TO SARAH CHILDRESS POLK

My Dear Wife:  

Washington City Sunday July 11th 1847

This morning I received your letter of the 2nd Instant, written at Murfreesboro’, & wish I could have spent the day with you. I calculate that you are to day at Columbia, and have probably attended church, with mother. I suppose you will return to Nashville in about a week, and that after paying another visit of two or three days to Murfreesboro’, you will set-out on your return to Washington. You see I am calculating your movements for you, with a good, deal of exactness. The truth is I miss you very much, and am already becoming impatient for your return. I have literally no news, except, such as relates to public affairs, and that I cannot undertake to communicate, farther than to say, that there is nothing of extraordinary intrest. I attended church to day, in company with Wm. H. Polk’s wife. He had other engagements—what I do not know—and did not attend. I invited Augusta to go with us, but it was communion-day, in her church, and as you know she is very pious. She declined, and so I went with Mrs. Polk alone. She is a lady in her deportment & conversation, is well educated and intelligent, but is far from being pretty; but that I suppose is a matter of taste.

Your affectionate Husband

JAMES K. POLK

P.S. Wm. & his wife will return to New York in two or three days, &
expect to leave that City for Tennessee in the course of the week. From what I can learn it is not fully settled whether she will accompany him to Tennessee or not. That they will determine when they get to New York. Yrs. &c.—J.K.P.

ALS. DLC–JKP. Addressed to Nashville.

1. Polk dated this letter correctly, but it bears an erroneous postmark of July 10.

2. Sarah Polk’s letter, written during a visit to Tennessee, has not been found.

3. Jane Knox Polk (1776–1852), the president’s mother, lived in Columbia, Tenn. A widow since 1827, she had inherited slaves from her father and from her husband Samuel.

4. William H. Polk and Mary Louise Corse married in New York City on June 29, 1847. Polk’s only surviving brother, Columbia lawyer William (1815–62) served in the Tennessee House, 1841–45 and 1857–59, and in the U.S. House, 1851–53. In January 1845, President Tyler appointed him chargé d'affaires to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, but William declined the nomination. Renominated by his brother, the new president, William won Senate confirmation on March 13, 1845, and served as minister at Naples until 1847. In 1838, in a case prosecuted by James H. Thomas, William H. Polk was convicted on a charge of assault and battery that resulted from his killing of attorney Richard H. Hays in a duel. William’s first wife, Belinda G. Dickinson Polk, died in 1844. Mary (1816–51) was a daughter of a wealthy Quaker tanner, Israel Corse, of New York City.

5. Augusta Adams Tabb (1824–60) married Joseph Knox Walker, Polk’s nephew and, during his presidency, private secretary, in 1841.