

Bob and Jann Perez collection of A. Mitchell Palmer materials

Ms. Coll. 1214

Finding aid prepared by Siel Agugliaro.

Last updated on April 06, 2020.

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

2016, May 24

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Perez, Jann
Creator	Perez, Robert N.
Title	Bob and Jann Perez collection of A. Mitchell Palmer materials
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1214
Date [bulk]	1912-1925
Date [inclusive]	1912-1963
Extent	1 linear foot (3 boxes)
Language	English
Abstract	A. Mitchell Palmer was a Democrat politician from Pennsylvania who served as Congressman, Alien Property Custodian and Attorney General between 1908 and 1921. This collection covers, to a limited degree, each of these three stages of Palmer's career. It includes photographs, correspondence, and administrative documentation relating to Palmer's political campaigns, his support of president Woodrow Wilson, and his involvement with organizations such as the Chemical Foundation, especially during his appointment as Alien Property Custodian.

Cite as:

Bob and Jann Perez Collection of A. Mitchell Palmer material, 1912-1963 (bulk: 1912-1925), MS. Coll. 1214, 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. Because of the Quaker affiliations of his family, Palmer enrolled in Swarthmore College, a Quaker institution, where 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. 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 of 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, which coincided with the First Red Scare years (1919-1920), 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

The Bob and Jann Perez collection of A. Mitchell Palmer materials consists of four different series: Palmer's Congressman career, service as Alien Property Custodian, service as Attorney General, and documentation on other politicians including a biography of Palmer himself. Series I includes photographs, correspondence, and the official program of the 1912 Farmers and

Democratic Day (Bangor, PA, August 23, 1912), in which Palmer delivered a speech as part of his Congressional campaign which he ran that year. This material offers insight into Palmer's political activities as a congressman, as well as his relationship with president Woodrow Wilson.

Series II consists primarily of the documentation related to the sales ordered by the Office of Alien Property Custodian during Palmer and Garvan's service. This material, dating from 1918 to 1920, is gathered in 3 bound volumes published in 1920, and provides researchers the opportunity to evaluate not only the activities of the Office, but also its relationship with the Chemical Foundation, of which Garvan was appointed president in 1919.

Series III contains photographs of Palmer and his staff during his office as Attorney General. A recorded speech of Palmer is also included, in two different formats (78 rpm record and audiotape). This material provides a glimpse into Palmer's career as Attorney General. The photographs allow researchers to assess the composition of the Department of Justice in those years, and are particularly useful in identifying many of the figures who assisted Palmer in his office. The series also includes a photograph of Palmer and his second wife Margaret Fallon Burrall in the mid 1920s, a few years after Palmer's retirement from government office.

Series IV includes photographs of Woodrow Wilson and his second wife Edith, and a VHS copy – and related promotional literature – of Darryl Zanuck's biographical film *Wilson* (1944). Stanley Coben's biography of Palmer, published in 1963, is also included.

Administrative Information

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Access Restrictions

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Source of Acquisition

Gift of Bob and Jann Perez, 2015.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

At the Library of Congress: A. Mitchell Palmer papers.

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- United States. Congress.
- United States. Department of Justice. Office of the Attorney General.
- United States. Office for Emergency Management. Office of Alien Property Custodian.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Audiovisual materials
- Biographies
- Correspondence
- Government records
- Photographs

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- United States--History--20th century
- United States--Politics and government--1901-1953

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Garvan, Francis P. (Francis Patrick), 1875-1937
- Palmer, A. Mitchell (Alexander Mitchell), 1872-1936
- Wilson, Woodrow, 1856-1924

SUBJECT(S)

- Political science
- Politicians--United States
- World War, 1914-1918--Confiscations and contributions--United States

Collection Inventory

I. CONGRESSIONAL MATERIAL.

	Box	Folder
Farmers and Democratic Day, official program, 1912 August 23.	1	1
Photograph, portrait, undated.	1	2
Photograph, Democratic convention 1912 (includes Woodrow Wilson and Champ Clark), 1912.	1	2
Correspondence, Don C. Seitz, Ellis Lewis, and Viola and Mary Brodbeck, 1912-1915.	1	3

II. ALIEN PROPERTY CUSTODIAN MATERIAL.

	Box	Folder
Portrait, circa 1919.	1	4
<i>Alien Property Custodian</i> , books, volumes 1 to 2, 1920.	1	5-6
<i>Alien Property Custodian</i> , book, volume 3, 1920.	2	1
<i>Aims and Purposes of the Chemical Foundation, Incorporated and the Reasons for its Organization</i> , as told by A. Mitchell Palmer and by Francis P. Garvan, 1919.	2	2

III. ATTORNEY GENERAL MATERIAL.

	Box	Folder
Correspondence and newspaper clippings, 1920, undated.	2	3
Democrats in the World War, audiotape (restricted), circa 1919-1921.	2	4
	Box	Folder
Democrats in the World War, record (restricted), circa 1919-1921.	55	
	Box	Folder
Photograph, A. Mitchell Palmer nominated as Attorney General, 1919 February 28.	2	5
Photograph, A. Mitchell Palmer named for Attorney General, 1919 March 1.	2	5
Photograph, A. Mitchell Palmer serving as Attorney General, circa 1919-1921.	2	5
Photograph, A. Mitchell Palmer speaking about "Palmer raids" on left-wing organizations, circa 1919-1920.	2	5
Photograph, A. Mitchell Palmer and staff, circa 1919-1921.	2	5
	Box	Folder
Photograph, A. Mitchell Palmer with Assistant Attorney Generals, circa 1919-1921.	107	
Photograph, A. Mitchell Palmer with the Department of Justice staff (2 panoramic photos), 1920 August 12.	55	3
	Box	Folder
Photograph, ex-Attorney General and wife, 1925 December 1.	2	5

IV. OTHER POLITICIANS AND PALMER BIOGRAPHY.

	Box	Folder
Garvan, Francis P., obituary, 1937 November 8.	2	6
Wilson, Edith, portraits, 1925-1926.	2	7
Wilson, Woodrow, photograph of him visiting Belgium, 1919.	2	7
Wilson, Woodrow, video (restricted) and promotional literature for Darryl F. Zanuck's <i>Wilson</i> , circa 1944.	2	8
<i>A. Mitchell Palmer: Politician</i> , by Stanley Coben, 1963.	3	1