

Nicholas Philip Trist – U S Diplomat of Interesting Distinction

Nicholas Philip Trist is perhaps one of the most obscure and eccentric federal officeholders. He was born June 20, 1802, in Alexandria, Virginia, and died there February 11, 1874,

He even earned vastly critical remarks from a U.S. President, even being fired from the State Department by President James K. Polk.

Yet he is a source of such unusual accomplishment as to be a significant contributor in what is known as the father of acquiring California.

Just to whet your appetite about Mr. Trist, later in this chapter, you will see why the United States includes today what we know of as the State of California, acquired because of the efforts of Mr. Trist!

The explanation for including him in Chapter 19 of my autobiography is that Nicholas is my 28th cousin, three times removed! The relationship: [Dwight Albert Sharpe to Nicholas Philip Trist](#) also may be described as him being the 9th cousin, four times removed of the husband



of the stepdaughter of my 6th great grand uncle, Dannett Abney.

Our ancestor in common goes back to a Norwegian Viking, Eystein Glumra Ivarsson, born in 788 AD, and his wife, Aseda Rognvaldsdatter, born about 804 AD. They are my 32nd great grandparents. To Nicholas Trist, [Eystein Glumra Ivarsson](#) is the 7th great grandfather of husband of 19th great grandmother of Virginia Jefferson Randolph, the wife of Nicholas Philip Trist. Virginia also is the granddaughter of U.S. President Thomas Jefferson. President Thomas Jefferson's relationship to me is as him being the 9th cousin, 2 times removed of the husband of the stepdaughter of my 6th great grand uncle, Danette Abney (born 1712).

So, these charts document the Theory of Relativity of Nicholas Philip Trist to me and as a part of our family. Our family reflects his reputation, both good and bad! At this point, I want to commend a recently published American history book, a New York Times Bestselling effort of Michael S. Medved, "The American Miracle ... Divine Providence in the Rise of the Republic," published 2016 by Crown Forum, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, New York (www.crownforum.com). Most of the material used in my Chapter 19 autobiography about Nicholas Trist is based on Mr. Medved's research and report in his book Chapter 9 (pages 232 – 263). Mr. Michael Medved was born and raised in the Jewish faith. This book is his effort to remind America's reading public of the important aspect of spiritual motivation in and among the founders of this nation and their leaders.




Though Medved is a Jewish man in his faith, he does a good job at illustrating positive aspects of Christian faith being real and active in America. Michael Medved is an American radio show host, author, political commentator, and film critic. His Seattle-based nationally syndicated talk show, *The Michael Medved Show*, airs throughout the U.S. on Salem Radio Network. I recommend that all lovers of American History, especially those who value spirituality, should devour this book!



Nicholas Philip Trist was born in Charlottesville, Virginia, January 2, 1800, He died February 11, 1874. Trist was the grandson of James Madison's former Philadelphia landlady. Ultimately, Trist was to enjoy intimate relationships with five American Presidents, and served terms as a principal and to aide to three of them.

The beginning of these stories about Nicholas Philip Trist early on as a young boy. His grandmother was the landlady and operator of an elegant boarding house in Philadelphia. Trist's early friendship began with Thomas Jefferson lodged there when he was in Philadelphia for sessions of the Continental Congress. Another future U.S. President also befriended Trist when he lodged at the boarding house during the Constitutional Convention, James Madison. Trist ran around the serving areas of the boarding house, serving its clientele, which is how these to famous men came to view Trist favorably.

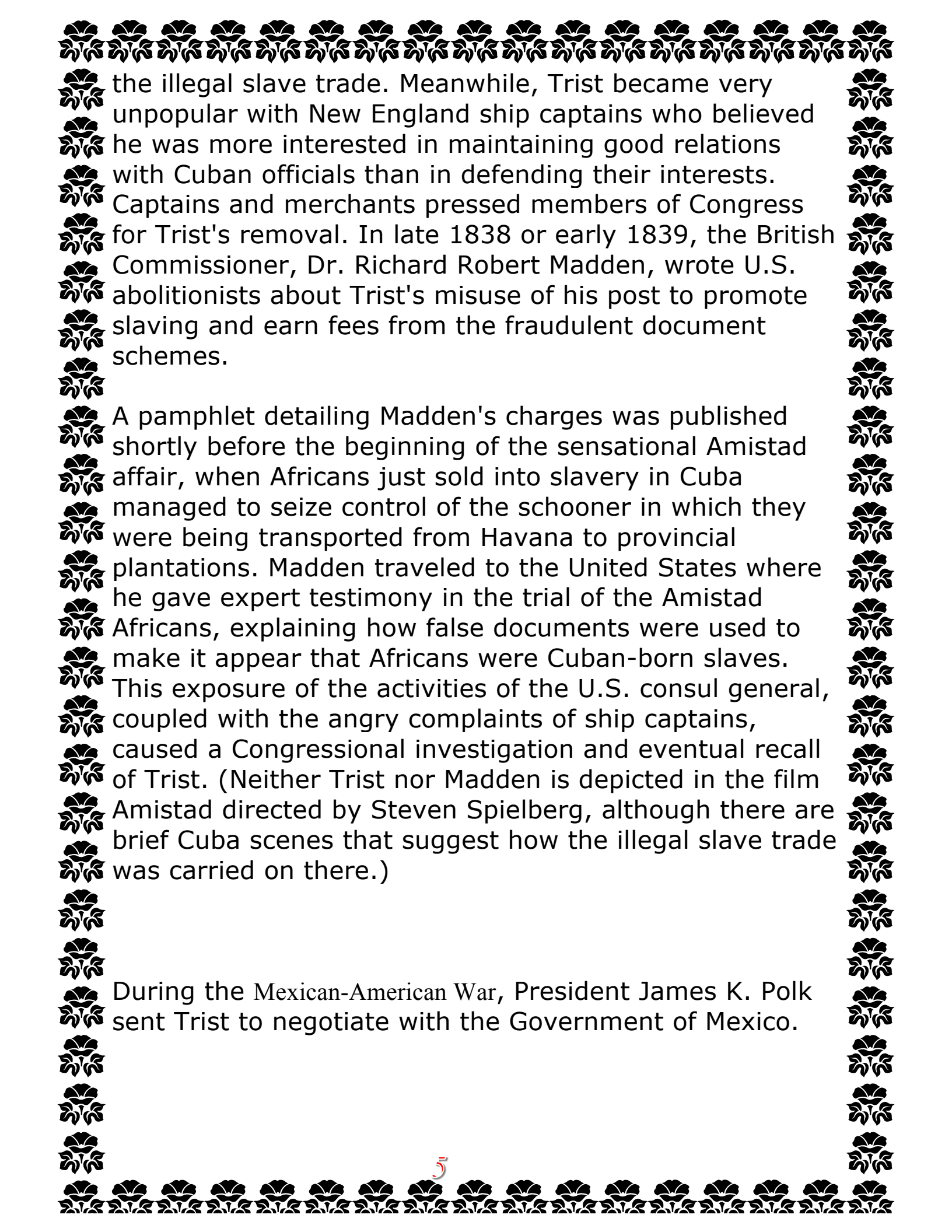


Madison became the fourth President of the United States. He served from 1809 to 1817. He is the 32nd cousin, once removed to me. Madison is the 3rd cousin, seven times removed to my son-in-law, Steve Westmoreland. He is the 13th cousin, five times removed to President George Washington. He is the 15th cousin, three times removed to President Thomas Jefferson. James Madison is the third cousin, once removed, to President Zachary Taylor. James Madison's relationship to President Zachary Taylor is extended in that President Taylor is the father-in-law of President Jefferson Davis of the Confederate States of America, the uncle of the wife of the brother-in-law of my great grandmother, Susanah Elizabeth Davis Abney of Lufkin, San Angelina County, Texas.

Trist attended West Point and studied law under Thomas Jefferson, whose granddaughter (Virginia Jefferson Randolph, 1818–1875) he married. He was also private secretary to U.S. President Andrew Jackson, whom he greatly admired. Trist served as a conduit for James Madison to President Jackson.

Trist was appointed U.S. consul in Havana, Cuba by President Jackson. Shortly after arriving there in 1833, Trist invested in a sugar plantation deal that went bad. He made no secret of his pro-slavery views. According to members of a British commission sent to Cuba to investigate violations of the treaty ending the African slave trade, Trist became corruptly involved in the creation of false documents designed to mask illegal sales of Africans into bondage.

For a time, Trist also served as the consul in Cuba for Portugal, another country whose nationals were active in

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the illegal slave trade. Meanwhile, Trist became very unpopular with New England ship captains who believed he was more interested in maintaining good relations with Cuban officials than in defending their interests. Captains and merchants pressed members of Congress for Trist's removal. In late 1838 or early 1839, the British Commissioner, Dr. Richard Robert Madden, wrote U.S. abolitionists about Trist's misuse of his post to promote slaving and earn fees from the fraudulent document schemes.

A pamphlet detailing Madden's charges was published shortly before the beginning of the sensational Amistad affair, when Africans just sold into slavery in Cuba managed to seize control of the schooner in which they were being transported from Havana to provincial plantations. Madden traveled to the United States where he gave expert testimony in the trial of the Amistad Africans, explaining how false documents were used to make it appear that Africans were Cuban-born slaves. This exposure of the activities of the U.S. consul general, coupled with the angry complaints of ship captains, caused a Congressional investigation and eventual recall of Trist. (Neither Trist nor Madden is depicted in the film Amistad directed by Steven Spielberg, although there are brief Cuba scenes that suggest how the illegal slave trade was carried on there.)

During the Mexican-American War, President James K. Polk sent Trist to negotiate with the Government of Mexico.

He was ordered to arrange an armistice with Mexico for up to \$30 million U.S. dollars, depending on whether he could obtain Baja California and additional southern territory along with the already planned acquisitions of Alta California, the Nueces Strip, and New Mexico. If he could not obtain Baja California and additional territory to the south, then he was instructed to offer \$20 million.



President Polk was unhappy with his envoy's conduct and prompted him to order Trist to return to the United States. General Winfield Scott was also unhappy with Trist's presence in Mexico, although he and Scott quickly reconciled and began a lifelong friendship.

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

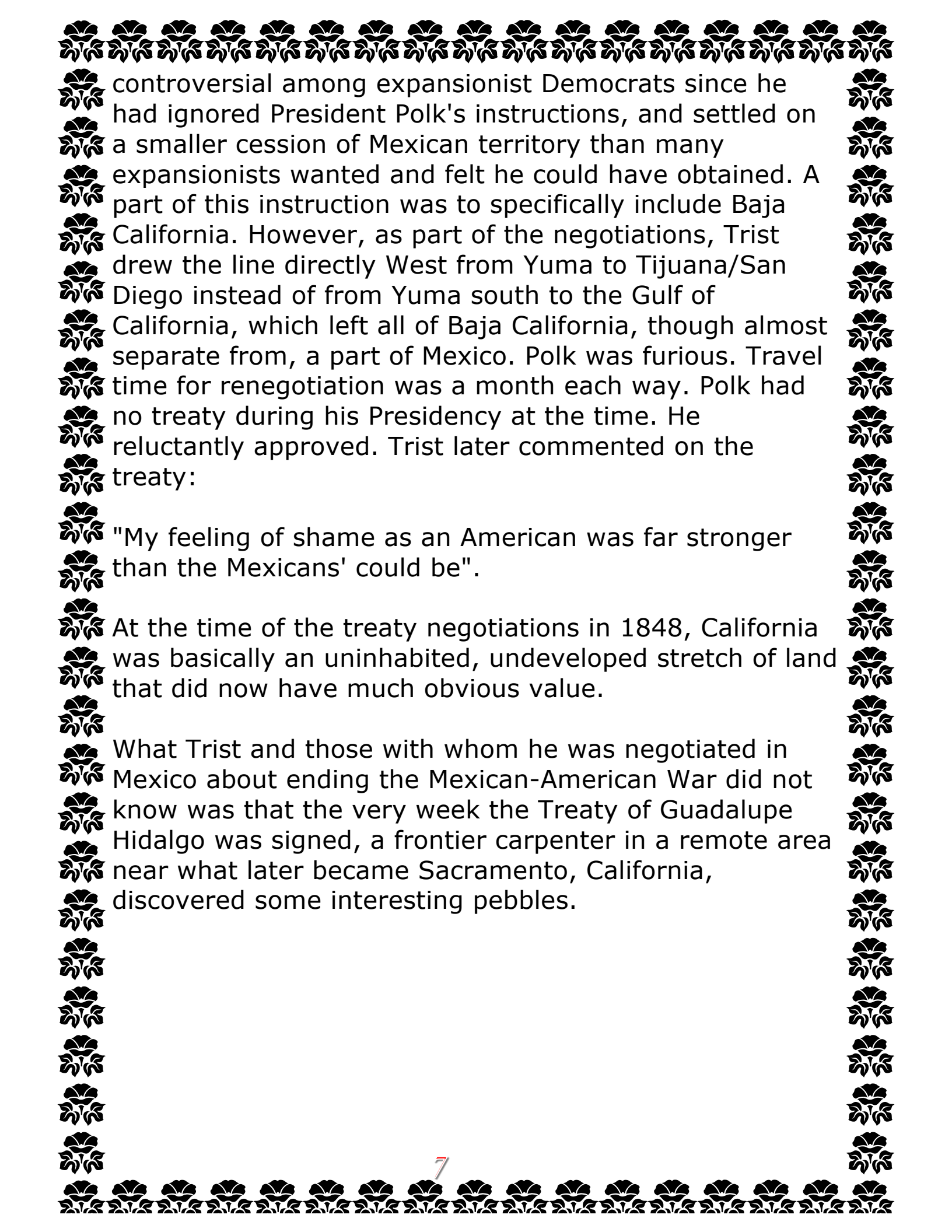
Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits, and Settlement between the United States and the Republic of Mexico



Cover of the exchange copy of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

Signed 2 February 1848

However, the wily diplomat ignored the instructions. Known to have an over-fluid pen, he wrote a 65-page letter back to Washington, D.C. explaining his reasons for staying in Mexico. He capitalized on a brilliant opportunity to continue bargaining with Santa Anna. Trist successfully negotiated the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848. Trist's negotiation was

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controversial among expansionist Democrats since he had ignored President Polk's instructions, and settled on a smaller cession of Mexican territory than many expansionists wanted and felt he could have obtained. A part of this instruction was to specifically include Baja California. However, as part of the negotiations, Trist drew the line directly West from Yuma to Tijuana/San Diego instead of from Yuma south to the Gulf of California, which left all of Baja California, though almost separate from, a part of Mexico. Polk was furious. Travel time for renegotiation was a month each way. Polk had no treaty during his Presidency at the time. He reluctantly approved. Trist later commented on the treaty:

"My feeling of shame as an American was far stronger than the Mexicans' could be".

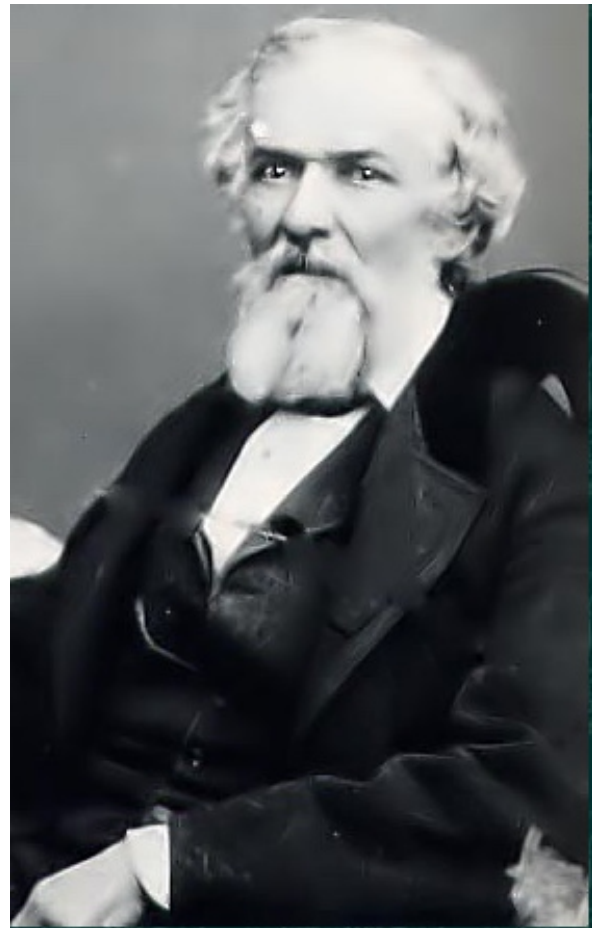
At the time of the treaty negotiations in 1848, California was basically an uninhabited, undeveloped stretch of land that did not have much obvious value.

What Trist and those with whom he was negotiating in Mexico about ending the Mexican-American War did not know was that the very week the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, a frontier carpenter in a remote area near what later became Sacramento, California, discovered some interesting pebbles.

Taking them to a civilized area for examination, it was learned they were GOLD NUGGETS! That gave way to what became the great Gold Rush of 1849 to California!



Quickly, California dramatically increased in financial value with the discovery of Gold. The rush of people to get in on the new wealth also had the side effect of creating growing urban and populated areas at a rate so fast that it was dazzling! Unknowingly, our family relative, Nicholas Philip Trist, had garnered for the United States a gem of vast wealth! However, that value was not discerned by President Polk.

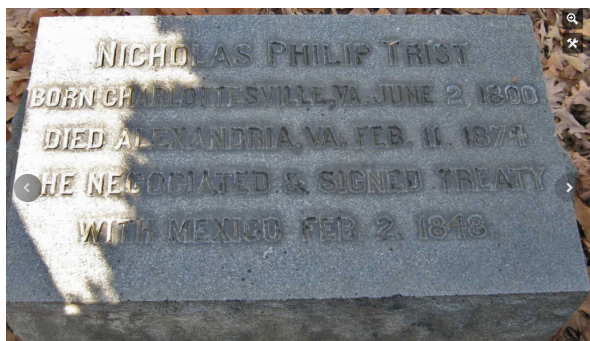


Upon Trist's return to Washington, he was terminated from his government position immediately for his insubordination to the President. His expenses since the time of the recall order in October of 1846 were not paid, nor was his salary after that time. Of course, the way things were done in those days, expense reimbursement and payment of salary while out of town was not done until the diplomat returned to Washington.

Because of President Polk's displeasure with Trist, those expenses and that unpaid salary did not take place until 1871 during the Presidential term of Ulysses S. Grant. Despite a commitment to free trade, Trist supported Republican Abraham Lincoln for President in 1860. While the Lincoln administration did not offer Trist any patronage, he did serve as postmaster of Alexandria, Virginia during the Grant administration.

Trist was also a lawyer, planter, and businessman. He died in Alexandria, Virginia on February 11, 1874, aged 73.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_Trisk



These are the two grave stones for Mr. & Mrs. Trist in the Ivy Hill Cemetery, Alexandria City, Virginia.

Here is Martha
Jefferson Randolph,
Trist's mother-in-law
who also was a
daughter of U.S.
President Thomas
Jefferson.



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Virginia, and died there in 1874.



Composed by

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