



# CONCHA

Peña

## Concepción Peña Pastor

*One of the first practising women lawyers in Spain, Law professor in exile*

**Ciudad Real, 1906 – Panama City, 1960**

Concepción Peña Pastor, or Concha Peña, was one of a small group of practising women lawyers during the Second Republic. She was also a politician, writer, lecturer and educator. She was a nationally-qualified teacher at the Instituto San Isidro and Cardenal Cisneros, institutions that were influential in Madrid's social and political life. She earned three Bachelor's degrees, in Philosophy and Humanities, Medicine and Law. She spent time in the classrooms of the Faculty of Law of Zaragoza and perhaps completed a Bachelor's from the Universidad Central de Madrid. There she earned a PhD in Law. She was one of the first women to join the Bar Association in Madrid in 1928.

The press of the period shows that she was politically prominent. In July 1930, *La Esfera*, one of the top journals of the day, published an article on women's access to the working world entitled 'El fin de la esclavitud: Mujeres emancipadas', which referred to the women lawyers 'Clarita Campoamor, Matilde de Huici and the fashionable criminal lawyer, Miss Conchita Peña' (edition 864, 26 July). The press also reported on her facet as a lecturer, with a variety of talks on topics like divorce in the ancient world and a tribute to Pi i Margall.

She was the first woman to join the Real Academia de Jurisprudencia y Legislación (Royal Academy of Jurisprudence and Legislation, second section) in 1923, where she became Secretary in 1929. She was also visible in political life. She was a member of the Agrupación Femenina (Women's Group) of the party Acción Republicana (Republican Action), where she defended women's rights and particularly women's suffrage. She was a candidate with the Partido Republicano Democrático Federal (Federal Democratic Republican Party) in the elections to the Constituent Courts in 1931, but she was not elected.

She went into exile in Paris, where she met her husband, a Yugoslavian language teacher, with whom she had a daughter. With the outbreak of the Second World War, they moved to

Panama, where she lived since 1938. She was a professor of Civil Law (1941-1942) and Roman Law (1942-1944) at the Universidad de Panamá and director of the National Library (1951). She continued to publish literary creations and many articles in the press in prominent Panamanian journals.

Her name appears on a plaque in the Simón Bolívar library at the Universidad de Panamá, devoted 'To the Spanish professors who at the dawn of the Universidad de Panamá generously contributed to creating an institution where freedom of thinking and teaching prevailed'. A Spanish woman jurist who is unknown in Spain, she is also included in a book on the suffragist movement in Panama, *Mujeres que cambiaron nuestra historia*, which attests to and acknowledges her life. She died in exile in 1960 at the age of 54.

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