

CHACÓN, SOLEDAD CHÁVEZ (1890–1936)

A pioneer politician, Soledad Chávez Chacón, “Lala,” was born in Albuquerque, a decade after the arrival of the railroad. Reared in a middle class home, Chacón had access to an education and earned an accounting degree from the Albuquerque Business College in 1910. That year, she married and had two children. Involved in community activities, Chacón joined literary, civic, and service clubs: el Club Literario, el Club Latino, the Women’s Club, and the Minerva Club. In 1922, Democratic power brokers—including her cousin, future U.S. senator Dennis Chávez — encouraged thirty-two-year-old Chacón to enter politics to help retake control of the state legislature. Democrats nominated her for New Mexico secretary of state and she became the first Hispana to be elected to a state office. In 1921 an amendment to the New Mexico Constitution granted women the right to hold public office. New Mexican women moved swiftly into public service. Chacón was reelected in 1924 when she defeated a Republican Hispano. She was invited to attend Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1933 inaugural as an Electoral College representative and was elected to the state legislature the following year.