

## History of League Womens Voters' of Southern New Mexico

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces (LWVGLC) began with a delegation from the New Mexico League visiting Las Cruces to encourage organizing a local League in 1967. The State Board wanted an organization in Southern New Mexico to support the position for rewriting the State's Constitution. The successful LWVGLC participated in the election of delegates to the Constitutional Convention. In the 1970s members actively supported the Equal Rights Amendment. With the start of the 21st century, members travelled to Otero Mesa to assess gas and oil interests. The We the People project led to advocating for health care. In 2010 the LWVGLC supported the NMSU Model UN Team with a fundraiser that brought former UN Ambassador Thomas Pickering to Las Cruces as a keynote speaker stressing peacekeeping. The LWVGLC celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2017 through 2019 with programs, films, a picnic, and traveling exhibit, and ending with a "Gala Tea Party" February 23, 2019. In April that year, the League became a 501(c)3 and changed its name to the League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico (LWVSNM).

## Pomeroy Foundation Marker

A Pomeroy Foundation Marker honoring the Women's Improvement Association for their suffrage work was erected in March of 2021 in Pioneer Women's Park.



Votes for Women

Women's Improvement Association  
Est. the Park in 1898, sent 1917 telegram to President Wilson  
advocating Passage of Women's Suffrage Amendment

William G. Pomeroy Foundation 2020



## For More Information

Please contact the following for more information:

GFWC Progress Club of Las Cruces  
<https://www.gfwcnm.org>  
or  
<https://www.gfwc.org>

League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico  
<https://www.lwvsnm.org/>



WIA Building, 340 N. Reymond  
Las Cruces, New Mexico

# WOMEN WHO CREATED A COMMUNITY



Picture courtesy of Rio Grande Archives at NMSU

## History of WIA and GFWC Progress Club of Las Cruces

Insert summary:



Picture courtesy of Rio Grande Archives at NMSU

## Hearse

In 1894, there were five ladies riding behind an old coal wagon taking one of their dear friends to the cemetery. They vowed that day to form a club to provide services that the city was not providing. Their first goal was to buy a hearse for Las Cruces. By 1901, the club had raised enough money to order a horse-drawn hearse and harness from St Louis. They let people rent the hearse for a fee of ten dollars for use in town, and fifteen dollars for use outside of town limits.

## Laura E. Frenger

1911: She organized the State Federation of Women's Clubs in New Mexico. This group fought for ratification of the 19th Amendment.



Picture courtesy of Rio Grande Archives at NMSU

## Property Law insert history



Picture courtesy of Rio Grande Archives at NMSU

# See history come to life.

## City Park

In 1898 - Woman's Improvement Association dedicated Union Park, now known as Pioneer Women's Park. The WIA members gave speeches in both English and Spanish telling all assembled that the park was meant to be used by all races and classes of citizens. The WIA worked to reduce the infant mortality rate, improve education and health care for children and bring rights to women in Las Cruces and New Mexico.



Picture courtesy of Rio Grande Archives at NMSU

## WIA Clubhouse-Library

In 1924, the City of Las Cruces took over the maintenance of the park, and this freed the club members to spend their time and money building a clubhouse and working to get a library for the town. WIA had already collected 500 books for the library even though it had yet been built and providing library services to Las Cruces for years. WIA members took turns volunteering as librarians. Since the women had a hard time raising money for a library, they sacrificed their clubhouse and made it into a library.



Picture courtesy of Rio Grande Archives at NMSU

Pioneer Women Park  
500 W Las Cruces Ave.  
Las Cruces, New Mexico

## Other Markers of Women's History

Three women, events, and places in Las Cruces have been added to the National Votes for Women Trail (<https://ncwhs.org/votes-for-women-trail/>) to honor women who contributed to the quality of life and democracy in Southern New Mexico. Laura Frenger (1873-1961) was one of many strong women who were part of the Woman's Improvement Association. Clara Belle Williams (1885-1994) was the first African-American to graduate from what is now New Mexico State University (NMSU) with a B.A. in English in 1937. She was not allowed into classrooms and sat outside the door to hear lectures. Clara Belle taught at Booker T. Washington Elementary for over 20 years. The English building at NMSU became Clara Belle Williams Hall in 2005.

María Gutiérrez Spencer (1919-1992), born in Las Cruces, was punished as a child in school for not understanding English. She graduated from Berkeley with a degree in Spanish and Latin American History in 1941. In 1967 María developed a Bicultural Orientation and Language Development (BOLD) program that was very successful with students in Silver City and Deming in the 1970s. A New Mexico Historic Women Marker for María is on the NMSU campus (Espina Street).

The countless stories of these and many other women of all ethnic backgrounds are celebrated on the National Votes for Women Trail.

## VOTES for WOMEN



*Then*

*Now*

## Voter Suppression Then & Now

Insert summary .....