

A dark, atmospheric photograph of a building's corner. The left side shows a textured, light-colored wall. The right side shows a dark, sloping roofline against a black sky. The overall mood is mysterious and moody.

*The city beautiful*

As soon as Redlands was founded, the town's citizens embarked on a journey to create "the city beautiful." With the arrival of the Smileys, the citizens of Redlands put forth a more concerted effort to accomplish this goal for the benefit of all.

In 1895, Alfred H. Smiley wondered "is it too much to ask of every citizen who has a spark of public spirit and patriotism, to work his own grounds as beautiful as art can make them?"<sup>1</sup> The following year, his brother Albert advertised \$200 in prizes—nearly \$5,000 in 2010 dollars—for people who "maintain their grounds with neatness and whose good taste is exhibited in the selection and arrangement of decorative plants." The following year, Smiley increased the total amount awarded to \$250, and limited the contest to persons "of moderate incomes."

Just after the turn of the century, sisters Olivia and Caroline Phelps Stokes, friends of the Smileys and frequent guests at their resort at Mohonk Lake, New York, enjoyed winters in Redlands. The two were heirs to the Phelps Dodge Corporation and Stokes publishing empire. By the time of their arrival in Redlands, they were already well-known philanthropists on the East Coast. Sadly, Caroline died in 1909, the year after their home on Mariposa Drive was completed. The Phelps Stokes sisters proved their generosity by the sheer amount of money given and the number of institutions that benefited from Olivia's estate following her death in 1927. Tuskegee Institute received the largest single gift; in Redlands, the YMCA, YWCA, University of Redlands, and Redlands Community Hospital each received \$10,000; Redlands Day Nursery, Family Service Association, the Contemporary Club, and A. K. Smiley Public Library each received \$5,000. The endowments and funds created by these gifts continue to affect the fiscal health of these organizations.

Alfred H. Smiley led the call for the establishment of a public library for Redlands. In 1894, he was elected the first president of the Library Board, at the time he urged his brother Albert to give the library a building. Long interested in displaced persons and families in need of aid, he became the first president of Associated Charities, later known as Family Service Association, in 1895.



<sup>1</sup> *Redlands Daily Facts*, March 21, 1895.



The winter residence of the Phelps Stokes sisters Olivia and Caroline stands in the hills of south Redlands. Heirs to the Phelps Dodge Corporation, a publishing business, and Manhattan real estate, the two gave generously to Redlands. Upon Olivia's death in 1929, she left funding for a park named for Caroline, scholarships, endowments, and bequests to nearly a dozen cultural and social service organizations in Redlands.

As a memorial to her sister, Olivia gifted fifteen acres of the estate to the City of Redlands to create Caroline Park. The park remained undeveloped until 1987 when the Rotary Club of Redlands spearheaded a campaign to create the park space, dedicated to native plants, for all to enjoy. In a partnership with the Redlands Horticultural and Improvement Society, a special endowment fund for projects and horticultural care of Caroline Park was also created. In addition to Caroline Park, the magnificent gates at Hillside Memorial Park, designed by their nephew Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, honor Caroline.

*Illustrations, opposite*

Olivia Egleston Phelps Stokes deeded to the City of Redlands land from her Redlands estate in memory of her sister, Caroline, for a park of native plants. With the oversight of the Rotary Club of Redlands and the work of many volunteers and organizations, the park was finally completed in the latter twentieth century.

The park sits astride Sunset Drive as a monument to the Phelps Stokes legacy in Redlands.







Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, an important East Coast architect, designed the gates for Hillside Cemetery at the request of his aunt Olivia. They represent community improvements funded by those who shared their bounty.

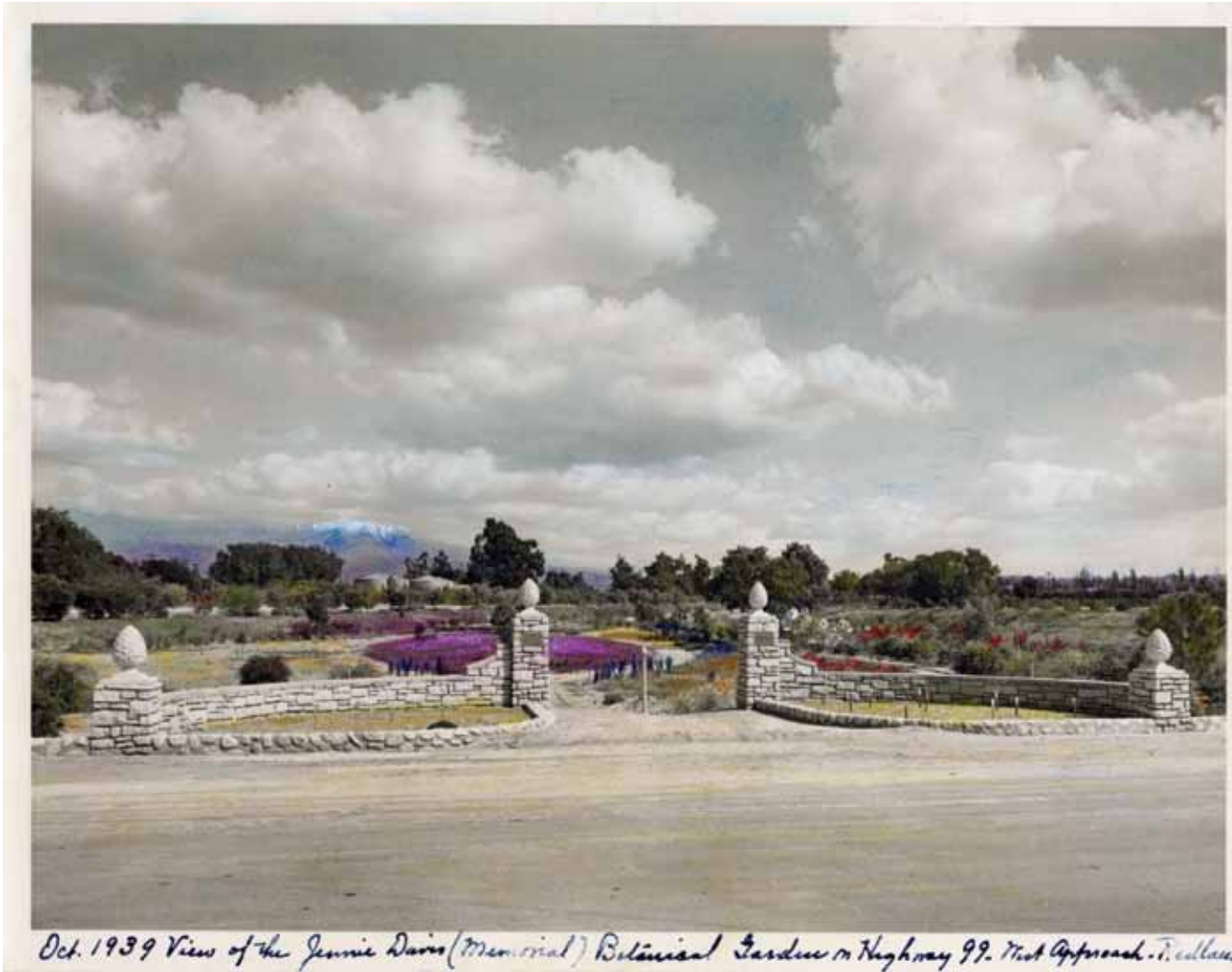


The plaque at Hillside Cemetery dedicated to Caroline Phelps Stokes. In addition to what they shared with the community of Redlands, the sisters also gave substantial gifts to Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute and to a foundation bearing their name headquartered in New York City.

In the mid-1920s, a plan was hatched in Sacramento to build Highway 99 through Redlands. What was the main highway until the construction of Interstate 10 in the 1950s is now Redlands Boulevard. Members of the Contemporary Club's Beautification Committee were horrified that Highway 99 passed the city's unattractive, odiferous dump, located between the Santa Fe Railway's and Southern Pacific Railroad's rights-of-way east of New York Street. The dump, or "Glory Hole" as it was called, was the first thing to greet Redlands's visitors traveling east through town.

Not content with the situation, the women of the Beautification Committee combined forces with the Redlands Horticultural and Improvement Society, the Chamber of Commerce, and a reluctant City of Redlands to transform the eyesore into a place of botanical wonder. Private gifts of funds both large and small made the project a reality: the result was Jennie Davis Park. At its inception, the park was intended to showcase rare plant specimens, flowering trees, and attractive shrubs. Much of the original curbing and planting was done courtesy of Works Progress Administration employees. The impressive cut-stone entrance was a gift to the park given by philanthropists Clarence and Florence White, who also gifted the Prosellis at the Redlands Bowl a few years earlier.





Jennie Davis, a talented, well-educated businesswoman and strong advocate of the cultural arts, provided leadership in improving Redlands's horticultural environment. Her own home's gardens were famous throughout Southern California. Following her death, her Contemporary Club colleagues turned the city dump into a park in her name. Philanthropists Clarence and Florence White donated the entrance, which featured the pineapple, long a symbol of hospitality.



Arguably the greatest grassroots effort to preserve community parks came in 1963 when privately owned Prospect Park was threatened with subdivision. A year earlier, Ruth Smiley Sanborn Drake, daughter of Daniel Smiley, offered Cañon Crest Park (commonly known as Smiley Heights) to the City of Redlands for \$200,000. Upkeep for the park and property taxes made its retention by the Smiley family impossible, and they hoped the City would step in to preserve the treasure. The City declined the offer, which was really pennies on the dollar for its value. One official remarked privately, “What would we do with it?” Sadly, the 200-acre park was subsequently subdivided. Smiley Heights would eventually house one of the most expensive and desirable neighborhoods in Redlands, filled with estates taking full advantage of the unparalleled views of the San Bernardino Valley. So when news that Prospect Park might suffer the same fate surfaced, it spread like wildfire.

Action began immediately. Prominent citizens lobbied the City Council to save Prospect Park. The council then filed for a federal grant to preserve open space for 20 percent of the \$560,000 sale price and placed a bond measure on the ballot to raise the amount of the purchase price not covered by the federal grant. A divisive campaign resulted in defeat of the bond measure in October 1963, meaning that those funds needed to be raised another way.



The house of Albert K. Smiley stood at the end of a road not far from his twin brother Alfred's house in Cañon Crest Park. By 1900, their estate, nicknamed Smiley Heights, was one of the most famous tourist attractions in Southern California.



A view of Redlands and the San Bernardino Mountains from Smiley Heights c1900. Taken from A. K. Smiley's bedroom window, this scene was famous throughout the world. When descendants of the Smiley family offered the park to city officials in 1961, one responded by asking "But what would we do with it?" The subsequent subdividing of Smiley Heights led to a civic revolt when a similar proposal was made for Prospect Park.



When Thomas Y. England and his son J. Will and family came to Redlands in the 1890s, they were owners of what was reputed to be the country's largest leather works. Inspired by their friends the Smiley brothers, they created a park similar to Smiley Heights and named it Prospect Park, a botanical park frequently shared on public occasions. Prospect Park's "lake" featured a rustic bridge along with many semitropical plants and splendid views of Redlands. The England family contributed generously to many causes in Redlands.



Direct gifts, art sales, teas, and numerous events created support for the park. As an incentive, Mary Kimberly Shirk offered to leave her estate, Kimberly Crest, to the people of Redlands if the preservation effort was successful. The Prospect Park Fund raised \$212,000 between 1963 and 1968, enough to buy the park when combined with the federal matching grant, which by 1968 increased to 50 percent of the purchase price, which was negotiated to \$424,000. Preservation of the park required the energy and funds of an amazing group of people.

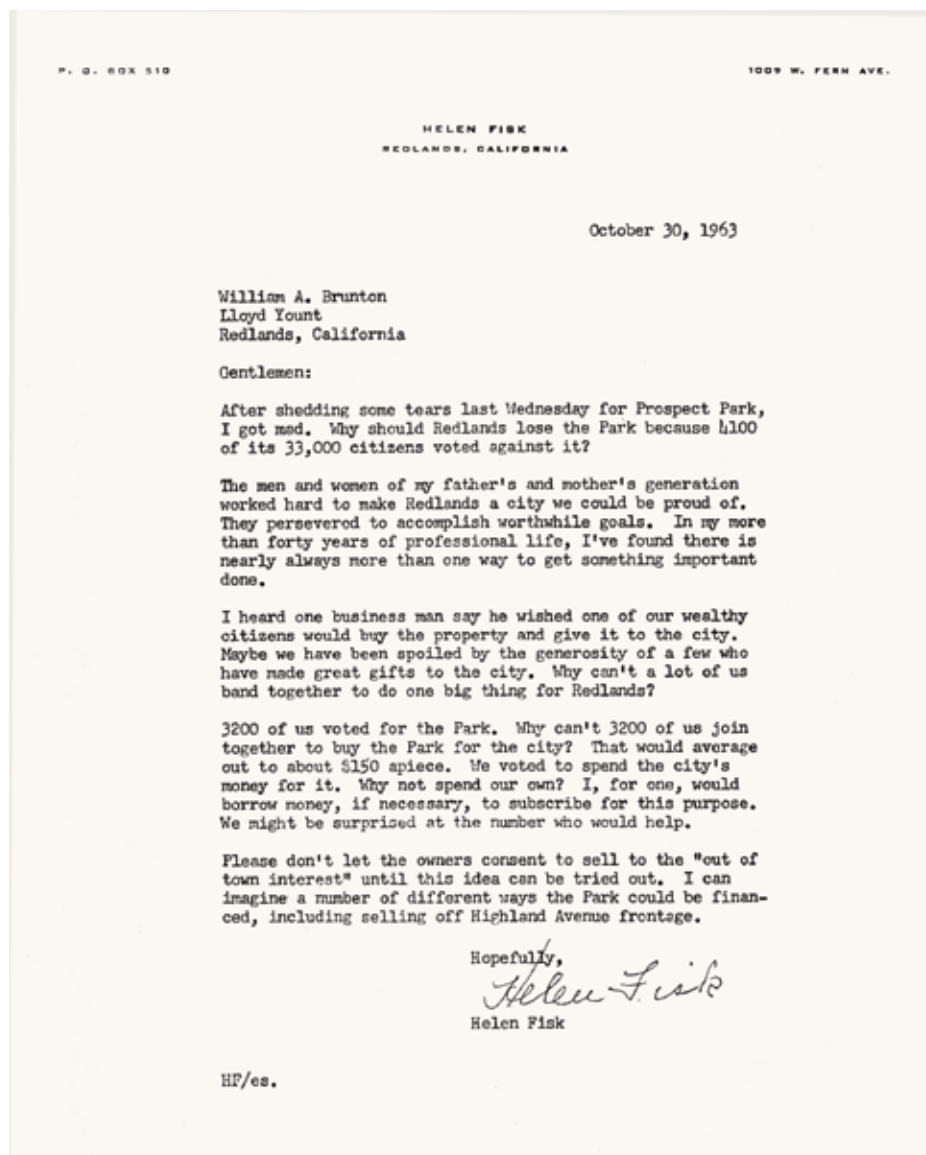
With the acquisition of Prospect Park and its presentation to the City of Redlands for all to enjoy, a new organization was born. By October 1968, The Friends of Prospect Park had more than seven hundred charter memberships, demonstrating a commitment by the community to preserve, protect, and help maintain Prospect Park for the future.



Mary Kimberly Shirk (left) and Avice Meeker Sewall (right) sit with two Redlands youths in Prospect Park following the successful campaign in 1968. The financial commitment and determination of Shirk, Sewall, and Helen G. Fisk helped save the important landmark.



Helen Fisk realized the importance of Albert Smiley's example in giving the library. In this letter, she proposed that people of Redlands borrow money, if necessary, to fund the purchase of Prospect Park for the City of Redlands.



Helen G. Fisk's philanthropic instincts stemmed from her parents John and Elizabeth. Helen knew the Smileys and appreciated her father's role in establishing the YMCA. Her activism in the 1960s helped secure Prospect Park for the people of Redlands.

Making good on her promise to leave her estate for the people of Redlands, Mary Kimberly Shirk created the Kimberly–Shirk Association in 1969, which would take title to the impressive house and grounds following her death. The French Chateau–style home was built in 1897 for Cornelia Hill, who moved to Redlands from New York. In 1905, she sold the estate to J. Alfred and Helen Kimberly of Wisconsin. Kimberly was a founder and long-time president of the Kimberly & Clark Company, best known as the creators of Kleenex facial tissue. Their daughter Mary Kimberly was married to Elbert Shirk in Redlands in 1904, but the couple soon returned to the Midwest. Following Elbert’s death in 1919, Mary Shirk returned to Redlands and took up residence at Kimberly Crest.

Mary Shirk’s vision for the estate was to preserve it for future generations, so they could see how some people of the past lived. In order to ensure that end, in 1978, just a year before her death, she amended her will to give the Kimberly–Shirk Association \$1 million or one-fifth of her estate—whichever was less. The Kimberly–Shirk Association took title to Kimberly Crest and a \$1 million gift from the estate in 1981. Since that time, the association, with the help of the community through both financial support and volunteer work, has continued to preserve and promote one of Redlands’s most beautiful and important treasures.

In 1886, the Hillside Cemetery Association incorporated. When Edward Judson and Frank Brown, cofounders of Redlands, first laid out the city in 1881, they neglected to include a cemetery. They soon rectified the situation with a gift of twenty-three acres of land to the newly formed association. At the time, the property, located at Alessandro Street and Sunset Drive, was above the level of gravity-flow irrigation from Brown’s Bear Valley Reservoir (Big Bear Lake), and was unusable for agriculture, making the land far less valuable than other tracts in Redlands. On June 12, 1887, the interment of Reverend Charles Gothier occasioned Hillside’s first. The Hillside Cemetery Association retained control of the cemetery until 1918, when it was transferred to the City of Redlands as a municipal cemetery. Interestingly, during the Great Depression in the 1930s, the City used monies from the endowment it inherited from the association to purchase Mill Creek water rights. In 1996, the Friends of Hillside Memorial Park organized to help preserve the cemetery. The Friends continue to raise money for their endowment fund to provide for the upkeep of Hillside Memorial Park.



Built in 1897 by the Los Angeles firm of Dennis and Farwell for Cornelia Hill, a well-to-do New York widow, Kimberly Crest is now a nonprofit cultural foundation. John A. Kimberly, the paper king and producer of Kleenex facial tissue, fled the Wisconsin winter, purchased Mrs. Hill's house, and renamed it Kimberly Crest. His daughter, Mary, agreed to leave the house and its grounds to a foundation if Redlands saved Prospect Park. Her generous act proved to be the tipping point in the park crusade.



For thousands of years San Timoteo Canyon was home to Cahuilla and Serrano Indians. It was later used as a site for Spanish and Mexican cattle and horse pastures, then as the site of a transcontinental railroad, agriculture, and residences. In the early years of the twenty-first century it has been the object of an intense debate between open space advocates and developers. Much of its land is now held by private open space conservancies, including the Redlands Conservancy.

A remarkable thing happened in Redlands in 1987: citizens elected to tax themselves in order to preserve open space. “Measure O” called for a \$7.6 million bond for the City of Redlands to acquire land for parks, natural open spaces, recreation facilities, and orange groves. An important feature of the design was the “Emerald Necklace,” borrowed from an East Coast design by noted American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. The “necklace” designates a circle of open and green space surrounding Redlands to preserve distinct borders with surrounding communities, helping to maintain a distinct identity for the community.

A group of Redlands citizens concerned about preserving the natural and historic environment formed the Redlands Conservancy in 1994. While the organization does not yet maintain an endowment, annual gifts continue to provide an income from which the conservancy is able to carry out its designs and programs to preserve both the natural and built environments, so identified with Redlands.

From its earliest days in the nineteenth century and into the twenty-first, the natural and built environments that define the physical look and feel of the community have been important to Redlanders. Donors have made possible the creation of and continuing funding for public parks, gardens, historic buildings, and open space. All of these elements converge to create “the city beautiful.”