

# **Lichtenberg family collection of A. Mitchell Palmer material**

**Ms. Coll. 1390**

**Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel.**

---

Last updated on March 29, 2019.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2018 March 28

---

## Table of Contents

---

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	4
Administrative Information.....	5
Related Materials .....	5
Controlled Access Headings.....	6
Collection Inventory.....	8
Series I. A. Mitchell Palmer material.....	8
Series II. Material about A. Mitchell Palmer.....	9

---

## Summary Information

---

<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
<b>Creator</b>	Lichtenberg family
<b>Creator</b>	Palmer, A. Mitchell (Alexander Mitchell), 1872-1936
<b>Title</b>	Lichtenberg family collection of A. Mitchell Palmer material
<b>Call number</b>	Ms. Coll. 1390
<b>Date [bulk]</b>	1912-1934
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1912-1996
<b>Extent</b>	0.4 linear foot (2 boxes)
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	A. Mitchell Palmer was a Democratic politician from Pennsylvania who served as Congressman, Alien Property Custodian and Attorney General between 1908 and 1921. This collection consists of material largely relating to Palmer's political career, from 1912 until his retirement in 1921. Researchers will find material created during Palmer's life time as well as material collected, after his death, by family, including photographs, political cartoons, material relating to his unsuccessful 1920 run for president, and an address given by Palmer at Swarthmore College.

**Cite as:**

Lichtenberg family collection of A. Mitchell Palmer material, 1912-1996 (bulk: 1912-1934), Ms. Coll. 1390, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

---

## Biography/History

---

Alexander Mitchell Palmer (best known as A. Mitchell Palmer) was born on May 4, 1872, in Moosehead, Pennsylvania, the son of Samuel Bernard Palmer and Caroline Albert. His Quaker affiliations led Palmer to enroll in Swarthmore College, a Quaker institution, from which he graduated in 1891. Although he did not complete his law degree, he passed the Pennsylvania bar exam in 1893, and began practicing in a small firm in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. In 1901, he took over the firm completely, becoming one of the most prominent attorneys in Monroe County. An active supporter of the Democratic Party, Palmer gradually became involved in politics in the 1890s, and in 1900, he was elected president of the Stroudsburg Democratic Club. He was elected U.S. Congressman in 1908, and was later re-elected in 1910 and 1912. In 1912, he supported Woodrow Wilson during the presidential campaign. After he unsuccessfully ran for U.S. Senate in 1914, Palmer was appointed by Wilson as Alien Property Custodian, a position that he held until 1919. His duties included the controversial process of expropriating and reselling enemy properties in the United States. As Alien Property Custodian, Palmer was the responsible for the sale of over 5,000 German chemical patents to the Chemical Foundation, a private corporation founded in 1919 by Wilson, who chose Francis Patrick Garvan to serve as its president. Garvan took Palmer's place as Alien Property Custodian in 1919, when Palmer, again supported by Wilson, became Attorney General. During his service, Palmer and his family were twice targeted by Italian anarchist, Luigi Galleani, who along with his followers, orchestrated a series of mail bombings in April, 1919, and home bombings in June, 1919. The recipients of the bombs were government officials who had supported anti-sedition laws and the deportation of immigrants suspected of crimes, as well as judges who had sentenced anarchists to prison. Palmer's home was largely destroyed. The First Red Scare years (1919-1920) followed and Palmer promoted a huge number of police actions -- which would be known as Palmer raids -- against groups of suspected radicals and U.S. aliens, who were often arrested without warrants.

Palmer was a Democratic Party nominee for president in 1920, but he was eventually defeated by Ohio governor James Cox. He retired from government office in 1921, and returned to his law practice. In the following years Palmer's precarious health prevented him from returning to political life, but he continued to support the Democratic Party, and in 1932, he supported Franklin D. Roosevelt during the 1932 National Convention. Palmer died from a heart attack in Washington, D.C. on May 11, 1936.

---

## Scope and Contents

---

This collection consists of material largely relating to Palmer's political career, from 1912 until his retirement in 1921. Researchers will find material created during Palmer's life time as well as material collected, after his death, by family.

The greatest portion of material documents Palmer's position as attorney general under Woodrow Wilson and his run for Presidency in 1920. There are a number of items showing Palmer's prominent position within the Democratic party, including medals from his involvement in the Democratic National Conventions from 1912 to 1920, inscribed photographs of Joseph Gurney Cannon and William Howard Taft, a photocopy of a letter from Wilson, a photograph of Wilson's cabinet, political cartoons illustrating his national presence and his political stances on issues, and a booklet and newspaper regarding his run for president. There are several newspaper clippings relating to the bombing of his home in June, 1919, by the Gallenists, but there is no other mention of the event in Palmer's material. The collection contains Palmer's Baccalaureate address at Swarthmore College, his alma mater, and possibly a photograph of him following the presentation of the Honorary degree of doctor of laws. This group of material also includes some material relating to his later years including his last will and testament and legal records relating to his shares in the Monroe County Water Supply Company.

Material about A. Mitchell Palmer includes a bibliography of works relating to Palmer, a published biography of Palmer, and photographs of Palmer's homes in Washington, DC, and Stroudsburg, PA.

---

## Administrative Information

---

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2018 March 28

Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel.

### Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use. The newspaper clippings in box 2, folder 1, are extremely fragile and require careful handling.

### Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may exist. For most library holdings, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania do not hold copyright. It is the responsibility of the requester to seek permission from the holder of the copyright to reproduce material from the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts.

### Source of Acquisition

Gift of Mitchell P. Lichtenberg (grandson of A. Mitchell Palmer) and family, 2018.

---

## Related Materials

---

## **Related Archival Materials note**

At the University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts: Bob and Jann Perez collection of A. Mitchell Palmer materials, 1912-1963 (bulk: 1912-1925), Ms. Coll. 1214

---

## **Controlled Access Headings**

---

### **CORPORATE NAME(S)**

- Democratic National Convention.
- United States. Department of Justice. Office of the Attorney General.

### **FORM/GENRE(S)**

- Bibliographies
- Biographies
- Photographs

### **GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)**

- United States--Politics and government--1901-1953

### **PERSONAL NAME(S)**

- Palmer, A. Mitchell (Alexander Mitchell), 1872-1936

### **SUBJECT(S)**

- Caricatures and cartoons--United States
- Political campaigns
- Political science

- Politicians--United States

## Collection Inventory

---

### SERIES I. A. MITCHELL PALMER MATERIAL.

	Box	Folder
Democratic National Committee delegate medals, 1912-1920.	2	4
William Howard Taft, portrait inscribed to Palmer, 1913 February 20.	1	1
Joseph Gurney Cannon, portrait, inscribed to Palmer, 1913 March 3.	1	1
Woodrow Wilson letter to Palmer, 1913, photocopy from the <i>Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson</i> , edited by Baker and Dodd, 1926.	1	2
Political cartoon drawing (1) for <i>Pittsburgh Sun</i> , drawn and inscribed to Palmer by Cy Hungerford, 1914 March 4.	2	3
Newspaper clippings relating to bombing of Palmer's home (newspapers are extremely brittle--please handle with care), 1919 June 3.	2	1
Swarthmore College Baccalaureate address by Palmer, 1919 June 8.	1	3
A. Mitchell Palmer with [probably Robert M. Janney], presenting Palmer with honorary degree of doctor of laws from Swarthmore College), photograph, [1919].	2	2
Political cartoon drawings (4) for <i>Evening Star</i> , drawn and signed by C.K. Berryman, 1919.	2	3
"Palmer for President" booklet from the Democratic National Convention, San Francisco, 1920.	1	4



"Palmer for President," <i>Convention News</i> , 1920 June 28.	2	1
Woodrow Wilson's Cabinet, photograph, 1921 February 15.	2	2
Agreement between A. Mitchell Palmer and the Scranton Lackawanna Trust Company relating to the common stock of the Monroe County Water Supply Company, photocopy, 1932.	1	5
Last will and testament of A. Mitchell Palmer, photocopy, 1934.	1	5
"In Re: Trust Under Agreement with A. Mitchell Palmer," in the Orphans' Court of Lackawanna County, relating to common stock of the Monroe County Water Supply Company, photocopy, 1956.	1	5

---

**SERIES II. MATERIAL ABOUT A. MITCHELL PALMER.**

	Box	Folder
Bibliography of works related to Palmer, after 1958.	1	6
Biography: <i>A. Mitchell Palmer: Politician</i> , by Stanley Coben, New York: Da Capo Press (first edition of this is available for circulation: Van Pelt Library. E748.P24 C6), 1972.	1	7
Photographs of homes of A. Mitchell Palmer (712 Thomas Street, Stroudsburg, PA [modern print of circa 1910 photograph], and 2132 R Street, Washington, DC), 1994-1996.	1	8