



**DALLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

*Remembering Dallas' past builds her future*

## **Hermine Tobolowsky E.R.A. Collection**

**A.86.48**

### **Finding aid**

#### **Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Dallas Historical Society

**Title:** Hermine Tobolowsky E.R.A. collections

**Dates:** 1957-1974

**Quantity:** 2 boxes, (.625 linear ft.)

**Abstract:** Hermine Tobolowsky, a Dallas attorney, lobbied for 25 years before legislative committees for equal rights for Texans, earning the nickname "Mother of the Texas Equal Rights Amendment." She also lobbied for the homestead exemptions amendment and for the amendment or repeal of more than 30 other discriminatory laws.

**Identification:** A.86.48

**Location:** In the archives of the Dallas Historical Society

**Language:** The materials are in English.

**Repository:** Dallas Historical Society

#### **Biographical Sketch**

Hermine Dalkowitz Tobolowsky was born in San Antonio, Texas on January 13, 1921, and died in Dallas on July 25, 1995. Tobolowsky was an activist attorney and is known as the "Mother of the Texas E.R.A." She was the daughter of Maurice and Nora (Brown) Dalkowitz. Her father, a Lithuanian immigrant, had observed some of the problems women had in their dealings with businessmen and urged his daughter—who had demonstrated a gift for argument and persuasion—to become a lawyer. Tobolowsky attended Incarnate Word College in 1938-39 and Trinity University in 1939-40 in San Antonio, completing her bachelor's degree requirements in only two years.

She entered the University of Texas, School of Law in 1943, one of only eleven women among the entering class of 350 and one of only two women in the class to graduate. According to Tobolowsky, a law professor gave her a list of eligible bachelors to consider in hopes she would not take up a man's space in the law school, she assured him she would be there on graduation day. She received her LL.B. degree with honors in 1943, graduating in the top ten of her class. She was admitted to the Texas bar the same year. Tobolowsky refused a job offer from a large Houston law firm, whose recruiter

informed her that clients would never see her and or know that her work came from a woman. She interviewed with the chief justice of the Texas Supreme Court for a law clerk position, and he told her he did not believe any woman had sense enough to clerk in the Supreme Court. Instead, Tobolowsky went to work for the law firm Lang, Cross, Beard, and Ladon in San Antonio, but only on the condition that she be hired on the same terms as their male attorneys.

She was with the firm for four years, then established her practice. On August 19, 1951, she married Hyman Morris Tobolowsky, credit manager of E. M. Kahn Company department store in Dallas, where she moved her law practice and residence. They had no children, and he preceded her in death in 1968. Beginning in the 1940s, Tobolowsky became active in organizations fighting Texas laws that discriminated against women. The first cause she pursued was working to allow women to sit on juries, which was not legal in Texas until 1953.

By 1959 she was president of the Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women and was legal counsel for the federation's national organization. She began to lobby the Texas legislature to change forty-four laws she had researched and identified as discriminatory. The first bill she introduced allowed women in Texas to control separate property owned by them before marriage or acquired by inheritance, known as the Separate Property Law. Tobolowsky faced stiff opposition-including ridicule by several legislators-so she, as part of a coalition of women's groups, decided instead to champion a blanket equal rights amendment to the Texas constitution.

The amendment was introduced in 1959 and was presented at every subsequent legislative session until it finally passed and was ratified by voters on November 7, 1972. This is how Tobolowsky became known as the mother of the Texas Equal Rights Amendment. She traveled around the country lecturing, lobbying, and helping several other states ratify similar amendments. In addition to her work in getting the Texas E.R.A. passed, Tobolowsky was responsible for the repeal or amendment of thirty-three discriminatory Texas laws and the passage of several other civil-rights laws. Including laws extending the homestead exemption to singles and equal custodial rights to fathers. She was chosen Texas Women's Political Caucus woman of the year in 1975 and was inducted into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame in 1986.

Source: *Handbook of Texas Online*, Natalie Ornish, "TOBOLOWSKY, HERMINE DALKOWITZ," accessed July 18, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fto49>.

### **Scope and Contents Note**

The collection ranges from 1957, which began Hermine Tobolowsky's career with the Equal Rights Amendment, to March 22, 1972, when the Senate passed the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution, to November 1972 when the Texas voters endorsed the state equal rights amendment. Collection includes, resolutions, speeches, press releases, reports, newspaper clippings, printed materials,

research notes, correspondence with the Business and Professional Women's Club, the Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, as well as signatures and correspondence for U.S. and Texas state Representatives and Senators.

### **Arrangement**

Collection is in one series, two boxes, and oversized materials.

### **Restrictions**

#### **Access Restrictions**

Collection is open for research by appointment.

#### **Publication Rights:**

Permission to publish materials must be obtained from the staff of the Dallas Historical Society.

#### **Copyright Statement:**

It is the responsibility of the user to obtain copyright authorization.

#### **Sensitive Material Statement:**

Manuscript collections and archival records may contain materials with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal or state right to privacy laws and regulations. Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in this collection without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications for which the Dallas Historical Society assumes no responsibility.

### **Index Terms**

#### **Subjects (Persons):**

Birckhead, Mary A.  
Cabell, Earle, 1906-1975.  
Carr, Waggoner, 1918-2004.  
Collins, James Mitchell (Jim), 1916-1989.  
de la Garza, Kika, 1927-2017.  
Dowdy, John V. (John Vernard), 1912-1995.  
Farenthold, Frances Tarlton, 1926-.  
Finnell, Charles. [local]  
Fisher, Ovie Clark, 1903-1994.  
Gambrell, Herbert Pickens.

Greenhill, Joe R., 1914-2011.  
Griffiths, Martha Wright, 1912-2003.  
Haynes, Jr., Clyde, 1924-1994.  
Hawkins, Jack R., 1905-1988.  
Herring, Charles Ferguson, 1914-2004.  
Hogg, Elizabeth.  
Hudson, Hubert R., 1928-1993.  
Johnson, Jacob Edgar, 1931-2006.  
Kaster, James Jay, V, 1933-2005  
Kazen, Abraham, 1919-1987.  
Kilgore, Joe Madison, 1918-1999.  
Kubiak, Dan, 1939-1998.  
Leonard C. Margery, 1929-1990.  
Longwell, Marjorie R.  
Mattox, James Albon, 1943-2008.  
McKnight, Joseph, 1925-2015.  
McSwain, Jr., Angus S., 1923-2011.  
Mutscher, G.F. (Gus), 1932-.  
Nugent, James E., 1922-2016.  
Parkhouse, George Marshall.  
Patman, William Neff, 1927-2008.  
Patman, Wright, 1893-1976.  
Pickle, J.J., 1913-2005.  
Pool, Joe Richard, 1911-1968.  
Price, Robert Dale, 1927-2004.  
Purcell, Jr., Graham B., 1919-2011.  
Ramsey, Ben, 1903-1985.]  
Robinson, Mary Lou, 1926-2019.  
Secrest, Jarrard, 1915-1966.  
Semos, Chris Victor, 1936-2004.  
Shafer, William O., 1917-1992.  
Smith, Cyril J., 1932-2016.  
Smith, Preston, 1912-2003.  
Traeger, John A., 1921-1994.  
Uher, Donald Ray (Tom), 1937-2019.  
Wallace, James Price, 1928-2017.  
Willis, Doyle Henry, 1909-2006.  
Yarborough, Ralph W., 1903-1996.

**Subjects (Organizations):**

Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women (U.S.)  
Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs. [local]  
Texas Federation of Women's Clubs--History  
Texas Women's Hall of Fame

Texas Women's Political Caucus  
University of Texas, School of Law

**Subjects:**

D.D. Williams v. Mabel S. McKnight  
Equal rights amendments—Texas  
Mother of the Texas Equal Rights Amendment  
Separate Property Law—Texas  
Texas Women's Political Caucus  
Texas Women's Hall of Fame

**Titles:**

Manuscripts collection

**Administrative Information**

**Preferred Citation**

Collection of the Dallas Historical Society, Hermine Tobolowsky E.R.A. collection.

**Acquisition Information:**

A gift from the family of Hermine Tobolowsky, 1974.

**Processing Information:**

Collection processed by Penny Castillo

**Description of Series**

The collection includes, resolutions, speeches, press releases, reports, newspaper clippings, printed materials, research notes, correspondence with the Business and Professional Women's Club, the Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, as well as signatures and correspondence for U.S. and Texas state Representatives and Senators.

**Series Title: The Hermine Tobolowsky E.R.A. Collection.**

Box #	Folder #	Title/Description	Date
1	A.86.48.1	Resolutions - for the Business and Professional Women's Club, the Texas Constitution, and precinct conventions	1958, undated
	A.86.48.2	Speeches - speeches on education, discrimination laws, community property, equal rights. One speech as the House Constitutional Amendments Committee, speech read by Senator Parkhouse	1957-1958, 1963, 1967

A.86.48.3	Paper by Clifford Helmcamp – “How Should Working Women in Houston Continue to Support the ‘ <i>Equal Pay for Equal Work</i> ’ Movement?”	November 1970
A.86.48.4	Press Releases – article for Cuff Notes, contribution announcements, radio announcements, campaign ads, newspaper releases: “A Matter of Simple Justice,” and “When is a House a Home?” press release for Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs	1963, 1971-1973, undated
A.86.48.5	Legislative papers – several repeals and amendments of law’s regarding discrimination in the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Texas Penal Code, election bulletins, Joint Resolution 208, 410, 1159, drafts and memorandums regarding community property	1961, 1966-1967, 1970-1971, undated
A.86.48.6	Legal brief – D.D. Williams v. Mabel S. McKnight. A case of marital property law after the death of McKnight’s husband. McKnight is suing the executor	Undated
A.86.48.7	Research notes – excerpts from letter from county and district attorneys about crimes between men and women	1963, 1970
A.86.48.8	Newspaper clippings – “Equal Legal Rights Advocate Honored at Hall of State with Herbert Gambrell”	1960, 1965, 1968, 1974
A.86.48.9	Reports – documents from the Tex. Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, Inc.	1958-1973
A.86.48.10	Literary production – briefs, memorandums, analysis, several skits on Equal Rights	1962, 1973, undated
A.86.48.11	Printed material – “Keeping in Touch with Our Legislators,” check lists, bulletins	1957, undated
A.86.48.12	Printed material – “Know Your Friends”	1957
A.86.48.13	Printed material – TFBPWC discussion panel material, play, “Sorry Sister, It’s The Law,” B&PW election information	1958
A.86.48.14	Printed material – Flash News, Spread the Word-Hearing of Our Legal Rights Amendment, Steering Committee for TFBPWC, Inc.	1959
A.86.48.15	Printed material,	1960

		Regarding story in the Saturday Evening Post, Bulletin News	
	A.86.48.16	Printed material – bulletin on senate hearing, Legislative bulletins, pamphlet	1961
	A.86.48.17	Printed material – “Last Chance for Justice”	1962
	A.86.48.18	Printed material – “What are the Laws Concerning Women?” Election Bulletin, TFBPWC workshop paperwork, program information	1968
	A.86.48.19	Printed material – Legislative Digest, legislative bulletin, FYI reports of pending bills	1963
	A.86.48.20	Printed material – list of bills introduced to legislation, letter, articles	1965
	A.86.48.21	Printed material – legislation bulletins	1967
	A.86.48.22	Publication – Texas Lawyers Weekly Letter	1964
	A.86.48.23	Printed material – memos and bulletins to the TFBPWC	1969
	A.86.48.24	Printed material – election Bulletins, <i>Congressional Record</i> , “Explaining the Proposed Equal Rights for Women Amendment”	1970
	A.86.48.25	Printed material – “The Status of Women,” “Women for Equal Justice Under the Law,” articles, bulletins, “Support of the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution”	1971
	A.86.48.26	Printed material – letters written the TFBPWC group-some could be speeches, Legislative bulletins, club materials, list of organizations supporting the E.R.A., information on the Citizen’s Advisory Council on the Status of Women	1972
	A.86.48.27	Printed material – legislative bulletins, club correspondence	1973
	A.86.48.28	Printed material - legislative bulletin, Luncheon invitation honoring Mrs. Tobolowsky, (Dr. Gambrell accepts historical materials)	1974
2	A.86.48.29	Correspondence – Homestead Amendment, letter in support of Jack B. Strong for state senator, letter to the San Antonio Express, to the General Counsel of the EEOC, TFBPWC correspondence	Undated

	A.86.48.30	Correspondence – Lt. Gov. Ben Ramsey	1957
	A.86.48.31	Correspondence - resolution adopted by the TFBPWC, annual report, correspondence with Margery C. Leonard. Printed material from the Legislative Steering Committee	1958
	A.86.48.32	Correspondence – Tex. Senator George Parkhouse, Honorable Joe Greenhill, Tex. Senator Doyle Willis, Tex. Senator Hubert R. Hudson, Tex. Senator Jarrard Secrest, Tex. Senator Bill Wood, and Cyril J. Smith	1959
	A.86.48.33	Correspondence – Tex. Senator Joe M. Kilgore, letters to the TFBPWC from Hermine, the Saturday Evening Post re: article on Texas laws discriminating against women	1960
	A.86.48.34	Correspondence – letter to TFBPWC re: Rep. Franklin Speers, and other officials running for seats during this election	1961
	A.86.48.35	Correspondence – letter to W.V. Chapman-who ran for Tx. Senate, Letter to TFBPWC, McCall’s Magazine, Tex. Senator Herring, Tex. Senator Abraham Kazen, Jr.	1962
	A.86.48.36	Correspondence – written by Hermine regarding the Equal Legal Rights Amendment, letter to Tex. Rep. James Nugent, letter from Tex. Attorney Gen. Waggoner Carr	1963
	A.86.48.37	Correspondence, Letter’s from TFBPWC, letter from US Rep. Earle Cabell, letter from Lt. Gov. Preston Smith, Letter to Prof. Joseph McKnight.	1965
	A.86.48.38	Correspondence - letter from Prof. J. McKnight with a proposed draft for the Rights of Spouses, letter to Judge Mary Lou Robinson, letter from US Rep. Joe Pool	1966
	A.86.48.39	Correspondence – legislative bulletins, letters sent to Gov. Connally and Jack Hightower, letters sent Tex. Speaker of the House Ben Barnes, letter to Tex. Rep. Felix McDonald, to US Sec. of Treasury Honorable Henry Fowler, from Pres. of State Bar of Texas W. O. Shafer, from National Women’s Party Chairman Mary A. Birckhead, Dean of Baylor School of Law Angus S. McSwain, Jr., US Rep. Graham Purcell	1967



	A.86.48.40	Correspondence – record of the Legislative Steering Fund, forms, Joint Resolution proposing and amendment to Article I	1968
	A.86.48.41	Correspondence – TBPWC correspondence, correspondence from Lt. Gov. Preston Smith, Tex. Rep. Frances Tarlton Farenthold, Tex. Rep. Jack R. Hawkins, Tex. Rep. Dan Kubiak, Tex. Rep. D.R. (Tom) Uher, Tex. Speaker of the House G.F. (Gus) Mutscher	1969
	A.86.48.42	Correspondence – memo to ERA Committee, letter from the Order of the Eastern Star, from US Rep. Kika De La Garza, US Rep. John Dowdy, US Rep. Wright Patman, US Rep. James M. Collins, US Rep. JJ Pickle, US Rep. O.C. Fisher, US Rep. Martha W. Griffiths, Senator Ralph W. Yarborough. Telegraph to Hermine that the Equal Rights Amendment had passed	1970
	A.86.48.43	Correspondence – from Tex. Rep. John A. Traeger, list of members who signed the Equal Rights Amendment, handwritten letter from Tex. Rep. Charles Finnell, Tex. Rep. Chris Victor Semos, Tex. Rep. James J. Kaster, Marjorie R. Longwell, Tex. Rep. Jake Johnson, Tex. Rep. Clyde Haynes, Jr., Tex. Sen. Jim Wallace, US Rep. Bob Price, and the Houston Dem. Women’s Club	1971
	A.86.48.44	Correspondence – from TBPWC, letters of and for support for the Nov. 7 election for the passage for the ELRA	1972
	A.86.48.45	Correspondence – from the Legislative Steering Committee, from the Dallas Times Herald Women’s News Dept. thanking Hermine, Tex. Rep. Jim Mattox, Tex. Sen. Bill Patman	1973
	A.86.48.46	Correspondence – to Dr. Gambrell from Elizabeth Hogg, a copy of the resolution signed by the Texas Rep. that voted for the ERA	1974