

FROM DESERT TO GARDEN.

THE COLORADO DELTA—THE MOST WORTHLESS DESERT IN THE COUNTRY NOW BEING RECLAIMED AND COLONIZED BY ENERGETIC AMERICANS.

THE LARGEST IRRIGATION SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES.

The Colorado Desert is being wiped from the map of California, and in its place there is growing up very rapidly an extensive, prosperous and wealthy community that will in the next few years add many millions to the assessment roll of the State and many thousands of names to the great register and probably one to the family of counties.

"In the Beginning".

About fifty years ago, Dr. Wozencraft, of San Bernardino, commenced an investigation of a project to reclaim this desert by means of water taken from the Colorado river. He presented his plans to Congress asking for a grant of the lands to be reclaimed.

In 1858 the Committee on Public Lands in the House of Representatives reported favorably on the concessions asked for. About the same time the State of California conditionally surrendered its claims to the lands in that county—lands that were absolutely of no value.

Engineers reported to both the State and the National Government endorsing the plans proposed by Dr. Wozencraft which contemplated a heading on the Colorado river at what was known as the Hanlon Heading and the use of the Carter river channel through Lower California to convey the water from the Colorado river to the lands to be irrigated.

Other Business On Hand.

Soon after this the civil war broke out and the project was necessarily abandoned.

Dr. Wozencraft evidently lived about a half century too soon. Had he succeeded in getting his grant from Congress and interested capital to construct his expensive works, there is no doubt but that an attempt to have colonized these lands at that time would have been a failure.

Land, Water and Man.

Land without water has no value. Water without land has no value, and water and land without man to utilize them have no value.

The great question in reclaiming the Colorado Delta has been: would man come along and utilize the land and water when they were brought together?

Magnitude of the Enterprise.

The Colorado Delta is the largest body of arid land susceptible of irrigation to be found in the United States, and has a more than abundant supply of water in the Colorado river to irrigate the same.

In this Delta there are fully 500,000 acres of choice land that can be irrigated in the State of California and 300,000 acres that can be irrigated across the line in Lower California.

There are two kinds of deserts—the reclaimable and the irreclaimable. The reclaimable desert consists of a fertile soil that is desert only because of its aridity. Plenty of water will convert such a desert into fertile fields. The irreclaimable desert is composed of sand, gravel and boulders, and can never be made of any value by the application of water.

The Colorado Delta is reclaimable, being composed of the most fertile soil to be found in the world, not even excepting the celebrated Valley of the Nile. The soil is a sedimentary deposit brought down by the waters of the Colorado river while it was at

work digging out the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

Another Move Made.

After the abandonment of the Dr. Wozencraft's proposition, the question of reclaiming the Colorado Delta was laid to rest for nearly forty years.

About 1890 other attempts were made to reclaim this great desert, but on account of the panic of 1892 and other causes, nothing was accomplished in the way of construction until 1900, although extensive surveys were made, land was purchased and a valuable property was accumulated.

During the spring of 1900 Mr. George Chaffey, having made an extensive and careful examination of the entire enterprise, contracted with the California Development Company for an interest in the company and undertook to deliver water on the desert within a given time.

A Competent Irrigation Engineer.

Mr. George Chaffey is well known in California and in Australia as one of the leading irrigation engineers of the age. He has always managed his own enterprises and has never managed enterprises for other people. He founded Ontario and Etiwanda—two successful irrigated settlements in Southern California, and then on the invitation of the Australian Government he went to that country and established Mildura and Renmark, furnishing the water to these settlements by means of mammoth pumps which cost over \$500,000—eight of the centrifugal pumps having discharge pipes four feet in diameter. All of his irrigation enterprises have been successful.

Work Commenced.

In April, 1900, actual work was commenced and it has been pushed rapidly ever since.

In June, 1901, an abundant supply of water was delivered through the new canal system crossing the International Boundary Line back into the State of California, again about sixty miles west of the Colorado River.

During the year prior to the delivery of water, the work of resurveying the public lands and laying plans for the settlement of the country progressed favorably, and at the end of the year there had been over one hundred thousand acres of land filed on by proposed settlers either under the Desert Land Act or under the Homestead Act.

A School District.

In April, 1901, the Imperial School District was formed by the Supervisors of San Diego County, and in the September following a school was opened in a ramada, which consists of nine posts as supports sustaining a covering of brush to keep off the sun. Besides this ramada was placed a tent in which to keep the books, etc., at night and in which to take refuge in case of storm—although it rarely storms. As yet there had been no opportunity to build a school house, and the law required the establishment of a school at a given time. There were twenty-four scholars enrolled in this primitive school.

Water Reaches Imperial.

Water was delivered too late in the season for any extensive agricultural operations although about 1200 acres of sorghum and millet were planted so as to furnish feed for the hundreds of horses that were at work on the

canal system and other hundreds of horses and cattle that would be brought into the settlements by actual settlers before anything could be raised in the spring of 1902. This first trial of the soil and climate was eminently satisfactory.

A Gigantic Enterprise.

The work of colonizing and reclaiming the Colorado Delta is one of the most gigantic enterprises ever attempted in California. Because of its magnitude the canal system was called the Imperial Canal, and Imperial Settlements is the name by which that section of country is known.

What Has Been Done?

Settlers have taken possession of 125,000 acres of land and secured water rights for the same from the Imperial Canal System.

This system of canals has been so far extended that water can be used this next season on practically any of the land now taken from the Government.

The town of Imperial has been platted and business has been started there in good style. There is a hotel, a post office, a general merchandise store, a stage station, a printing office where the Imperial Press—a twelve page paper with four columns to the page—is printed, a church with a parsonage—a regular little white New England church with a spire—and the First National Bank of Imperial has been organized and will be ready for business by the first of next year.

The town of Calexico has also been platted. It is located on the boundary line about sixteen miles south of Imperial. Here is to be found the headquarters of the California Development Company in a large, double adobe building. A general merchandise store is also to be found here and the town—only a few weeks old—is growing finely.

The town of Paringa is platted but no improvements have been made there as yet. It is located midway between the other two towns.

The town of Imperial is located about 28 miles south of the Southern

Pacific Railroad, and is connected with that road by a daily stage line.

Railroad to be Built.

The Los Angeles, Imperial and Arizona Railway Company will be incorporated very soon to build about 400 miles of railroad. This road is planned to be built from Yuma westward through the Imperial Settlements via Calexico, Paringa and Imperial, towards Los Angeles, and will be either extended to that city or connected with some other standard gauge railroad that will make satisfactory connections with the Southern metropolis. There will thus be one branch line built northward from Imperial to connect with the Southern Pacific, and another branch line southward from Calexico to the head of the Gulf of California. The road from the Southern Pacific to Imperial and thence to Calexico will be graded during the coming winter and will be put in active running order soon thereafter.

In addition to this railroad enterprise, the building of which is now assured—although little has been said about it—the people of San Diego are moving to build a railroad eastward from that city which, when built, will give the Imperial Settlements another outlet to the coast.

A Telephone System.

A telegraph line now runs from Flowingwell to Imperial and Calexico, with a branch line from Flowingwell to Iris to connect with the Western union telegraph line.

The population of the Imperial Settlements during the past year has increased from practically nothing to over one thousand people, and the increase has mostly been made during the past two months.

Such is the development of what promises to be one of the most noted and productive sections of this State of garden spots.

To Settle Permanently.

Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Srack started today for the Imperial country, Mr. Srack by camp wagon and his wife by rail. They expect to cast in their lot with the new country and settle there permanently.—Santa Ana Herald.

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