

**Harris County Archives  
Houston, Texas**

*Finding Aid*

**ROBERT Y. 'BOB' ECKELS COLLECTION  
MC008  
1935-1989 (Bulk: 1978-1988)**

**Size:** 1 cubic feet, 55 items

**Restrictions on Access:** None

**Restrictions on Use:** None

**Acquisition:** Robert A. Eckels

**Accession Number:** 2004.027,  
2008.002

**Processed by:** Annie Golden, 2007;  
Sarah Canby Jackson, 2015, 2016, 2020

**Citation:** [Identification of Item], Robert Y. 'Bob' 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. Eckels (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 Eckels'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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Eckels)

**Collection Summary:**

Fourteen scrapbooks, photographs, audio video tapes and one film document the political career and interests of Robert Y. 'Bob' Eckels 1935-1989.

**Archivists Note:**

Please also see the County Attorney's case files for more information on the career of Robert Y. 'Bob' Eckels and the Terence Leo O'Rourke Papers.

## Inventory

**Series: Audio Visual Materials**

**Dates:** 1964 -1989, nd

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

**Subseries: Photoprints**

**Dates:** 1960s – 1989, nd

Photoprints reveal a pictorial history of the political activities, daily responsibilities, interests, and involvement of Bob Eckels, his staff, and constituents in Precinct 3. Local political figures are often represented in those photographs documenting his annual community picnic. Early photographs of his family and the young Robert A. Eckels (later to become a state legislator and county judge) are of interest. Many of the photographs, negatives, and contact sheets are unidentified.

<b>Title / Description</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
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

Personal / Family	1983, nd	0059-P-01
Robert Y. ‘Bob’ Eckels – Headshots	1960s – 1983, nd	0059-P-02
Commissioner, Pct. 3, Harris County	1975 – 1987, nd	0059-P-03
Events, Bear Creek Park, various photos	1971 – 1987, nd	0059-P-04
Community Picnic / Political Rally	1977	0059-P-05
7 <sup>th</sup> Annual 4th of July Picnic	1980, ca	0059-P-06
Events, politicians, group shots	1982 – 1989	0059-P-07
Fundraising event, various photos	1982, nd	0059-P-08
4 <sup>th</sup> of July Picnic	1983	0059-P-09
Community Picnic / Political Rally	1985	0059-P-10
Community Picnic / Political Rally	1986	0059-P-11
Community Picnic / Political Rally	1986	0059-P-12
Events, awards, group shots	nd	0059-P-13
Events, various	nd	0059-P-14
Community Events [large format prints]	nd	0059-P-15

**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
Headshots	nd	0059-P-16

**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](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=Houston...and_then_some).

<b>Title / Description</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
<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 documented Bob Eckels’s tenure as a Harris County commissioner. Eighty nine per cent of the tapes were in ¾ inch U-matic formats and could not be appraised until a 2016 digitization project. At that time it was determined five of the tapes were either blank or unplayable. Of the remaining 37 tapes, 25 are of poor quality with either audio or visual distortion or both.

A complete listing of the digitized tapes, their content and condition is available from the archives. The general subjects of the tapes are indicated in the title, 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.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
<i>Eckels, News Stories</i> Possible duplicate of VHS 826	VHS 827	1977, 02 - 09	0014-Z-02 Digitized
Eckels, News Stories	VHS 826	1977, 02/24 - 1977, 09/21	0014-Z-02
Eckels, News Stories	VHS 857	1978, 09/18 - 1979, 07/20	0015-Z-01 Digitized
Eckels, News Stories	VHS 837	1979, 03/01 - 1979, 11/12	0014-Z-02 Digitized
The Business of Beer, KPRC	VHS 822	1979, 10/16-17	0014-Z-01 Digitized
Constituent Testimonials	VHS 832	1980	0014-Z-02
Bob Eckels, News Stories, Indictment, Arraignment	VHS 839	1980, 01/01	0014-Z-02 Digitized
Indictment of Commissioner Bob Eckels and Judd McIlvain	VHS 828	1980, 04/28	0014-Z-02 Digitized
Big Two News Conference KPRC	VHS 821	1980, 06/01	0014-Z-01 Digitized
Big Two News Conference KPRC – duplicate of VHS 821	VHS 825	1980, 06/01	0014-Z-02

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
Seven Stories including Channel 26	VHS 856	1980, 06/05	0015-Z-01 Digitized
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 Digitized
Eckels, News Stories	VHS 858	1980, 07/31 - 1981, 02/10	0015-Z-01 Digitized
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 Digitized
Northwest Chamber of Commerce Meeting	VHS 845	1981, 05/15	0015-Z-01 Digitized
Farm and Ranch Club Facility KPRC	VHS 838	1981, 08/01	0014-Z-02 Digitized
60 Minutes - Dr. Joe Jachimczyk	VHS 830	1983, 10/09	0014-Z-02 Digitized
60 Minutes - Billy Reagan	VHS 830	1983, 10/09	0014-Z-02 Digitized
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 823	1983, 04/15 - 1983, 10/24	0014-Z-01 Digitized
Republican Women Satellite Video Conference	VHS 847	1983, 04/20	0015-Z-01 Digitized
Trends and Topics with Bob Eckels	VHS 855	1983, 11/14	0015-Z-01 Digitized
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 851	1984, 01/16 - 1984, 06/3	0015-Z-01 Digitized
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 844	1984, 06/14 - 1985, 02/26	0015-Z-01 Digitized
NACO (National Association of Counties Organization)Mtg. Seattle	VHS 848	1984, 07	0015-Z-01 Digitized
Nancy Carney Show: Jon Lindsay, County Judge	VHS 820	1984, 09/12	0014-Z-01 Digitized
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 824	1985, 03/07 - 1985, 07/25	0014-Z-02
Dedication of War Memorial Pct. 3	VHS 849	1985, 05/27	0015-Z-01 Digitized
Bob Eckels, News Stories	VHS 853	1985, 07/30 - 1985, 11/13	0015-Z-01 Digitized
Bob Eckels, News Stories - duplicate	VHS 854	1985, 07/30 - 1985, 11/13	0015-Z-01 Digitized

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
14th Annual Breakfast	VHS 836	1986, 11/21	0014-Z-02 Digitized
NACO Groundbreaking Ceremony	VHS 834	n.d.	0014-Z-02
Houston and Then Some	VHS 835	n.d.	0014-Z-02
Northwest Spotlight interview / movie	VHS 840	n.d.	0014-Z-02 Digitized
Bob Eckels Pct 3 Program	VHS 846	n.d.	0015-Z-01 Digitized
Miscellaneous News	VHS 850	n.d.	0015-Z-01 Digitized
no title	VHS 859	n.d.	0015-Z-01 Digitized

**Series: Scrapbooks**

**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.

Donated by an unknown creator, three scrapbooks document the years 1985 – 1987 in particular the political indictments against Eckels.

<b>Title / Description</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
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
Scrapbook – “Eckels Political Indictments”	1980; 1985, 05/01 – 1987, 03/01	0006-S-06
Scrapbook	1986, 01/01 – 1986, 12/31	0006-S-06
Scrapbook	1987, 01/01 – 1987, 08/31	0006-S-06