

James Knox Polk

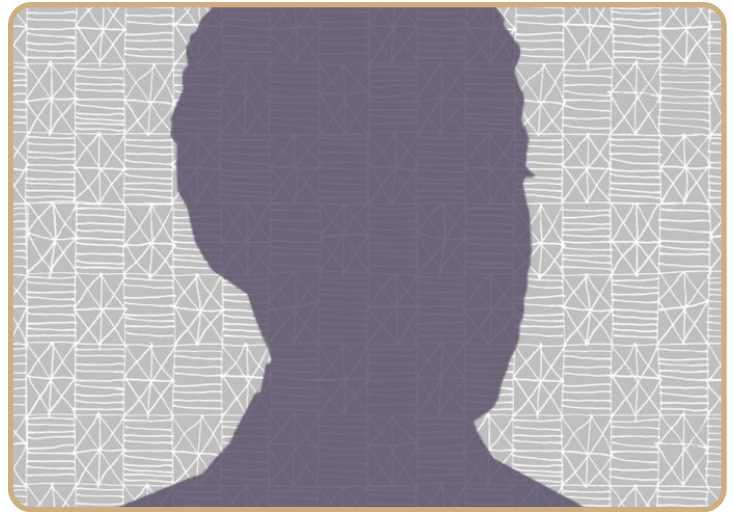
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Places: Midway, Woodford County, Kentucky; Versailles, Woodford County, Kentucky

Birth: January 21, 1845

Death: January 27, 1918

Professions: Jockey, Hostler



Birth Name

James Knox Polk, at his birth in 1845, was given the same name as the eleventh President of the United States. Margie Johnson, his mother, could not provide her son a life free of enslavement. But she gave him a name that, after freedom, would be remembered in Kentucky's African American history.¹

Civil War and Freedom

Polk was owned by Abraham Buford of Woodford County, Kentucky. In 1862, Abraham joined the Confederacy during the Civil War. He took sixteen-year-old Polk with him. Described as an "expert horse rider," Polk became responsible for the horses Buford took into war.

At the end of the conflict, Polk was free. He returned to Woodford County and married Mary Bohannon in 1868. They became parents of twelve children. After the death of Mary in 1894, he married Carrie Blackburn.²

Becoming A Leader

Polk chose not to pursue a career with horses. Instead he became a religious leader. He acquired his Doctor of Divinity degree from Louisville Theology Seminary. He served the Baptist Church at Mortonville, Kentucky for forty-five years. In 1872, he organized the Pilgrim Baptist Church with sixteen members. He pastored the church members for forty-seven years. The church still stands in Midway, Kentucky.³

Legacy Remembered

Reverend James Knox Polk will forever be remembered. In 2003, the church at Mortonville

was renamed Polk Memorial Baptist Church. In 2008, a Kentucky Highway Marker at the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Midway was installed. It acknowledges Polk's leadership in forming and leading the congregation.

Polk, at his death, was said to have been 'faithful and devoted, a good citizen, a man of integrity and force of character, of kindness, humility and courtesy.'⁴

Polk was buried in Simmons Cemetery, Versailles, Kentucky.⁵

Sources

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<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111241973/james-knox-polk>

Footnotes

¹Polk, James Knox (former slave) NAAA

²Rev. Jas. K. Polk Dead

³Polk Memorial Celebrated Sesquicentennial

⁴Rev. Jas. K. Polk Dead

⁵Rev. James Knox Polk Grave Memorial