

January 2022



Presents

Claremont *Passionate for Trees*

A Compilation:

- **TREE STORY**

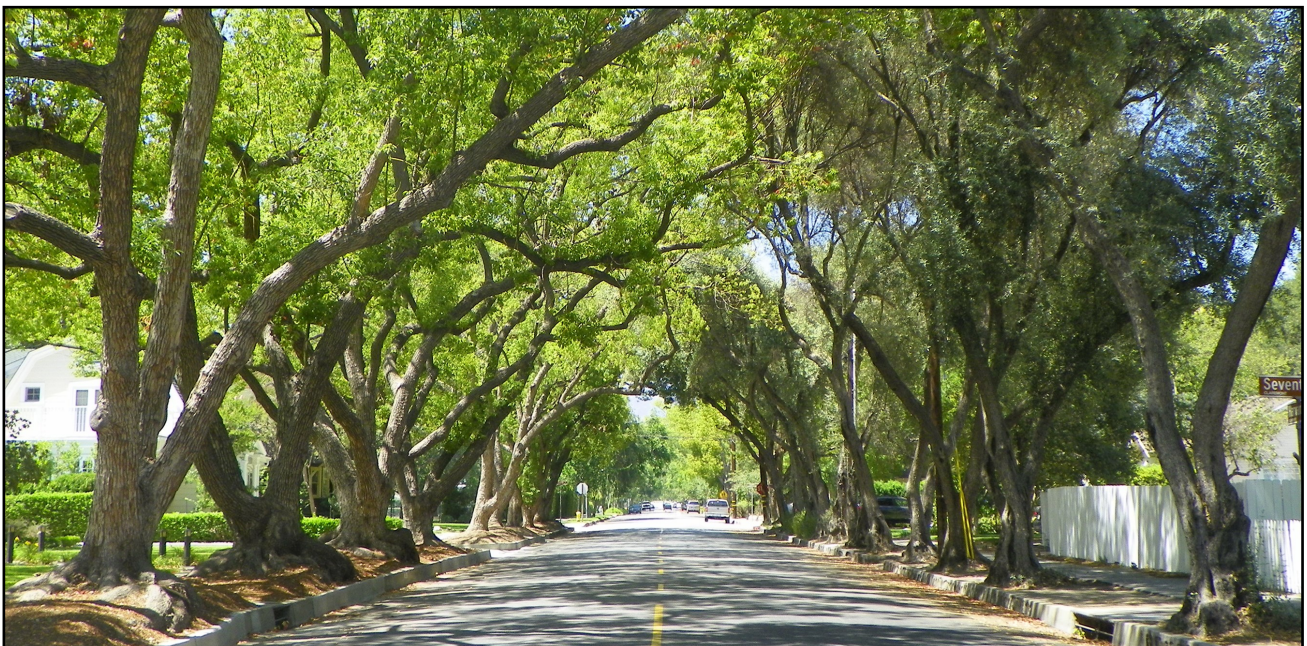
Claremont Museum of Art Exhibition Display Boards

- **CLAREMONT HISTORY
AND TREE EVENT TIMELINE**

- **TREE SPEAK**

Excerpts from **Judy Wright's** Book

Claremont: A Pictorial History



Mindi Meader, Photographer

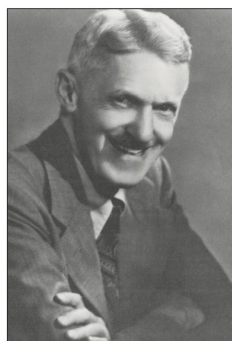
Planting a College

“I can see now how the planting of those eucalyptus trees along College Avenue was symbolic; for the same pioneers who set out those trees were also planting a college, and both trees and college were to grow to proportions far beyond the dreams of those who planted them.” - Frank Brackett, 1944

One of the outstanding features of The Claremont Colleges is the arrangement of buildings around courts and greens. These formal landscape features greatly enhance the buildings by providing a graceful, stylistically appropriate setting for them as well as extending the functional capabilities of the semi-public classrooms and halls. In 1919, Ralph Cornell was hired as supervising landscape architect for Pomona College. Pomona College president, Wilson Lyon, describes some of Cornell's contributions to Pomona College during his tenure there:

“In an age when California was losing much of its natural beauty, Pomona should be proud of the development and improvement of its campus and grounds...(it) had become a group of green quadrangles and lovely gardens...The harmonious beauty of these quadrangles and gardens had been developed by Ralph D. Cornell...who served his alma mater with great affection for over fifty years.”

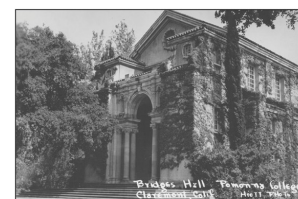
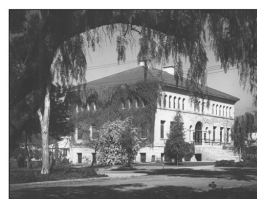
Cornell also had a good relationship with the Claremont Chamber of Commerce, helping take part in the “City Beautiful” movement during the 1920s. Cornell designed several Claremont landscapes including the Claremont “civic center”, Foothill Boulevard, Oak Park Cemetery, Memorial Park, Marston Quadrangle, Memorial Court, and Honnold Library. Extremely influential, Cornell was known as the “Dean of Landscape Architecture of the Pacific Coast”.



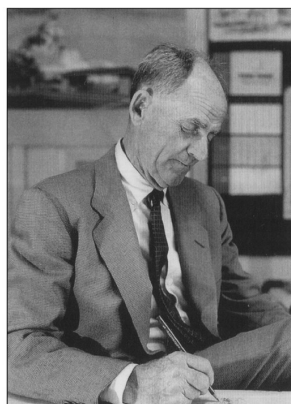
Pomona College's landscape architect, Ralph Cornell and Marston Quadrangle drawing.



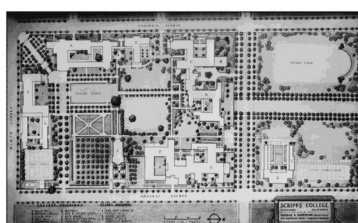
College Avenue running through Pomona College, c. early 1920s. The eucalyptus planted by Henry Palmer and Frank Brackett have grown into mature trees



Highlighting Pomona College's beautiful intersection of architecture and nature are Pomona College's Pearsons Hall (left) and Bridges Hall of Music (right).



Equally as important to the growing Claremont College Consortium, was Scripps College landscape architect Edward Huntsman Trout. Trout placed large importance on campus trees, seeing them equivalent to columns on classical buildings. Trees were carefully chosen and placed throughout campus according to their mass, color, and light, drawing distinction to both the architecture and surrounding landscape.



Scripps College plan, Eucalyptus Court at Balch Hall, and the main walk towards Toll Hall.

Claremont's Early Trees

Claremont's first informal town meeting was held in 1889. The first civic step was taken after this meeting, as friends of Pomona College were invited to bring rosebushes, shrubs, and trees to be planted around Claremont Hall. It was only six days after the first town meeting that a three-member committee on sidewalks and shade trees reported a gift of 250 trees with the suggestion that the residents meet and decide what trees should be planted on each street. In 1892, it was decided that money for the town would be obtained by subscription and that there would be a village improvement society made up of town committees. Town meetings helped organize volunteer labor to plant trees and shrubs and clear rocks from trails and roads. Tree committee members kept busy in their spare hours by plowing out cactus, sagebrush, and rocks on homesites given to them by Pomona College. Eventually, a street tree chairman was chosen to look after Claremont's trees. Duties of the street tree chairman included planting the young trees and carrying water to them in buckets. Frank P. Brackett, during his term at this job, set out Eucalyptus on College Avenue, choosing sturdy saplings "of the thickness of one's thumb." They grew so well that in 1898 the frontispiece of the college yearbook proudly presented a photograph of their impressive display of every tree all of 15 feet tall.



Pomona College's Holmes Hall, c. 1910.



Artesian wells (natural groundwater aquifers) were common in Claremont and allowed for the growth of trees amid the rocks and sagebrush. This artesian well was located at present day Pilgrim Place and was owned by the Del Monte Irrigation Company.

"One spring day in 1890 there might have been seen wending its way slowly northward along the meandering road that was to be College Avenue, a light express wagon drawn by an old white horse and carrying a load, a choice load, of small nursery trees. With them rode or walked two men, one a young teacher-surveyor and the other a bearded man of distinguished mien, a lover of trees who had selected these saplings, the Eucalyptus Viminalis, with utmost care. Carefully, too, as I remember, they set the young trees in the ground along the sides of the new College Avenue, not in solid walls as the custom was, but with wide spaces intervening for growth and for the vistas of mountain and plain to be glimpsed under the spreading branches of the big trees as they were to become. Day after day the two men drove the old white horse along the road, watering the young trees and caring for them as new growth appeared."

- Frank Brackett, from *Granite and Sagebrush*

Claremont Citrus

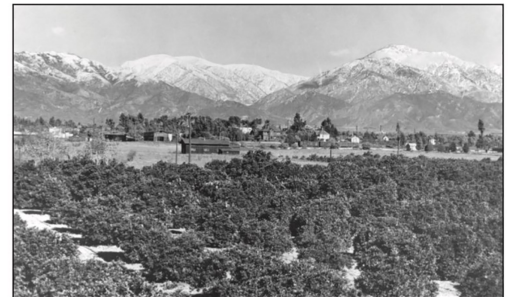
It was not just street trees that were being planted in Claremont during the late 1800s. While the citrus industry in Claremont was just in its infancy during this time, by the early 1900s most of the non-residential parts of the city were set out in orange, lemon, and grapefruit groves. The formation of the Claremont California Fruit Growers Association by Peter Dreher in 1892 would galvanize the city's citrus industry and help establish the College Heights and El Camino packing houses. Claremont's citrus trees would create a huge industry for the community and shape the town well into the 20th century.



Two views of College Avenue, c. 1896. To the left is College Avenue looking north from Second Street. Note the young Eucalyptus trees recently planted by Henry Palmer and Frank Brackett. To the right is College Avenue looking south from Sixth Street.



Henry Palmer's home at El Alisal (now the site of Memorial Park), 1894. The land's natural spring provided an abundance of water to promote the growth of Sycamore, Live Oak, and weeping willow trees.



Postwar Street Trees

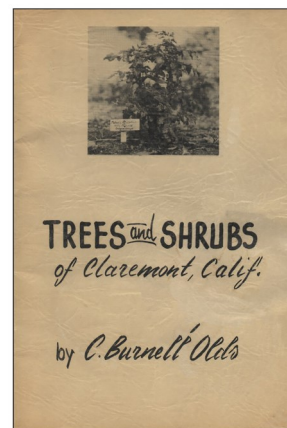
“... We discover what was important to those who lived before us, that the pioneer residents chose to build schools before sidewalks, that The Claremont Colleges, until recently had their own architectural committee, and the planting of trees often took precedence over other personal or civic needs.

- Judy Wright, from “Claremont: A Pictorial History”

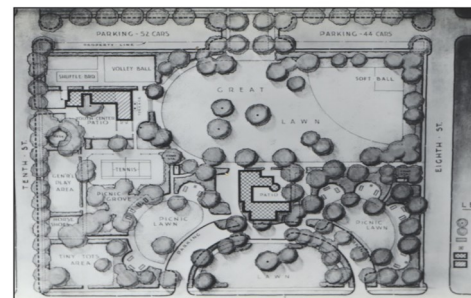
Claremont’s postwar era saw the formation of several committees which focused on planning, tree planting, and overall beautification of the city. The Postwar Planning Committee, Claremont Civic Association, and Citizens Committee for Claremont all helped in establishing the character of Claremont that we know today. The Postwar Planning Committee made many recommendations that laid the groundwork for planning decisions throughout subsequent decades. Likewise, the Civic Association was a direct outgrowth of the Citizens Committee for Claremont which formed in 1954 to support a master plan for Claremont and its basic purpose was to safeguard the character of the City of Claremont.

Mrs. Mary Ilsley describes some of the work and subsequent implementation of the Postwar Planning’s street tree committee:

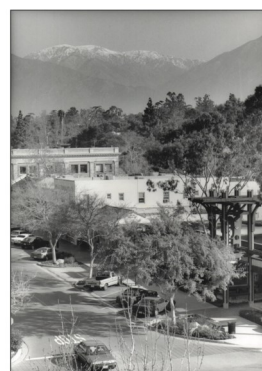
“We organized a committee of one hundred (in 1944) who were supposed to steer where we should go and at that time we asked that a committee be organized for the beautification of the town with trees. So we went around town and tapped people on the shoulder and asked them if they would give \$25 or so toward our project, and we got over \$3,000... We chose Berkeley Avenue and Tenth Street for the beginning planting with crepe myrtle on Berkeley and purple plums on Tenth Street. We approached everybody in homes along the way on those streets and told them what we were going to do. Claremont being the way it was, a very nice village where everybody liked everybody else and wanted to do things, they almost all agreed. We said to the homeowners, “On your street there are so many poor trees. We’d like to take them out and we’d like to plant uniform plantings. We’d like to have you buy the tree that we want you to buy and plant the tree and when we get the tree in, we will water it and take it over in time. It won’t be your tree; it will be the city’s tree and the city will have control of it.” So we went ahead and it was comparatively easy to do because everybody was so cooperative.



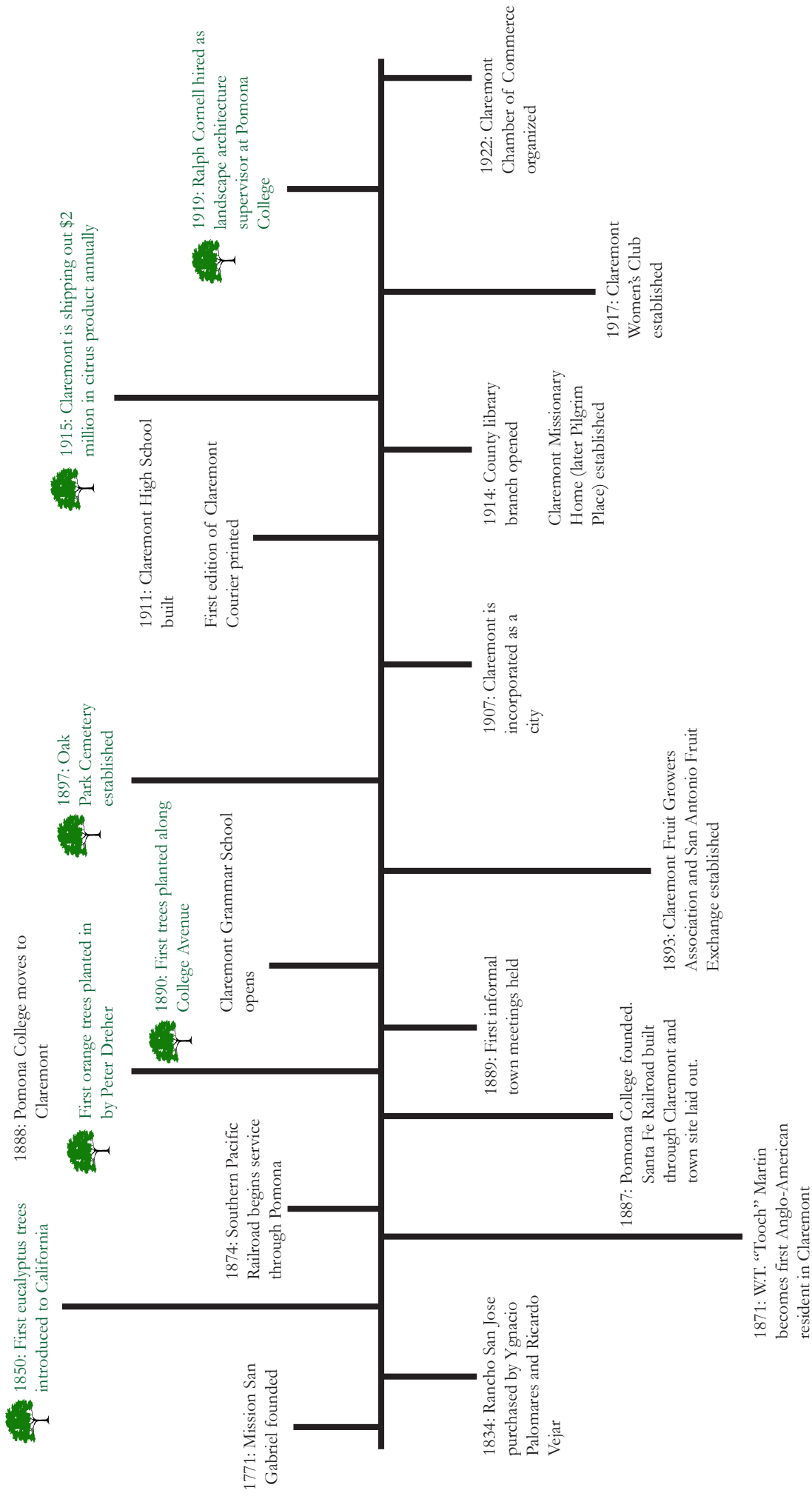
Pilgrim Place resident and botanist, Dr. C. Burnell Olds, cataloged over 1,000 species of trees and plants throughout Claremont in 1955. Providing residents with locations of the various species, Olds showcases Claremont’s role as a “working botanical garden”.



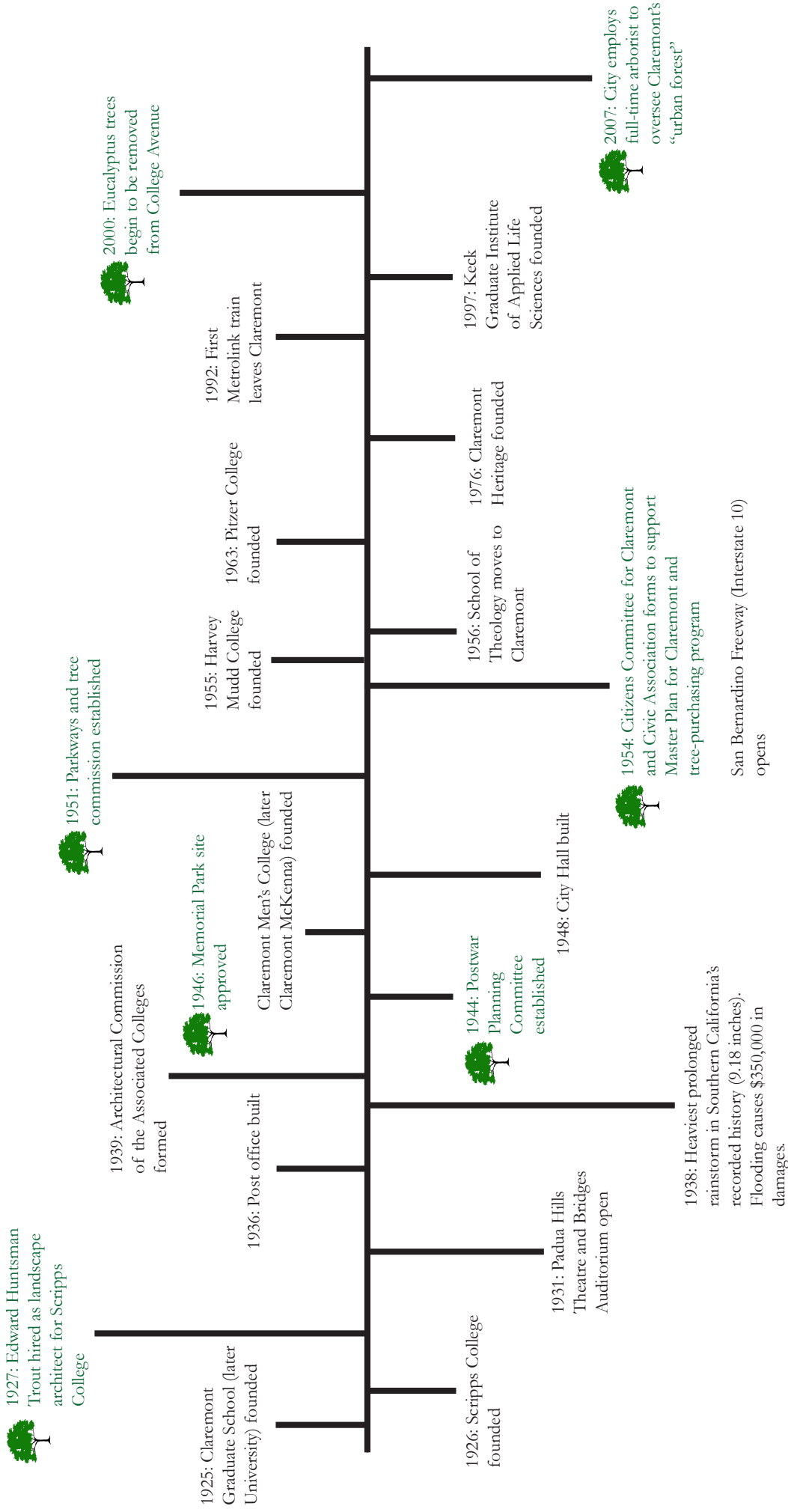
Memorial Park plan and plaque, c. 1962. The Memorial Park site was approved for construction in 1946 and sits on the former site Henry Palmer’s El Alisal home.



Claremont History and Tree Event Timeline



Claremont History and Tree Event Timeline



TREE SPEAK

From Judy Wright's *Claremont: A Pictorial History*

The first informal town meeting was held in 1889. The first civic step in Claremont was taken on Washington's Birthday, 1889. After this town meeting all friends of the fledgling college were invited to bring rosebushes, shrubs, and trees to be planted around Claremont Hall. It was only six days after the first town meeting that a three-member committee on sidewalks and shade trees reported a gift of 250 trees with the suggestion that the residents meet and decide what trees should be planted on each street. During 1892 it was decided that money for the town would be obtained by subscription (a form of assessment) and that there would be a village improvement society made up of committees of the town. Charles Burt Sumner notes in *The Story of Pomona College*:

"Claremont very early in its history had the reputation far and wide of having excellent roads. Street trees were planted, sidewalks made, and much was done, considering the moderate means of the people, both of a temporary and permanent character, to improve the village and make it attractive."

Before 1900 the Town Meeting organized volunteer labor from the town to plant trees and shrubs around college buildings; spent holidays digging rocks from trails; appointed a committee on shade trees; organized a volunteer fire department and purchased fire-fighting equipment on a cooperative basis; planned the building of the Claremont Inn; and planned and helped execute the development of Oak Park Cemetery. Faculty members and other pioneer residents chaired or were members of many "Town" committees. There were street, sidewalk, and school committees, etc., but the committee that seems to have had the most work and which is mentioned most often in the minutes is the street tree committee. Faculty members and other pioneer residents served on that committee and kept busy in spare hours by plowing out cactus, sagebrush, and rocks on homesites given to them by the College...

Duties of the street tree chairman included planting the young trees and carrying water to them in buckets when they needed it. Frank P. Brackett, during his term at this job, set out eucalyptus on College Avenue, choosing sturdy saplings "of the thickness of one's thumb." They grew so well that in 1898 the frontispiece of the college yearbook proudly presented a photograph of their impressive display of every tree all of 15 feet tall.

Frank Brackett remembers in his book *Granite and Sagebrush*:

"One spring day in 1890 there might have been seen wending its way slowly northward along the meandering road that was to be College Avenue, a light express wagon drawn by an old white horse and carrying a load, a choice load, of small nursery trees. With them rode or walked two men, one a young teacher-surveyor and the other a bearded man of distinguished mien, a lover of trees who had selected these saplings, the eucalyptus viminalis, with utmost care. Carefully, too, as I remember, they set the young trees in the ground along the sides of the new College Avenue, not in solid walls as the custom was, but

with wide spaces intervening for growth and for the vistas of mountain and plain to be glimpsed under the spreading branches of the big trees as they were to become. Day after day the two men drove the old white horse along the road, watering the young trees and caring for them as new growth appeared."

The young man was Brackett and the older man Henry A. Palmer, the president of the Board of Trustees of Pomona College. Frank Brackett said in 1944:

"I can see now how the planting of those eucalyptus trees along College Avenue was symbolic; for the same pioneers who set out those trees were also planting a college, and both trees and college were to grow to proportions far beyond the dreams of those who planted them."

(Pages 76-78)

The first burials in Claremont were under an oak tree on Edward Norton's property. The oak tree is still standing and is located at 740 Harvard Avenue...In 1897 the Oak Park Cemetery was established. However, Oak Park Cemetery was an oak "park" in name only. Under the native oaks were sagebrush, rocks, cactus, and rattlesnakes. The subsequent development of the cemetery with a park-like atmosphere is another example of volunteer spirit and civic cooperation that has characterized Claremont's history.

...One hundred years later we see the results of the careful landscaping of the park. Not only have sagebrush, cactus, and rocks disappeared, but the grove has enlarged and now there are numerous acacias, peppers, and evergreens, as well as oaks. In about 1917, Mr. Paige of the city of Pomona Parks Department planned the palm grove and planted the original lawns. A 1917 unsigned composition titled "God's Acre in Claremont" says:

"...in older American settlements the spire of the village church rose from the cluster of time-worn stones that marked the graves of early villagers, the beautiful name "God's Acre seemed especially appropriate...the burial ground is made the most beautiful spot in the vicinity."

...In 1946, Ralph Cornell of Cornell, Bridgers, and Troller, who planned the landscaping for much of the Claremont Colleges' campuses and Memorial Park, recommended the plantings and roadways through the cemetery.

(Pages 79-81)

The Civic Association was a direct outgrowth of the Citizens Committee for Claremont which formed in 1954 to support a master plan for Claremont...The community organization they founded was called the Civic Association and its basic purpose was to safeguard the character of the City of Claremont.

In addition to participation in the planning process, the Civic Association also initiated a tree-purchasing program and has been active in promoting the attractiveness of the Village.

(Page 256)

In early 1927 Trout was hired as landscape architect for Scripps, possibly on the recommendation of Gordon Kaufmann. Their collaboration on the campus plan and on its individual buildings affords a rare glimpse into the method by which architects of the 1920s and 1930s controlled and coordinated city form, gardens, and individual buildings. On June 24, 1930, President Jacqua wrote to Trout: "In your plans I should like a good deal of stress laid on trees. They give distinction to all of our planting..." It is interesting that apparently Trout noted tree trunks as equivalent to columns and according to Polyzoides, "distributed them in regular grids throughout his composition, depending on the species of the tree and the intended effects of mass, color, and light...an Olive Grove (by the Humanities Building),...with a cypress allee bordering the grove on Amherst Avenue...Finally an east-to-west allee of elm trees today, a major Scripps College landmark, appears on this drawing for the first time."

(Page 290)

One of the outstanding features of The Claremont Colleges is the arrangement of buildings around courts and greens. These formal landscape features greatly enhance the buildings by providing a graceful, stylistically appropriate setting for them as well as extending the functional capabilities of the semi-public classrooms and halls.

The dean of landscape architects for Pomona College and the city of Claremont is responsible for many of these designs at The Colleges, for several other projects in the City, and other parts of Southern California.

...In 1919 [Ralph] Cornell's first job was supervising landscape architecture for Pomona College...Cornel was subsequently retained by Miss Ellen Browning Scripps to design what is now called the Torrey Pines Park. Vera B. Cornell, Ralph's wife remembered that:

"Miss Ellen' appreciated the beauty of those unique trees and fully realized the importance of preserving them..."

...Wilson Lyon tells us about some of Cornell's contributions to Pomona College during his tenure there:

"In an age when California was losing much of its natural beauty, Pomona should be proud of the development and improvement of its campus and grounds...(it) had become a group of green quadrangles and lovely gardens... the Stover Memorial Walk, which unified the central campus, the Pearsons-Crookshank-Mason Quadrangle, and the Carolyn Bartel Lyon Garden in the fine arts quadrangle. The harmonious beauty of these quadrangles and gardens had

been developed by Ralph D. Cornell...who served his alma mater with great affection for over fifty years."

Open spaces are not merely voids between structures; they are compositions of space and landscape elements. They are as well designed, with as much form and character and with as much evidence of style, as the buildings. They are usually ringed by tree-covered walks, employ an open green space, and provide small seating areas for reading or contemplation. The feeling of enclosure and protection is strong, and the concept of a cloistered garden is present in many of the smaller courtyards. Fountains and sculpture are common features. Some of the most successful examples of relationships of formal architectural styles and landscape styles are found in this area. We have opportunities to study relationships between buildings and sites which are dominated by pedestrians and bicycles rather than automobiles. In this sense the landscaping is historically significant for it accommodates pre-industrial, humanistic ideals of man and his environment. In its soothing beauty the landscaping reminds us that such ideals remain.

Locally, Cornell had an interesting relationship with the Claremont Chamber of Commerce. Under Leila Ackerman's leadership in the 1920s, the Chamber of Commerce became part of the "City Beautiful" movement. The Chamber helped to design the civic center and hired Cornell to landscape that area. They also "rented out" Cornell as a consulting landscape architect to homeowners who wanted to beautify their yards. Claremont's Cornell landscape monuments also include Foothill Boulevard, Oak Park Cemetery, Memorial Park, Marston Quadrangle, Memorial Court, and the Honnold Library site, set-back, and front landscaping. Cornell, often understandably called the "Dean of Landscape Architecture of the Pacific Coast," died in 1972. Claremont is indeed favored to have had the help of someone whose work is as significant as his.

(Pages 292-294)

The [Postwar Planning] Committee worked for over a year and made many recommendations that laid the groundwork for planning decisions throughout subsequent decades. Each member of the executive committee served as head of different committees that concentrated on such issues as the business district, finance, current zoning ordinances, street trees, safety facilities (fire and police), street maintenance, school district planning, park planning, etc.

Mrs. Mary Ilsley reports as follows on the work and subsequent implementation of the street tree committee:

"We organized a committee of one hundred (in 1944) who were supposed to steer where we should go and at that time we asked that a committee be organized for the beautification of the town with trees. Clary Stover, who was a builder here, and Claude Bradley, the realtor, were interested and so the three of us were on a committee to get some ideas. We decided that the best way to

do it was to get a backlog of money and then to go to the City Council with an offer and with a request. So we went around town and tapped people on the shoulder and asked them if they would give \$25 or so toward our project, and we got over \$3,000...So we went tot eh Council and said, "Will you give us the right for a uniform tree-planting program if we eater the trees the first year and take care of them. At the end of the year will the City agree to take over the watering?"

Then we chose Berkeley Avenue and Tenth Street for the beginning planting with crepe myrtle on Berkeley and purple plums on Tenth Street. We approached everybody in homes along the way on those streets and told them what we were going to do. Claremont being the way it was, a very nice village where everybody liked everybody else and wanted to do things, they almost all agreed. There were two or three who were actively opposed but we had the city permission to go ahead and so we managed to ignore them. We said to the homeowners, "On your street there are so many poor trees. We'd like to take them out and we'd like to plant uniform plantings. We'd like to have you buy the tree that we want you to buy and plant the tree and when we get the tree in, we will water it and take it over in time. It won't be your tree; it will be the city's tree and the city will have control of it." So we went ahead and it was comparatively easy to do because everybody was so cooperative.

After we got the trees planted we had the problem of watering. Clarence Wagner, who was an orange grower in town, said her would be willing to water the trees from his tank truck. So we would tell him where to go. We had two little Boy Scouts who would catch gophers for us at 25 cents a head, or I should say a tail. They were supposed to bring me the tails to prove they got them. I found that one little boy came very often with a whole handful of tails. It wasn't until I took the tails away from him that his "catch" decreased. He was repeating tails."

(Page 338)

...We discover what was important to those who lived before us, that the pioneer residents chose to build schools before sidewalks, that The Claremont Colleges, until recently had their own architectural committee, and that the planting of trees often took precedence over other personal or civic needs.

(Page 484)