

*Claremont Village about 1941.  
Note the packing houses lining  
the railroad tracks.*

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT LOCAL INFLUENCE on Claremont's growth and development that occurred during this time period was probably the creation of the Postwar Planning Committee. The Chamber of Commerce took the lead and encouraged good city planning by creating this committee in August 1944. Though often called the "Committee of One Hundred," it was created with 50-60 members and grew to have a maximum membership of only 77 members. The committee functions, as outlined by the Chamber, included:

evolving projects for betterment of Claremont calling upon local organizations and individuals to aid in forwarding them, cooperating with city council and planning commission in matters that will be for civic good and working for welfare of the citizenry.

To direct the efforts of the committee, a small executive committee was formed and included the following residents: Willis Kerr as chairman, Ray E. Baber, James A. Blaisdell, Claude C. Bradley, Lucy Brown, George N. Christian, Bess Garner, L. P. Wood, Millard Sheets, Clarence T. Stover, Mary Ilsley, G. W. Hunter, Louise Martin, and Abbott Boone.

An August 4, 1944, editorial in the *Courier* stressed the importance of this committee:

## POSTWAR PLANNING

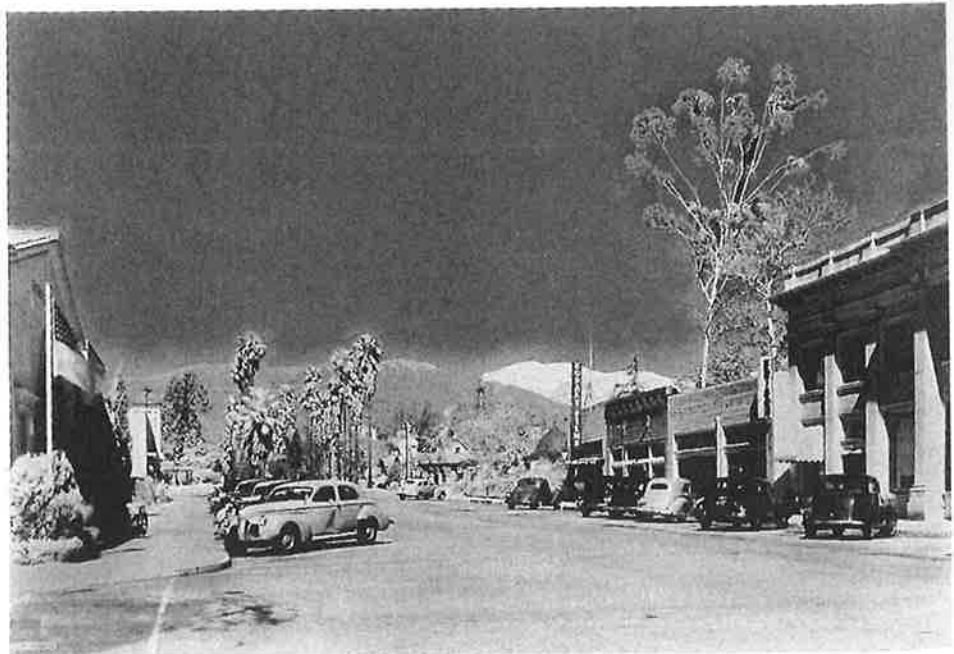
Indicative of constructive foresight and sensitivity to the community's needs is this week's announcement by H. T. Richards, a Chamber of Commerce president, of the formulation of a large and representative committee for study of Claremont postwar planning.

...Organization of such a committee at this time is highly promising. It might seem at first consideration that Claremont's postwar adjustments shouldn't provide much of an agenda. On the contrary, however, our relationship to a more industrialized, population swollen Southern California, our access to proposed freeways and to public transportation facilities, our readiness to provide sound construction and improvement projects—providing employment on the largest possible scale—all of these, and similar considerations, will determine the degree to which this community dovetails its progress into the larger aspects of a rapidly changing scene.

Tremendously gratifying in connection with the work of the new committee is the marked business district improvement which has been undertaken during the summer months. That much more remains to be done is obvious, but constructive thought on the part of a large group should open the path to extensive additional improvements which are sorely needed if the commercial area is to share in the pride which Claremonters have thus far largely reserved for the residential area.

The outlook for Claremont—its colleges, its schools, its church, its promise for richness in living—is great. May the work of this new committee provide the secure foundation upon which an even better community may be built.

*Yale Avenue in 1944.*



The 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. There were public meetings, monthly executive meetings, and many subcommittee meetings. All of the subcommittees made recommendations to the city council through the general committee.

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 to the Council and said, "Will you give us the right for a uniform tree-planting program if we water 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.

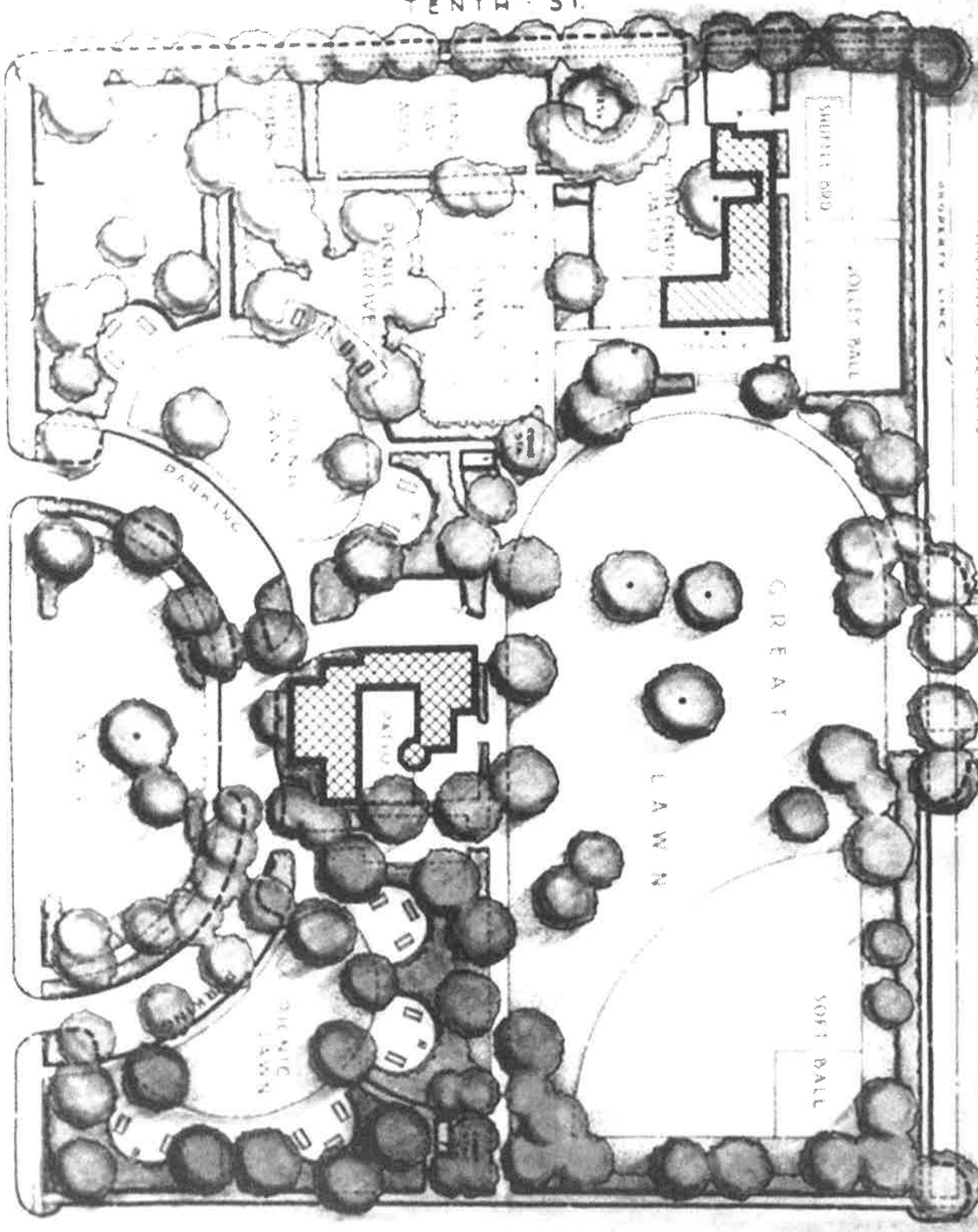
After we got the trees planted we had the problem of watering. Clarence Wagner, who was an orange grower in town, said he would be willing to water the trees from his tank truck. So we would tell him where to go. We had two little Boy Scouts who would catch gophers for us at 25 cents a head, or I should 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.

E. AVE.

TENTH - ST.

PARKING - 52 CARS

PARKING - 44 CARS



EIGHTH - ST.



LEG

Other recommendations from this committee that have influenced Claremont include the creation of a professional rather than a volunteer fire department, the study of a city-manager form of government, specific designation of street trees for certain streets, creation of a parkways and streets commission, requirement that developers would pay for and plant street trees, creation of a parks and recreation commission, the tightening of Claremont's zoning ordinance to withstand the anticipated pressure of postwar industrialization of the Pomona Valley, and the proposal for a memorial park in honor of Claremont's war dead. This park would also start the park/school concept which is largely still in existence.

In July 1945 an important meeting was held regarding the Memorial Park project. It was called by the Postwar Planning Committee and the Claremont Coordinating Council at the request of the City Council. The significance of the gathering was twofold: the two sponsoring organizations had secured an option on the two-block property belonging to Bess and H. H. Garner and citizens were invited, through a proposed referendum, to help determine whether the land should be purchased for a memorial city park, community and youth center, swimming pool, and related facilities. Ruth Iredell, a member of the first recreation commission created in 1945, recalls the park elections:

Of course we had the two elections—the park measure failed the first time (the first election included the Pool; the second did not). We had some buttons which said "Park Here," and we tried to get everyone to wear these buttons. We had meetings with young people. Phillip Ordway did a great deal of spade work in going around talking to people trying to interest them. We raised money as gifts to show people that if the measure passed there would be substantial private contributions to help with the development.

The park was to be a memorial to the men (and women) who fought in both World War I and World War II and we did stress the memorial feature as a reason for having the park. There were people in town who said that it would be better to develop the area into a subdivision and crowd into it as many houses as possible so that veterans and their families could live there. So we had all kinds of opposition. Claremont was very conservative and it was hard to initiate anything new.

We sent out little pamphlets giving arguments for the park. Phil Ordway and many of us spent almost full time in the six months between the two elections trying to influence various people through organizations and every possible way to get a vote for it the second time.

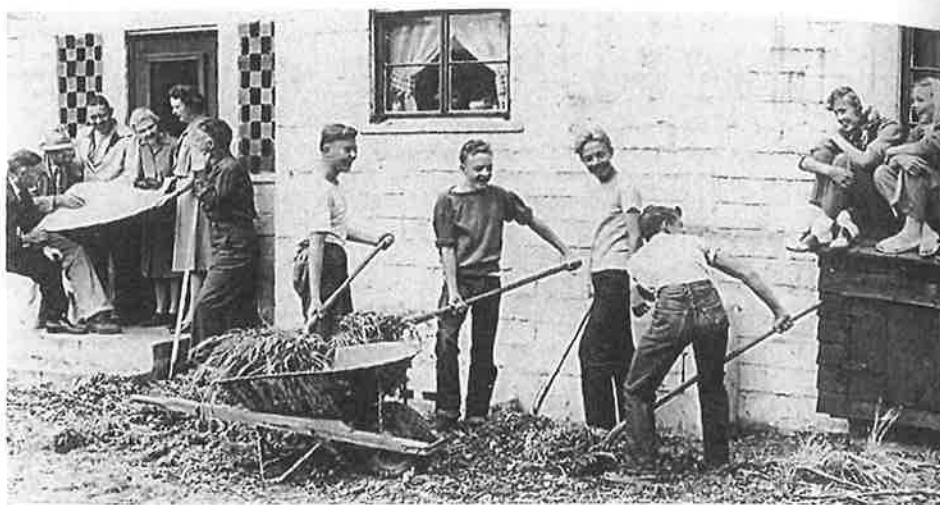
The first time the park was put on the ballot was in November 1945, and the bond issue was for \$165,000, which included the swimming pool. The bond failed by 55 votes. A *Courier* article shortly afterwards stated that because so many people wanted the park, petitions were to be circulated to have another election on the issue, and John Vieg



*Charlotte Neeley, attorney and first woman City Council member elected in 1946.*

*Ralph Cornell's plan for Memorial Park.*

*Youth and adults fix-up the Youth Activities building at Memorial Park.*



was chairman of the committee seeking signatures for the petition. The second time the measure was put on the ballot the bond measure was proposed for only \$100,000 without the pool. In the meantime \$21,500 had been raised in individual gifts towards the purchase. Phillip Ordway was chairman of the general committee to pass the bond measure the second time, and among those on the committee with Ordway were: Janet Allen, Ray Baber, Robert Bernard, Leisa Bronson, Jennie Cooke, Ruth Iredell, Mary Ilsley, John Vieg, Robert Strehle, and Gwen Woodford.

The second time the measure was on the ballot was at the same time as a city council election and so the total vote was much larger than the first time and the "get out the vote" for the park required more work. We did a lot of work to get out the vote. We telephoned people; we watched the polls, and called people we thought would probably vote for the park. On April 9, 1946, the margin of victory was 31 votes more than the two-thirds required.

Since the park became a city council issue, it became the major issue in the election campaign. Pro-park candidates Phillip Ordway and Charlotte Neeley (the first woman city council member) both won election in 1946. Ruth Iredell recalls:

When the polls closed, we all stood there through the count and when it was over we just had to celebrate. So we asked Mayor Robbins whether we could have a parade and he said, "Yes, you can do anything you want." We all got into our cars and drove all over town honking our horns. We really felt that we had had a wonderful victory for the city—and I think we had.

The courtyard of the house within Memorial Park was named for Mayor Homer Robbins who had been supportive of the park acquisition efforts and who, unfortunately, died a few months after the election.