

William E. Mikell papers

MSS .019

Finding aid prepared by Will Chim.

Last updated on March 22, 2013.

University of Pennsylvania, Biddle Law Library, Manuscripts Collection

February 2013

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Biddle Law Library: Manuscripts Collection
Creator	Mikell, William E., 1894-
Title	William E. Mikell papers
Call number	MSS .019
Date [inclusive]	1917-1940, undated
Extent	1 linear foot
Language	English
Abstract	<p>This collection features a series of materials partially documenting the career of lawyer and legal scholar William E. Mikell. Most notably featured in this collection are various drafts of the criminal codes Mikell was heavily involved in planning and drafting during his career. As well are included a large variety of personal notes and writings of Mikell's which touch upon the large number of criminal law and code topics he worked with throughout his life. Speeches given by and about Mikell are included in their original forms, as well as person memorabilia including Mikell's 1890 Master's degree from The Citadel. The collection is rounded out with a brief set of personal photographs and miscellaneous correspondence from Mikell's career.</p>

Cite as:

[Identification of item], in the William Mikell papers, Manuscripts Collection, MSS.019, Biddle Law

Library, University of Pennsylvania Law School, Philadelphia, PA.

Biography/History

William Ephraim Mikell (1868-1944) was an American lawyer, legal scholar, and professor. He is best known for his career of extensive work in American criminal law, and worked many years to simplify and humanize criminal law and procedure. He received his Bachelor of Science from The Citadel, better known as the South Carolina Military College from 1886-1890 and attended the University of Virginia Law School in 1894. He practiced law in both North and South Carolina before coming to Philadelphia in 1896 to work under George Wharton Pepper and William Draper Lewis on the Pepper and Lewis Digest of Pennsylvania Decisions. Later that year, when William Draper Lewis became Dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Mikell was appointed as an instructor on Lewis' recommendation. By 1902, Mikell was a full Professor, and in 1914 became Dean of the Law School, serving until 1929. In 1938, Mikell was made Professor Emeritus at Penn Law.

He is best remembered for his work on criminal law. In 1915 he published a draft of a statute providing for simpler forms of indictment. As well, his critical study of the Penal Code of Pennsylvania led to the creation of a Commission to write a revision of that Code. Mikell was the Secretary and Draftman of the Commission, which completed its work in 1922. He later worked as the Senior Reporter for the draft of a Code of Criminal Procedure by the American Law Institute in 1924.

Mikell was regarded as an adept teacher, scholar, and administrator. He was well known for his love of teaching the law, unique methods of instruction, and skill in training new students and scholars of the law. Although his formal legal training only lasted six weeks in a lecture course, he nonetheless adapted himself to the profession of the law and became a celebrated instructor and scholar. Edwin Keedy, colleague of Mikell and former Dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, describes Mikell in a 1944 obituary in the Penn Law Review as a legal scholar of the highest standard and work ethic, and a compassionate teacher.

Scope and Contents

This collection of papers from lawyer and legal scholar William E. Mikell gives a look into his heavy involvement with criminal law throughout his long and prosperous career, especially with the University of Pennsylvania Law School. The majority of the collection are texts that Mikell himself professionally wrote or was involved with creating, as well as personal notes, writings, and research on these topics handwritten by Mikell. A brief collection of personal memorabilia, photographs, and correspondence are also included. The specifics of each file are as follows:

"Drafts of Criminal Codes" contains several drafts of criminal codes for US states that Mikell helped to

plan and write, including those of Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and a proposed national code.

"Report to Revise Pennsylvania Penal Code" contains an unbound, 185-page report from the commissioners appointed to revise the penal code of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1921.

"Ledger of Criminal Code Drafts" contains a ledger book used by Mikell to notate and keep track of the physical drafts and progress on the criminal codes he penned, in this specific case, that of New York. Includes a breakdown of the sections and contents of the New York criminal code and the schedule by which Mikell completed the entries.

"Criminal Code Notes" contains a large series of personal handwritten notes by Mikell concerning topics of criminal law, criminal codes, and a number of projects he was involved in.

"Academic Notes" is a brief collection of academic regulations and examination rules for the University of Pennsylvania Law School dated 1939, possibly written by Mikell.

"Commission for Pennsylvania Parole and Probation Systems" contains a report of the meeting for the Governor's Commission to study Pennsylvania parole and probation systems, dated 1937 and including transcripts of the meeting minutes and resolutions.

"Speeches" contains a brief set of speeches either given about William Mikell or given by Mikell, the latter being handwritten and containing personal notes.

"Personal Memorabilia" contains a variety of personal ephemera, including a 1937 resolution appointing Mikell to the Commission to Study Pennsylvania's Parole System, Mikell's 1890 Master's degree from The Citadel, and a 1930 Penn Gazette which includes an article about Mikell's appointment to a Penn Law endowed professorship.

"Miscellaneous Photographs" and "Miscellaneous Correspondence" contain several undated and untitled personal photographs in a bound booklet and several letters to and from Mikell, respectively.

Administrative Information

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Access Restrictions

The archives reserves the right to restrict access to materials of sensitive nature. Please contact the department for further information.

Use Restrictions

Copyright is retained by the authors of items in these papers, or their descendants, as stipulated by United States copyright law.

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Faculty papers

SUBJECT(S)

- Criminal Law
- Criminal procedure
- Juvenile delinquency
- Law enforcement
- Lawyers
- University of Pennsylvania. Law School -- Faculty

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
Drafts of Criminal Codes, 1917-1940.	1	1
Report to Revise Pennsylvania Penal Code, 1921.	1	2
Ledger of Criminal Code Drafts, 1926-1930.	1	3
Criminal Code notes, undated.	1	4
Academic notes, 1939.	1	5
Commission for Pennsylvania Parole and Probation Systems, 1937.	1	6
Speeches, undated.	1	7

Personal Memorabilia, undated.	1	8
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Miscellaneous Photographs, undated.	1	9
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Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1928-1939.	1	10
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