

Baylor University . The Texas Collection

Pat M. Neff Collection. Inclusive: 1847-1952, Bulk: 1920-1947

Summary Information

Creator	Neff, Pat Morris, 1871-1952 Neff, Isabella Shepherd Neff, Myrtle Mainor Wilcox, Hallie Maude Neff Neff, Jr., Pat Morris
Extent (quantity/size)	This collection contains 643 document boxes and six oversize boxes.
Language	English; Spanish
Abstract	This is an extensive collection of Pat. M. Neff materials. It consists of items from his early years, his time as governor of Texas, and materials from when he was President of Baylor University.

Subjects

Baptist General Convention of Texas -- History. / Baylor University -- History. / Baylor University -- Presidents. / Baylor University -- School of Nursing. / Education, Higher -- Texas -- History. / Governors -- Texas. / Governors -- Texas -- Election. / Mother Neff State Park (Tex.) / Neff, Isabella Eleanor Shepherd, 1830-1924. / Neff, Pat Morris, 1871-1952. / Parks -- Texas. / Politicians -- Texas. / Politics -- History. / Railroad Commission of Texas -- History. / Texas -- Legislature. / Texas -- Politics and government. / Texas -- Politics and government--1865-1950. / Texas Centennial (1936 : Dallas, Tex.) / Universities and colleges -- Texas -- Waco -- History. / Waco (Tex.) -- History--20th Century. / Waco (Tex.) -- History. / Waco (Tex.).

Administrative Information

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Preferred Citation When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is:

Pat M. Neff Collection, Accession #463, Box#, Folder #, The Texas Collection, Baylor University.

Processing Information Described by Benna Vaughan; Thomas DeShong; Paul T. Fisher; Nicholas Graves; Petra Ibarra-Nagel; Adina Johnson; Jonathan Riddle; Mary Ellen Stanley and released on 2013-01-31.

Scope and Content

The Pat Neff Collection consists of ten different accessions to the collection. The original accession was received from Mrs. Adela Elliot Goodyear in 1973. The second was a transfer from uncatalogued holdings in The Texas Collection, 1975 January 27. The third was a transfer from uncatalogued holdings in The Texas Collection, 1975 January 27. The fourth was from an unknown donor at an unknown date. The fifth was a transfer from uncatalogued holdings in The Texas Collection via the Office of Historical Research in 1975 February 7. The sixth was a purchase from Fred White Jr., 1976 November 1. The seventh was from an unknown donor at an unknown date. The eighth was from the Pat Neff Jr. Estate in 1986 Spring. The ninth was from the Hallie Maude Neff Wilcox Estate via Mrs. Maurice Brown, 1987 May. The tenth was a transfer from the Texas Collection film archive, 2000 May.

The scope and content in the Neff Collection is wide-ranging, encompassing early family materials and extending to materials from just after he ended his service to Baylor University. The largest sections of each series are the correspondence files. The Family Series includes family correspondence between the Neff family members. The Governor Series holds official correspondence from his time as governor. The Interim Series reflects the period between his governorship and his administration as Baylor University President and contains correspondence relating to the Board of Mediation, Railroad Commission, Texas Centennial, and State Parks. The Baylor Series is made up of correspondence relating to Neff's role as President of Baylor University. The Personal Series is possibly the most diverse series and is certainly the largest. Neff's service in the Texas House of Representatives is not well-documented in this collection.

Administrative/Biographical History

Pat Morris Neff was the ninth child born to Noah Neff and Isabella Shepherd Neff in Coryell County, Texas, on November 26, 1871. Neff grew up on the family farm and attended school in McGregor, Texas. He was very close to his mother, Isabella "Mother" Neff, and she was a strong influence upon his life. Upon graduating from high school, Pat Neff arrived at Baylor University in 1888 December, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1894. After his work at Baylor, Neff traveled to Magnolia, Arkansas, where he taught at the Southwestern Preparatory Academy for two years. Returning to Texas, Neff enrolled in law school at the University of Texas, then began his law career in Waco, Texas. He took classes toward a master's degree at Baylor and prepared to run for political office.

Legislative Period and Beyond, 1898-1906

Neff ran and won against Joe Weldon Bailey for a seat in the Texas House of Representatives in 1898. The following year proved to be a big one for Neff: he was sworn into the Texas House of Representatives in 1899 January, married longtime sweetheart Myrtle Mainor Neff in May, and earned his master's degree from Baylor University in June. A strong supporter of education, especially the University of Texas, Neff won a second term and then a third, during which he served as Speaker of the House from 1903-1905. After his third term ended, Neff returned to Waco, where he now had a daughter, Hallie Maude Neff, and a son, Pat Neff Jr.

Between the Legislature and the Governorship, 1906-1920

While serving in the Texas House of Representatives, Neff did keep up his legal practice in Waco. From 1903 to 1905, Neff maintained a private law practice and served as assistant county attorney. He was elected to be county attorney in

1906 and served four terms in the position, serving until 1912. During these years, Neff established a stellar reputation for his legal work.

Neff balanced his county attorney's duties with his involvement in many local organizations. He was often the featured speaker at engagements and served as counsel for some of the organizations he was affiliated with, such as Woodmen of the World. Neff was appointed a member of Baylor University's Board of Trustees in 1904, then became president of the Board in 1907 and remained in office until 1932, when he resigned from the board to become president of Baylor. He also served as church clerk for the First Baptist Church in Waco until 1918. Neff was appointed to the Conference of Education in Texas from 1913-1915 and elected president of the group in 1913.

Governor, 1921-1925

Neff announced his candidacy for Texas governor in 1919. He took his campaign directly to the people by traveling to areas of Texas where politicians did not usually campaign, and he is thought to be the first Texas candidate to use the airplane as a transportation tool for campaigning. Neff was a staunch supporter of prohibition as well as women's suffrage, public health, prison reform, higher pay for teachers, and ecological issues such as water conservation. He defeated Joseph Weldon Bailey in a runoff for the governorship.

Neff ascended to the governorship in a time of turmoil, both nationally and locally. Neff began by cutting offices and departments, such as the State Board of Pardon Advisors, often taking over the duties himself. He was known to be uncompromising, and Neff's relationship with the legislature deteriorated rapidly. Issues and events Neff faced during his gubernatorial service include:

- The discovery of oil in Mexia, Texas, and the resulting rise in population and crime in the town
- The Ku Klux Klan's reemergence in Texas during the 1920s
- The Denison Railroad Strike
- Prohibition, and the people who were for and against it
- The idea of a state park system in Texas
- The possibility of running for US President and a potential offer to serve as president of the University of Texas
- Preparations for the Texas Centennial

His legacy as governor included appointing more women to state offices than ever before, new highway development, additional money for education, and developing the Texas State Parks system (starting with Mother Neff State Park).

Post-Governor/Pre-Baylor, 1925-1932

At the end of his tenure as governor, Neff returned to Waco and his law practice. In 1927, Neff was appointed to the U.S. Board of Mediations by the U.S. Senate, to fill a vacated position. This board was an independent committee that was available for railroads and their employees to help settle strikes. Neff served on the Board from 1927-1929 and sought further reappointments but was rejected as a board member by labor unions.

After the death of Clarence Gilmore, a member of the Railroad Commission, Neff was asked by Governor Dan Moody to complete the term. Neff then won the primary election to serve as an outright member of the Commission. Neff ran again for commission office in 1930 and won reelection as chairman by a landslide. However, the other two commissioners opposed him so strongly that they deposed him in 1931.

Baylor Years, 1932-1947

Neff retired from the Railroad Commission and the Baylor University Board of Trustees in 1932 to accept the presidency of Baylor University. Baylor faced financial difficulty during the Great Depression, and Neff started trimming the budget and developing an active recruitment and publicity program.

Neff also dedicated time to student development. He was known to preach not just sermons at Chapel but also to issue proclamations and publicly discipline students caught hazing, drinking, or smoking. However, Neff was also not above helping with tuition or paying part of a student's bill out of his own funds. During World War II, he initiated a Navy pilot training program and convinced Baylor's Waco Executive Council to allow servicemen to live in Baylor dorms.

Neff requested money from the board for various initiatives, especially construction projects. Building projects during Neff's administrations include: Rena Marrs McLean Gym, the administration building (later named Pat Neff Hall), the Judge Baylor statue, Alexander Hall, a stadium for track and baseball, two football practice fields, a building for the Baylor Theater, Kokemot Hall, the Student Union Building, Tidwell Bible Building, and the Armstrong Browning Library. Some of these projects were completed; others were delayed due to the economy and higher-than-expected costs.

While at Baylor, Neff moved briefly back into politics in order to support his friend, John Nance Garner, and he was active in many religious organizations throughout his life. He served as president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas from 1926-1929. He was also active in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), serving on numerous committees and boards and spending three terms as president in the 1940s.

Neff had various confrontations with Baylor's Board of Trustees, as they and the Waco Executive Committee questioned his judgment later on in his administration. On 1947 November 7, Neff turned in his resignation, and he gave his farewell speech at Chapel on 1947 December 18. He was appointed President Emeritus and kept an office in Pat Neff Hall for some time. When he was asked to leave this office, he threatened to donate his papers to the University of Texas, but President W.R. White persuaded him to leave his papers to Baylor by making a room in Pat Neff Hall available for Neff's papers and memorabilia. Pat Neff died of a heart attack in 1952 January at the age of 81. He is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Waco, Texas.

Related Resources

Summary of related Archive materials

Hallie Maude Neff Wilcox, #1724

Related citations

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Archival Arrangement

Attempts to process the Neff Collection in the past left the collection without its original order. Texas Collection staff chose to use a portion of the last outline in this arrangement. The collection is arranged in five series: I. Family Papers, II. Governor Records, III. Interim Years, IV. Baylor University Records, and V. Personal Documents and Items. The largest series in the collection is the Personal Documents and Items section. Due to the early publication date of some books found in the Personal section of the Collection, the dates of that section do not give a true representation of the date range of the total Collection. It is also important to note that it was common for Neff to file personal correspondence in with general correspondence and this is true throughout the Collection.

Series 1: Family Papers. 1847-1953

Administrative/Biographical History

This series consists of 43 manuscript boxes of correspondence broken into two subseries: General Family Papers, with general letters between family and friends, and Classified Family Correspondence, consisting of letters between Pat Neff and specific family members. The bulk of the correspondence is in the Classified Family section, encompasses the dates 1858-1946, and consists of letters to and from Pat Neff to his mother, Isabella Neff, his wife, Myrtle Mainor Neff, and some of Pat Neff Jr.'s materials. This series is in fair to average condition.

Series 2: Governor Records. 1892-1947

Administrative/Biographical History

This series of 212 boxes of material pertains to Pat Neff's gubernatorial campaign of 1920 and his tenure as Texas governor from 1921 to 1925. The materials chronicle his initial victory, his inauguration, and his transition into public office. Correspondence between Neff and individuals at the local level, state officials within his administration, fellow governors and politicians of other states, various presidents and cabinet officials, and even leaders of foreign countries, can be found throughout the series. Arrangement is also divided concerning the subject or recipient of the material. This series, one of the largest in the collection, is in average to good condition.

Series 3: Interim Years. 1920-1947

Administrative/Biographical History

The Interim Years Series of the Pat Neff Collection consists of 43 boxes of material divided into four subseries, the Board of Mediation, the Railroad Commission, the Texas Centennial 1936, and Texas State Parks. The majority of these papers were collected after his term as Texas Governor ending in 1925 and continued through his service as the President of Baylor University. The first subseries consists of documents collected during his service on the Board of Mediation from 1927-1929, which includes general correspondences between Pat Neff and United States Senators, Railroad Endorsements, personal endorsements, and a variety of clippings pertaining to Pat Neff. The next subseries includes documents collected by Pat Neff during his service as the Railroad Commissioner of Texas, with documents such as general correspondence, personal letters from friends and acquaintances, invitations, congratulatory notes, thank you notes, requests for literature, poetry, requests for appearances at commencements and meetings, bills, and pamphlets. Next in the Interim series is the Texas Centennial subseries, which includes stamps, poetry, literature, programs, invitations, souvenirs, magazines, newspapers, bulletins, newsletters, meeting notes and minutes, and planning documents and bills for the various celebrations. The final subseries in the group is State Parks, the section containing the earliest dated materials in this subseries, and contains general correspondence, brochures on specific parks, pamphlets, magazines detailing specific parks and what they have to offer, personal requests, inquiries, travel books, letters of appreciation, work requests, historical accounts of certain areas, photographs, newspaper clippings detailing parks, studies of parks and park entrances, bills, meeting notes, blueprints, and construction plans. Documentation focusing on Mother Neff State Park is especially strong. This series is in average condition.

Series 4: Baylor University Records. 1930-1952, Bulk 1932-1947

Administrative/Biographical History

The Baylor University Records series of the Neff Collection consists of 147 boxes of material and covers Neff's tenure as president of Baylor University, which began in 1932 and ended in 1947. The series describes Neff's interactions with university faculty, staff, students, and individuals unaffiliated with Baylor, as well as some personal correspondence. Some of this personal correspondence dates before and some later than Neff's tenure as Baylor's president, but was left in this arrangement as it was. The series is in average condition.

Series 5: Personal Documents and Items. 1818-1959

Administrative/Biographical History

The Personal Series includes speeches, collected speeches, notes pertaining to speeches, correspondence, and event programs. Also included are materials pertaining to the Southern Baptist Convention, correspondence detailing missionary work, invitations, bills, medical records and financial documents. This series also incorporates publications regarding freemasonry and correspondence detailing the construction of the new Masonic Lodge in Waco, Texas. Also included is a collection of badges, buttons, medallions, business cards, and postcards collected throughout Neff's life. The personal series also contains biographical and historical materials concerning Pat Neff and his family, including family Bibles. Next are datebooks, notebooks and ledgers belonging to Pat Neff as well as Neff's funeral book. Audio and visual materials are also included such as photographs and LP albums. News clippings also make up part of this series of the collection. The photographic materials span over Pat Neff's life and encompass images from his travels throughout the United States, his family and his time at Baylor. Finally, included are Pat Neff's desk items found in, on, or around his office while at Baylor University. Some previous arrangement and description were maintained in the processing of this series. The date span of this series is very wide due to the publication of some of the books in the collection as well as some personal items donated by loved ones after Neff's death. This series is in poor to good condition.