

Founding History

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of GREATER TUCSON

According to the 1941 City directory ... Tucson had a population of 60,000 ... there were 2,680 students at the U of A and the public school system was considered “the Education Center of the Southwest.”

Tucson was located on the main line of the Southern Pacific Railroad, and many people were employed by that company, including families of our founders. U.S. Highway 80, which ran through Tucson, was known as the “Broadway of America ... with the highway 100% paved.” In addition, there was a fully equipped aviation field that was operated by U.S. Air Service and American Airlines with daily passenger flights. Tucson itself had 85 miles of paved roads.



Tucson 1940 – Photo by Gene Magee

Even then Tucson was “a tourist town.” The city’s marketing information focused on the climate which was “the finest in America for health, rest, and recreation.” There were commercial and tourist hotels that charged \$2-\$15 per day. Tucson also was a headquarters for guest ranches in Southern Arizona.

Our 28 founders were women who were already very involved in the community. Some of them gathered at the Santa Rita Hotel for an organizational meeting on May 16, 1941 and they began the required LWVUS study called “Know Your Town.” Betty Geehan, a current day member, says that this information was important because the women learned how Tucson government worked and what was involved to make it run effectively. “Know Your Town” was required to be updated from time to time.

During this provisional period, the group was required to adopt a budget and policies and procedures. Initially, a new League is expected to follow their state LWV by-laws, but there was not yet a State League. They also had to recruit members and establish dues, which were set at \$2 in 1941.

On October 28, 1941 the provisional period leaders met at the Tucson YWCA on Fifth Street to formally become a Tucson League of Women Voters. Helen Congdon D’Autremont presided.