states would simultaneously gain a free state in Oregon if he became president. This proved to be a popular platform amongst both Southern and Midwestern Democrats, and James K. Polk defeated Henry Clay by a wide margin, becoming the nation's eleventh President on 4 March 1845.

Sources:

Bicknell, John. *America 1844: Religious Fervor, Westward Expansion, and the Presidential Election That Transformed the Nation*. Chicago Review Press, 2014.

Collection materials.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, "United States Presidential Election of 1844."

Freehling, William W. *The Road to Disunion: Volume I: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854*. Oxford University Press, 1991.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains a one-page transcript of a campaign song written in the daybook belonging to a man named James P. White (biographical information unknown). The untitled song was dated 3 December 1844, the day before the end of the 1844 election. Thomas J. Dillingham transcribed the song before 1953. The tune of the original song is unknown.

The song supports Democratic candidate James K. Polk's bid for presidency with a refrain of "for disenfranchised you ne'er will be / When we get Polk of Tennessee." The lyrics also include much derision for Henry Clay and the Whig Party's position on the re-establishment of a National Bank.

Interestingly, the song explicitly mentions "the leaders of the Native Clan" as supporters of Polk, when voting rights for Native Americans were murky at best and nonexistent at worst in 1844. The song also often refers to the Whig Party as "feds" or "the Federal Party" to more closely link Clay to historically unpopular Federalist presidents such as John Adams and John Quincy Adams.

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"Song," 3 December 1844

CONTAINER

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