



*Ruth Kneeland,
while a student at
Mount Holyoke College.*

WHEN MY FAMILY MOVED to Claremont over 30 years ago, my husband and I bought season tickets for the musical series at Bridges Auditorium and little did we know that we would be seated behind a Claremont legend. Sitting in front of us was Ruth Kneeland Ordway. During the 1970s we had many pleasant conversations about the League of Women Voters, the establishment of Memorial Park, her historical house on Miramar, and why Claremont, after a 1939 League of Women Voters recommendation, did not buy the water company in the 1940s. From the time Ruth Ordway moved to Claremont in 1930, she was one of the most influential women in Claremont. Joining with her husband, Philip, a former City Council member, her many accomplishments, even now enhance our community.

Titusville, Pennsylvania, was the town "no one had ever heard of" according to Ruth Ordway. She was born there on November 7, 1888. Martin Kneeland, Ruth's father, was a Presbyterian minister at the First Presbyterian Church in Titusville. Her family later moved to Roxbury, Massachusetts, where Ruth's father was the founding minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Roxbury.

ONE MORE MOUNT HOLYOKE WOMAN

the problems of the world. The organization, which still functions, notes that one of its major goals is healing the wounds of history in order to break cycles of revenge especially where different cultures and civilizations meet.



Carrie Chapman Catt.

The other organization that Ruth McLain made Ruth Ordway aware of was The League of Women Voters that had been formed just after World War I. Carrie Chapman Catt, who had been a dynamic leader in the suffragist movement, proposed the formation of a national league of women voters to “finish the fight” and to aid in the reconstruction of the nation. The occasion was in 1919 at the 50th Anniversary Jubilee Convention of the National American Women’s Suffrage Association in St. Louis. In proposing a “fitting commemoration,” Catt asked:

What could be more natural than that women who have attained their political independence should desire to give service in token of their gratitude? What could be more appropriate than that such women should do for the coming generation what those of a preceding period did for them? Let us raise up a league of women voters . . . a league that shall be non partisan and non sectarian in character . . . a union of all intelligent forces within the state to attack illiteracy, social evils, and industrial ills. The politicians used to ask us why we wanted the vote. They seemed to think that we want to do something particular with it, something we were not telling about. They did not understand that women wanted to help make the general welfare.

The League of Women Voters of The United States was officially founded as “a mighty experiment” at the Victory Convention” of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in Chicago, Illinois in 1920. By then 33 states had ratified the suffrage amendment, and final victory was imminent. Ruth Ordway was enthusiastically drawn to these ideas and performed a primary role in establishing the LWV in Claremont.

In Claremont, there was an organizational meeting of the League of Women Voters first and then the first real meeting of the League was on October 19, 1938, in the Women’s [club] Clubhouse. Ruth Ordway opened the meeting, after which the nominating committee presented a full slate of officers. Leisa Bronson was elected the first president of the League in Claremont. At that time Leisa announced some of the things that would take place during the year and what the League’s purpose was going to be. Ruth Ordway served as fourth president, serving in 1940-42 and again in 1946-47.

Philip was a "hands on" city council member. He led the way for the development of Memorial Park, for "The Community House" as the Garner House was then known, and many activities in the park such as the July 4 celebration and the first wading pool. Philip also guided the way for the building of the 1948 portion of city hall and was chair of the city council finance committee. Over several years he received the appreciation of his city council colleagues because, using his efficiency expertise, he presented a detailed study of the city's quarterly expenditures, something that is done today with computers.

Members of Boy Scout Troop #1 who did their good turn for 1931 by gathering together and repairing toys, shown in the foreground, for boys and girls for Christmas.

The picture was taken in front of the new Chamber of Commerce building and the scouts are from left to right:

John Dunn, David Lyon, Bob Griffith, John Lincoln, James Lyon, Philip Ordway (scoutmaster), Bob Tolleson, Raymond Holtz, Edgar Lee Hall, Leroy Hall, John Kemp, Alden Stewart, Richard Post, Morris Sweveland, Champ Thompson, Royal Deming, Roger Johnson, Fred Steudler, Burton Blanchard, and John Crowell.

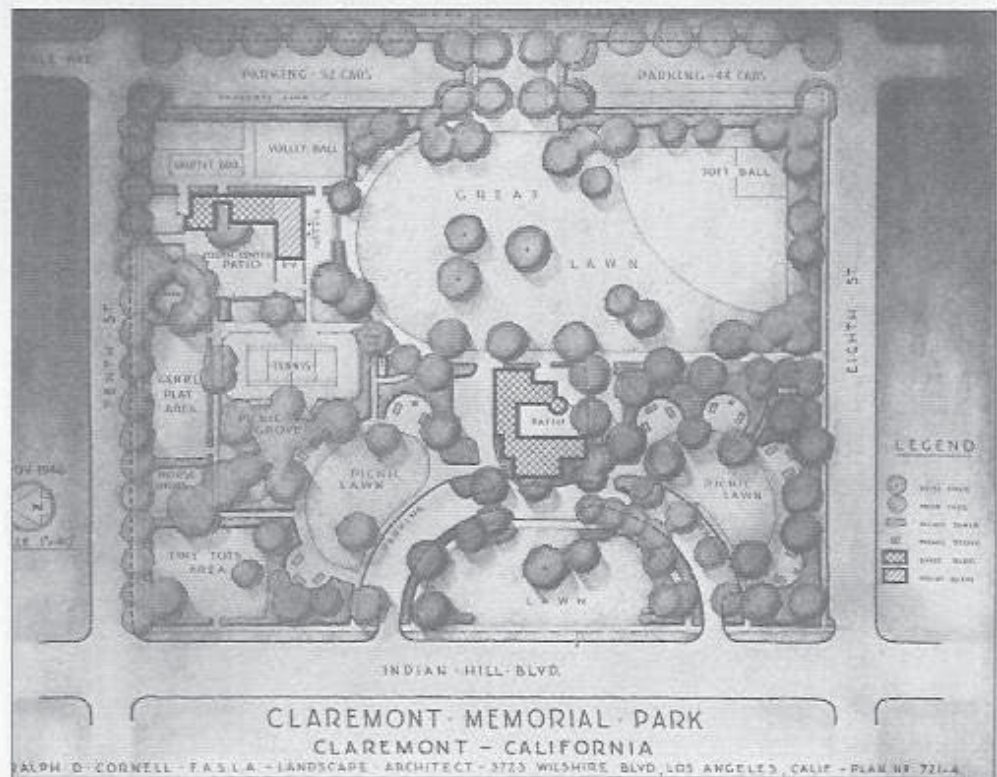


The next issue that Ruth and Philip worked on together was the establishment of a City Manager/City Council form of government. The idea had come from the Claremont Postwar Planning Committee of 1944, a group of almost 100 people who developed a framework for the community of Claremont we enjoy today. One portion of that framework was a change in the structure of city government. The city was growing and the committee projected much more growth after World War II. Managing a city with a part-time council and mayor was a challenge enough with only about 3,000 people. What would it be like if the population doubled?

Claremont, since its incorporation in 1907, had always had a five member board of trustees or city council with one member chosen by council peers as mayor. Until 1948, the selected mayor and council became almost administrators by having to be in charge of employees and carrying out policy. There were occasions when political goals conflicted with good administrative policy and there were strong pressures for the awarding of city contracts and hiring. Many large cities in the eastern United States had a "Strong Mayor" form of government and civic life was extremely political. On the other hand Philip, who was on the city council as the city manager discussion was taking place, had seen small to medium cities where the administrators were separate, but responsive to the political norms of the politicians. He pushed for a city manager.

Fashioned out of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century progressive reform movement, the council-manager system of local government may be one of the few original American contributions to political practice. In 1908, Staunton, Virginia, instituted the first position legally defining, by ordinance, the broad authority and responsibility associated with today's professional local government manager. The city manager, under this

*Memorial Park plan
by Ralph Cornell.*



system, is comparable to a corporation's chief executive officer. He/She serves at the pleasure of the board of directors (a part-time city council). The city manager is a professionally-trained public administrator charged with implementing the policies and directives of city council. The city manager has broad administrative authority with strict rules prohibiting political interference in administrative matters.

While unusual at that time, in 1947, the League of Women Voters was asked by the city council to study the issue of a city manager for Claremont. In 1948, after an extensive study and recommendations by the League of Women Voters, the city council passed an ordinance establishing a city-manager form of government. The ordinance was not approved without controversy. Some residents thought this form of government communistic while others charged that it was a movement away from representative government that would bring extravagance and irresponsibility. The city council's wishes prevailed, however, and through the years the city council has been generally successful in maintaining that "delicate balance" between the elected and administrative officials of the city. Following a nationwide search, Keith Murdock from Ferndale, Michigan, was selected as the first city manager. He was hired for \$400 a month.

In the mid 1940s the Ordways decided to sell their citrus grove and house on Miramar Avenue and build a retirement home. Thus began the long process of preparing to build their adobe house at 611 West Eighth Street. Theirs was the first lot to be sold in what was then called "The Whitney Tract," an area west of Berkeley and north of Eighth Street, that had once been covered with citrus trees. While most of the houses built in this area were built at the same time —1948-1950s, several were architect designed and many were built by Harold and Wally Caldwell, local contractors/designers. Ruth and Philip had a different idea for their retirement home. They wanted a California house made of adobe. At first an architect was involved but left when the Ordways insisted on using adobe brick all over the house except for one row of cement block at the stress points around the windows. Though no one knows what merit badge they earned for the work, the boy scouts from Troop # 1 were responsible for building most of the adobe bricks. The clay came from Padua Hills. There is a story told according to Sue Verheyden, who with her husband, Jack, purchased the house from Ruth, that the columns which hold up the

porches and the car port are palm trunks. It seems that when Philip was on the city council, he fought against the widening of Yale Avenue because the palms growing there would be removed. "He lost the fight but he kept the palms," said Mrs. Verheyden. He placed the trunks in the back of his trailer and kept them in his orchard until the house was being built. The roof is covered with hand-made clay tiles. On the inside, except for the kitchen and baths, the ceilings are beamed. Some of the paneling inside was imported from Mexico and the flooring is colored cement. Specially made American Indian tiles with stylized animals surround the fireplace opening. The outside landscaping, according to the Verheydens, is "Early California" as planned by the Ordways with historic roses, varieties of live oaks, olives, California peppers, and avocados.

Ruth lived in the house until 1969 when she sold it to the Verheydens and moved to Mount San Antonio Gardens

RUTH ORDWAY—AN INTERCULTURAL EXPERIMENT

THE FIRST CLAREMONT INTERCULTURAL living experience was an idea brought to reality by the leadership of Ruth Ordway from The Claremont Church, Henry Cooke, Professor of Sociology and History at Pomona College and the Graduate School, Harland Hogue, Scripps religion professor; and by the mutual ideas and effort of a large group of Claremont residents. In 1947, this group purchased a two and one-half acre block of land for sale in the Arbol Verde area of Claremont. Nearby was the "East Mexican Colony," which included the section of Claremont just above First Street and adjacent to areas in Upland and Montclair. Ruth tells about how it started in her 1979 oral history interview:

My father died in 1946. I remember taking Harland Hogue down to talk to him before he died Hogue was a Presbyterian minister too and going down to see my father we got to talking about the situation of the Mexicans here. I was a member of the Social Action Committee at the Church. Harland said we ought to do something about the situation. At that time the land that we now call the Barrio (Arbol Verde); it was being sold for taxes. We got six or eight people to put in \$500 a piece, and we bought the land. We got title and organized the Intercultural Council to sell lots, half to whites and half to Mexican people. The organizing of the Intercultural Council came out of this action we took on behalf the Mexican people.

The Intercultural Council (ICC) was organized in the spring of 1947 for the purpose of encouraging and aiding anything that had to do with the intercultural health of the city and began with Ruth Ordway as president

Ruth was an intrepid traveler. During her college years she made two trips, one a walking tour, to Europe. She and Philip also traveled to Asia, the Middle East, Greece, and South America. She also enjoyed visiting her son, Nelson, a physician, who founded a children's hospital in Colombia. Jane Sanders tells us that "While living in Claremont, she traveled to Mexico to help Padua Hills Theatre. Ruth often went with . . . [Bess Garner] to Mexico and Central America and brought back dancers, singers and costumes for the performances at Padua. She went to South America with Professor Hubert Herring for a conference . . . [While there . . .] She was a press representative for the Pomona Progress *Bulletin*." Ruth, Jane, Peg Gray, and Isabel Smith were a foursome who traveled the southwest. They covered virtually every road in the local deserts and mountains and sometimes drove off the roads. They also explored all the Navajo and Pueblo country—to Canyon de Chelly, Monument Valley, Kaibab Plateau, Tetatskin, Keet Seal, Capital Reef, and Cedar Breaks.

When Ruth moved to San Antonio Gardens in 1969, she continued to travel and led tours of several countries, Greece, the Greek Islands, Australia, and Mexico for residents of the Gardens. "She wasn't a Lady Bountiful," Jane Sanders said, "but was truly a friend of the people." The amazing thing was that Ruth accomplished so much without ruffling others. She had an excellent sense of humor, a love for her fellow man, and the ability to get along with people from all walks of life."

After Ruth Ordway died, Janet Allen, Jane Sanders, and the Claremont League of Women Voters instituted an award named in her honor to be given to men and women who have made outstanding contributions to the community. The memorial is an annual citizenship honor that recognizes the achievements of Ruth Ordway who died November 26, 1982. Recipients of the award include: Ruth Iredell, Eleanor Cohen, Stanley Larson, Enid Douglass, Caroline Beatty, Leisa Bronson, Gordon Curtis, Mary Jane Merrill, Martin Weinberger, M.L. and Robert Stafford, Judy Wright, Marjorie and Bill Ryan, Eleanor Wash, Jane Sanders, Marilee Scaff, Marjorie Stoddard, Diann Ring, Charlene Martin, Janet Allen Cancell, Suzan Smith, Georgeann Andrus, Michael Fay, Nick Presecan, Muriel O'Brien, and Sandra Baldonado.