

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Archives

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Michael A. Musmanno: Pennsylvania Renaissance Man

Many Members of the PA House have had unique and distinguished careers before and after their time in office. However, few have had as much on their resumes as former Representative Michael A. Musmanno. Born in 1897 in McKees Rocks, Allegheny County, Musmanno earned a B.A. and M.A. from George Washington University, an LL.B. from Georgetown University, and two J.D.s from American University and the University of Rome.

Musmanno was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1928 and 1930. While in office, Musmanno championed the cause of ending the Coal and Iron Police forces. These private police, which were intended to protect the property of coal and iron companies, were instead used to quell strikes and intimidate workers — often using violence. Further inspired to end these police forces following the 1929 death of striking coal miner John Barcoski at their hands, Musmanno introduced legislation calling for their replacement with unarmed security forces. The bill failed after a conference committee between the House and Senate failed to come to a consensus. However, in the following months Governor Pinchot withdrew the commissions of the 1,030 Coal and Iron Police, effectively ending the system.



Motivated by the death of Mr. Barcoski, Musmanno

authored a short story entitled “Jan Volkanik,” which dramatized Barcoski’s life and the brutality of the Coal and Iron Police. His story was turned into a major motion picture in 1935 produced by Warner Brothers, entitled *Black Fury*.

Following his time in the House, Musmanno was elected as a judge to the Allegheny County Court (1931-1934) and later to the Pennsylvania Common Pleas Court (1934-1939). During his years in office and on the bench, Musmanno’s reputation as a brilliant legal mind grew. During the Second World War, Musmanno joined the Navy, and rose to the rank of Rear Admiral.

Left: Film still from *Black Fury* Source: explorepahistory.com

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Musmanno Continued

Following Germany's surrender, Musmanno lead the United States' investigation to determine the circumstances of the death of Adolf Hitler. He continued this endeavor for several years in an effort to confirm the suicide of Hitler through the collection of documents and filmed personal interviews with Hitler's personal staff, top generals, and others who were near him in his final days.



Musmanno (right) interviewing Nazi general Bernd von Loringhoven
Source: Duquesne University Archives and Special Collections



Source: Duquesne University Archives and Special Collections

Appointed by President Truman, Musmanno served as a judge at the Einsatzgruppen trial (September 29, 1947 – April 10, 1948), one of the Nuremberg Military Trials, in which the leaders of the mobile death squads which operated in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe were found guilty of war crimes.

Upon his return to Pennsylvania following the military trials, Musmanno was elected to the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court, serving from 1951 to 1968. In addition to serving on the state's highest court, Musmanno authored numerous books on a variety of topics including WWII, Italian Americans, Abraham Lincoln, and legal matters.

Upon his death in 1968, he was interred at Arlington National Cemetery. His extensive personal papers are housed at Duquesne University and are frequently utilized by researchers today.



Musmanno (left) at Nuremberg, 1947
Source: Duquesne University Archives and Special Collections

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Legislation Spotlight: PA Preferred Act

The PA Preferred® trademark, which is featured on many fruits and vegetables grown in Pennsylvania, is a result of years of work between the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the state legislature. The PA Preferred program began in 2004 after the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture launched the initiative to promote agricultural products grown and produced in Pennsylvania. Following the success of the initial program, Representative Stephen Bloom (Cumberland County, 2011-2018) introduced legislation which called for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to acquire, register, license, protect, and promote the PA Preferred® trademark for use in the sale and promotion of PA-produced agricultural products.



Above: Images of the PA Preferred logo on mushrooms and eggs produced in Pennsylvania. Source: Reading Eagle (readingeagle.com)



From left to right, Rick Herring, division president, Giant Food Stores, Carlisle; Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett; Sen. Elder Vogel Jr. of the 47th District.; and Rep. Stephen Bloom, R-199, announce the signing of the House Bill 1424, PA Preferred Act. The bill was signed at the Giant food store in Camp Hill Thursday.

Above Source: *The Sentinel*, (Carlisle) October 28, 2011

During an oral history interview with the House Archives, Representative Stephen Bloom, prime sponsor of the bill that led to the PA Preferred Act, shared his experience working on the legislation:

"The PA Preferred Act was my first piece of legislation that got passed by both chambers and signed into law by the governor. So, always will have a special place in my heart... [this program] helps the farmer and the producer get their product to the consumer who's looking for that high-quality, locally-sourced agriculture, whether it's food, wine, [or] beverage..."



Be sure to check out the growing collection of House Archives Oral History interviews that have been added to our YouTube Channel! The stories shared by former Members are not only entertaining but provide unique insight into the process of how Pennsylvania's laws are made.

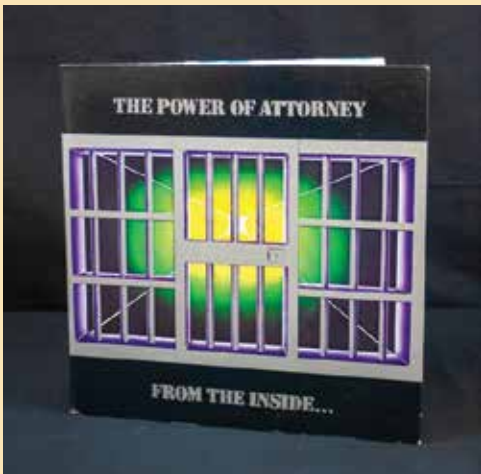
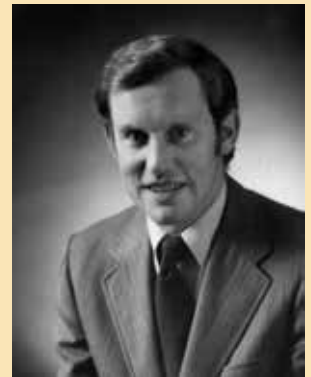
Use the code to the right to visit our YouTube Channel!



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James B. Kelly III, Vinyl Record Donation

The House Archives welcomes a wide variety of donations from former House Members, but recently we received a truly unique item: a vinyl record recorded by Pennsylvania prison inmates in 1974. While in office, James B. Kelly III (Allegheny County, 1971-1976) toured the Graterford Prison in Montgomery County. He observed a group of musicians which he found impressive. Kelly connected with Shep Gordon (a talent manager known for his association with acts such as Alice Cooper) whom he met through his Pittsburgh neighbor Bob Harper (station manager of radio station KQV-AM). Kelly asked for some help securing some instruments for the men, and was connected with Stan Vincent, a record producer. Soon not only were instruments secured, but studio time to record an album was booked. The group was called The Power of Attorney, and their subsequent album was entitled From the Inside. While the album was a singular endeavor, it served to illustrate that many talented people are in the prison system.



We Want to Hear From You!

We are inviting our readers to share with us articles, stories, photographs, and even just ideas for topics you would like us to include in future issues. Please email us at records@pabmc.net or give us a call at 717-783-3866 if you would like to contribute or have any ideas!

