



Baker & Botts in the Development of Modern Houston

Kenneth J. Lipartito, Joseph A. Pratt

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As counsel for Pennzoil's successful effort to recover billions of dollars in damages from Texaco over the acquisition of Getty Oil Company, the Baker & Botts law firm of Houston, Texas, achieved wide public recognition in the 1980s. But among its peers in the legal and corporate worlds, Baker & Botts has for more than a century held a preeminent position, handling the legal affairs of such blue-chip clients as the Southern Pacific Railroad, Houston Lighting & Power Company, Rice University, Texas Commerce Bank, and Tenneco. In this study, Kenneth J. Lipartito and Joseph A. Pratt chronicle the history of Baker & Botts, placing particular emphasis on the firm's role in Houston's economic development.

Founded in 1840, Baker & Botts literally grew up with Houston. The authors chart its evolution from a nineteenth-century regional firm that represented eastern-based corporations moving into Texas to a twentieth-century national firm with clients throughout the world. They honestly discuss the criticisms that Baker & Botts has faced as an advocate of big business. But they also identify the important impact that corporate law firms of this type have on business reorganization and government regulation. As the authors demonstrate in this case study, law firms throughout the twentieth century have helped to shape public policy in these critical areas.

Always prominent in the community, and with prominent connections (former Secretary of State James A. Baker III is the great-grandson of the original Baker), the Baker & Botts law firm belongs in any history of the development of Houston and the Southwest.

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