

League of Women Voters Of Southern New Mexico



Attendees of the 50th anniversary of the LWVSNM
Photo by Alex Burr

The League of Women Voters was organized nationally in 1920, and the Southern New Mexico League formed in 1967. Among their many activities, they have helped update the NM Constitution, participated in the *We the People Project* advocating healthcare, supported the NMSU United Nations Team to promote peacekeeping in the world, and created the 2020 Suffrage Alliance in Las Cruces which brought several women's organizations together to educate and promote voter's rights. The LWVSNM has planted a tree in Pioneer Women's Park to show solidarity with the history of women in Las Cruces who want this community to thrive.

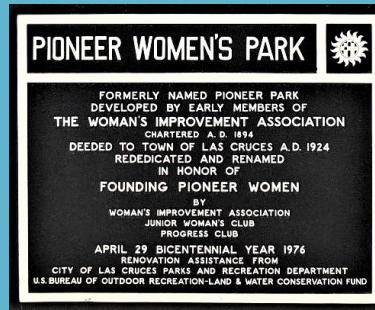
*Empowering
Voters and
Strengthening
Democracy*



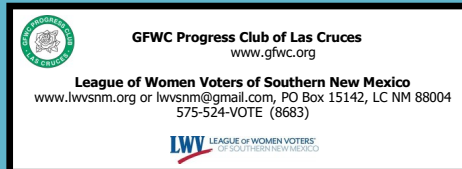
Wanting every eligible voter to have equal access to the ballot box with an equal voice and equal participation that reflects the diverse makeup of our country



A priority of the WIA was to purchase a hearse so community members could go to their final resting place with dignity, and now their hearse can be viewed at the NM Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum in Las Cruces.



Come Visit Us!



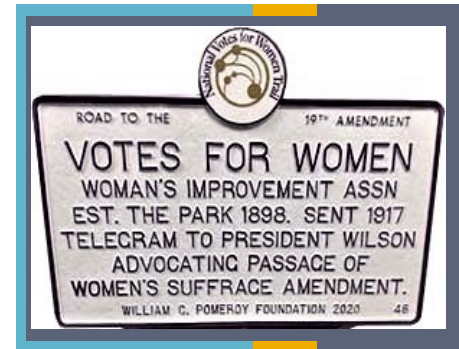
This flyer was created for the GFWC Progress Club of Las Cruces and the League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico. Additional information can be found by contacting the site or institutions below.

N M Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum
4100 Dripping Springs Road, Las Cruces, NM 88011
www.nmfarmandranchmuseum.org

Rio Grande Archives, New Mexico State University
<https://lib.nmsu.edu/archives/rghc.html>

City of Las Cruces
700 N. Main, Las Cruces, NM 88001 or las-cruces.org

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woman%27s_Improvement_Association_of_Las_Cruces



*Women Who
Created a
Community*



Honoring the Centennial of the
19th Amendment
1920-2020

with a National Votes for Women Trail
Pomeroy Foundation Marker
Pioneer Women's Park

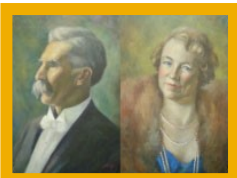
Las Cruces, NM

The women of the WIA bought the land across from their park to build their clubhouse in 1927. They brought in traveling art shows, held recitals and plays, created a library and purchased the books from their own fundraising. The front was modified in 1942 to a pueblo style.



Laura E. Frenger was a force for women's rights in New Mexico. She moved to NM in 1898 and joined the WIA the next year. During the years from 1899 to 1958, Laura's accomplishments include: GFWC Sec. for the Territory and State of NM; organized the State Federation of Women's Clubs in NM; in the first Child Welfare Committee in NM; GFWC State Director of the World War I Victory Commission; Home Service & Executive Secretary of Dona Ana County Chapter of the American Red Cross; GFWC State Director of the World War I Victory Commission; Home Service & Executive Secretary of the Dona Ana County Chapter of the American Red Cross; worked for women's suffrage in NM alongside Adelina Otero-Warren of Santa Fe; elected President of the State Federation of Music Clubs; Organized the first Pan-American Roundtable in NM to promote knowledge, understanding, and friendship among the people of the Western Hemisphere; organized citizenship classes, a well-baby clinic and a mental health clinic; and by 1958, saw NM pass a law allowing women to inherit the husband's property if he died without a will.

Thomas and Alice Branigan – Alice was one of the first 15 members of the WIA. After she died, she left the City of Las Cruces enough money to build the first public library, Thomas Branigan Memorial Library, which opened in 1935, and her endowment still provides library books today.



Little Ruth Day christened Union Park in 1898. Later the park was named City Park, then Pioneer Park, and in 1976, it was deemed Pioneer Women's Park.



Pioneer Women's Park was the site for the GFWC Progress Club's centennial celebration in 2015. This bench was donated to the park so visitors could relax and enjoy their time there.

Pioneer Women's Park

This wonderful park provided by the Woman's Improvement Association has been used not only for recreation since 1898, but it was the meeting place for the WIA. The WIA members gave speeches at the dedication in both English and Spanish telling all assembled that the park was meant to be used by all races and classes of citizens. In wings attached to the gazebo, the women held their meetings that included topics like the acquisition of a hearse to take members of the community to their burial with grace, and greater healthcare and sanitation to remediate significant deaths in infants and disease in general. The ladies also bought a water sprinkler to lower the dust in the streets. The WIA set up the first free library in the wings of the gazebo, and later they built a clubhouse which became the first real library in Las Cruces. Yet, these community-minded women knew that women did not have equal rights, and they worked along with the club women of New Mexico for the right to vote in all elections. Minutes of the W.I.A. meetings available at the NMSU Branson Library Rio Grande Archives records, from December 1, 1917, show that the members passed a motion to send a telegram to President Woodrow Wilson "for the passage of the suffrage amendment." They authorized the Secretary, Laura E. Frenger, to send the telegram.



GFWC Progress Club of Las Cruces

This club belonging to the General Federation of Women's Clubs has a long history of working for the rights of women. The GFWC motto, "Unity in Diversity," reinforces the inclusion of all women to equally participate in society. Formed in 1915, the Progress Club has dedicated itself to supporting the needs of our community. The women who join can involve themselves in the arts, civic engagement and outreach, education and libraries, the environment, and health and wellness projects. The goal is to build your own skills and knowledge while helping those around you.

In 1917, American women had been fighting for over 50 years for the right to vote. In the State of New Mexico, there was strong resistance by the male legislators to allow women to vote in state and general elections. The Progress Club held a debate, and by a vote of two to one, the club decided they had to join the suffrage movement. Working with the State Federation of Women's Clubs and the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the right to vote was finally won by the passage of the 19th Amendment.



GFWC Progress Club of Las Cruces
Celebrating the 19th Amendment
February 2020

National Votes for Women Trail

Notable women of Las Cruces on this distinguished trail include Clara Belle Williams (1885-1994), the first African-American to graduate from New Mexico State University (NMSU) in 1937. Facing discrimination, she prevailed and taught in Las Cruces for over 20 years. Also included is María Gutiérrez Spencer (1919-1992). Born in Las Cruces, she graduated from Berkeley in 1941 and developed a Bicultural Orientation and Language Development (BOLD) program for second language learners. She taught in Silver City and Deming, NM. The women of the Woman's Improvement Association (1894-2000) are celebrated for their fight for passage of the 19th Amendment and for promoting good health for women and children as well as education and libraries. See more sites on the trail at <https://ncwhs.org/votes-for-women-trail/>