

**Harris County Archives
Houston, Texas**

Finding Aid

**BOB Y. ECKELS COLLECTION
MC008
1935-1988 (Bulk: 1978-1988)**

Size: .2 cubic feet, 52 items

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: None

Acquisition: Robert A. Eckels

Accession Number: 2004.027

Processed by: Annie Golden, 2007;
Sarah Canby Jackson, 2015

Citation: [Identification of Item], Bob Y. Eckels Collection, MC008, Harris County Archives, Houston, Texas.

Creator Sketch:

Robert Young Eckels, Jr. (Bob) was born in Temple, Texas, July 24, 1929, to Robert Young and Mildred Daniel Eckels. Eckels was a graduate of Houston Independent School District and went on to receive his bachelor's degree from Sam Houston State College and his master's degree from the University of Houston. He served two years in the United States Army from 1952 – 1954 and in the Army Reserve until honorably discharged June 30, 1960.

Eckels began his career as a public school teacher and businessman. In 1960 he was elected to the Houston Independent School District school board. President for four of his nine years on the board, he is credited with aiding in the non-violent integration of Houston schools while other schools throughout the country were erupting into violence.

Eckels ran for Harris County commissioner in 1968 as a Democrat and lost the race in the midst of accusations that he pressured teachers to vote for him. In 1972, as a Republican, Eckels once again campaigned for county commissioner and defeated the incumbent William F. "Bill" Elliott. In 1980 the Federal Government indicted Eckels and a television reporter for mail fraud in soliciting \$46,680 for the production of a 1976 educational film on county government, *Houston and Then Some*. Both were acquitted.

In February 1986, Eckels was indicted for allegedly stealing county bridge timbers, using county employees to deliver the wood to his Sealy farm, and accepting an illegal gift. A mistrial was declared after a juror brought a law dictionary into the jury room.

Eckels's trial for accepting one mile of paved road from G & S Asphalt Company on his Austin County ranch began November 2, 1987. After almost a month of testimony, a jury convicted Eckels of official misconduct. A contentious battle ensued between Eckels and the District Attorney, Johnny Holmes, on whether he was automatically removed from office with the jury's decision. After a month of legal wrangling, Eckels accepted a plea agreement. He resigned as Harris County Commissioner Precinct 3 on January 5, 1988, paid a \$2000 fine, and agreed not to appeal. On January 12, 1988, the Harris County Commissioners Court appointed Elizabeth Lyons Ghrist to replace Eckels with the proviso that Ghrist not seek election to the office.

Eckels's legal problems did not end with his resignation from office. In August 1988 Eckels was fined \$2,000 after pleading no contest to felony wiretapping of employee telephones. The charges were subsequently reduced to misdemeanor charges.

Eckels died of an apparent heart attack at his ranch on December 24, 1989. His second wife, Mary Francis, and two children, Robert A. Eckles (Harris County Judge 1995 – 2007) and Carol Ann Adams, survived him.

Bibliography:

Makeig, John. "Eckels pleads no contest, fined \$2000," *Houston Chronicle*, August 12, 1988.

Moran, Tom. "Jury convicts Eckels of misconduct," *Houston Chronicle*, November 26, 1987.

"Testimony to begin today in Commissioner Eckel's trial," *Houston Chronicle*, November 2, 1987.

Zuniga, Jo Ann. "He did it his way. Hundreds bid farewell to controversial Bob Eckels," *Houston Chronicle*, December 28, 1989.

Eckels, Robert A. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Eckels

Collection Summary:

Eleven scrapbooks, photographs, and 41 audio video tapes document the political career and interests of Bob Y. Eckels 1935-1988.

Archivists Note:

Please also see the County Attorney's case files for more information on the career of Robert Eckels.

Inventory

Series: Audio and Visual Materials

Dates: 1964 -1988

The series is divided into photoprints, photonegatives, film, and audio-video tapes.

Subseries: Photoprints

Dates: 1978 -1988

Photoprints reveal a pictorial history of the political activities, daily responsibilities, interests, and involvement of Bob Eckels, his staff, and constituents in Precinct 3. The majority of the photographs are contact sheets and many of the photographs, negatives, and contact sheets are unidentified.

Title / Description	Date	Location
Contact Sheets – Constituents and staff members	n.d. [1986-1988]	0016-P-01
Contact Sheets – Constituents and staff members	n.d. [1986-1988]	0016-P-02
Contact Sheets – Landscape and construction	n.d. [1986-1988]	0016-P-03
Constituents with Commissioner Eckels	1982-1987	0016-P-04
Commissioners Court	n.d.	0016-P-05
Judge Robert Eckels with Golfer	n.d.	0016-P-06
Precinct 3 Constituents	1985	0016-P-07
Precinct 3 Constituents	1986	0016-P-08
Precinct 3 Constituents	1987	0016-P-09
Precinct 3 Constituents	n.d. [1978-1988]	0016-P-10
Precinct 3 Roadwork	1985	0016-P-11
Precinct 3 Roadwork	1986	0016-P-12
Precinct 3 Bulldozing	1987	0016-P-13
Precinct 3 Bulldozing	1987	0016-P-14
Precinct 3 Landscaping	n.d. [1986-1988]	0016-P-15
Opening Precinct 3 Model Airplane Park	n.d.	1004-D-04
Groundbreaking Harris County Toll Road	1984	0001-M-05

Subseries: Photonegatives
Dates: 1964-1987

Title / Description	Date	Location
Precinct 3 constituents (unidentified)	1964, 12/26; n.d.	0016-P-17
Kent's Graduation	1986	0016-P-18
Precinct 3 Right of Way	1987, 05/20	0016-P-19

Subseries: Film
Range of Dates: 1976

This unique view of Harris County government in 1976 was professionally produced in as an educational film to be used to illustrate the functions of county government. The film has been digitized and can be viewed at the Texas Archive of the Moving Image http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=Houston...and_then_some.

Title / Description	Date	Location
<i>Houston and Then Some</i>	1976	
Digital Copies of <i>Houston and Then Some</i>	1976	VHS 90, 91

Subseries: Audio Video Tapes
Range of Dates: 1977 – 1986, n.d.

Forty-one audio video tapes document Bob Eckels's tenure as a Harris County commissioner. Because 89% of the tapes are in ¾ inch U-matic formats, they have not been viewed. The subjects of the tapes are indicated on the covers, with most of them created by Broadcast News Report, a private "clipping" service for video. Please contact the archivist for complete information on individual titles.

Title	Description	Date	Location
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 843	1977	0014-Z-02
Possible duplicate of VHS 826	VHS 827	1977, 02 - 09	0014-Z-02
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 826	1977, 02/24 - 1977, 09/21	0014-Z-02
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 857	1978, 09/18 - 1979, 07/20	0015-Z-01
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 837	1979, 03/01 - 1979, 11/12	0014-Z-02

Title	Description	Date	Location
The Business of Beer, KPRC	VHS 822	1979, 10/16-17	0014-Z-01
Bob Eckels Strategy Meeting	VHS 832	1980	0014-Z-02
Bob Eckels, News Stories. Indictment, Arraignment	VHS 839	1980, 01/01	0014-Z-02
Indictment of Commissioner Bob Eckels and Judd McIlvain	VHS 828	1980, 04/28	0014-Z-02
Big Two News Conference KPRC	VHS 821	1980, 06/01	0014-Z-01
Big Two News Conference KPRC – duplicate of VHS 821	VHS 825	1980, 06/01	0014-Z-02
Seven Stories including Channel 26	VHS 856	1980, 06/05	0015-Z-01
Precinct 3 Elections	VHS 831	1980, 06/06 - 09	0014-Z-02
Indictment File Tape I	VHS 841	1980, 06/11 – 1980, 10/16	0014-Z-02
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 858	1980, 07/31 - 1981, 02/10	0015-Z-01
Indictment File Tape II	VHS 833	1980, 10/17	0014-Z-02
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 829	1981, 03/10 - 1981, 12/07	0014-Z-02
Northwest Chamber of Commerce Meeting	VHS 845	1981, 05/15	0015-Z-01
Farm and Ranch Club Facility KPRC	VHS 838	1981, 08/01	0014-Z-02
60 Minutes - Medical Examiner – Dr. Joe Jachimczyk	VHS 830	1983, 10/09	0014-Z-02
60 Minutes - Billy Reagan	VHS 830	1983, 10/09	0014-Z-02
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 823	1983, 04/15 - 1983, 10/24	0014-Z-01
Republican Women Satellite Video Conference	VHS 847	1983, 04/20	0015-Z-01
Trends and Topics with Bob Eckels	VHS 855	1983, 11/14	0015-Z-01
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 851	1984, 01/16 - 1984, 06/3	0015-Z-01
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 844	1984, 06/14 - 1985, 02/26	0015-Z-01
NACO (National Association of Counties Organization)Mtg. Seattle	VHS 848	1984, 07	0015-Z-01
Nancy Carney Show: Jon Lindsay, County Judge	VHS 820	1984, 09/12	0014-Z-01
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 824	1985, 03/07 - 1985, 07/25	0014-Z-02

Title	Description	Date	Location
Dedication of War Memorial Pct. 3	VHS 849	1985, 05/27	0015-Z-01
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 853	1985, 07/30 - 1985, 11/13	0015-Z-01
Bob Eckels, News Stories - duplicate	VHS 854	1985, 07/30 - 1985, 11/13	0015-Z-01
14th Annual Breakfast	VHS 836	1986, 11/21	0014-Z-02
NACO Groundbreaking Ceremony	VHS 834	n.d.	0014-Z-02
Houston and Then Some	VHS 835	n.d.	0014-Z-02
Northwest Spotlight interview and movie	VHS 840	n.d.	0014-Z-02
no title	VHS 842	n.d.	0014-Z-02
Bob Eckels Pct 3 Program	VHS 846	n.d.	0015-Z-01
Miscellaneous News	VHS 850	n.d.	0015-Z-01
no title	VHS 852	n.d.	0015-Z-01
no title	VHS 859	n.d.	0015-Z-01

Series: Scrapbooks

Dates: Dates 1935, 1978-1988

Scope and Contents Note:

Newspaper clippings, programs, invitations, correspondence, photographs, and ephemera document Harris County and the personal interests of Commissioner Bob Eckels.

Among the subjects covered include Harris County Precinct 3 programs, flood control, bridge and road improvements, toll road bond issues, and county elections. Of special interest is a scrapbook that contains newspaper clippings of the 1935 flood in Houston.

Title / Description	Date	Location
Scrapbook	1935, 12/06- 12/13	0007-V-02
Scrapbook [01]	1978, 01/01 – 1980, 01/23	0004-S-09
Scrapbook [02]	1979, 10/25 – 1980, 12/30	0004-S-09
Scrapbook [03]	1980, 12/24 – 1981, 12/30	0004-S-09
Scrapbook [04]	1982, 01/01 – 1982, 12/31	0004-S-09

Scrapbook [05]	1983, 01/02 – 1983, 12/31	0004-S-10
Scrapbook [06]	1984, 01/04 – 1984, 12/21	0004-S-10
Scrapbook [07]	1985, 01/09 – 1985, 12/24	0004-S-10
Scrapbook [09]	1987, 09/02 – 1987, 12/31	0004-S-10
Scrapbook [11]	1988, 01/01 – 1988, 07/20	0004-S-10
Scrapbook [12]	1988, 07/21 – 1988, 12/14	0004-S-10