

# Collector's Journal

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## 2009 James Knox Polk Presidential Dollar

### *Eleventh in the Presidential Dollars Collection*

The James Knox Polk Dollar is the third of four unique Presidential Dollars issued by the U.S. Mint in 2009. The series started in 2007, and four new coins are issued each year. The coins honor all deceased U.S. Presidents in the order in which they served, so the first coin in 2007 was for the first President, George Washington. James Knox Polk was the eleventh President, so this coin is the eleventh in the overall collection. It was preceded in 2009 by the coins for William Henry Harrison and John Tyler, and it will be followed by the coin for Zachary Taylor.

The Polk coin was released in the summer of 2009. Like all Presidential Dollars, it was struck for only about three months before production started on the next coin. Each Presidential Dollar is therefore a strictly limited edition that can never be made again.

A unique Presidential portrait appears on the obverse of each Presidential Dollar. As mandated by the Presidential \$1 Coin Act of 2005, the reverse of all Presidential Dollars features a standard design showing “a likeness of the Statue of Liberty extending to the rim of the coin.” The Statue of Liberty symbolizes the freedom which allows the people of the United States to select a President every four years.

The obverse of the James Knox Polk Presidential Dollar features an image of James Knox Polk based on an early type of photograph known as a daguerreotype that was produced about 1849 when he was President. The original photograph was taken by Mathew Brady and shows a half-length portrait of Polk; it is owned by the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Brady opened a studio in Washington, D.C., in 1849 and later became the most famous Civil War photographer.



#### **James Knox Polk**

James Knox Polk was born near Pineville, North Carolina, on November 2, 1795. When he was a young boy, his pioneering family moved to the Tennessee frontier to start a plantation. He studied law and was elected to the Tennessee House of Representatives before serving in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1825 to 1839. Aided by his friend Andrew Jackson, he became Speaker of the House. In 1839, he returned to Tennessee following his election as Governor.

Polk attended the 1844 Democratic party convention, but he was not initially a candidate for President. After seven ballots, the delegates were deadlocked in the choice between former President Martin Van Buren and Lewis Cass. Polk was introduced on the eighth ballot, and he won the nomination unanimously on the ninth ballot.

Although he was well known in Tennessee, Polk was relatively unknown on the national stage. However, he won a close election against Whig candidate Henry Clay. He strongly supported “Manifest Destiny,” the belief that the United States had the right to expand westward. He added more than one million square miles of territory, including Oregon and Washington as well as California and much of the Southwest following the Mexican War.

Polk enjoyed a successful Presidency, but he declined to run for a second term. He died on June 15, 1849, less than 15 weeks after leaving office.

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