

Mabel Walker Willebrandt

Bibliography and Suggestions for future research/leads:

The best source for Mabel is, of course, Mabel herself. Her writings and letters are collected at the Library of Congress and are located in the Manuscript Room. No appointment is necessary to look at her work.

The other obvious source is Dorothy M. Brown's book, *Mabel Walker Willebrandt: a Study of Power, Loyalty and Law* (1984). Dorothy Brown has an extensive Bibliography in her Biography.

Works Consulted:

Papers of Mabel Walker Willebrandt, Manuscript Collection of the Library of Congress:

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Letter to parents, June 2, 1924.
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Letter to parents, March 29, 1929
Letter to Mabel from Elsie Giles, September 16, 1931. MWW papers.
Letter from David Walker to Elsie Giles, October 10, 1931. MWW papers.

Letters of Dorothy Van Dyke
Letter from Dorothy Van Dyke to Catherine Drinker Bowen, January 20,
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Mabel's Speeches and Writings:

Mabel Walker Willebrandt, *The Inside of Prohibition* (1929)
Ceiling Unlimited, Address in honor of Amelia Earhart
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Some Observations on Women in the Field of Law, MWW papers.
Will You Help Keep the Law? Good Housekeeping Magazine, April 1924.
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Contemporary Sources:

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10, 1923.
Ernest Gordon, *The Wrecking of the 18th Amendment*, (Alcohol
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Teacher, Tells Why She Believes in the Enforcement of Prohibition Law*

Secondary Sources:

Barbara Allen Babcock, et. al., *Sex Discrimination and the Law* (1996)
Edward Behr, *Prohibition* (1996)
Louise Brooks, *Lulu in Hollywood* (Limelight, 1st ed. 1989)
Dorothy M. Brown, *Mabel Walker Willebrandt: A Study of Power, Loyalty
and Law* (1984)
Karen Berger Morello, *The Invisible Bar: The Woman Lawyer in America,
1638 to the Present* (1986)
Kenneth D. Rose, *American Women and the Repeal of Prohibition* (1996)

Suggestions for further research/Leads:

Disability: Mabel's deafness plagued her throughout her life, and she had a
series of operations designed to ameliorate her condition, but they often made
things worse. One very interesting aspect of Mabel's life might have been the

way she dealt with her disability. Her letters have many references to her efforts to cope with her growing deafness, and she gave a donation to Helen Keller's foundation, receiving a note in return: her charitable donations might provide some clues as well.

Relationship to her child Dorothy; although Mabel and her daughter seem to have had a good relationship, there are intimations that Mabel did not entirely approve of Dorothy's decision to become financially independent of Mabel after her marriage. It would be interesting to look into whether or not Mabel's strict approach to child-rearing had any effect—positive or otherwise—on their relationship. Dorothy may still be alive, and her children are likely to be with us; they might be amenable to being interviewed.

Communism: at the end of her life particularly, Mabel's lifelong hatred of communism blossomed into full flower. She participated in the red scare in Hollywood, drafting the Hollywood loyalty oath. I do not know where Mabel's loathing for communism came from; it might be interesting to look back into her life and try to determine where and when she developed this sentiment. The red scare in Hollywood is also fairly well-documented, and the Congressional Hearings of the era might provide a fair amount of information.

Life before or after the prohibition years: to a certain extent, I did something that both Dorothy and Mabel would rather I had not, and that was focus on Mabel's years as head of prohibition enforcement. I did that in large part for my own reasons; I am fascinated by prohibition and its sociocultural associations (especially as they relate to the current War on Drugs) and so I basically confined my study to her prohibition years. She had a long private practice after quitting the Justice Department, however, and it might be interesting to look into her aviation cases or her work in Hollywood, where she was counsel to many of the stars. People associated with Hollywood tend to keep memoirs; there might be information there about her private practice as lawyer to the stars. Mabel also had over 2000 cases in the police court in Los Angeles: it was where she learned her trade and found her place as a woman lawyer. That part of her life might be worth exploring as well.

Religiosity: Mabel's religiosity was a tremendously important part of her life. Her letters are filled with references to her feelings about God and the strength she derived from her faith. Her conversion from Christian Science to Catholicism at the end of her life occurred after her father's death, and there is a fair amount of evidence in her letters suggesting that her religious sensibilities were closely associated with her relationship to her parents. Mabel's religion, and the effect it had on her thought, as well as the way it shaped her relationship to her parents, would be a useful key to her life. There is a great deal of information in the letters about her faith.

Tax cases and Prison work: I focussed on prohibition; however, a great deal of

Mabel's work involved the tax law, and especially given her approach to statutory law as exhibited in *Donnelly*, her tax work could be fascinating. Those materials could be found, at least initially, on microfiche. During her tenure at the DOJ, as well, Mabel established a women's prison run according to progressive notions of work and rehabilitation: materials about both the philosophy behind the prison and Mabel's efforts to get it established are probably located in her papers at the Library of Congress.

Other cases, to see if *Donnelly* was her standard lawyering pattern: I became very upset with Mabel for the way she approached the statute in *Donnelly*; as I only used one case for my case study, there is a possibility that it was an aberration. It would be interesting to get copies of her other cases and briefs from the Supreme Court Library, in addition to getting work she did during her years in private practice, and see whether or not her manner of lawyering in *Donnelly* was her standard approach or an anomaly. As I said, I did not consult the materials at the National Archives; the DOJ library evidently sends such materials as memoranda and so forth on to the National Archives, and there may be a great deal of information about Mabel's lawyering there.

Mabel's Oral Arguments: although the Supreme Court library does not have transcripts of Mabel's oral arguments, there may be other ways to get at her oral argument style. For one, Mabel and her cases were high-profile enough that newspapers may have published credible accounts of her arguments. In her papers, there is a folder of newspaper clippings that might contain this sort of information. Even if there are no such accounts, other people might have described Mabel's arguments in their own writings. In addition, where she argued cases in other parts of the country, it is possible that those other jurisdictions might have kept records of the oral arguments.