



Suffrage stories

Anna Maria Lafranchi, also known as Mary, was born in Brusio, Switzerland. She arrived in New Zealand with her husband Giovachimo sometime before 1871. The couple lived in the mining settlements of Macetown and Cardrona. Anna Maria signed sheet 79 of the 1893 Women's Suffrage Petition.

Anna Maria and Giovachimo opened the All Nations Hotel in Cardrona in 1873. Sadly, Giovachimo died in 1889 after falling from a horse. Anna Maria's family kept working. Her sons operated a gold mining dredge, 'the Lafranchi Dredge', from 1902 to 1916. Anna Maria was involved in the family business – newspapers from the time show that dredging claims were granted in her name.

Who knows what inspired Anna Maria to sign the suffrage petition. Being a businesswoman, hotel operator and mother of four children in Central Otago's goldmining settlements must have been challenging. Her experiences seem to have convinced her that women needed more of a voice in the political life of New Zealand.

We often think of suffragists as urban ladies of English origin, who worked for reform through their church and community networks. But the suffrage petition was signed by women of different circumstances and backgrounds from all over New Zealand.

Anna Maria Lafranchi

1835-1924



■ Lafranchi family at All Nations Hotel, Cardrona, c. 1883. Anna Maria is second from the left. Credit: c/nE2963/72, Hocken Photographs Collections, Te Uare Taoka o Hakēna – the Hocken Collections, University of Otago.



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