



L·V·H·S·A·A
Las Vegas High School Alumni Association

MAUDE FRAZIER

(Superintendent of Las Vegas School District - 1927-1946)



Maude Frazier made an impact in Nevada in several ways, and her career paved the way for other women in politics and those who choose to pursue a career. Frazier was born in Wisconsin in 1881. Her parents wanted her to be a teacher, but in recalling that decision in later life, Frazier remembered her objections to restrictions placed on teachers just after the turn of the century. Teachers could not dance or play cards. Frazier rode a bicycle and the school board did not approve. She saved her salary of \$22 a month so she could go on to college. Teachers in those days needed only to have a high school education and to pass a competency exam to teach.

In 1906 Frazier came west to Nevada to teach in Genoa, then moved on and taught in different schools around the state. By 1921 she was a deputy superintendent for the Department of Education. She worked out of Las Vegas, but covered a large territory in a car she named Teddy (after Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders). In 1927 she took a job as superintendent of the Las Vegas Union School District, consisting of two local elementary schools and the high school. (She was also Principal of the high school.) This put her in charge during the population boom brought about by the construction of Hoover Dam. She remained in that job until her retirement in 1946.

She found a local high school so old and unsuitably built that she feared it would explode in flames, burning students alive. Fire did destroy the building, but not during school hours, so nobody was hurt. Frazier and others worked all night salvaging desks and other equipment, and convened school the next day in temporary classrooms all over town.

Fortunately, Frazier had already persuaded the public to pass a \$350,000 bond issue to build Las Vegas High School at 7th and Bridger (opened in 1930) (now Las Vegas Academy), a school so architecturally memorable that it is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. She was criticized for building "rooms which will never be used." Frazier Hall on Bridger Street was named in her honor.

After retirement, Frazier launched a political career. She won a seat in the Assembly in 1950 and was a state legislator for 12 years. In 1962 Lieutenant Governor Rex Bell died in office and Maude Frazier was appointed to fill that vacancy. She was the first woman to hold that office.

Her most popular issue was getting a college of some sort in Southern Nevada. In 1955 Frazier persuaded legislators to appropriate \$200,000 for a Southern Nevada campus, but they attached a big, fat string. The money would be forthcoming only if Las Vegas raised \$100,000 from private sources. R. Guild Gray, the superintendent of schools at that time, chaired the fund-raising effort, with the help of Frazier and Archie Grant. They kicked off the campaign on May 24, 1955, with a one-hour telecast featuring Strip entertainers as well as civic leaders and educators. They exceeded the goal by \$35,000, and in April 1956, Frazier was allowed the honor of shoveling out the first spade full of soil in what would become a junior college and, eventually, UNLV. The oldest building on the UNLV campus, completed in 1957, was named Maude Frazier Hall. Unfortunately, this historic landmark was demolished in 2009.

Maude Frazier was known to say "instead of trying to make people to fit into a certain mold, we should encourage them to finish their own mold."

Maude Frazier died in her sleep at the age of 82, a few months after leaving office in 1963.



Las Vegas High School
Frazier, the principal, is the

faculty, 1931-32. Maude
woman with glasses in the row

next to the back.
UNLV Special Collections

These biographies are based on research and could contain discrepancies.
If there are any excerpts you feel should be changed please feel free to contact dave@lvhsaa.com.

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