

THE HISTORY PROJECT



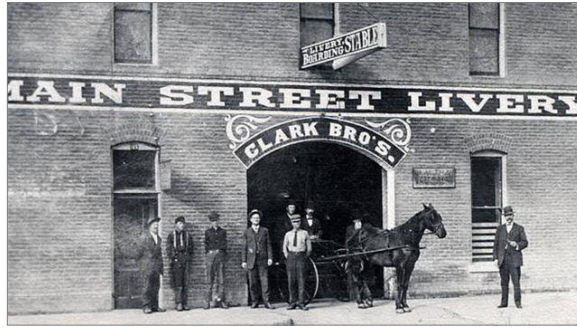
Prelude- We must always remember that first there were the native people, the Tongva Indians, and this was their home.

The First

Spark

*I*n 1888, In a, young orchard town called Pomona, named for the Roman goddess of agriculture and fruitful abundance, a few progressive minded people came together with common beliefs and a desire to worship in the liberal religion of Unitarianism. They were encouraged by their beliefs to think for themselves and do good works because it was right, loving and kind. These people, on the heels of the civil war would begin to build a new country, and new way of living and a new church; our church. This spark would grow, sometimes struggle and flicker, almost die only to return as the brightly burning chalice of our beloved Monte Vista Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

California here we come!



The 1800's saw the arrival of railroads in southern California. In 1888 California was a young state; only 38 years in the union with the gold rush just a recent memory. Abraham Lincoln had been dead only 23 years and Grover Cleveland was president. The first citrus groves had been planted in Pomona only 16 years earlier by Cyrus and Amanda Burdick after sundown because oddly enough, it was believed that to plant by sunlight would harm the delicate orange trees. The oranges that were planted by lantern light eventually grew from 40 acres into a sea of citrus groves carpeting the inland empire. It was Burdick who was one of the first settlers in Pomona after his San Dimas cattle ranch failed in the drought of 1869. Burdick was able to start again as a result of a land deal that was developed by Ricardo Vejar and his business partner Ygnacio Palomares. Land changed hands and some shady deals were done. The unsuspecting Don Vejar signed what he thought was a credit agreement in English for some cattle supplies but what he really signed was a mortgage on his property. Speculators eventually bought the land and vineyards, olive trees and citrus groves sprouted across the fertile valley.

On Feb 22, 1876 the new trains delivered hundreds of hopeful people to the virgin California town to build prosperous lives and create a city out of the untamed land. Nearly 20,000 land purchases were made that winter day. Pomona was built on the American dream but the brave settlers had work to do and much to worry about. "Boom Towns" were plentiful and speculators greedy. But Pomona survived where others failed and the American Dream prevailed. Pomona became the Inland Empire's first incorporated city on January 6, 1888.



Gala Ball at the Pomona Opera House

That same year College Instruction began, in a small, rented house in the city of Pomona. The following year a gift of land located in the neighboring town of Claremont was made to the brand

new college. This land included an unfinished hotel and the school relocated there soon after. The school, although located in Claremont kept its name and in 1888 Pomona College was born.

Churches were some of the first establishments to grow as people needed to build familiar connections and community. Our founding members were strong and brave enough to stand apart from all the traditional Christian churches and start a new Unitarian church so far away from Boston. They secured a location in an opera house at 3rd and Thomas in Pomona .They called their little church; *The First Unitarian Society of Pomona*.



Opera House 3rd and Thomas

That year they hired their first minister, The Reverend Oscar Clute. In 1893, Within 5 years of the first meeting and 4 ministers later, the congregation built a church of their own across the street from the public library under the leadership of Minister Ulysses G.B. Pierce. Only a few years after Pomona became a city the Unitarians settled into the heart of that city!



Meeting house of The First Unitarian Society of Pomona at Main and Center Street. built 1893

Hard Times a'comin

Many years had passed and the church transformed itself with the times. It flourished when the new city sprouted around it, so too did it suffer as hardship and war took its toll on the country and the city of Pomona. WWII disrupted lives and pulled our country forth where it had not been willing to go. America was up to the task, however. Sacrifices were called for and sacrifices were made. Men had gone off to war or active war jobs and money was scarce. To stay afloat the Pomona church merged with the local Universalists in the 1940's and became "UU"s long before the official merge in 1961. The group renamed themselves "the Community Liberal Church of Pomona" during this time of hardship. The small congregation of mostly women struggled to keep the doors open as their numbers dwindled down. In 1943, the church could barely afford to pay Reverend Samsom, and his services were shared with the Riverside Universalist church. He became a part time minister for the little Pomona church until they could no longer afford to keep the doors open. If you can go there today you will find not a church, but rather, a parking lot. The beautiful church is gone now, sold by the AUA as the little church struggled during the war. On February 14, 1943 at 5pm a vote was taken to shut the doors.

The document reads;

“Resolved that the board of directors of the community Liberal Church of Pomona California(1) Suspend services of the church until there is a greater need for them here,

(2) Release the present minister in order that he may devote his entire time in other fields, (3) Thank the AUA and the Universalist Gen Conference for the generous support they have given us in past years (4) Pay outstanding accounts, and (5) Turn over church properties to the AUA before March 1st 1943 so that proceeds may be used to further the work of the church in more productive fields or war conditions make it more possible.

The meeting was adjourned to the auditorium and Mr. Calderoth preached the closing sermon.”

The end of the war brought with it the symbol of the our beloved flaming chalice but with no church to house it, it symbolically burned bright in the hearts of the “women’s Alliance” This group of women from the little Pomona church met in various places and sewed for the Red Cross to help the war effort. They stored the church’s historical documents, aged books, handwritten pages yellowed by time. They valued this history and could not let the little church die completely. As long as they stayed together and held space for the ideas and spirit of the church, they knew it would revive; had to revive. In those fragile old books are found the bylaws written in 1888 to the final vote to close the church doors in 1943. These 128 year old books are our treasure, the roots of our church. The Women’s alliance added a book of history to the collection with the documentation of their meetings and the church’s revival. Within less than ten years the Unitarians would reestablish with the help and encouragement from the last minister, Reverend Samson of the little Pomona church. When the trustees had voted to suspend the services until there was “greater need” little did they know that need would come very soon. Many of the same people who were present at the final meeting of First Unitarian Church of Pomona Were present at the vote to form another church under a similar but modern name: Pomona Valley Unitarian Fellowship. This took place on August 20th 1952 with 27 in attendance .This is the anniversary we celebrate in the coming year; 1952-2011, 60 years of our congregation! The seeds were planted in Pomona among the citrus groves for a new church in 1888 and it has grown through rainstorms and drought along with the town around it to become our beloved MVUUC. If only our Pomona founders from 1888 could see us now!

By Kathleen Jacobson



SHINING THE LIGHT
OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS
SINCE 1888

THE HISTORY PROJECT ~ LIGHTING OUR WAY

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Every man is a volume if you know how to read him.

~William Ellery Channing



Reverend Oscar Clute 1837-1902

Minister; The First Unitarian Society of Pomona 1888-1889 and 1892

***I*n 1888 California must have seemed like a wilderness; a wild unknown place, but the Reverend Clute was up for the adventure. Clute was an intelligent, energetic, ambitious man, taking on numerous positions and moving between teaching and preaching many times. Although Reverend Clute had a restless ambition and adventurous spirit, there was one passion he would always return to; Agriculture.**

He was born near Albany, New York, March 1, 1837 and for Oscar Clute, agriculture was in his blood. His ancestors from Holland were some of the early settlers in the Saratoga County. His parents Richard Clute mother Lucy Clements Clute were farmers as were many Dutch immigrants. The bright and active young Clute worked on the family farm and attended school. Tragically, when Oscar was eleven years of age his mother died, and he was sent to live in Valatie, Columbia County, N. Y. in the home of John Corning. For two years he attended the district school but the bright young man was soon transferred to Oak Street School at Binghampton. By the age of 17 the young Oscar was off and running and he was elected principal of the Binghampton schools, Shiawassee County.

He left after two years for the position as Principal of Oak Street School where he had studied as a youth. In 1859 he entered the sophomore class of the Michigan State Agriculture College. He took a little hiatus to join most of his sophomore class in support of the Union army during the civil war. Clute had always been anti-slavery and he believed in the cause of abolition. He was part of Howlett's Topographical Engineer Corps serving under General John C. Fremont. They were sent out on trains to Tipton where they were to secure horses and set out on their first project. However upon arrival Clute witnessed an event that had an apparently profound effect upon him and stayed at the forefront of his memory. His commander, Fremont, was relieved of duty after bypassing President Lincoln's authority and taking it upon himself to free all the slaves owned by Missouri secessionists, a move referred to as *Fremont's Emancipation Proclamation*. Ahead of his time by about a year, General Fremont changed the focus of the war. The Union General noted that,

"The time has come for decisive action; this is a war measure, and as such I make it. I have been given full power to crush the rebellion in this Department, and I will bring the penalties of rebellion home to every man found striving against the Union."

Clute, who admired Fremont's decision, was witness to the Major General's removal from his command and departure "broken and dejected" in 1861. Soon after, the Engineer corps was deemed unnecessary and the young men returned to school to finish their studies. Upon returning, Clute did very well, a natural teacher, he taught in the preparatory department his senior year. He graduated in 1862.

He was immediately hired as an instructor upon his graduation and elected to a professorship the following year. Clute grew into a serious man. He appeared dignified and educated yet a bit aloof, always lost in thought; pensive, and quiet. When he spoke, it was to the point. He was a successful teacher yet intimidating as well.

The ever restless Clute felt there was more to accomplish. He wanted to be well rounded in his education. After four years he resigned from his position to study theology at Susquehanna Seminary Meadville, Pennsylvania, acting as assistant teacher and at the same time and taking advanced work.

Money became tight for Clute who had married Mary Merrylees in 1864 and was beginning to expand his family with children, eventually six in total; William Merrylees, Oscar Clark, Lucy Merrylees, Katherine Spencer, Edward Hale and Marie Morrill.

During his seminary studies, the deep thinking Clute had a crisis of the soul that would bring him eventually to Unitarianism. He studied and read all manner of writings and soon discovered inconstancies and contradictions.

“He began to read the Bible and the history of dogmas. He got an inkling of the great differences in so-called Christian creeds, differences so great that if one was right the others must be wrong. A good deal of study and thought and the open soul, glad to receive the influx of divine truth today soon led him to doubt the truthfulness of the great foundations of Trinitarian theology. He could find no Truth of a personal devil, a local hell, eternal punishment, the trinity, the deity of Jesus, total depravity or vicarious sacrifice.”¹

He sunk into a depression at first, confused and frustrated. But reason prevailed. He found comfort in the writings of Ellery Channing. He came to the conclusion that “It is not rationalism that is dangerous but too little rationalism” and “Reason is the ultimate Guide”. The metamorphosis was complete and Clute found what he never knew he was searching for: Unitarianism.

Clute had never stepped foot inside a Unitarian church, but here he found himself to be a Unitarian in his faith. He had set his direction and goal. Clute was firm in his new faith of reason and he would become a minister for his cause.

Clute had been a Republican because of his anti-slavery convictions. He ran for congress in the first district of New Jersey in 1872 and was defeated. There after he was associated with the Prohibition Party and never pursued a political career.

Busy and ambitious, Clute had accepted the position as a principal of public schools at Chenango Forks, N.Y. to make ends meet during his studies. Upon graduation the new Unitarian minister, the Reverend Oscar Clute accepted a call from the First Unitarian Church at Vineland, NJ where he remained for six

years from 1868-1874. Over the next fourteen years he took on a succession of ministerial positions; Newark, NJ, Keokuk, IA, and Iowa City, IA. In Iowa, he was minister to several prominent parishioners including; the Hon. George W. McCrary, M. C., and Secretary of War under ex-President Hayes; also Justice Samuel F. Miller, of the United States Supreme Court.

By the time 1888 rolled around, a group of Unitarian settlers in the new city of Pomona were looking for a minister. They were meeting in the city's opera house and required leadership. They wanted to build a church.



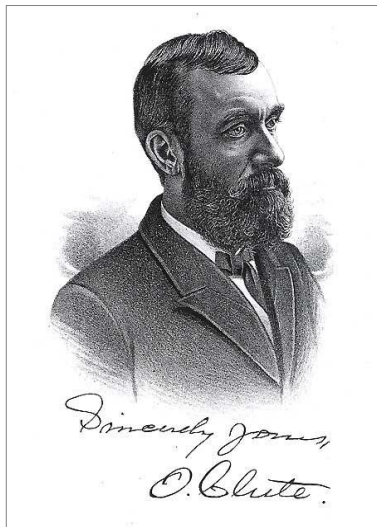
The Opera House on 3rd and Thomas in Pomona

The hopeful Unitarians appealed to the AUA who recommended Oscar Clute to the position. An energetic minister was needed; a church builder with experience and drive to venture out into this new agricultural town in the Young state of California. Clute had had his eye on California and was excited about the opportunity. Clute was welcomed wholeheartedly. A description by William J. Beal of Reverend Clute has him as “a man of good size, well proportioned, slightly stooping, rather slow of motion, dignified, full dark beard, streaked with gray, exact in speech, with a positive air, not particularly jolly or easily approached, not demonstrative, sometimes giving offense through objections made.”

He occupied the pulpit for one year, and was admired by the congregation. The church was new and needed his leadership but 1889 brought with it an offer of high esteem for Oscar Clute. He resigned his pulpit with regret to accept the post of President of Michigan agricultural college in East Lansing. He may well have resented that decision as his presidency was wrought with much trouble and student unrest. He suffered faculty turnover and a populist revolt. These difficulties took a toll on his health and Clute aged quickly during his tenure.

In 1893 he received his LL.D from Michigan State Agricultural College. After serving four years he resigned in favor of the presidency of Florida Agricultural College. However, the job proved demanding and Clute needed to slow down. In 1902 in failing health, Rev Clute returned to the pulpit at the First Unitarian Society of Pomona. Reverend Clute was only 65 years old but he was frail and weak. The Pomona church had during his absence grown in number and Reverend Clute was glad to see it. He still had his ambition but his health could no longer carry his drive to achieve. Only a few months had passed in California, when the very ill Clute entered the Soldier's Home in Los Angeles where he died in 1902.

By Kathleen Jacobson



Clute was the author of four books, including *The Blessed Bees* (1879), published under a nom de plume. Other books were *A Good Education Is Within the Reach of Every Young Man*; Dr. T.C. Abbott (1893) and *Education at the Michigan Agricultural College: Its Scope; Its Method and Its Resources* (1890).

He has given us a single hymn, *O Love of God Most Full*, published in 1904.

O love of God most full,
O love of God most free,
Come, warm my heart, come fill my soul,
Come, lead me unto Thee!

Warm as the glowing sun,
So shines Thy love on me;
It wraps me 'round with kindly care,
It draws me unto Thee!

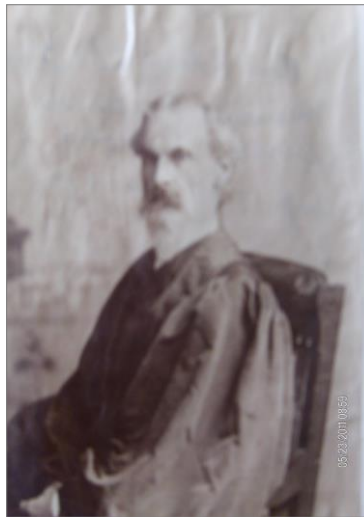


1. This is a direct quote from the historical book in the possession of MVUUC that holds our history. No date is attached to the story on Clute however it is suspected to be written in 1892

SHINING THE LIGHT
OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS
SINCE 1888

THE HISTORY PROJECT ~ KINDLING THE FLAME PART I

REVEREND EDWIN BROWN



ENTERED INTO THIS LIFE APRIL 23 1835

AND INTO THE LIFE BEYOND JANUARY 30 1892

THE SECOND MINISTER OF THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF POMONA 1889-1991

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This Biography of the life of Edwin Brown was transcribed from a book of handwritten records kept by the Unitarian Church of Pomona estimated to be written in 1892. All the language is transcribed exactly as written. No corrections were made to the grammar.

*Reverend Edwin Browne was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts*

*April 23 1835, the fourth child of Erastus and Anna (Winship) Browne. The blood and spirit of old Lexington stock flowed in his veins. Back of him was integrity of purpose and loyalty in conviction, Mr. Browne Senior, being an earnest supporter of the reforms of his time: an early and ardent advocate of anti-slavery views during a residence in New Hampshire, in a community where no tolerance was granted and diligence from the prevalent Calvinist thought. He declared fearlessly his liberal religious views and refused to submit to the state law for taxation for the support of a church whose creed he utterly repudiated. For sturdy defense of his principals he was arrested and lodged in jail for some weeks until friends, much against his will paid the unjust tax and secured his release.*

*The father's conscientious uprightness and independence of character were the rich inheritance of the son. The mother was of gentle refined nature with keen appreciation of the beautiful in nature and art, and from her came his love and facility on poetry, music and painting.*

*Receiving only such educational advantage as the public school offered, supplemented by the lowly living but high thinking of a simple home where men noted as reformers and leaders in new thought were frequent guests. At the age of sixteen he entered a printing office in Keene New Hampshire where he worked for two years. Then going to Boston, had the good fortune to obtain employment on bookwork in the establishment of John Wilson and Son, Now the famous "University Press" of Cambridge. The kind interest shown to the young man by his employers grew to warm friendship which continued through life and strongly influenced his after career. Mr. Wilson was an ardent Unitarian and the author of several theological works. Soon perceiving*

*the bent of the young printers mind, he was allowed by Mr. Wilson some choice of "copy" and here with composing stick in hand he set out type of books whose pages opened to him now and fascinating realms of thought in theology, science and better -letters; here in the hope of years, became fixed purpose on the resolve to devote his life to the work of liberal Christian ministry. Mr. Browne said the years spent in the printing business were his "academic course". In 1857 he entered Meadville Theological School taking a four year course and graduating in the class of 1861.*

*Mr. Browne supplied the pulpits of Stoughton and Sterling Massachusetts for two years. In 1863 he was ordained in Bolton, Massachusetts where he remained for seven years. In 1871 he accepted a call to Keokuk, Iowa which pasturage he resigned in 1874. Returning to Massachusetts he ministered to a new society in Brookline for one year. In December 1875 he was simultaneously invited to Omaha, Nebraska and Charleston, South Carolina. Threatening pulmonary disease warned him to seek change of climate and he made an engagement at Charleston for one year. The necessities of war and the demoralization of the years following had reduced this historic church in members and wealth until discouraged and despondent on the verge of disruption. The year 1876 was a time of storm, passion and turbulence and perhaps the most critical season in the slow progress making by South Carolina toward reconstruction. The position of a Northern man, pronouncing radical in political as well as in theological news, was a delicate and a difficult one. But Southern courtesy granted Mr. Browne a polite, if guarded welcome, and his rare tact and discretion enlisted respect while he quietly won his way to the cordial goodwill and esteem of citizens generally and the faithful devoted adherence of his own church people constant through his fourteen years of service among them which followed him through the remaining years of life and honored him in death. The south grants little toleration to the free thought on any lines and Unitarians as*



*representing freedom in religion is regarded with aversion and fear. Rather such was the condition or situation at the period of Mr. Browne's pastorate at Charleston.*

*During these years the church continued small in numbers but it grew strong in courage and purposes and its remarkable unity of interest and feeling. An unusual experience was met in this ministry by the twice rebuilding in great part of the church edifice. On August 1885 long needed repairs were forced by the ravage of a cyclone, which carried away roof and tower and demolished the fourteen cathedral windows.*

*In May 1886 the restored church was rededicated with rejoicing with was soon to be turned to mourning and despair by the great earthquake of August 1886 which shattered the building to its foundation.*



Historic view of the Unitarian Church with St. John's in the background, circa 1866-1900  
From the photographic collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, 39/007/007



*Again it was restored to more than its original beauty after six months of labor and expenditure of \$15,000, the generous gift of the denomination at large and again rededicated by glad and helpful hearts in May 1887.*



*These years of misfortune and anxiety were a severe strain as well as physical tax of the pastor who not only made much effort in the over collecting the subscriptions for the work but gave daily personal supervision to the rebuilding on both occasions. In 1888 Mr. Browne's*

*health became again cause of solicitude and again a change of climate was the prescription. In July 1889 he closed his long term of service at Charlton. For several years Mr. Browne had been urged by his friend Reverend C.U. Wendte of Oakland California, twice superintendent for the AUA on the pacific coast to try life and work on the Pacific Coast. At Mr. Wendte suggestion and advice he arranged with the Society of Pomona to take up the work vigorously begun by Reverend Oscar Clute, who had been called to the presidency of the Michigan Agricultural College.*

*Mr. Clute Had followed Mr. Browne in the pulpit at Keokuk church fifteen years before arriving in Pomona in August 1889. Mr. Browne entered once upon his work, his buoyant spirit inspiring him to believe he could quickly recapture his strength. For one year he struggled manfully to keep his hold on active life but in September 1890 he laid aside his work of ministry and in serene patience turned his final task of yielding to his own desires in resignation to the supreme will.*

*A year and a half later, Christmas 1891, he wrote a friend, "The battle is near ending. I shall soon come off victor over suffering and death."*

*On January 30 1892 he entered on the higher life. A brother clergyman writes in eulogy of Mr. Browne, "Resolute and upright in character-faithful and straightforward in heart, one whose devoted loyalty to truth and right knew favor and was never served by self interest. A man more free from all self seeking, I have never known or one less worldly in his ambitious aims and loves."*

*"As a preacher he was dignified, impressive in manner: his sermons, choice in diction were earnest, keen in and of lofty spirituality strongly influencing for good thought and life of those who listened to him.*

*To the Church of Pomona, Mr. Browne's service was so short, his limitations so great, his record so brief: yet here where he came to die,*

*even in the dying his brave acceptance of life as it metered out for him his unquestioning faith in the wisdom of the divine ordering- the unspoken lessons of his ministry in this community enriched and blessed many souls both inside and outside of his own church and the gently persuasive influence of his pure and noble character will linger in many hearts as a remembrance of one who passed this way into heaven.*

*From the Boston Evening Transcript of February 4<sup>th</sup> 1892,*

“The Reverend Edwin C. L. Browne, a well known Unitarian clergyman, died near Los Angeles, California on January 30<sup>th</sup> of pulmonary consumption aged 57 years- He was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, while a youth was for some years in the printing office of John Wilson and Son of the famed University press of Cambridge where he won the cordial interest of both senior and junior members of the firm which continued as a prized and lifelong friendship.”

“Endowed with a fine personal presence of winning geniality and courtesy of manner and a noble spiritual nature, he was endeared to a wide circle of friends and in loving hearts will his memory be kept green.”

Memorial services on the death of Mr. Browne were held on the morning of Sunday, January 30, 1892 in the Unitarian churches of Boston Massachusetts, Keokuk, Iowa, Charleston South Carolina and Pomona.

*At Pomona the reverend Leslie Sprague preached on the life and character of our late pastor. The hall used by our society was crowded by friends of the late preacher and many went away unable to obtain even standing room in the hall.*

*Among the requests made by Mr. Browne shortly before his death were the following, “That the Reverend Sprague, my friend and brother read passages at the funeral services from the best minds ancient and modern, expressing the utmost faith and hope in God and combined*

conscience of existence and then offer a brief prayer full of thankfulness for life and perfect trust in the eternal goodness" In his closing memoranda he said, "And finally I give my heartfelt thanks to the friends and citizens of Pomona, who have become kinder and dearer from my first day among them to these last, turning even the bitterness of morning over my defeated hopes into praise"

Immediately after the conclusion of the memorial services the congregation met to take action on the death of their late pastor.

The following tribute to his memory was unanimously adopted by a standing vote as voicing the sentiments of our people and the secretary was instructed to enter the same upon the records of our church and send a copy to Mrs. Browne.

*"A noble and beautiful life in the person of Reverend Edwin C. L. Browne has gone from our midst to life beyond and we who profited by his words of wisdom and his example of virtue are decisions of hearing testimony to the esteem in which his life was cherished."*

*"A fond and beautiful memory shall abide with us and our thanks shall go up to the giver of life the he was permitted to dwell among us. We wish to tender our deepest sympathy to the wife and relations his departure has left in sorrow."*

*"And we pray that the peace of his life may abide with those beloved."*

*The church at Charleston has placed a marble tablet with the church building to the memory of Mr. Browne.*

*On the Sabbath following the death of Mr. Browne at Pomona, the Rabbi of the Jewish Synagogue at Charleston delivered to his congregation a touching and eloquent address on the character of Mr. Browne.*

\*This Biography of the life of Edwin Brown was transcribed from a book of handwritten records kept by the Unitarian Church of Pomona estimated to be written in 1892. All the language is transcribed exactly as written. No corrections were made to the grammar.





Shining the light  
Of Religious Freedom  
Unitarian Universalists  
Since 1888

## The history project

# Kindling the flame part II



The Meeting house of The First Unitarian Society of Pomona at Main and Center Street. Built 1893

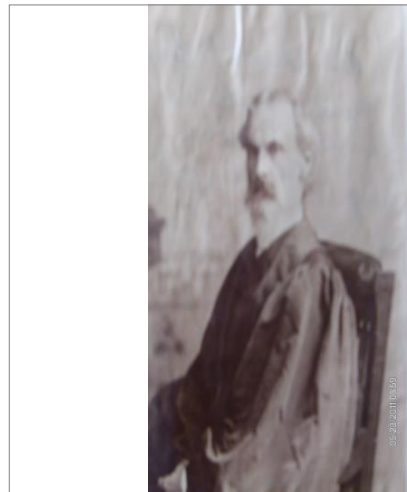
*A*s I look into the past I feel like a historical detective. There are so many missing pieces that I have to count on the books and papers available to me. Sometimes there are gaps in the written history.

I researched Reverend Oscar Clute and found a detailed history of his life and accomplishments proudly recorded in multiple pages of the church records. I then discovered Reverend Edwin Browne recorded in the historical book with detailed sympathy about the memorial services at his death. Both served for short terms, yet many pages were written about them.



Oscar Clute

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Edwin Brown

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Jackson Opera House

Following Mr. Clute and Mr. Browne was the husband and wife team of Mr. Leslie Sprague and Mrs. Lilly Sprague.

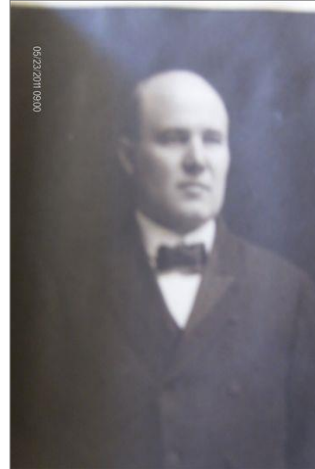
The Pomona church came to know the minister couple when they spoke at the memorial service of Mr. Browne in 1892. Three years before coming to Pomona, they met in Theology school and married there. They worked as a team and were well known and in demand. Our old documents write about them in a very polite fashion stating that they served as ministers of the Unitarian Society of Pomona from 1901-1903. The old record book from the Pomona church contains less than a page that is dedicated to their ministry and no details about them other than that they served. An article from The Boston Transcript reads:

" They went to Pomona, California and were instrumental in instilling religious instincts among the inhabitants of that frontier town."



Lila Frost Sprague

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Leslie W Sprague

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Succeeding the Spragues, our fourth minister, Ulysses Grant Baker Pierce, had multiple pages written about him. We had an interim after Reverend Brown and before the Mr. and Mrs. Sprague and his entry is as long as our settled minister husband and wife team.

Here is what was written about the Spragues in the Pomona Unitarian Society's historical document;

*After Mr. Claytons departure on August 1, 1891 our church drifted along without a pastor for three months. On Sunday evening November 1, 1891 at the opera house on Thomas Street the Reverend Leslie Sprague was publically installed jointly with his wife Lila Frost Sprague. The services of instillation were conducted by reverend Taylor Thompson and Reverend Van Ness and were of an unusually interesting character as might be inferred by the well known names of the participants. The Theater was filled by our own people and representatives of all the churches in town.*

*Serving our Society with faithfulness - giving us at all times of their best- on February 26 1893, Mr. and Mrs. Sprague resigned the joint pastorate to take*

*effect on March 12, 1883, in order to accept a generous call from the Unitarian Church at San Francisco.*

*The Sprague's were succeeded without interruption to our church services by the Reverend Ulysses B Pierce.*



Reverend Ulysses B Pierce

I could find little information about Mr. and Mrs. Sprague outside of our documentation and a few newspaper articles about new church dedications they were involved in. This leads me to conclude that the Sprague's were not necessarily popular ministers. Or it could be that the secretary was not feeling ambitious the day he or she recorded their biography. Maybe the society never bonded with these ministers. There is documentation referring to the couple and their other minister friends as "characters" twice in our historical books. I invite you to share your thoughts on why so little was written about these ministers when much was written about all the others. I look forward to questions and discussion!

~Kathleen Jacobson



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Of Religious Freedom

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## The History Project

# Kindling the Flame part III

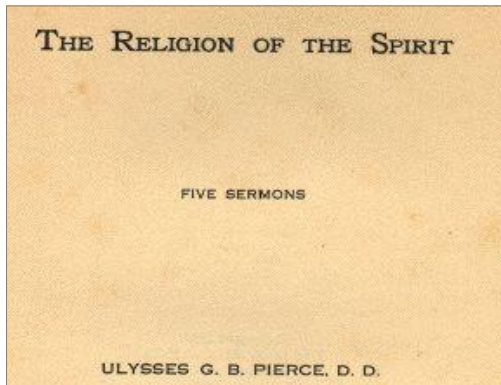


*Reverend Dr. Ulysses G. B. Pierce Minister First Unitarian Church of Pomona 1893-1897*

When the Reverend Dr. Ulysses G. B. Pierce became minister of the Pomona Unitarian Society in 1893, the congregation, still without a permanent church was meeting in the Jackson Opera House. The plan was to have his installation at the site of the future church at the corner lot of Main and Center Street as the cornerstone was placed.

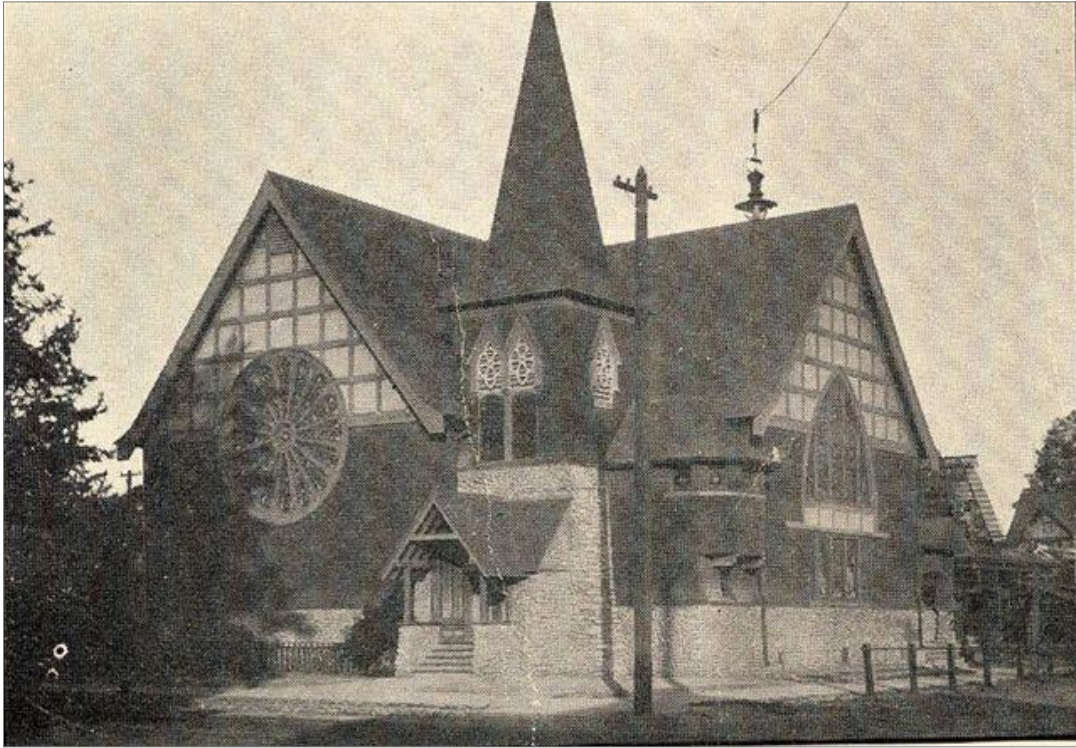
However, they could not contain their excitement and he was installed immediately! His, was the only name considered and chosen by unanimous vote on April 16, 1893.





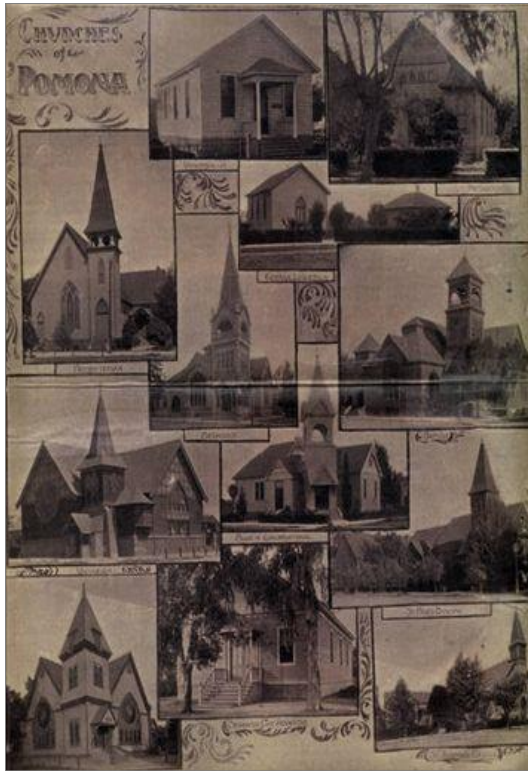
He was the first Minister to preach at the newly erected Unitarian Meeting house. The new meeting house was beautiful, with a high steeple, but it's only real ornamentation was an intricate round stained glass window. It was welcoming and homey rather than awe-inspiring as were some of the others churches in Pomona .The meeting hall was a place for people to feel at home rather than a monument to a diety. It was a place to discuss ideas of the intellect. This new building fit their needs perfectly.





Unitarian church at Main and Center, Pomona, California

With a building of their own, the Unitarians were finally established in the city of Pomona under the pastorate of Dr. Ulysses G. B. Pierce .It was good timing for the Unitarians to build their church, because a year later on Nov. 14, 1895, the Jackson Opera house, where they previously met, had burned down.



Churches of Pomona

The meeting hall of The Unitarian Society of Pomona was one among many churches in the city of Pomona. After multiple ministers the Unitarians finally felt settled. Reverend Pierce came with an excellent background. His term as minister was to be the high point of the entire fifty four years of the society.

Ulysses Grant Baker Pierce was born in Rhode Island on July 17 1865. He attended Hillsdale College . In 1890 he entered the Newton Theological institute. He soon found himself questioning the doctrine, to the irritation and annoyance of his teachers. His questions were put aside as sacrilegious probings into Gods mysteries. He attended Harvard Divinity School in 1890 where he found his way to the Unitarian faith and a logical religion that sought to answer his questioning and encouraged his curious mind. He was ordained in July 1891 at Decorah, Iowa and served as minister to that congregation from 1891 to 1892. He was also married in 1891 to Helen Florence Lonsbury. Grant then came to Pomona to serve as the minister to The First Unitarian Society of Pomona. He left only after his father died, so that he could be near to care for his mother.

In a letter the Board of directors he wrote;

November 6 1897

*To the board of trustees, First Unitarian Church, Dear Friends,*

*The Death of my father and the consequent necessity of being near my mother impels me to tender here my resignation as your minister to take effect as soon as may be in accordance with the terms agreed upon and the welfare of our work. It may not be possible but it would be a great personal satisfaction ,as it would lessen the pain of serving so pleasant a relation if before leaving I might see my successor duly instilled, yet of course I would suggest no unwise haste in the matter . Perhaps I might add that anticipating your cooperation in leaving as in staying, I have accepted the pastorate of the Church of Ithaca New York. To begin either in person or substitute January 1<sup>st</sup>. While this letter offers no adequate opportunity I cannot refuse the impulse to thank you, both individually and as a board, for your wise and untiring efforts in guiding and managing the affairs of the church and I am no less willing to make the acknowledgement because few realize how much of the success was directly attributable to your council and advisc. Assure me of their continuance and it will not be so hard to go. Resuming the spirit of this letter, I trust you will accept my resignation with as little delay and formality as may be.*

*Ulysses G B Pierce*

He then took posts in Ithaca, New York 1898 to 1901 and then All Souls Unitarian Church in Washington, D.C from 1901 to 1942 where he also served as Chaplain of the United States Senate from 1909 to 1913, under President William Howard Taft. He presided over President Taft's Memorial service upon his death.



Dr. Pierce died October 10, 1943 at the age of 78. His ashes were entombed in the southwest corner of the Court of the Founders, All Soul's Unitarian Church,



Washington, D.C.

Following the departure of Mr. Pierce, the pulpit was occupied by Mr. David Heap of Pasadena until March 20<sup>th</sup> 1898. On February 27<sup>th</sup> of that year a meeting of the society was held in the church. At that time it was decided by all present to extend an invitation to Reverend Charles A Livingston of Waverly Massachusetts to occupy the pulpit as pastor. He left in 1898. At that time the congregation was delighted to call again on their first minister, the Reverend Oscar Clute to take up the pulpit. Unfortunately his health was failing and he died soon after.



The Records were not kept in much detail following the year 1899. Only one of five volumes of minutes of the board one trustees had been handed down. The rest are lost. The church thrived for the next thirty years until the depression and WWII took its toll on the country and the Church.

~ Kathleen Jacobson

**FACTS about the United States from 1910 to 1920**

- *Population: 92,407,000*
- *Life Expectancy: Male 48.4 Female: 51.8*
- *Average Salary \$750 / year*
- *The Ziegfeld girls earned \$75/week.*
- *Unemployed 2,150,000*
- *National Debt: \$1.15 billion*
- *Union Membership: 2.1 million Strikes*  
*1,204*
- *Attendance: Movies 30 million per week*
- *Lynchings: 76*
- *Divorce: 1/1000*
- *Vacation: 12 day cruise \$60*
- *Whiskey \$3.50 / gallon, Milk \$.32 / gallon*

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SHINING THE LIGHT  
OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM  
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS  
SINCE 1888

## KINDLING THE FLAME IV



### Ministers Through the years

Oscar Clute~ 1888-1889

C.R. Brown 1889-1891

Leslie W. Sprague and Lila Frost Sprague 1891-1893

Ulysses G. B. Pierce 1893-1897

Interim –David Heap 1897-1898

Livingston 1898-1900

Interim- N.M. Jones 1900- 1901

Clute 1902

Interim H.W. Knickerbocker 1902

Leo W. Fuller 1902-1903



Missing information 1903-1916

Francis Watry 1916- 1928

Miss Buillony 1935

Reverend Earnest Whitesmith 1936

Richard Borst 1939-1940

Peter Samsom 1940-1943

Nine years between churches

Members Continued meetings through women's alliance

Pomona Valley Unitarian Fellowship 1952

1952- 1952 Lealand Stewart

Fellowship granted Charter from AUA With official recognition  
became:

Pomona Valley Unitarian Society / MVUUC

1957-1961 Herring

1961-1966 Walton Cole

1966- 1984 Ernie Howard

Interim 1984-1986 Veron Curry

1986-2005 Ellen Livingston

Interim 2005-2006 Sonja Montana

Interim 2006-2007 Paul Sawyer

Ann Schranz 2007-

## Student Ministers

Dennis Daniel

Monica Cummings 1998-2000

Linda Stowell 1988-1989

Tom Schmidt

Walter Mattingly 1994-1996

Beth Johnson 2001-2003

Betty Stapleford 1996-1998

Shining the light  
Of Religious Freedom  
Unitarian Universalists  
Since 1888

# History Project

## The Flaming Chalice

By Kathleen Jacobson

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Like a link in a chain from the past to the future,  
That joins me with the children yet to be,  
I can now be a part of the ongoing stream,  
That has always been a part of me!

~ Alan Bergman~



*Unitarian Universalists are well known for looking ahead into the future; they tackle social issues and support important causes but they are not known for looking into the past. Because we are free thinkers, we tend to stand as individuals on our own paths. We have very few Symbols that unite us in the absence of dogma and we seem to prefer it that way. Most Unitarian Universalists came to the religion as adults and therefore have no ties to it as a heritage religion.*

*In preparation for our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary the past is sitting in my living room and den and all over my house in boxes and stacks of paper, files and books. I have looked into the past and met amazing people like Oscar Clute, our first minister in 1888. As I researched and wrote his story, he came to life for me. I learned of Reverend Edwin Browne who was so beloved that when he died, every church he ever preached at across the country was full to capacity for his memorial services! Then there was Reverend Ulysses Grant Baker Peirce, who became Chaplin to the US Congress after resigning the pulpit of our Pomona*



*Society in 1897. Reverend Cole who served from 1961 to 1966 was an admirable man whose interest in science and social justice established the culture of this church and is influential to this day. There are so many more visionary people upon whose shoulders we stand. These are people to be remembered. I write their stories in gratitude because these are the people who started this remarkable church that had become so important in my life.*

*I have been a member M\UUC for about eight years now. I have sat through many a Sunday service wondering why I didn't find this church sooner. I have welcomed new members and said goodbye to old members. I have attended memorial services wishing the future members would know how special our Sachiko was to us or how our beloved Bob Minick filled our hall with songs and stories. I was aware of others that I didn't know well. I only remember Homer Davis as he was at the end of his life. I wasn't able to get to know him but I was very aware of the love people had for him and his impact on the congregation. He always had a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye. I am sure there are new people reading this who never heard of Sachiko, Brother Bob and Homer. I want to make sure they do!*

*It was about the time that Homer died that I learned about some of the origins of our Monte Vista church. I wanted to know more. I wanted to know who the people were in 1952 that built this congregation that I was reaping the benefits of. I wanted to know how they decided to start the church and what the challenges were. I knew they must all be gone now and there would be some fascinating people among them. I wanted to know!*

*These questions bounced around in my head for awhile until one day I opened my mouth and said the words, "I volunteer". The next thing I knew, there I was, my house full of boxes and papers and pictures all to be sorted through. After 6 months and a big backache later, I had stooped and sorted and organized transcribed and written M\UUC history. I have been immersed, absorbed and obsessed with this history. I have been fascinated by what I found and I hope you will share that fascination with me. To my surprise, our church history went back to 1888 and I held in my hands the congregational bylaws written that year in an old book with a feather quill! I glanced at old photographs of former ministers from 1888 and 1897.*

Copy of Articles of Incorporation  
 signed in the Society at a meeting held for  
 the purpose at M. Lomas Hall June 26, 1892.

Know all men by these pre-  
 sents, that we, the undersigned, a majority  
 of whom are citizens and residents of  
 the State of California, have this day  
 voluntarily associated ourselves together  
 for the purpose of forming a corporation  
 under the laws of the State of California.  
 And we hereby certify:

First, - That the name of the said  
 corporation shall be The First  
Unitarian Society of Pomona.

Second, - That the said corporation is  
 formed for the study and practice  
 of religion, the worship of God, and  
 the service of man.

Third, - That the place where the  
 principal business of the said cor-  
 poration is to be transacted is Pomona.

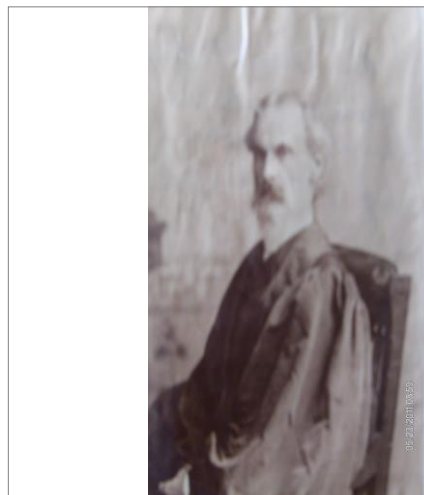
Fourth, - That the term for which the  
 said corporation is formed is for

Constitution and By-Laws  
of  
the First Unitarian Society of Pomona.

Name.

Article I.

The name of this Society shall  
 be, The First Unitarian Society  
of Pomona.



*These people from the past are people we should never forget, even if we never knew them. It is because of these people that our congregational family is here. That is the connection! I found our heritage; it's the people, these exceptional people. Just as we are proud to claim among our faith such great minds as Kurt Vonnegut, Susan B Anthony, Emerson and Thoreau we also have Oscar Clute, Ulysses Grant Baker Peirce, Walton Cole, you and me! Our history should be important to us because we are part of it.*

*We are creating history even today and I want to capture it and document it for future generations. I want to tell your story; each of you. I want to tell about the wonderful contributions we make to society with our food programs and social action involvement. I want to tell about our parties and small groups. I want to tell about the interesting characters that make up our congregation.*

*Maybe I am sentimental but I invite you to come along a sentimental journey with me. I guarantee it will be interesting! I invite you to join me this year in celebration of our sixtieth anniversary in Monte Vista. We stand in the present, connected to our past and creating our future! We have so much to celebrate and we have so much to be proud of.*

*Kathleen Jacobson*





## History Project~ Mission Statement

We study our past because without awareness of our history we have an incomplete present and a hazy future. In this process we will honor the people and the times that gave birth to who we Unitarians Universalists are today.

We will lift up the memory of those who came before us: their daring ideals, their shared loyalty to our liberal faith. We will celebrate the hard work and wisdom that has been called forth to create liberal religious congregations In this Inland Valley dedicated to keeping the flame of spiritual freedom alive..

Who we were in the early years still matters, who we are now matters, who we will be matters. Studying our roots will bring us closer together as we share a past that is so rich in history and a future with renewed understanding and commitment.

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Of Religious Freedom  
Unitarian Universalists  
Since 1888

## A Candle in the Dark



### The Women's alliance

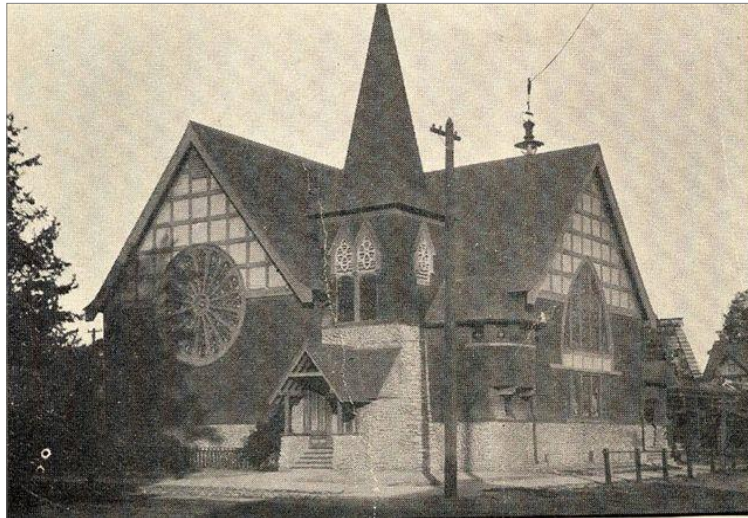
The Women's Alliance began at the Pomona Unitarian church. First they started out as a women's group during a time when women's voices were stifled and women's concerns considered trite. Although this was not the case at most Unitarian churches, it was the case in American society. In 1888, when the Pomona church was started women did not yet have the right to vote. Women In search of a voice needed a place to exercise their reason together as comrades, so they often formed groups in which to share their talents.

The Alliance changed over the years as the country changed and so too did the town of Pomona. Women's voices grew stronger in the 1920's with the passing of the nineteenth Amendment. In the 1940's they grew stronger still, as men went off to war and women were left behind to work, support and manage the home front.

The Women's Alliance was strong in 1943 but the Pomona church was not. The last minister, Peter Samsom was young, in his 20's and he tried to keep the church going. He felt that his inexperience was to blame for the church's failure. It was an idea that would never leave him and would drive him to action with the help of the Alliance, nine years later. In 1943 Samsom's

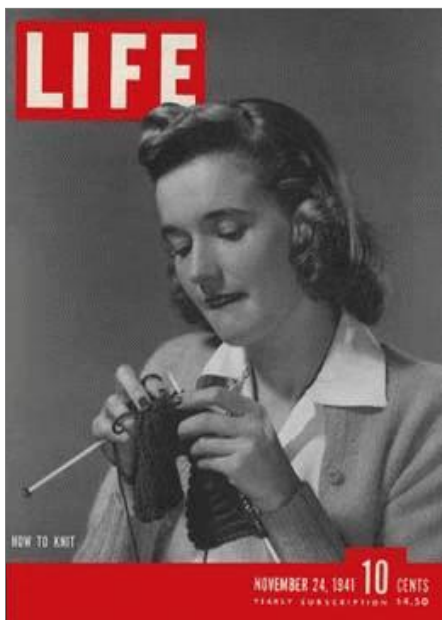


salary was only \$50 a month and the AUA matched that. He supplemented his income by sharing his time with the Riverside Universalist church.



Pomona Unitarian Church

The Women's Alliance had been an integral part of the financial support for the church and for that Reverend Samsom was grateful. The Alliance donated consistently from monies raised in various ways. They also donated much time and effort to the Red Cross during the war years and during the time of the closure of the church they were knitting socks and sweaters for the boys at the front.



The Red Cross was the distribution agency for all knitted clothing. The U.S. War Production Board gave them priority status for receiving wool in 1942. Knitting was a way for the Unitarian women to serve the fighting men with compassion but without supporting the idea of war: The church had taken a pacifist stance.

The war years were hard on the church and in 1943, with low membership and dwindling financial support, the church voted to close its doors. The women's Alliance was devastated at the loss. They held on to the church records with the wish that somehow the small candle of hope would ignite into a larger flame and burn brightly as it once did in the Pomona valley.

Just two years later in 1945 the war ended. No one could have guessed the postwar decade would usher in a baby boom, a housing boom and an economic boom that would be the just the kindling needed to revive the church.

When the church closed, the Women's Alliance stopped meeting for a time. But Reverend Peter Samsom urged them to continue.





Reverend Samsom would play a part in keeping the handful of people together. The church was gone and he had taken on a new pulpit in San Diego but his heart could not give up on Pomona. This spark was burning very low during those years.



The Women's Alliance held a meeting to decide their direction, if it was at all possible to continue. They soon learned it was. The meeting was held at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Iverson, 445 E Holt Ave. In attendance were Mrs. F. E. Wilcox, Edith Davis and president of the National Alliance, Mrs. Helen Wise, and Representative Mary Lawrence. They enlisted the help of Mrs. Royal H. Graves who had a great love for the Pomona church. She planned the first post- church event the spring of 1946: a lunch in at the Claremont Inn

with a large crowd in attendance as well as former Pomona Minister, Peter Samsom. It was a huge success and the Women's Alliance was back in business.

They started to meet in homes with various speakers and topics from poetry to book lectures. They took fieldtrips and had picnics, always staying in touch with Peter Samsom and inviting him to events.

During this time, the young minister found his stride in San Diego. With more experience under his belt, he became a successful and dynamic speaker. He eventually preached on a Sunday morning radio show that attracted the attention of Belle and Al Karlston. The Karlston's regularly listened to his show until they were able to start attending his church.

Soon after joining the First Unitarian Church of San Diego The Karlston's had to relocate to Pomona due to Al's job. They were hoping to resume their involvement in a Unitarian church but The Pomona church had been closed for nine years. Reverend Samson was very familiar with the circumstances and gave them the names of some of the former members as well as the Women's Alliance. Soon a couple from San Diego showed up on Al and Belle doorstep. They had also relocated to Pomona and were in search of a Unitarian church. They had been encouraged by Reverend Samsom, their minister in San Diego ,to meet with other Unitarians with the hope of rekindling the flame of Unitarianism in Pomona. Soon there were about 28 people interested in starting a new congregation. Members of the Women's Alliance were the link in the chain from the past to the future. They would come to be known as the Mothers of the new Pomona Valley society. The old records were turned over to the new church so the congregants would know the roots of the church and the people who struggled so hard to keep liberal religion in the Pomona valley would not be forgotten.

By Kathleen Jacobson

#### **FACTS about the United States in the 1940's.**

- **Population 132,122,000**
- **Unemployed in 1940 - 8,120,000**
- **National Debt \$43 Billion**
- **Average Salary \$1,299. Teacher's salary \$1,441**
- **Minimum Wage \$.43 per hour**

- 55% of U.S. homes have indoor plumbing
- Antarctica is discovered to be a continent
- Life expectancy 68.2 female, 60.8 male
- Auto deaths 34,500
- Supreme Court decides blacks do have a right to vote
- World War II changed the order of world power; the United States and the USSR become super powers
- Cold War begins.



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Since 1888

The History project

## The Torch is passed

***A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots~ Marcus Garvey***



~~~~~

On a warm evening in August 1952, a group of Unitarians met in the living room of Al and Belle Karlston for the first meeting of a new Pomona Valley Unitarian church. Some were new to the area and others had been members of the Pomona Unitarian church in 1943 when it closed its doors. Some had stayed in touch through the Women's Alliance. Many had children that they wanted to educate in the values of the liberal Unitarian religion. Others wanted to see Unitarianism return to the Pomona valley and thrive as it once did and they were hopeful about starting an important new Unitarian society. There were 27 in attendance and Tom Diegan led a discussion on the life of Emerson.

This meeting had been planned months earlier as potential members were contacted and bylaws were written. Word was spread with the help of the Women's Alliance and old time Unitarians awoke from their slumber. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wilcox who had been very active in the old Pomona church as they tried keeping it afloat. Their involvement would prove to be crucial to the direction of this new Unitarian fellowship.

Each person brought their unique talents to the group and soon many individual lights combined to reignite the smoldering chalice.



That evening 18 people signed the book and a fellowship was born. They each donated \$1.00 as was required by the new bylaws.

The first members to sign the book were;

<i>Oscar Knieff</i>	<i>Mrs. Edward Taylor</i>
<i>Beatrice Knieff</i>	<i>Mrs. Walter Lockwood</i>
<i>Gerald Phelps</i>	<i>Edith Mather Page</i>
<i>Jane (Smith) Phelps</i>	<i>Margaret Phillips</i>
<i>Carol Masee Adamson</i>	<i>Mr and Mrs Albert Karlston</i>
<i>Walter P Taylor</i>	<i>Edith M Penfield</i>
<i>George Griswold</i>	<i>Harold Adamson</i>
<i>Norman Lockwood</i>	<i>Blanch Irving</i>
<i>Leila Wilson</i>	

At the second meeting eight new members joined. The fellowship grew fast and by 1954 they had fifty members. They started holding meetings at the community house in Claremont Memorial park with RE instruction for the children given by Sue Boonisar. The meetings were held bimonthly on the first

and third Wednesday evenings. That same year they lost the use of the community house and had to scramble to find suitable locations to meet. Often fifty people were crammed into the living room of a generous host. A frequent guest speaker in those days was Reverend Peter Samson of the old Pomona church. He was instrumental in bringing the right people together at the right time to rekindle the flame of Unitarianism in the Pomona valley. He was just one of the links in the chain to the church history that is rooted in Pomona.



Home used for fellowship meetings

In 1954 Dwight David "Ike" Eisenhower was the President of the United States but the shadow of McCarthyism loomed large over the country. All members of any organization, including churches were required to sign a loyalty oath or face taxation and scrutiny. McCarthy's witch hunt would be over by 1954 but some of his paranoid mandates lingered and no one could predict the end to the suspicious government requirements.



Joe McCarthy 1952

The oath

"I further swear (or affirm) that I do not advise, advocate or teach, and have not within the period beginning five (5) years prior to the effective date of the ordinance requiring the making of this oath or affirmation, advised, advocated or taught, the overthrow by force, violence or other unlawful means, of the Government of the United States of America or of the State of California and that I am not now and have not, within said period, been or become a member of or affiliated with any group, society, association, organization or party which advises, advocates or teaches, or has, within said period, advised, advocated or taught, the overthrow by force, violence or other unlawful means of the Government of the United States of America, or of the State of California....

This "loyalty Oath" became the topic of much debate in the early years. Both Unitarian churches in Los Angeles and San Francisco refused to sign the oath and were taxed by the government. The new Pomona valley church was not in a financial condition to stand on principal. They voted to sign.

By 1955 the Fellowship had enough money to hire Revered Lealand Steward part time for an annual salary of \$1500. He stayed for only one year and then moved on to a church in Hollywood. That year the new group of Unitarians applied for a charter to establish the fellowship into the AUA as the Pomona Valley Unitarian Society.

The society had grown so much that they needed to build a place of their own. Frank Wilcox had an idea, he knew of some land for sale in Montclair. It was covered with orange groves, with plans for a road to go through it. Wilcox intended this purchase as purely an investment. He thought the society could buy the land and resell it for a profit, then use that money to build a church in Claremont. He offered to put up half, if the Society could raise the other half for a land purchase costing \$4000. Soon The Pomona Valley Unitarian Society was the owner of 2 ½ acres of orange groves and 3 houses located within the newly purchased lot.



1957 was a year of growth and accomplishments for the young church .The group was granted official status and recognition by the AUA in 1957. Now they could officially call themselves a Society: The Pomona Valley Unitarian Society. The influence and attachment to the old Pomona church was evident in the name. Many felt that this was a rebirth or reestablishing of that church. They knew the flame had always been there burning low. It was re-ignited with the growth of the economy and the baby boom of the post war years.

A building committee was formed and money collected for a Unitarian meeting house which was built and dedicated in 1957.

The AUA required 65 pledging families for the support of a full time minister. By 1957 the society achieved that goal and hired Reverend John Herring, who had been a Congregationalist. They had to get permission from the AUA to hire a non Unitarian minister and it was granted.



Once again, as they did in Pomona 1888, The Unitarians were building a congregation and a church in a brand new city. With a population of 8,008 located over 4.2 square miles, the city had just voted to incorporate at the April

1956 election. The city was known as Monte Vista back then but voted to change the name to Montclair in 1958 to avoid confusion with a Northern California town with the name Monte Vista.



The new Society had a lot of work to do but they were strong enough in numbers to realize their dreams. They owned land and counted among their attributes, vision, growth, potential, and financial strength. The roots had been planted 64 years earlier. That meeting in a Claremont living room in 1952 was the turning point. The Unitarians were back and ready to grow a church among the citrus groves of the Pomona Valley once again.

By Kathleen Jacobson

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The history Project

A light in the valley~ breaking ground

The space within becomes the reality of the building.

~Frank Lloyd Wright~



*I*n 1957 the new Pomona Valley Unitarian Society had almost everything, a large membership, an RE program, ambition, leadership, and land but they did not have a building. They needed a meeting hall, a place of their own. They decided to build on the lots they had purchased in Montclair and that meant a bank loan in the amount of \$18,986. For collateral, some of the members put up their own personal stocks and bonds. The society made arrangements with the architectural firm of Mr. Foster Rhodes Jackson to design a natural looking building that would include ample light and a view of the mountains. The architect presented plans for a stepped Mayan style building with floor to ceiling glass windows for the north wall to reveal a breathtaking view of the mountains. The design was beautiful but not practical as the congregation later learned when staring into a glare rather than at a minister at the pulpit. But at the time there was celebration and a dedication of the new building.



The dedication took place in 1957 with great commemoration and many invitations were sent out. One special invitation was extended to Reverend Peter Samsom. His presence would bring the society full circle. As the last minister of the Pomona church, he was responsible for setting the scene for the meeting to re-establish a Unitarian church in the area. He was invited to witness the success he so fervently worked for. Unfortunately he had to decline and his letter reflected his regret. He was very proud of the new society and wished them the warmest regards.

The program was as follows:

May this building always stand in this community as a symbol of the spirit of free inquiry...May it always be a hospitable home for all who, though firm in their opinions, respect the opinions of others. J Anton De Haas

Unitarian Society of Pomona Valley

Dedication service
May 12 1957 4:00pm

Prelude "May Sheep Safely Graze" J. S. Bach

Processional "These Things Shall Be"

(Congregation remain seated)

Childs flower offering-Sunday school

Invocation- Rev. Raymond Maniker

Reading- Rev Leeland Stewart

Introduction- Richard Trostler

Architect Forester Rhodes Jackson

Presentation of the keys Oscar Knieff to
President A. R. Karlston

Greeting from Community Rev Clarence Neff

Greeting from Temple Beth Israel Rabbi
Michael Robinson

Greeting from friends- Dr Joseph Griggs

Greeting from Universalist Church- Rev
Harold Schmidt

Greetings from United Churches- Rev Jack
Kent

Meditation- Rev Steven Fritchman

Solo "Bless This House " Nan Carlston

Anthem "The Spacious Firmament on High"
Hayden

Act of Dedication Dr Anton De Haas

Closing words Rev John Clark

Recession "God of Our Fathers" Daniel
Roberts and George Warren

(Congregation remained seated)Postlude-
Tocata and Fugue in D minor J. S. Bach

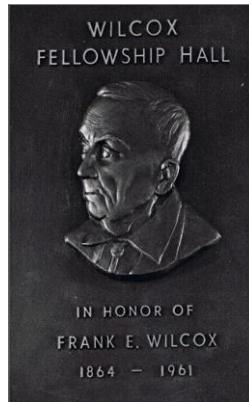


The society planned very carefully with hope for their building to symbolize their values. In 1960 an architectural relief was added to the façade of the meeting hall near the front. This Sculpture by Artist Walter Williams was called, "Let there be life". Williams described his sculpture for the Progress Bulletin," It symbolized the energy from the sun leaping the measureless abyss of space, plunging to Earth and being reborn in the long evolutionary chain of life."



The new society worked carefully, planned the landscaping, often with members working in the surrounding gardens. Mrs. Weis donated the mulberry trees. They hired the landscaping firm of Adolph Hirsh for the major design. The Women's Alliance donated \$400 for the blacktop parking lot at the front of the church and \$100 was raised for the remaining balance through a Sunday collection. The modern building was surrounded by orange groves but that would soon change as progress and development swept through Montclair. The city had financial struggles and needed more revenue to support its infrastructure.

In 1964 land developers saw opportunity in the orange groves lined up along the 10 freeway and a deal was made for the construction of a huge shopping center. The city solved its tax shortage by increasing its tax revenue by 20%. In August 1968 Montclair got a state of the art shopping center and The Unitarian Society got an expansive, new neighbor. The enormous complex contained 875,000 square feet, three major department stores, 64 smaller shops, and space for 5,000 cars.



Over the years the church building has stood witness as the city grew up around it. Many voices have been heard in our beloved meeting hall on a wide variety of stimulating topics. Members have come and gone. Repairs had been made, the roof has been replaced. The sanctuary had to be expanded and the troublesome septic tank has had many tantrums.



To some, the architecture is dated and the design restrictive. But this is our home and it was built with more than brick and mortar: it was built with hope. As our former president Dick Trostler said in 1957, "The money was lent to us by our members who showed sincere faith that our group must and will continue." This church was built and entrusted to us to make it come to life with ideas, fellowship and growth into the future.

By Kathleen Jacobson

Whatever good things we build, end up building us.

Jim Rohn

Facts about the United States in the 1950's

Population: 151,684,000 (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census)

Unemployed: 3,288,000

Life expectancy: Women 71.1, men 65.6

Car Sales: 6,665,800

Average Salary: \$2,992

Labor Force male/female: 5/2

Cost of a loaf of bread: \$0.14

Bomb shelter plans, like the government pamphlet *You Can Survive*, become widely available

Shining the light
Of Religious Freedom
Unitarian Universalists
Since 1888

History Project

Tending the fire

Founding Members~ past Presidents

These were the first names in the membership book in 1952

Oscar Knieff

Beatrice Knieff

Gerald Phelps

Jane (Smith) Phelps

Carol Masee Adamson

Walter P Taylor

Edith Mather Page

Margaret Phillips

Mr and Mrs Albert Karlston

Edith M Penfield

Harold Adamson

Blanch Irving



PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

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1952-1953 Oscar Knieff

1953-1954 Water Taylor

1954- 1955 Harold Poland

1955-1956 Ronald Coonrod

1956-1957 Dick Trostlier

1957-1958 Al Karlsten

1958-1959 Al Karlsten

1959-1960 Floyd Chamlee

1960-1961 Jim Lynch

1961-1962 Del Tweedie

1962-1963 Walter Taylor

1963-1964 Sydney Meed

1964-1965 Oathur Carpenter

1965-1966 Rosalie Craft

1966-1967 Ted Drake

1967-1968 Ed Goldberg

1968-1969 <i>Marge Preska</i>	1984-1985 <i>Bruce Williams</i>
1969-1970 <i>Laurie Hack</i>	1985-1986 <i>Rick McClure</i>
1970-1971 <i>Laurie Hack</i>	1986-1987 <i>Harry Radcliff</i>
1971-1972 <i>Hugh Marsh</i>	1987-1988 <i>Harry Radcliff/ Diane Boydell</i>
1972-1973 <i>Tom Hill</i>	1988-1989 <i>Diane Boydell</i>
1973-1974 <i>Mary Hill</i>	1989-1990 <i>Rick McClure</i>
1974-1975 <i>Phil Penrose</i>	1990-1991 <i>David Ganz</i>
1975-1976 <i>Phil Penrose</i>	1991-1992 <i>Jerry Johnson</i>
1976-1977 <i>Bobby Rhodes</i>	1992-1993- <i>Ellen Williams</i>
1977-1978 <i>Nancy Neuman</i>	1993-1994 <i>Judy Dunbridge</i>
1978-1979 <i>Rick McClure</i>	1994-1995 <i>Ron Quinn</i>
1979-1980 <i>Rick McClure/Mary Roberts</i>	1995-1996 <i>Dick Olson</i>
1980-1981 <i>Mary Roberts</i>	1996-1997 <i>Karen Johnson</i>
1981-1982 <i>Harry Ragland</i>	
1982-1983 <i>Phyllis Chamberlain</i>	
1983-1984 <i>Phyllis Chamberlain</i>	
1997-1998 <i>Karen Johnson</i>	
1998- 1999 <i>Bob Saunders</i>	
1999-2000 <i>Bob Saunders/ Rebecca Gordon</i>	
2000-2001 <i>Dave Albay-Yenney</i>	
2000 - 2001 <i>Dave Albay-Yenney</i>	
2001-2002 <i>Dave Albay Yenney/ Emilie Mason</i>	
2002 -2003 <i>Emilie Mason</i>	
2003 -2004 <i>Cynthia Humes</i>	

2004 - 2005 Amy Likover

2005 -2006 Tim Ross

2006- 2007 David Adams

2007- 2008 Sloan Atkinson

2008- 2009 Dave Albay-Yenney

2009- 2010 Dick Olson

2010- 2011 Julie Steinbach

2012 -2013- Bob Kriesel



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Lighting the chalice

John Woodbridge Herring



John Woodbridge Herring ~Minister of Pomona Valley Unitarian Society 1957-1961

John Woodbridge Herring was born June 15, 1891 in Winterset, Iowa. He attended Oberlin College in 1914 earning his AB, and then on to Columbia University for his graduate work. He attended Oberlin Theological Seminary from 1914 to 1915 and Chicago Theological Seminary from 1915 to 1917.

He was ordained a congregational minister in 1917. He has written two books: Adult Education and Social Planning and Trails to the New America

Reverend Herring was interested in Liberal religion, the education and promotion of constant learning into adulthood in spiritual matters. He believed religious education should not end with Sunday school instruction and he served on various committees to promote his ideas.

Reverend Herring was already on the liberal end of Christianity when he was ordained as a Congregational minister. His formal introduction to Unitarianism came when he was invited to preach for the Pomona Unitarian Society as a guest speaker in 1956. He found the philosophy of Unitarianism in line with his evolving beliefs. He was offered the position of settled minister by the Pomona Unitarians but there was one problem: He was not a Unitarian minister. In order for him to accept the post, he was required to apply to the AUA for recognition as a Unitarian minister and interview with the PSWD. He was easily accepted and after the red tape was completed, he took up the pulpit for the Pomona Valley Unitarian Society. He embraced his new religion as evidenced in his sermon from which excerpts are included here.

Why I became a Unitarian

It is difficult to explain how I became a Unitarian. In Fact I would feel a little more comfortable in trying to state why I think I am a Unitarian. I feel "squeamish" about becoming anything. Unitarianism appeals to me because it invites one to write his own creed. It adds the very important invitation that we do our own prospecting for truth, companionability. Joining such a society is to me different form the common churchly act of adopting a given code or credo. Unitarianism is, I think not a confession of faith but a declaration of independence, a shared declaration.

Probably those of us, who adopted Unitarianism, did so for two sets of reasons. One set would make a human interest story, difficult if not impossible to unravel. The second set would be the story of an intellectual journey. The two sets added together would be a "ring in a book" that only Robert Browning could write and "only God could understand." I will tackle only the intellectual half of the job.

The principal reasons I am a Unitarian add up to a trilogy of attributes: First, a profound rejection of the supernatural; second, a high regard for the natural; and third, a conviction that reason, wedded to scientific method, is moving towards the throne.

First, a profound rejection of the supernatural: Many of us who are enthusiastic about Unitarian fellowship have known the acute discomfort of giving up old comfortable tales and rituals because the mind came firmly to reject them. Some of us have known a period of antagonism to those tales and the institutions that perpetuate them. Then, often after years have elapsed, we found that time healed the pains and the antagonism and left the mind and spirit relatively free to build anew.

I say "relatively" free because I do not think that any adult fully escapes from the child he used to be. Thus, those of us who are Humanist by adoption still walk under ladders with a shade of self-consciousness, if not nervousness. We cannot shake off some lingering effects of old credulities. These shows up in odd ways: A tendency to ruminate, to chew old cud instead of bite off fresh forage.

Second, I mentioned a high regard for the natural. It is necessary for a man to be religious. For religiousness is the family name for the most engrossing emotions that mankind is capable of. He must possess adequate emotions. Religiousness cannot be excluded from any life without some form of death taking place. The question is: which emotions shall we choose? In my case the emotions tangled up with the

supernatural proved blind guides. More and more, in numerous ways, they became the emotions of the unnatural. The answer lay in trying to replace them in the emotions of the natural. The unnatural is the creation of man in a state of ignorance. The unnatural code and deity are inferior to the man that conceives them. No man can project an image as extraordinary as himself. The true marvel, the divine that is within our grasp, lies on the lighted side of the curtain. Primitive man lived on manna from treacherous heaven. We are offered now a far finer manna from a marvelous and utterly reliable universe.

Can we choose to be religious in our feeling about the natural universe? I do not know what else to choose.

The third attitude I mentioned is my conviction that reason, wedded to the scientific method, is moving toward the throne. This conviction may be classified as wishful. The movement is, it may go at times in reverse, unsteady, not predictable, yet I cannot escape the belief that the mounting power of human knowledge must, however clumsily, and uncertainly, gradually, take over the controls in human affairs.

These three attributes then are my core belief that I am a Unitarian and a Humanist.

John Woodbridge Herring

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One Bright Candle Part I



Walton E Cole

Minister Pomona Valley Unitarian Society 1961-1966

The free church sets before us the goals of loyalty to truth and brotherhood Our Goal is not only to talk about brotherhood in all its religious implications but to actualize it in our life together. ~Walton E Cole

The small group of Unitarians had started meeting in a home in Claremont in 1952 and by 1957 they had a building of their own, But their greatest cu was to attract one of the brightest candles in the Unitarian ministry as their settled minister.

1961 was the year the Unitarians and the Universalists merged but it was also the year Reverend Dr. Walton E Cole came to Claremont, after having accepted a call the Pomona Valley Unitarian Society.

Walton E Cole was born in St Louis, Missouri in 1900. He did much of his schooling in Chicago, attending Chicago Theological Seminary and Divinity school at the University of Chicago. He received his **Dr** of Divinity from Olivet College.

Ordained in 1928 Reverend Cole served at Third Church of Chicago, First Unitarian Church of Toledo, Second Church in Boston and First Congregational Church in Detroit. He also served on many committees including the Committee on Mental health in Detroit for which he was a resource person at University and public conferences. .

Dr Cole quickly became well known in Unitarian circles with his two books: *Standing up to Life* and *Realistic Courage*. He became even better known when In Detroit he had a broadcast radio show called, *Religion in the News*. He started at a Detroit the radio station in 1939 by taking a counter stance against the Catholic priest and anti-Semite Father Charles Coughlin. As Father Coughlin's star fizzled out, Walton Cole's star **rose** brilliantly. By 1941 Walton had made numerous television appearances and delivered inspiring radio sermons.

When the Coles first arrived in California, they marveled at the weather, where impressed by the mountains, and amazed by the beaches. California was magnificent! They bought a small house on Indian Hill in Claremont and settled in.

The Montclair meeting house was unlike church Walton had seen in Toledo, Detroit or Boston. It had a flat roof, stepped rooms and large glass windows. Lorena noticed other differences in California, such as the informal fashion as well. Lorena always wore a hat to Sunday services, as was custom back east; however she noticed many California women with bare heads. She observed for a while and decided she would forgo the hat on Sundays as well.

Reverend Cole set his goal immediately to build membership. Under his leadership and ministry the congregation increased in numbers from 150 to 350. He was directly involved in the religious Education and there where so many children, an addition had to be added to the church building to accommodate them all. Walton's approach to the ministry involved "Material of excellent literary and musical quality, thoroughly ideal in content and spirit and relevant to the specific occasion."



Breaking ground on the RE addition

The musical content was no problem. The Coles were a team and Lorena was the musical talent in the family. She played the violin and had directed many choirs. In short time she assembled **three** choirs at the Pomona Valley church. Lorena liked to refer to she and her husband as a,"Two person multi-directional

task force.”



The Coles immediately plunged into the California culture, visiting Palm Springs and Big Bear. They soaked up the Sun and went to museums. Walton believed that if you want to know anything about the local culture, just check out the local museums.

The Coles also traveled to Arizona and New Mexico where they checked out the local museums there too. What they saw in Arizona would spark a new interest in Walton that would flavor the rest of his life with a new kind of art and philosophy. Walton became fascinated with the Native American Culture. He made friends of the Hopi and became a collector of Hopi Art. Walton incorporated Native American lessons into the Children's RE program back at the Pomona Valley Unitarian Society. He became president of the Pomona Valley Indian Affairs Association and he set out to learn the philosophy of the native people. Walton respectfully taught these lessons to his congregation with Sunday sermons such as *Life and religion in Navajo land* and *What we can learn from the people of peace*. He respected and embraced the beauty he discovered and shared it with his new church until it blossomed into a hallway of color wrapped walls in mysterious, exquisite Native American art. Walton was absorbed with native custom in dance and music. He said, "I now Understand why the Indians of the Mesas who participate in this sacred drama of form, color, sound and rhythm is raised into vastness flooded with impersonal joy and plunged into ever flowing tide of the tribal and world soul."

Walton Cole brought many gifts to his new Pomona Valley congregation from his recent discoveries to his long honed hobbies. Walton was a scientist at heart. He believed that, "The religious Moment is one of awe and wonder. It can take place when you are looking through a microscope or listening to a concert." He was

the minister with the telescope and a microscope. He talked of Andromeda and amoeba, macro and micro. He worshiped the divine in nature and made it a topic of his sermons. The congregation was captivated by Reverend Cole's ability to bring the beauty of culture and science to a reverent lesson in a Sunday service. Walton was a member of the national association for the advancement of science, the Astronomers league of America and the Royal Astronomical society of Canada and he knew the night sky. He so loved star gazing that for him, it was religion. He said," For me an act of worship can happen in a laboratory as well as a church."

Walton became interested in Science as a teenager in South Dakota. He was studying geology when his high school teacher told the class that the world was created on October 22, 4004 BC. Appalled, Walton asked about the fossils found in rocks that dated further back. The teachers answer was that Satan put them there to fool professors. It was at that point in his life that the science loving teenager discovered his religion was science. The two were not opposed; reverence for the natural world was reverence for the divine. Walton came across the quote by Emerson that said," Religion that ignores science, disobeys God and commits suicide."

Walton Cole was minister of the Pomona Valley Unitarian Society during the dawning of the 1960's. In August 28, 1963, Martin Luther king gave his famous,"I have a Dream Speech." For those who shared this dream, the words were hopeful but the dream would require martyrs. The death of these martyrs would shock the complacent population into awareness. The country would slowly change but the casualties of its growing pains were often the innocent. On Sunday, September 15th, 1963 a bomb ripped through a Birmingham church in Alabama, killing four little girls. The target was The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham because it was used as a meeting-place for civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Ralph David Abernathy and Fred Shuttlesworth. The church had been used as a point place for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Congress on Racial Equality .The campaign to register African American to vote in Birmingham was underway and hate was waging war against equality. That hate would take the lives of Denise McNair 11, Addie Mae Collins 14, Carole Robertson 14 and Cynthia Wesley 14 at 10:22 am.



Walton Cole responded to this tragedy by holding a memorial service and joining Birmingham, African Americans and all freedom loving people in mourning for the four innocent victims of hate and ignorance. He stood at the entrance of our church next to a sign draped in black stating, "We are in mourning for the slain Negro children of Birmingham." During the service, four young Claremont Unitarian Universalist girls danced a ballet, each representing the innocence and beauty of what was lost. Walton wanted to address, not only the mourning community in Alabama, but the potential this country lost when these four young girls were tragically ripped from our lives by hate. The contributions they could have made, the laughter and joy they would have known, all their potential was stolen from them and us as Americans. Dr Walton Cole would guide his congregation through their grief over this tragedy but unfortunately, this would not be the last time. The congregation and the country would not have time to put away their mourning clothes before they were needed again. That September day was only the beginning of many violent, public deaths that would rock the decade.



On November 22, 1963, shots rang out in Dallas across the afternoon sky and the course of the country was changed forever. John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the thirty-fifth President of the United States, was assassinated that day, in Dealey Plaza, Dallas, Texas. The country had yet another tragedy to mourn and Walton Cole had once again to help his congregation through their grief.



Lyndon Banes Johnson became the new President and he championed civil rights while dragging us into the muddy jungles of Vietnam. In 1964 US Congress Authorizes war against North Vietnam and young American men were coming home in coffins.

Freedom summer took place in 1964 with high hopes. But the south fought back like a bucking bronco unwilling to be tamed. The ignorant and hateful were defiant in the face of every authority and moral reasoning. The hate was like a cancer that could not be cured and at its center was the Ku Klux Klan. In Mississippi James Chaney, a 21-year-old black man Andrew Goodman, a 20-year-old white Jewish anthropology student; and Michael Schwerner, a 24-year-old white Jewish CORE organizer and former social worker set out to register black voters. They were violently killed by as white Mississippi lashed back at what they considered outsiders and intruders. During the ten week project called "Freedom Summer" the cancerous hate and violence spread across Mississippi in a murderous rage. When the FBI was investigating the murders of the three young civil rights workers, they turned up numerous bodies of young Black men in the Mississippi swamps. Thirty seven black churches were bombed or burned, eighty Freedom Summer workers were beaten, thirty Black homes or businesses were bombed or burned and over a thousand people were arrested. The rest of America was appalled at the violence in Mississippi but most whites were not yet ready to have "Nero" neighbors. President Johnson signed the Civil Rights act of 1964 but this did not stop the violence as it continued to increase in many American Cities.



Walton did what he could to help the cause of civil rights in his own neighborhood. He noticed that Claremont was predominantly white. He and others organized a group called, "Operation Goodwill," that promoted friendly acceptance of all neighbors. They signed petitions in support of diversity and proudly displayed signs in their homes that read,

"This household welcomes neighbors of any faith, race or nationality. We ask only that they be good neighbors as we shall try to be."

The list of signatures to the good neighbor covenant grew to 842 by December 1963 and they were printed in the *Progress Bulletin*. By March 1964 they had added another 630 signatures.

The world was beginning to change and Walton Cole was getting older. His health was declining and he didn't have the same exuberant energy that he used to. He had seen a lot, accomplished much in his life and by 1966, he was ready to take a rest.



Reverend Dr. Walton E Cole retired in 1966. He and his wife Lorena remained in Claremont until his death from a heart attack in 1968. He died at Pomona Valley Hospital on September 21, 1968. Walton Cole was so loved as a scientist and minister, that in 1972, Local artist Phil Lowandowski created two metallic sculptures that hung in the sanctuary for years. One was a Chalice based on a design by Walton Cole called, "The Chalice of Enlightenment." The other was called "Andromeda and The Stars" to represent Dr Coles love of Astronomy. These sculptures were dedicated in the memory of Dr Walton E Cole.

In 1969, one year after Walton died, the first man landed on the moon. I wonder what would our astronomer and star gazing minister have said about that? It would have been quite a sermon!

Lorena Cole stayed active in the church until her death in the 1980's

By Kathleen Jacobson



How much things cost in 1962

Yearly Inflation Rate USA 1.20%

Yearly Inflation Rate UK 3.6%

Year End Close Dow Jones Industrial Average 652

Average Cost of new house \$12,500.00

Average Income per year \$5,556.00

Average monthly rent \$110.00 per month

Tuition to Harvard University \$1,520.00

All Wheel Drive Scout off road \$2,150.00

Renault Imported car \$1,395.00

Average Cost of a new car \$3,125.00

Eggs per dozen 32 cents

Gas per Gallon 28 cents

Factory Workers Average Take Home Pay with 3 dependents \$94.87

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One Bright Candle Part II



Reverend Cole takes on Father Coughlin

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In 1939, World War II was beginning in Europe. In September of that year, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced the British declaration of war against Germany. That same year, France, Australia, and New Zealand also declared war on Germany. The United States had decided to remain neutral. Germany had invaded Poland and the Dark

figure of Adolph Hitler was just beginning to emerge to the world, but the extent of his evil was not yet fully realized.

In the 1930's, isolationist-minded America had a different outlook at the time the war began. It was not until the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 that Americans would be willing to enter the war.

Walton Cole did not necessarily subscribe to the isolationist view; he was in tune with the world outside of the United States, and he was never afraid to speak up in the face of injustice. He was not pro-war, but he was also not blind to the pain and suffering inflicted on people as Hitler invaded one country after another. He lived in Toledo, Ohio in 1939 and, unbeknownst to him at the time, pro-Nazi propaganda was being broadcast from a radio station 70 miles away.

In March of 1939, Reverend Walton Cole was invited to Harvard to conduct morning and afternoon worship services at King's Chapel. While in Boston, he met with his friend Ted Weeks, for lunch. Ted informed Walton about Father Coughlin, a priest in Michigan with an anti-Semitic radio program. Walton knew there was anti-Semitism in the country but he was surprised to hear it was coming from a priest. Ted Weeks urged Walton to look into the problem since he lived in close proximity. There was no question in Walton's mind as to what needed to be done; he set his task to getting to the bottom of the pro Hitler propaganda coming from the Catholic Church in Michigan.

Father Charles Coughlin broadcast his radio show every Sunday at 4:00 pm and published a weekly newsletter called, *Social Justice*. His ideas seemed to come straight from the Nazi propaganda machine and were pro Hitler and anti-Semitic. One such quote read, "Germany is the innocent victim of a sacred war declared against her nine years ago by the Jews."

The FBI had been aware of Father Coughlin as early as 1936. At that time he was advocating an invasion of Mexico and claiming to have an army of men ready to do it. The FBI remained vigilant and compiled an impressive file on Coughlin, consisting mostly of letters and complaints from people who recognized his hateful rhetoric for what it was. By 1939, Coughlin's eyes looked toward Germany and the Third Reich, and the FBI continued its interest but had not made a move to arrest Coughlin. He seemed to stop just short of breaking any laws.

Walton returned from Boston in April of 1939, and immediately listened to Father Coughlin's radio broadcast on local radio station WJR. Walton, being a direct and confident man, phoned the radio station after the broadcast and asked to speak directly to the Priest. He was told that Father Coughlin did not take calls. Undaunted, Walton then phoned a Catholic acquaintance in Michigan who attended Father Coughlin's church, and he was supplied with a phone number. Walton called that number, and to his surprise, Coughlin himself answered the phone. Walton told the priest that he was a critic of his policies and would like to meet with him to discuss his views. Coughlin invited him to lunch and a date was set.

When Walton Cole arrived for his meeting with Coughlin, he was told by a young priest that Father Coughlin was too ill to join them; a lunch was arranged with the staff instead. Walton was sure he was being given the run-around, but he had a pleasant lunch with three young priests and four young women, and tried to learn as much as possible about Coughlin's intentions. They told stories about the excitement they encountered while working for Father Coughlin. One story described Coughlin, during a speech, pulling off his collar and coat and calling President Roosevelt, "Franklin double-crossing Roosevelt!"

After lunch, Reverend Cole was invited to Coughlin's room for a short visit. Walton met with Coughlin, and Coughlin was indeed ill. A new date was made for lunch and a tour of the facilities.

Walton Cole's next visit to see Coughlin was a real "eye-opener." Coughlin was the tour guide and showed him around the Shrine of the Little Flower Catholic Church. Walton saw the *prie dieu* where the priests knelt to prepare for mass. It was set facing a picture of Father Coughlin. Walton wondered to himself about the arrangement of the furniture in such a way.



Father Charles Coughlin

Coughlin then offered to show Walton what he called the "heart" of the shrine: the offices of Social Justice Magazine. Once there, Walton observed a line of girls opening mail and dumping out change. It amazed, but did not surprise, Walton that Coughlin had so much support. He was escorted into Coughlin's office where the two sat and talked. Walton asked the priest why he disliked Roosevelt. Coughlin mumbled something to the



effect of yet not fully explaining that Roosevelt failed to do something he wanted him to do; Walton wondered what that could be. Before he could find out they were interrupted by a secretary who had a call for the priest from a person whose name Walton recognized to be an American pro-Nazi organizer and leader. Father Coughlin excused himself and took the call immediately. The interruption gave Walton an opportunity to look around the office. Walton noted a marked page from a German propaganda publication on the priest's desk. By the end of the meeting, Walton Cole knew he was dealing with a problematic situation. Walton formulated his plan on the way home. He decided to appeal to the American people in an article; Walton was an excellent writer and he would use his talent to expose the Coughlin as a hateful rabble-rouser.

Walton went to Boston to meet with Ted Weeks again and report his findings, as well as to propose a counter article in Boston's *Atlantic Monthly*. Weeks was concerned about Coughlin, but felt the mood of the country was "too hot to handle," considering the popular support for the controversial priest. Weeks recommended waiting to publish an article until the atmosphere of discontent among the population subsided.

Walton had an ability to know with confidence what he needed to do, and he had the connections to do it. He had faith in people, and he never feared standing up to ignorance. Walton knew the road would be difficult, but it was the only road he could take.

One of Walton's concerns was that he could lose his job. He explained to the congregation the dark character he had encountered in Father Coughlin and his determination to stand up to the prejudiced priest. Reverend Walton Cole had nothing to worry about--his progressive Unitarian congregation gave him their unanimous support.



Cole's next step was to contact the New York Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice. Dale Dewitt was the committee chair of that Unitarian social action group, which ironically, had the same name as Father Coughlin's Nazi propaganda publication, *Social Justice*. Dewitt was 100% behind Walton. The Unitarians historically have stood up for human rights and against hatred, noticing injustice before popular culture caught on. Walton took the lead and took on Father Coughlin in a way only Walton could. First, he decided to go over Coughlin's head; Walton went to Detroit to meet with Bishop Mooney, who had jurisdiction over Coughlin. Mooney disliked the propaganda that came out of the Shrine of the Little Flower, but he felt helpless to stop it. He explained that the previous bishop gave Coughlin a free hand and that he had gotten out of control. Mooney said, "He is like a wild horse; I tie a rope and he breaks free and is off again; cleverly, he has not violated any Catholic doctrine. "

When Walton explained that his own hands were not tied and that he intended to stand up to Coughlin, the Bishop warned him that Father Coughlin would stoop to tactics that Walton could not imagine.

Walton's next step was to go on the radio to counter Father Coughlin's broadcast. Father Coughlin had been broadcasting at WJR, the local radio station in Detroit. Walton relied on the laws that required all sides of an issue to be presented, so he went to WJR and demanded equal time. The WJR station managers were supporters of Father Coughlin. Due to the law, they reluctantly gave Walton a contract for three broadcasts, but they intended to put up roadblocks at every opportunity, starting with censorship. They demanded to review all of Walton's speeches beforehand, and the station retained the last word for approval of content.

It seems strange in retrospect, but Father Coughlin had a very large following. The history books report the support for the “boys in uniform” once America entered the war. There was “Rosie the Riveter,” the USO, and war bonds. The government rationed food and other items. The Red Cross had many programs, such as “Knitting for the War Effort”. But in the years before 1941, Father Coughlin’s philosophy reached and infiltrated thousands of households, and they generally agreed with the priest who was anti-war and anti-Jew. Thousands listened to his broadcast every Sunday afternoon. Even Cole Porter recognized the priest’s cultural significance as he noted in his song “A Picture of Me Without You:

*“...Picture City Hall without boondogglin’,  
picture Sunday tea minus Father Coughlin”*

Father Coughlin was part of American culture. This was the opponent Walton Cole had taken on. David was picking a fight with Goliath!

This Goliath was accustomed to crushing his opponents. All those who opposed him gave up the fight. Father Coughlin used intimidation tactics, and most critics ran for cover. On Palm Sunday, Walton received a telegram from an unknown sender that read:

IN POSSESSION OF COLE- DEWITT CORRESPONDENCE AND  
PLAN FOR UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP FOR NATIONAL ANTI-  
COUGHLIN BROADCAST YOU AS SPEAKER. ADVISE DON’T  
PROCEED.

Walton now had an idea of what he was up against: intimidation and threats. Walton and his wife Lorena received disturbing phone calls throughout the ordeal. What he didn’t know was how far it would go and if anybody would try to carry out any of the threats. In spite of the risk, Walton never faltered.

At his first meeting for script approval, he brought an attorney from the congregation to meet with the attorney from the radio station. By chance, the two attorneys knew each other from law school, and that was the end of Walton's worries over the issue of censorship.

Walton's first broadcast was a success. He slowly built his audience by talking about people's concerns and fears during the depression. He talked about real issues and warned the people not to get caught up in propaganda when they were vulnerable. His theme was, "Defending Ourselves against propagandists."

After a few broadcasts, Walton arranged to give a speech at the Detroit Naval Armory. His speech was titled, *Hitler over America, An Expose on Father Coughlin*, and it was scheduled to take place on July 24 1939. There were posters all over Detroit promoting Walton's speech. They were even on the busses and street cars.

The streets were so packed that Walton had to be brought to the Armory by police escort. There were 8,500 people, 6,000 inside and 2,500 outside. Loudspeakers were set up so everyone could hear. Walton's wife, Lorena, was very nervous and feared for Walton. She felt some of the men toward the front of the room looked like Coughlin's "goons". There were indeed some threatening-looking people in the crowd, but Coughlin stopped at intimidation. It was a tactic that had worked for him in the past, but that was until he met Walton E. Cole. But the crowd was there for Walton and he didn't disappoint. Walton was a great speaker and he was standing on the side of truth and reason. The crowd loved him.

Walton kept up his radio show in spite of how many times the radio station "lost" his recording or refused to play it. Walton just kept at them until his broadcast would finally air.

Walton's broadcasts expanded beyond the original three. As Walton continued to counter Coughlin's propaganda, the priest was starting to get himself into some trouble. The FBI had continued to compile information on Coughlin. He was connected to a group called the Christian Front. When in January 1940, the FBI uncovered a cache of weapons and plans to murder Jews, Communists, and "a dozen Congressmen," Coughlin's credibility with his following was damaged. Coughlin was not directly involved with the plot, but his propaganda backfired, and he was believed to be putting his money where his mouth was. As his support started to falter, Coughlin's opinions became more extreme. In September, 1940, he described President Franklin D. Roosevelt as "the world's chief war-monger."

Walton Cole could see Coughlin's downfall as inevitable. There was not much more to do, and Cole had a church to attend to. It was time for him to shift his focus and let Father Coughlin sink on his own ship. The ordeal ended for Walton on Easter of 1940, just one year from the start.

Walton ended his radio show, but he continued to keep tabs on Coughlin. The following year, in 1941, Coughlin wrote in *Social Justice*: "Stalin's idea to create world revolution and Hitler's so-called threat to seek world domination are not half as dangerous combined as is the proposal of the current British and American administrations to seize all raw materials in the world. Many people are beginning to wonder who they should fear most—the Roosevelt-Churchill combination or the Hitler-Mussolini combination." Yes, Coughlin's ship was sinking but the self-destructing priest was the one who fired the first "hole through the bow" and sailed the sinking ship into WWII, where Cole and others could deal the final blows.

Coughlin's radio show was off the air by the time the United States entered the Second World War. The National Association of Broadcasters arranged for Coughlin's radio broadcasts to be cancelled. The Post Office also banned his weekly newspaper, Social Justice, from the mail. On May 1, 1942, Archbishop Francis Mooney finally ordered Coughlin to bring an end to his political activities. He was warned that if he refused he would be defrocked.

Charles Edward Coughlin retired from the Shrine of the Little Flower Church in 1966. He continued to write pamphlets until his death on October 27, 1979.

By Kathleen Jacobson\*  
August, 2011

\*Authors note: I have enjoyed researching and writing all the stories that have appeared in the Encounter. This story, however, was very difficult and troubling. My research required me to delve into Coughlin's FBI files and listen to his speeches on the Internet. I knew I would encounter hate from the 1930's, but I didn't expect to encounter current support for Father Coughlin's anti-Semitism. I know hate exists in the world, but I was caught off-guard and had to interrupt my writing a few times in order to recover from the uneasy feelings it caused me. It was my great joy, however, to tell the story of Reverend Walton Cole, one man who fought against hate, and won.



Shining the light  
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Unitarian Universalists  
Since 1888

## The History Project

# One Bright Candle Part III

## The minister and his Sports cars



*I think that cars today are almost the exact equivalent of the great Gothic cathedrals: I mean the supreme creation of an era, conceived with passion by unknown artists, and consumed in image if not in usage by a whole population which appropriates them as a purely magical object.*

~ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*

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Reverend Dr. Walton E Cole had accomplished much in his life. He had written two books, taken on the formidable opponent Father Charles Coughlin, broadcast on the radio, spoke at prestigious events and churches all over the country, sat on numerous committees *and* raced an

Aston Martin at the Ford Proving grounds in Detroit. Walton Cole was a car lover. Once, an unapproving congregant asked his wife why a minister needed to have a sports car. Lorena Cole answered, "He's a man isn't he?". But Lorena sure loved those sports cars too. She even bought a Maroon Suit to match the maroon paint on the French *Semca* sports car and tan shoes to match the tan English leather interior.

It all started when Walton fell in love with a 1951 *Jaguar XK 120*, 6 cylinders and double overhead camshafts. He got the catalogue from the dealership and dreamed about owning such a car. It seemed like only a dream. When Walton found out the price of the car, he would do the math over and over again hoping something would change in the numbers and he could afford it. But Walton never failed at anything he took on. He was the kind of man who knew what he wanted to accomplish, set his mind to it and, as if by magic, it happened. But there was no magic; Walton Cole was a confident goal oriented man. One day, the numbers worked out in his favor and he announced to Lorena that they were getting a Jaguar.



Jaguar



semca

The Coles' bought the exotic *Semca* soon after ordering the Jaguar. He had to wait almost a year for the Jag because they were built to order. Walton's *Jaguar* was a blue convertible with an interior that wrapped around him like a cockpit. There was no heater but the Coles put the top up a handful of times. "Why have a convertible if you are gonna leave the top up?" Instead, Lorena put a blanket in the car, blue of course to match the blue paint!

Aston Martin

Nash Healy



The cars we drive say a lot about us. ~Alexandra Paul



Mercedes



Thunderbird



Porsche

The Coles would own a series of Sports cars throughout the 1950's. They traded the *Jaguar* for a newer version and the *Semca* was traded for the *Nash Healy*.

By the time they were on their second round of sports cars, Walton had been elected President of the Sports Car Club of America, Detroit chapter. After some time, the Ford Motor Company was starting to notice all the European sports cars driven and owned by Americans. Walton was contacted by the Ford Proving Grounds and asked if he knew of any Sports car club members who might like to be in a demonstration race. Ford not only wanted to see the competition, they wanted to see it run. Well the answer to the question was not just yes, or how many drivers do you need, but rather what is your maximum capacity? Who wouldn't want to be a part of a chance to race on the Ford Proving Grounds? Walton was planning on racing his *Nash Healy*. He then bought a helmet for good measure.



Walton and his club members showed up at the track and raced their personal sports cars with the Ford engineers looking on. For the first time, they were able to “open it up and let her loose!” With no restrictions to speed, no stop signs or traffic signals. With no other traffic or pedestrians, these sport car aficionados got to put the pedal to the metal and drive at top speeds. Walton was the leader of the pack as they rounded the track. Walton won the race of course!

After Ford got a taste of the competition they started making some unusual requests of Walton. First they asked if they could use the *Nash Healy* for a two week display on sports cars in the Ford Museum in Dearborn Michigan. The two weeks extended into four weeks. Walton saw Henry Ford II there scrutinizing the car. He knew Ford was looking to build a smaller car.

The next request that came from Ford was even more unusual. They wanted to rent both The Nash and the *Jaguar* for the weekend. They borrowed the Nash 10 times. One time Walton arrived early to pick up the car and he found a white claylike substance on the car. They had been taking molds of the car!

Walton eventually replaced the Nash with a *Porsche* then an *Aston Martin*. His last sports car was a Thunderbird. Finally, he had to give up his hobby so he could afford to buy a home. But Walton never lost his love of sports cars.

A young couple who were members of Walton's church were visiting Florida. One Spring day while on their Florida vacation, they decided to attend the local Unitarian church for Sunday services. One of the members, upon finding out they were from Detroit, said, "There is a preacher there who is hell on wheels!"

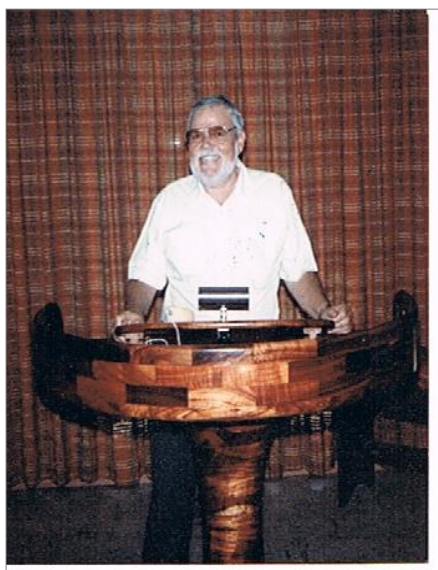
"Yes", they replied, "that's Walton Cole."

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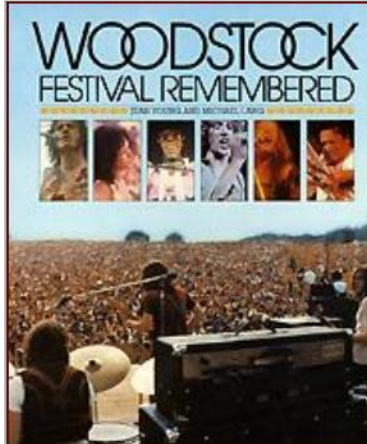
Reverend Ernie Howard



Minister of Pomona Valley Unitarian Society 1966- 1984

We were deep into the 1960's the year Ernie Howard became minister of the Pomona Unitarian Society. The world was changing; it was the "dawning of the age of Aquarius". This is the history most of us remember. We were eye witness to the changes, and even if we were too young to experience the events; we felt it's affects on our lives .The repercussions have stretched out across the years to subsequent generations. In 1966, the new minister of the Pomona Unitarian Society would reflect the changes happening in the country.

Everyone just called him Ernie rather than Reverend Howard. Less formal than his predecessor, Reverend Cole, Ernie was as mellow as the decade was turbulent. The 1960's saw the advent of Civil rights, women's rights, the space race, birth control, LSD, hippies, the draft, protests, Woodstock, and assassinations. The year before Ernie became minister, bombing raids had started in Vietnam.

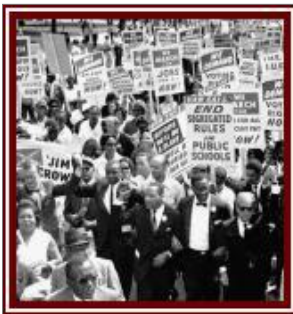
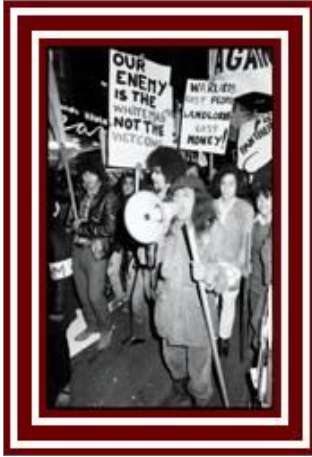


THE 1960'S



Young people were speaking out, acting out and dropping out. The music was experimental, far out and psychedelic: where soul met rock and roll. The clothes were groovy bellbottoms, Nehru jackets, granny dresses, love beads and cool miniskirts. The beat generation, philosophical and questioning the establishment was finding a new truth, daddy o. The 70 million baby boomers were growing up and changing the world, man. The flower power and long hair revolution told the establishment that the rules were changing. The new generation demanded change and rebelled against the conservative values of the 50's. The summer of love, "love-ins" and communes were held during a decade of an ugly war and violent assassinations. Make love not war became the motto, "so

don't sweat it, because, if it feels good do it." The western world came of age with changes in education, music, sexual freedom and fashion. This new consciousness brought the Unitarian Universalists to the forefront as an alternative religion for a generation of free thinkers.



Ernie Howard was a new kind of minister for a new America. Ernie was one of the ministers to come out of Star King with a more personal philosophical approach to the ministry.

Ernest L. Howard was a Texan, born in Taylor, Texas, on April 6 1924. He had that southern quality of telling a story with a Texas drawl that made it sound like poetry. And Ernie was an eloquent story teller; he would draw on his own experience to give his sermons a human quality. One memorable sermon surrounded the painful subject of his discovery about his father's activities in the Ku Klux Klan. He shared his pain and used it as a tool to discuss prejudice in a decade where the denial of civil rights was at issue. There were usually "talk backs" at the end of his services so the congregation could participate in discussion. Ernie never shied away from the controversial topics that emerged in the 1960's but they were not always Sunday service topics. He did support his own political causes that were of great importance to him. Ernie was interested in civil rights. He marched and protested in support of those who were victims of injustice. The congregation was aware of Ernie's strong support of the union organizing efforts of Cesar Chavez. Chavez, a good friend of Ernie's, came to the Monte Vista Unitarian church for a lecture with Q&A following. It was a historic event.



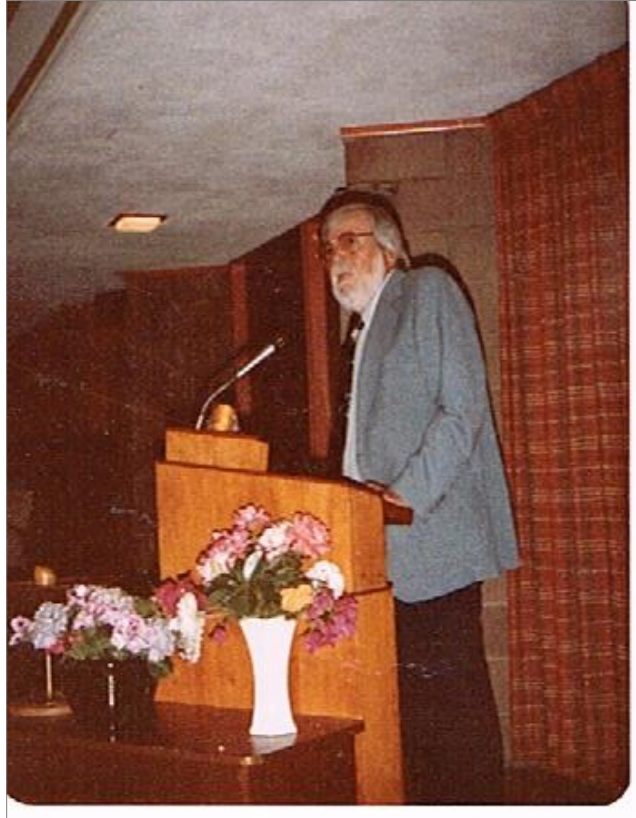
Ernie's previous church was located in Chattanooga Tennessee and while there, Ernie was right in the thick of the civil rights movement. He stood up and marched for the end to segregation. His stance did not go unnoticed nor did it come without consequences. Twice his Unitarian church was set on fire but it never burned completely.

Ernie in 1965 marched in Selma Alabama alongside his friend in colleague James Reeb. Reeb was set to stay with the Howards at the end of the protest march. His suitcase was already in Ernie's car but Reeb made the fateful decision to remain a few days longer in Selma. Reverend James Reeb was beaten so severely by segregationists that he died two days later in a Selma hospital.



James Reeb

Ernie's sermons seemed to be about the psychological feelings of the congregation. He wanted them to look at their own lives to see how they dealt with day to day issues. His homespun tales about his own life set the tone for that type of introspection. In 1967 Thomas Harris' book *I'm Ok, You're Ok*, was published and psychological reflection was popular. People everywhere were examining and looking within. Ernie was in step with the times. He was warm and easygoing and he felt like a family member to many congregants. He had southern charm and a calm and comforting demeanor. He was a huggable lovable guy.



One day Ernie wore a serape poncho during a Sunday service. This display of multiculturalism confused and bothered some congregants of the older generation that were used to a more formal minister. Ernie was anything but formal. The Beatles grew their hair long and Ernie wore a serape. Yes, the world was changing!

His gift with language added to his special gift for consoling those in grief. He conducted memorial services with great comfort even if he didn't mention an afterlife. He was just as gifted with language and instinctually knew the right thing to say. Ernie's talents with consoling and grief counseling would be desperately needed in 1968 when both Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. were assassinated but Ernie was still focusing inward for ways to deal with the turmoil on the outside.



In contrast to his speaking talents, Ernie was not an administrator. It's not that he wasn't good at organizing or leadership; he just emphasized his time in the pulpit and seemed to feel that the Sunday service was the minister's job, not so much the meetings and business side of things.

Ernie was a movie buff and loved play acting and directing. He also enjoyed the California beaches. He considered himself a real beach bum. He loved books connecting the Earth to spirituality such as Anne Dillard's *A Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. Ernie made connections with nature and people; he was a "Thoreau" kind of minister. He is the reason our newsletter is entitled *The Encounter*. He really enjoyed life and knew it was precious because he suffered from a respiratory ailment that cost him a lung and eventually his life.

Ernie was tired quite often. Those around him tried to help ease the burden. Mary Roberts, the office administrator was very protective of Ernie. She did quite a lot of work so he could rest. Ernie's wife Betty was a big help as well. By 1984 Ernie's health had really deteriorated.

Ernie's ministry took the congregation through the recession 1970's and into the 1980's. New Fads and trends moved us along the decades. Watergate, Disco, gas lines, leisure suites, Carter, Iranian hostages, Reagan, shoulder pads, big jewelry, big hair, spandex, Flashdance came and went. Ernie had weathered many changes but his energy was running low.



Ernie's exuberance for life may be the reason most congregants didn't realize the extent of his illness. When he called the board president in the middle of the night to tender his resignation, effective immediately, people were suspicious. But Ernie did succumb to his long time respiratory disease and died soon after. Some of the congregants attended his memorial service in Texas. His service was held on the banks of a serene lake just outside of Austin. The Howards had retired and bought a little house on the bank of the lake: Lake Buchanan.

As the mourners stood on the bank of the placid lake, a lone unmanned sailboat boat, drifted slowly by. All eyes fixed on that sailboat, white sails catching the breeze as it just floated out across the scene, dreamlike and tranquil and then quietly docked itself. Then someone softly whispered, "So long Ernie."

By Kathleen Jacobson



Mystic

An empty rowboat drifts here, there
on the surface of a pond
as clear and smooth as air.

The surface mirrors friends on a dock,
Aware of the sweet weather,
of their good fortune.
An empty rowboat drifts here, there.

The thoughts they share,
clouds of words gently blown around,
are almost as clear and smooth as air.

Around them, plush greens in countless layers
Push up and out while reflecting down.
An empty rowboat drifts here, there.

How much peace can we bear
(the world's unhappiness--knocking at the horizon--
not as smooth and clear as air)?

From within the green comes the voice of one of the children fair
all of whom the friends are painfully fond.
An empty rowboat drifts here, there.
The world is clear and smooth as air.

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History Project

The Eternal Flame



This last year and a half we went on a journey through our history. The road went back further than expected and was full of surprises along the way. We have a rich history that we can be proud of. Through our history we can find connections to a religion that most of us found by choice as adults.

The narrative monthly Encounter stories end with this installment but they will be replaced by the shorter “History Spotlight”. The History Project will also continue with plans to catalogue and store our treasured letters, books and photographs. I encourage everyone to get involved because the history is about us.

The lessons that I take away from researching our historical documents, is that most were written without the understanding that someone would try to make a sense of them years later to piece together a story. This has taught me how to document current events keeping in mind the purpose these resources will serve in the future.

The most inspiring thing I learned from doing this project is how much I admire the people that make up this church, past and present. I interviewed many congregants, each holding separate pieces of a puzzle. I assembled the puzzle as I wrote about people I never met; and they came to life for me. With each piece in place, I could see the whole picture emerging and it was a beautiful picture indeed!



Sometimes I got very involved to the point that I felt I knew the people I wrote about even if I never met them. Walton Cole died when I was two years old but I spent so much time reading about him and learning about his personality, his interests and his accomplishments, that when I read about his death from a heart attack in 1968, I grieved as if I knew him. I also grieved that I never knew him. I wanted to be sitting there in the sanctuary listening to his sermons on the galaxies and the stars.

I felt the same about Ernie Howard. If I stretched my imagination, I could almost hear his southern drawl. When I spoke to his Widow, Betty, I learned so much about this lovable, intelligent man. How lucky we were to have him as a minister.

Then there is the living, walking history, Reverend Ellen. Most of us know her well which is why I did not write about her...yet. She knows so much and has seen so much change in her time here as our minister. I honor this great lady and admire her immensely.

We have looked into the past and now we look to the future. We are the makers of history. As we have seen through these stories and our larger UU history, UU's have historically been on the frontlines in the battle for justice. How will we change the world? What will be written about us? We are standing on the side of love and I think that is a good start!

