

NM HERstory Symposium: Heritage and Innovation
July 27, 3-5 pm MT, Santa Fe Prep Auditorium and Zoom

“She Who Shaped New Mexico” and the NM Social Studies Curriculum Project

Lisa Nordstrum

Recent scholarship is recognizing the important influence of women’s ideas around culture, identity, and independence in the American Southwest. Multiple visions and perspectives spring from the intersectionality of these women’s voices.

Women in the Southwest have centered communities, demonstrating their spirit of independence in accordance with and in spite of gendered ideas about the roles of men and women within the organization of power. Native American women held the responsibility of gathering, growing, and processing foods, maintaining dwellings, and participating in the rituals and traditions of their community. The vastness of the American Southwest provided migratory choices according to needs, and women sustained the cultural fabric wherever they lived.

Early European exploration and settlement brought a new culture of women into this landscape, where they faced both hardship and opportunity. Native women served as interpreters, mothers, and peacekeepers as the cultures mixed by both force and choice. As women became mothers of racially mixed children, they faced new challenges. Some women were able to use this to position themselves in places of power within westward expansion. As the US government promoted occupation of the continent, women migrated to the Southwest, seeking new beginnings, independence, and creative opportunities. Here they found a place that enabled them to do so. Under the pivotal Homestead Act, single women were empowered to settle and make a home of their own, receiving the independence they sought.

Through a NM Department of Cultural Affairs funded project, I am developing a curriculum aligned to the NMPED Social Studies and Humanities Content Standards for use by educators, students, and the general public. Women as significant shapers of the history of New Mexico will be the focus, bringing intentional inclusion of women’s roles to the forefront of teaching. The New Mexico Historic Women Marker Initiative: She Who Shaped New Mexico website is the focal point for students’ research. Lessons include an examination of the website content to create interpretive projects, development of secondary source research skills, and extensions into primary source research through archival documents, collections of journals and letters, photographs, newspaper articles, and diaries of personal experiences.

Lisa Nordstrum, NM K-12 certified teacher with 30 years of experience; history teacher at Santa Fe Preparatory School; field researcher/educator for School for Advanced Research, Museum of Indian Arts and Culture; and NM History Museum. Lisa is developing relevant curriculum and primary research methodology for high school students related to NM’s new Social Studies Standards. Her contract with the Department of Cultural Affairs to expand New Mexico’s marker project, <https://www.nmhistoricwomen.org>, will broaden our appreciation for the numerous contributions women have made to advance our multicultural state.



Women on New Mexico’s Crossroads-Colonial History and Culture

Robin Farwell Gavin

Since prehistoric times, trails have traversed the broad landscape of New Mexico. Native American trails of the fourteenth century and earlier appear to have connected Chaco Canyon to settlements as far as Casas Grandes (Mexico) and Cahokia Mounds (Illinois). Although men are credited with forging these trails, they were accompanied by women from the beginning. New Mexico’s seventeenth-century colonists included not only *peninsulares* but also *criollos*, *indios*, *mestizos*, *castizos*, *negros*, *mulatos*, and *moriscos*. In the eighteenth century, *genízaros* also became recognized members of New Mexican communities. They trekked the 1500 miles from Mexico City to Santa Fe, where women helped to found Santa Fe and other towns in the remote northern frontier, faced with disease, starvation, and threats. El Camino Real from Mexico City to Santa Fe officially opened in 1598 when Don Juan de Oñate and 129 soldiers, their families, and Native servants forged their way north from Zacatecas, Mexico, using well-traveled Native trails, to establish the first Spanish-speaking settlement in New Mexico. From 1598 to 1821, the Camino Real was the main route of communication between Colonial New Mexico and the vice-regal government in Mexico City. Over this route came people and goods from all across Spain’s vast empire—from Mexico and South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

In 1680 trails connected the Rio Grande pueblos and enabled their runners to carry secret codes coordinating the Pueblo Revolt. From 1598 to 1821, goods from Spain’s vast empire traveled over the Camino Real (Royal Road) from central New Spain (today’s Mexico and Guatemala) to the remote northern frontier. This diverse population brought equally diverse cultural traditions and aesthetic sensibilities to the far northern frontier. Although there are no extant diaries and few documents about daily life from this period in New Mexico, existing archaeological artifacts, objects and inventories help us to understand the multiethnic, multicultural community that was colonial New Mexico. Many of these objects were destined for use by women, illuminating the roles of women in the colonial period.

Starting in 1821 the Santa Fe Trail brought American and (New) Mexican merchants face to face, while French fur traders and trappers roamed trails from Canada and Louisiana through New Mexico into Mexico. In 1880 the railroad opened the door to tourists, health seekers, anthropologists, artists, and writers, bringing a profound change to the traditional cultures of New Mexico. And with the designation of Route 66 in 1923, automobile tourism began to flourish. The Spanish Trail was forged in 1829, establishing the road from Santa Fe to the Pacific.

Robin Farwell Gavin, Curator Emeritus served as Curator of Spanish Colonial Art at the Museum of International Folk Art for 17 years and then joined the staff of the new Museum of Spanish Colonial Art where she is now. She was the lead curator for over 30 exhibitions concerning the Spanish colonial arts of Mexico and New Mexico. Her publications include Cultural Convergence in New Mexico: Interactions in Art, History & Archaeology (2021), Converging Streams: Art of the Hispanic and Native American Southwest (2010), and Cerámica y Cultura: the Story of Spanish and Mexican Mayólica (2003).

Santa Fe, NM

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Many Cultures on the Santa Fe Trail- Dr. Frances Levine

The Santa Fe Trail has a special allure in Southwestern History. It was a trail that linked two culturally and historically distinctive regions of North America—the far northern frontier of the newly formed Mexican nation with the westward expanding American nation. Along its path the Santa Fe Trail also crossed the traditional lands of many Native American nations as well. The Santa Fe trade between the Mexican capitol of the same name, and the Missouri frontier is often said to have begun with the expedition made by William Becknell and a small mercantile caravan from Boonslick, near Franklin, Missouri to Santa Fe in the Fall of 1821. Within a generation, it had become more than a supply route, more than a road of commerce, it became the route of an expanding empire as American interests proffered the expansionist policies of Manifest Destiny. The military and then territorial government officials traveled this same trail. The two frontier areas, distant from their mother countries, became a nexus between nations and cultures. Because the Santa Fe Trail was as much as road of military expansion as it was of mercantile commerce, it is not often associated with stories of frontier women. New communities and outposts emerged along the trail, growing in part from service to trail travelers. Many of these communities—St. Louis, Santa Fe and Taos among the most prominent—became social crucibles where people from many cultures mixed and joined in new ways. Through the voices of women that very process of families and cultures merging, and communities changing is told in sensitive and revealing ways in letters, diaries, and personal reflections. I will discuss how the more nuanced views and the experiences of several women who traveled the trail offer larger perspectives on American history.

Dr. Frances Levine, recently retired president and CEO of the Missouri Historical Society (MHS) and the Missouri History Museum, previously served as Director of the Palace of the Governors, New Mexico History Museum. Fran is the author and co-editor of several award-winning books, including Our Prayers Are in This Place: Pecos Pueblo Identity over the Centuries; Through the Lens: Creating Santa Fe; Telling New Mexico: A New History; All Trails Lead to Santa Fe; and Doña Teresa Confronts the Spanish Inquisition: A Seventeenth-Century New Mexican Drama. Crossings: Women on the Santa Fe Trail will be published in 2023 by University of Kansas Press.

St. Louis, MO and Santa Fe, NM



Flamenco Pioneers in New Mexico: Documenting Histories- Nicolasa Chávez

The birth and development of the flamenco and Spanish dance tradition in New Mexico, is due to the tremendous work, dedication, and talent of New Mexican women. Even though believed to have arrived over 400 years ago with the first Spanish colonist, flamenco, like Mexican Mariachi and other Hispano/a traditions, was largely introduced and developed throughout the 20th century. By the latter part of the 20th century, flamenco was firmly rooted within the state’s cultural milieu. New Mexican flamencas were instrumental in planting the seeds of a unique New Mexican flamenco tradition from the early performances at regional fiestas throughout the state and the early tablao scene in Northern New Mexico, to creating internationally renowned dance companies and educational institutions, to the facilitating the world’s longest running International Flamenco Festival. All the while the tradition has been handed down either at home from grandmother to mother to daughter, at community gatherings and juergas, and from master

to student, following the original oral and familial traditions. It later moved into the academic setting as the University New Mexico became the only degree program in the entire United States. Today New Mexico's flamenco heritage is five generations strong largely because of several pioneering New Mexican women. Today the descendants and students of these original flamencas carry on the tradition throughout the state in community celebrations, school curriculums and public music programs. This work and dedication transformed New Mexico into a flamenco epicenter which attracts local, regional, national, and international participants, changing the lives of many along the way.

Nicolasa Chávez, a fourteenth generation New Mexican, is a historian, curator and performance artist, concentrates on the rich multicultural heritage of New Mexico and the connection between New Mexico and the Spanish-speaking world. She authored The Spirit of Flamenco: From Spain to New Mexico (Museum of New Mexico Press) and A Century of Masters: the NEA National Heritage Fellows of New Mexico (New Mexico Book Award winner). She performs and conducts lecture/demonstrations on the history of Flamenco, Spanish Dance, and Argentine Tango. She is the Deputy State Historian for New Mexico.

Santa Fe, NM



**New Mexico's Woman Suffrage Campaign and the Ongoing Work for Equal Rights
Sylvia Ramos Cruz, M.D.**

The history of woman suffrage in New Mexico is rich and deep. But, as with other aspects of women's lives, most of their stories—political, economic, social—are not found in history books. We are still uncovering this history in family lore, memoirs, songs, newspapers, and a few scholarly works.

Hundreds of women took part in the campaign. Among them, Ada McPherson Morley, Nina Otero Warren, Cora Armstrong Kellam, Aurora Lucero, Maude McFie Bloom, and Isabella Selmes Ferguson. These were women shaped by the world and events around them, pushing against the limits society imposed on them. Most were college educated, many were employed. They kept up with world events, scientific discoveries, and new ideas. They had strongly held beliefs and biases, yet banded together for decades despite religious, political, economic, and social differences to make real the dream they shared.

Sadly, their victory did not end the struggle for women's full citizenship in our democracy. As Alice Paul knew, the Vote would not guarantee women their rights. Only an amendment could. She wrote the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923, and we have been working to get it into the U.S. Constitution ever since.

Her prescient voice is still with us as we see women's autonomy and worth questioned and assailed daily. It is incumbent on us as citizens to ensure that the ERA, ratified by the 38 states needed, becomes the law of the land. "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." In 1973, New Mexico passed its own ERA law with due process and equal protections against sex discrimination of all types. Our Bill of Rights ensures equal pay, property rights, fair labor conditions, and healthcare access not available in other states.

Sylvia Ramos Cruz is a retired general surgeon, poet, writer, and women's rights activist. Her photographs and award-winning poetry and prose have appeared in Artemis Journal, Chamisa

Journal, Choice Words: Writers on Abortion, Journal of Latina Critical Feminism, Malpais Review, Persimmon Tree, and Southwest American Literature Journal, La Crónica de Nuevo Méjico, the Online Biographical Dictionary of Woman Suffrage in the US, and In Her Own Right: A Century of Women’s Activism 1820-1920. She has lectured widely and published articles on the suffrage movement in New Mexico, some of which are available on video.

Albuquerque, NM

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NM Listens is a collaborative project of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico and the NM Humanities Council, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities to advance democracy. The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan organization, protects voting rights and promotes policies in the public interest. Students, 16 years of age and older, and rising leaders can join the League of Women Voters of New Mexico at no cost. <https://lwvnm.org/membership.html>.

Registration: Attend in person or register in advance to attend by Zoom:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/new-mexicos-women-heritage-and-innovation-tickets-368504515927>

The recording of this symposium and other NM Listen events are posted on <https://nmhumanities.org/nmlistens>

For more information, contact Meredith Machen, projects@lwvnm.org, 505 577-6337.