Our History

In 1897, female journalists could not join press clubs. Journalist Marian Longfellow O'Donoghue (Henry Longfellow's niece) invited two colleagues to create a "progressive press union" for women. From 17 original members, the National League of American Pen Women grew to include not only writers but also artists, composers, dancers, and, most recently, women from all allied creative professions.

Through our 120-year history, we have inspired, encouraged, and supported more than 55,000 Pen Women as well as contributing to the development of future professionals in all artistic disciplines while enriching our communities across the country.

Today, we remain the oldest women's arts organization in the United States. Our goal is to evolve into a modern organization and spread our reach to new generations of women while continuing to build on our rich history and legacy.