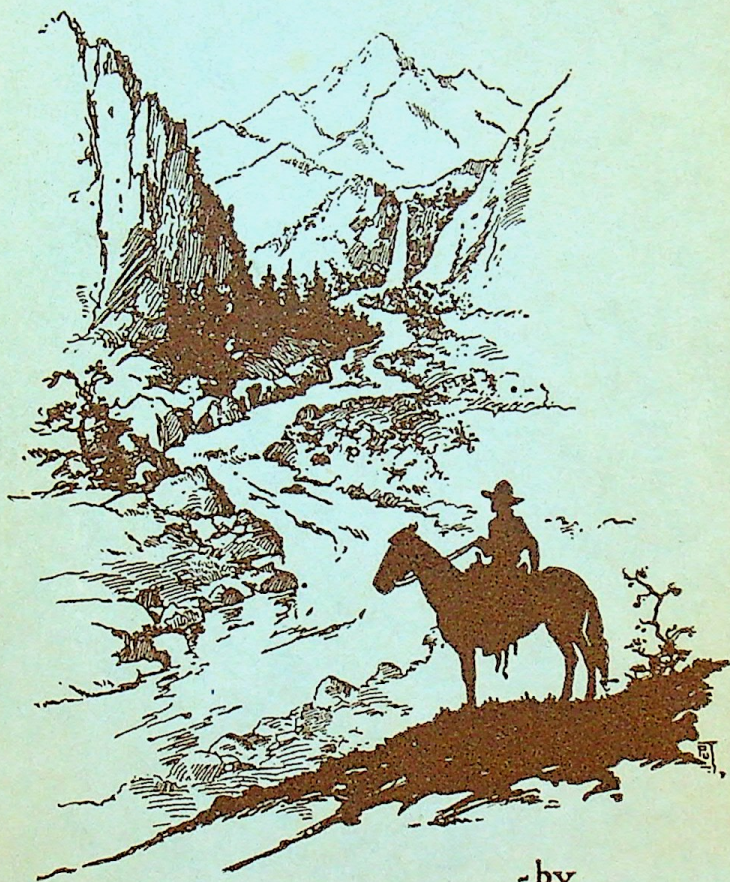


THE WATER TRAIL



-by
Don J. Kinsey



The Water Hole



The Water Trail

*The story of Owens Valley and the controversy
surrounding the efforts of a great city to secure
the water required to meet the needs of an
ever-growing population.*

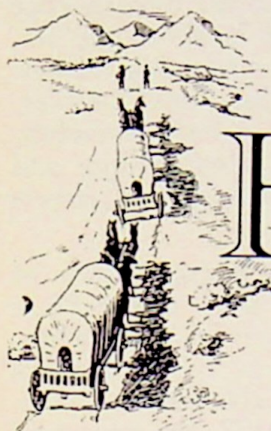
By DON J. KINSEY



Where Owens River rises in the High Sierras

CHAPTER I

Romance and Strife



FOR nearly a century the Owens Valley of California, high and rugged, walled in by mighty mountains, a community yet reminding of the days of the pioneers, has been the scene of events constituting an epic chapter in the history of the West.

The Owens Valley has seen the slow and painful march of the covered wagons carrying settlers over a hunger and thirst-stricken trail across mountain and desert to the sunset coast. It has witnessed California's bitterest Indian war. It has experienced winters so severe, whole tribes of its native Indians were wiped out. It has watched the coming and the going of roaring mining camps where life weighed little in the balance against lust for treasure.

Owens Valley has seen the building of one of the world's greatest engineering works, the Los Angeles aqueduct. It has seen the Aqueduct seized, attacked, dynamited in warfare waged against Los Angeles by a group of Valley residents.

And, finally, Owens Valley was the scene of a financial cataclysm. Measured in dollars, the recent failure of the five Owens Valley banks probably would make but small impression in large financial centers, but, in the Valley towns, it is as it would be in Los Angeles if each and every one of that city's banks had failed.

Inyo County, which is very sparsely settled except for the Owens Valley section, lays claim not only to historical

fame but to topographical note as well. In this county are the highest and the lowest spots in the nation. Mount Whitney, topmost peak of the High Sierras, is 14,501 feet in elevation and Death Valley, on the eastern edge of the county, is 427 feet below the level of the sea. Mount Whitney is crowned with everlasting snows. Death Valley bakes under an ever-blazing sun. The Sierras rear their jagged crests along the western boundary of Inyo and on the east the dry and bleak White and Inyo mountains shut the valley off from the great American desert.

Never reached by the Padres in their explorations of California, the Owens Valley, historic home of the Piute Indians, first felt the tread of white men in 1829, when, it is related, Jedediah Smith and a party of trappers traversed the section. Peter Ogden, a Hudson Bay trapper, visited the valley in 1831 and, in 1833, the renowned Capt. Joe Walker led a party from Independence, Mo., through the Valley to the coast.

The name Owens Valley was bestowed upon this section of California by Gen. John C. Fremont, the "Pathfinder," honoring Richard Owens, one of his scouts. But Owens, himself, for all his wanderings with Fremont, never set foot in the Valley.

Gold, magic lure which drew men over blazing deserts and snow-capped mountains, to pioneer the West, was responsible for first settlement of the district from which Los Angeles now gets its water supply. Answering the siren call of gold, the famous Jayhawker party passed through the Valley in 1849, after suffering privations in Death Valley, which have been told and retold as one of the most signal examples of human fortitude in the annals of the West.

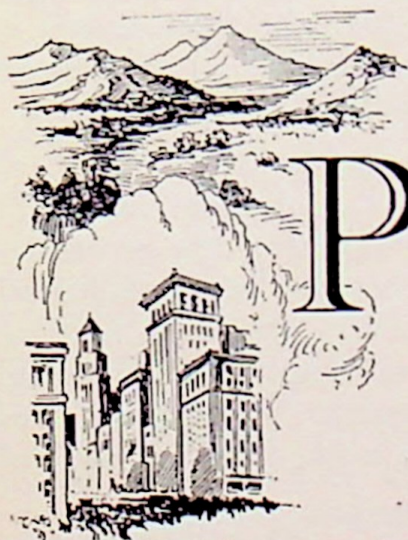
Precious metal was first discovered in Inyo county in 1854, and through the '60's, '70's, and '80's Inyo boasted of many mining camps which contributed materially to California's mineral output.

The coming of the miners, and later of the stock-raisers, brought on the Indian wars which resulted in the deaths of many whites and of many more of the red men. The battle of Bishop Creek, near the site of the present town of Bishop, was won by the Indians, and for a time the whites were forced out of the Valley. Federal soldiers were called in; a fort was built at Independence and soon the whites again held the upper hand.

Inyo county was established by act of the California legislature in 1866.

CHAPTER II

Los Angeles Goes to Inyo



PICTURE the Owens Valley of Inyo County in 1905.

A community of five thousand people residing in an isolated, mountain and desert bound valley, 4,000 feet above the level of the sea.

The Valley's gold and silver rush had subsided. Most of the mines had been worked out or abandoned.

Its commercial and farming development was hindered because of the Valley's isolation from the remainder of the state. Prior to the building of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, Owens Valley had no standard railroad contact with the outside world. Its nearest railroad connection with Southern California markets was Mojave, 180 miles south of the town of Bishop. Between Mojave and

the Valley was the Desert, crossed only by a winding, uncertain wagon trail.

By 1905, Los Angeles had become the metropolis of the Pacific Southwest—a city of 160,000 inhabitants situated in the midst of a semi-arid region and growing so rapidly as to be the object of nation-wide wonderment. The Los Angeles river and a few scattering wells constituted the city's only water supply sources. Although more dependable in its habits than many western streams, the Los Angeles river carried a limited supply of water. Even in normal years it was capable of supplying not more than 250,000 persons; in dry years its supply dropped down dangerously near the actual needs of the 160,000 people then living in the city.

In the meantime, the tide of population continued to move steadily toward Southern California. Thousands of new families each year came to make their homes in the land of sunshine and orange blossoms. Los Angeles received its share of these new residents.

With a constantly increasing population and a water supply already taxed to its limit, Los Angeles faced the most vital problem of its history. To meet the necessities of its inhabitants, the city must secure a large additional supply of water. Exhaustive surveys disclosed that no such supply was available within Southern California. Seeking relief from a desperate situation, the people turned to William Mulholland, then, as now, chief engineer of the city's municipal water system.

Mulholland, who had come to America from his birthplace in Ireland when a youth of 14, had won recognition as a hydraulic engineer of marked ability. Starting with the Los Angeles water system in 1878 and becoming its chief engineer in 1886, he already had raised these works from the status of a few haphazard open ditches to a modern and efficient supply and distributing system. This was the man destined to conceive and successfully

complete the greatest and most daring aqueduct project the world had ever seen.

Having been told of the Owens River, 250 miles north of Los Angeles, Mulholland decided to investigate the possibilities of this stream.

Arriving in Owens Valley, Mulholland found a river fed by the melting snows of the Sierra Nevadas. A portion of the river's water was used upon the ranch lands of the Valley; the remainder, and the greater share, was wasted by the river as it emptied into Owens Lake—a salt-incrusted sink without an outlet.

After tramping for 40 days over the rugged peaks and blazing desert sands between Owens River and Los Angeles, Mulholland returned to the city and made his report. He stated that the water needed by the city was available in Owens River. To bring this water to Los Angeles would require the construction of an aqueduct 250 miles long. The project, he announced, was feasible; it would cost \$24,500,000; it would meet the needs of 2,000,000 people; and, if the people were willing, he was ready to start the job at once.

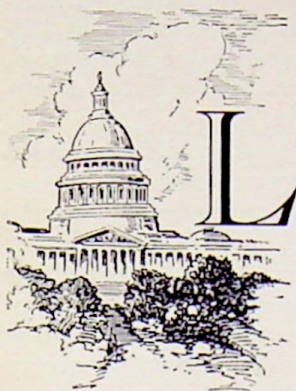
It was the longest aqueduct ever projected by mind of man. Natural obstacles in the way of its route appeared to be well nigh insurmountable. But the people believed Mulholland could carry through, and by a ratio of 14 to 1 they approved the necessary bond issues.

Driven by the lash of dire necessity, Los Angeles had gone to Owens Valley for water. The curtain was raising upon a pulsing drama of engineering achievement and sectional strife without parallel in modern times.



*Equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt, friend of
Aqueduct project.*

Roosevelt and the Aqueduct



LOS ANGELES in 1905 girded itself for the task of launching the most gigantic aqueduct project theretofore ever undertaken by any American city.

Surveys conducted under the direction of William Mulholland, had disclosed that it was feasible and practicable to construct an artificial waterway that would span the 250 miles of desert and mountain country between Los Angeles and the Owens River.

In the Spring of 1906 there was presented for adoption by Congress a bill authorizing the purchase by the City of Los Angeles of certain government lands in Owens Valley needed as rights-of-way for the Aqueduct and as storage reservoir sites. Immediately, it became apparent that the Aqueduct project was faced with vigorous opposition. The bill languished in Congressional committees and was threatened with defeat.

Headed by W. B. Mathews, special counsel for the Aqueduct project, a committee from Los Angeles hastened to Washington and sought assistance from President Theodore Roosevelt. President Roosevelt investigated the Aqueduct project; he heard the arguments of those opposing the project and then, in a characteristic Rooseveltian manner, he acted. When the President had finished expressing his views there was a sudden stir of activity in Senate and House committee rooms. The aque-

duct bill was favorably reported out and promptly adopted by Congress.

In a letter forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior on June 25, 1906, President Roosevelt decisively had urged adoption of the Aqueduct bill, had expressed himself as favoring the use of Owens River water in Los Angeles and, incidentally, had revealed the identity of those opposing the Aqueduct project. In his letter, President Roosevelt said, in part:

"I am impressed by the fact that the chief opposition to this bill, aside from the opposition of the few settlers in Owens Valley . . . comes from certain private power companies whose object evidently is, for their own pecuniary interest, to prevent the municipality from furnishing its own water. The people at the head of these power companies are doubtless respectable citizens, and if there is no law, they have the right to seek their own pecuniary advantage in securing the control of this necessity of life for the city. Nevertheless, their opposition seems to me to afford one of the strongest arguments for passing the law, inasmuch as it ought not to be within the power of private individuals to control such a necessity of life as against the municipality itself."

Although Los Angeles sought only to use the surplus waters of Owens River, after the needs of the ranchers had been fulfilled, there were those in Owens Valley who opposed the use of this water by the City. They had hopes that the Government would build an irrigation project in Owens Valley.

It is true that the Reclamation Service had started a survey of the Owens Valley district in 1904. This region was one of the eleven sections investigated in California by the Reclamation Service, following the adoption of the Reclamation Act in 1902. In view of the fact that only three of the eleven original California tentative projects ever were authorized by the Reclamation Service, it is a matter of grave doubt whether the Government would ever have built an irrigation system for

Owens Valley, even though there had been no Los Angeles Aqueduct.

President Roosevelt was recognized as this nation's foremost advocate of reclamation. Nevertheless, it is significant to note that he favored the Aqueduct project as against the claims of the Owens Valley residents.

Opposition of the private power companies mentioned in President Roosevelt's letter, at first hand, may seem difficult to understand. This opposition readily can be explained when it is pointed out that, from its intake in Owens Valley to its terminus in Los Angeles, the Aqueduct drops from an elevation of 4,000 feet to an elevation of 800 feet—thus making available for development, under municipal ownership, a large volume of hydro-electric power.

Theodore Roosevelt and his "Big Stick" had cleared the way in the halls of Congress for Los Angeles' great water project. It remained for the engineers to conquer the physical barriers still separating the thirsty city from the life-giving snow water of the High Sierras.

CHAPTER IV

The Aqueduct and the Valley



WILLIAM Mulholland, at the time he made his preliminary surveys in 1905, had reported that it would require five years and \$24,500,000 to construct an aqueduct capable of carrying sufficient water from Owens River to supply the needs of 2,000,000 people in Los Angeles.

It was a tremendous task and a great vision of future

growth to be submitted for approval before the citizens of a city whose population then numbered 160,000. Nevertheless, the plan was accepted and the necessary bonds voted by overwhelming majorities.

Then followed almost three years of intensive preliminary work. Detailed surveys for the project were made and carefully checked. Along the 250-mile route of the Aqueduct line, 43 division headquarters, supply and construction camps were established. Five hundred miles of roads and trails were built to give access to a wilderness of mountain and desert country to be penetrated by this far-flung project. Telephone and telegraph lines were erected to provide means of communication. Hundreds of miles of pipe lines were laid to furnish water for men and animals and for construction purposes in desert and mountain camps.

Thousands of tons of material and equipment must be shipped into Owens Valley and there was no railroad to carry this tonnage. Accordingly, the City of Los Angeles opened negotiations with the Southern Pacific Company, with the result that this company constructed a standard gauge railroad 120 miles long from its main line at Mojave to Lone Pine in the Valley.

In October, 1908, actual work on the Aqueduct was started, and just five years later, in October, 1913, the first water from Owens River, ending its 250-mile journey through the completed Aqueduct, came tumbling down the San Fernando Cascades into Los Angeles. When the last bill had been paid it was disclosed that the Aqueduct, including its rights-of-way, had cost \$24,460,000 or just \$40,000 less than Mulholland's original estimate.

The Los Angeles Aqueduct was hailed throughout the nation as the most spectacular and daring engineering accomplishment ever attempted by an American city. Five thousand men laboring through five blazing desert summers and freezing mountain winters, under the direction of William Mulholland, had done what many declared was impossible.

When completed, the Aqueduct included 142 separate tunnels, aggregating 53 miles in length; 12 miles of inverted steel siphons, varying from 7 to 11 feet in diameter; 24 miles of open unlined conduit; 39 miles of open concrete-lined conduit, and 97 miles of covered conduit. Additional miles were taken up by three large reservoirs, the largest of these, the Haiwee reservoir, being capable of storing more than twenty billion gallons of water.

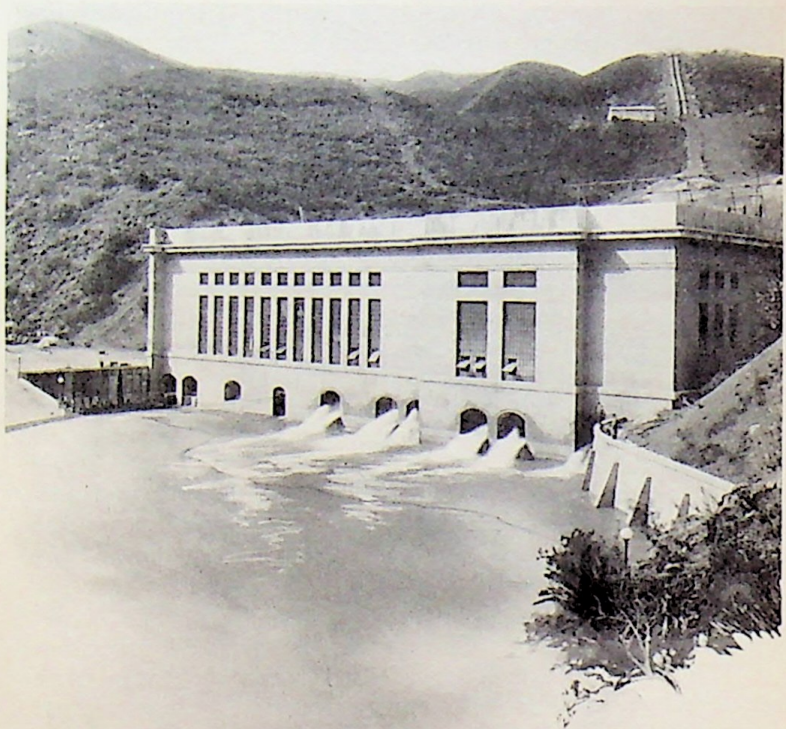
Through this gigantic waterway there was destined to come rushing a new tide of prosperity and development for Los Angeles and Owens Valley.

Prior to the construction of the standard gauge railroad into Owens Valley, that section of California virtually had been isolated from the remainder of the state. The railroad brought the large and profitable markets of Southern California within easy and economic reach of the Valley farming centers. Hundreds of the Valley's residents were given steady employment during and following the building of the Aqueduct. At the present time the payroll of the City of Los Angeles in Owens Valley amounts approximately to \$100,000 a month.

In 1905, three years before actual work on the Aqueduct was started, Inyo County had an assessed valuation of \$2,487,000; in 1915, two years after the completion of the Aqueduct, Inyo County's assessed valuation had increased to \$7,628,000; in 1926 Inyo County's assessed valuation was \$11,347,000.

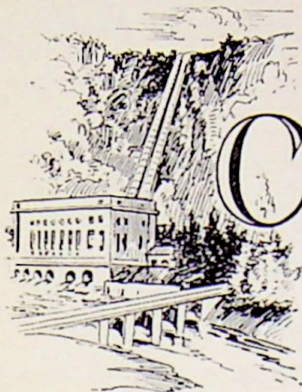
During the past year the City of Los Angeles paid \$144,000, or 43 per cent, of Inyo County's total tax bill. In the same period of time the City expended \$202,132 on improvements to the ranch properties purchased in the Valley.

Greater and more far-reaching in its benefits, perhaps, than any other development growing out of the City's entrance into Owens Valley was the golden flood of hydro-electric power released for use in the Valley through the construction of the Aqueduct. Let us then next give our attention to the romance of the Valley's treasure of White Gold.



*City's San Francisquito Power Plant, No. 1, built
along the line of the Aqueduct.*

Aqueduct Power



CONCEIVED primarily as a water supply system for a great and growing city, the Aqueduct was destined to bestow upon both Owens Valley and Los Angeles the golden benefits of cheap hydro-electric power.

Early Aqueduct surveys revealed the fact that this gigantic water carrier, when placed in operation, would present opportunities, at several points along its route, for the development of large quantities of water power. With its intake on Owens River twelve miles north of the town of Independence and approximately 4,000 feet above sea level, the Aqueduct would drop in its course to Los Angeles to an elevation of 800 feet at its terminus. This fall of 3,200 feet, far more than was required to carry the water to Los Angeles by gravity, immediately suggested hydro-power development possibilities to Aqueduct engineers.

The same surveys that disclosed the hydro-power opportunities along the route of the Aqueduct also indicated that the construction of the water line would necessitate the boring of many miles of hard rock tunnels and the excavation of millions of feet of earth for the huge conduits that were to carry the water to the southern city. Operation of the drills, dredges and shovels to be used in boring these tunnels and digging the conduits would require considerable quantities of power.

It was recognized that the cheapest and most efficient form of power for such purposes would be electricity. There was, however, no electricity developed and available for use in Owens Valley. Investigations soon disclosed that sufficient hydro-power to meet all Aqueduct construction needs could be developed from several of the mountain creeks that emptied into Owens River along the line of the project.

In 1909, the City of Los Angeles retained E. F. Scattergood, then a consulting engineer in private practice, as chief electrical engineer of the Aqueduct project. Under the direction of Mr. Scattergood two power plants were placed in operation along Division Creek, two miles west of the Aqueduct intake, and a third plant erected on Cottonwood Creek, forty miles south of the intake.

The 3,000 horse power of energy generated by these three plants was carried down the line of the Aqueduct over 188 miles of transmission lines and used to operate tunnel drills, dredges, electric shovels, concrete mixing machinery, water pumps and electric locomotives.

When the Aqueduct was completed, power from the City's three hydro-electric plants in Owens Valley was released for use by the industries, mines, ranches and townspeople in the Valley. To these three original plants there was added in 1913 a fourth plant below Haiwee reservoir. In 1924 the Bureau of Power and Light erected a fifth power plant with a generating capacity of 4,000 horsepower, on Big Pine Creek, and in 1927 the Bureau replaced its first Haiwee plant by a much larger one capable of generating 6,000 horsepower of energy.

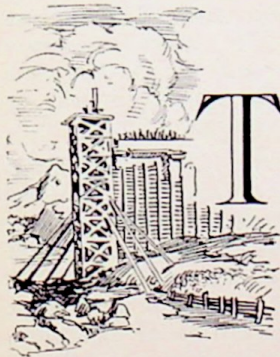
From the five power plants now operated by the City of Los Angeles in Owens Valley a total of 13,000 horsepower is generated. Because it is not economically feasible to carry this quantity of power over a 250-mile transmission line to Los Angeles, the energy is all retained in Owens Valley and made available for the development of that region.

While building and operating the Owens Valley electric system, Mr. Scattergood also gave his attention to the problem of utilizing the great power possibilities of the Aqueduct itself. In accordance with plans worked out by Mr. Scattergood, five power plants, generating a total of 118,000 horsepower of hydro-electric energy, have been placed in operation along the line of the water carrier. These plants are situated along the southern end of the Aqueduct and are designated as San Francisquito No. 1, capacity 60,800 horsepower; San Francisquito No. 2, capacity 41,800 horsepower; San Fernando, capacity 8,550 horsepower; Franklin Canyon, capacity 2,850 horsepower, and the River Plant, capacity 4,000 horsepower.

It was the development of large quantities of cheap power along the Aqueduct that led to the organization under the direction of Mr. Scattergood, of the Los Angeles Bureau of Power and Light, recognized today as the largest municipally-owned electric utility in the United States.

CHAPTER VI

The Long Valley Dam



THE Aqueduct, once only the dream of an engineer, was now a reality. The people of Los Angeles, who only a few years before had faced the menace of a killing water shortage, now were provided with a gigantic waterway destined to build that city into the Metropolis of the Pacific.

But soon there were to follow other scenes and other acts in this Owens Valley drama.

Their setting was to be in the midst of the matchless scenic grandeur of the towering Sierra Nevadas, but their action was to revolve about the age-old problem of conflicting human purposes.

When Los Angeles engineers entered Owens Valley, they found the ranchers of that region depending upon the unregulated flow of the Owens River for their irrigation water. They built their diversion ditches from the stream's main channel and took the water as it came. This, of course, resulted in an irregular and undependable water supply.

Grasping this situation, officials and engineers for the City of Los Angeles as early as 1914 attempted to negotiate with the Valley ranchers with the view of working out an agreement on water storage and regulation that would provide the ranchers with the water as they needed it, and also supply the requirements of the Aqueduct. Careful studies and surveys of the water run-off in the Owens Valley basin previously had been made by Los Angeles Water Bureau engineers under the direction of William Mulholland.

When the City's proposals were submitted, representatives of the Valley people declared that they would insist upon making their own studies of the River before entering into a water agreement. After a delay of seven years, representatives of the City and the Valley met and discussed the terms of the proposed agreement. It seemed that a settlement satisfactory to everyone concerned would follow without fail.

On its side, the City offered to construct a dam 100 feet high in Owens Gorge thus creating a reservoir in Long Valley some thirty miles north of the northern end of Owens Valley. Such a dam was not needed particularly so far as the City was concerned, since large storage capacity was already available along the line of the Aqueduct. In Haiwee reservoir, sixty miles below the Aqueduct intake, more than twenty billion gallons of water

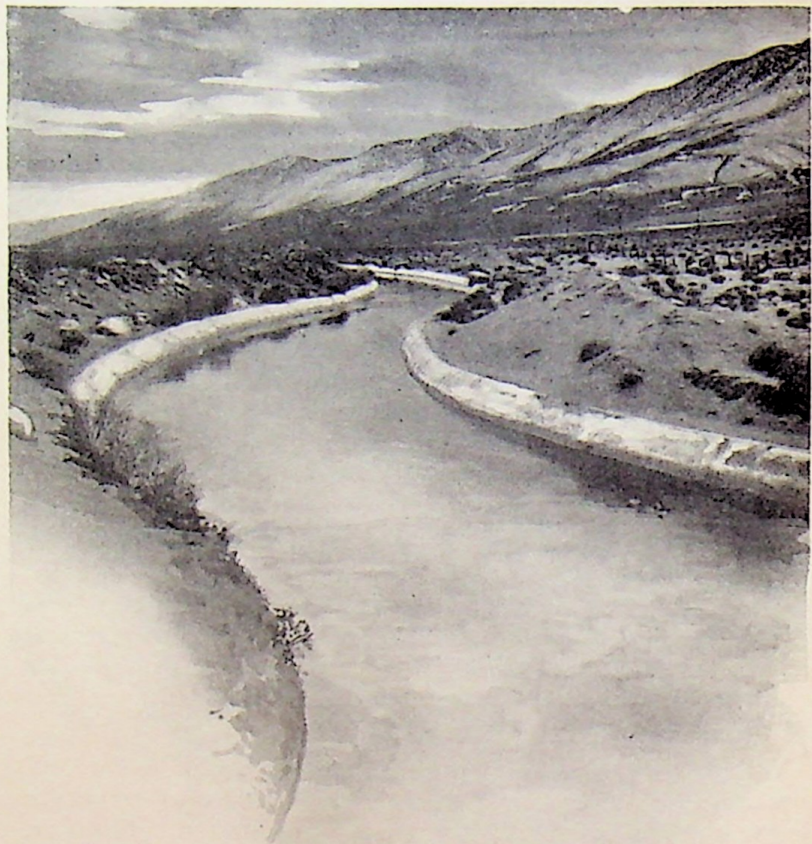
could be stored, and there were other storage basins along the waterway as it approached Los Angeles.

The principal beneficiaries of the Long Valley dam, it was shown, would be the Owens Valley irrigators who would be provided with a regulated water supply.

In 1921 preliminary work on the dam was started by the City, but in the midst of this work a group of Owens Valley residents headed by W. W. Watterson, a Bishop banker, filed suit enjoining the City from the construction of the Long Valley dam. The Watterson group declared that the City must build its Long Valley dam to a height of 150 feet to remove their objections. Los Angeles engineering authorities pointed out that a dam higher than 100 feet would not be feasible or practicable. Investigation had disclosed, they submitted, that because of the loose and porous formation of Owens Gorge above the 100-foot level, water even though raised beyond that height could not be held in storage but would leak out through the canyon walls back of the dam.

Under rights already secured, the City could use Long Valley as a storage basin up to the 100-foot level. Construction of a 150-foot dam, even though it never was utilized, would necessitate the purchase of an additional area from Valley landowners at a price the City regarded as exorbitant.

The City of Los Angeles refused to build the Long Valley dam to a height which its engineers had found would be impracticable. Building of the lower structure was blocked by the Valley group's injunction. The first attempt at a settlement of the Owens Valley water problem had failed, and the Valley ranchers had lost an opportunity to secure, without cost, a regulated irrigation supply.



Open Section of Aqueduct in Owens Valley

Land Purchases



WATER rights — law suits — hatreds.

Throughout the years of Western America's settlement this trio has stalked hand in hand over those lands where water is a precious commodity to be conserved and guarded. In regions where the water supply is limited there rarely has failed to develop, sooner or later, a bitter contention between districts or individuals seeking and requiring this vital necessity of life. And so it has been in Owens Valley.

Following the completion of the Aqueduct, eight long years were consumed by negotiations between representatives of the City of Los Angeles and Owens Valley with the view of arriving at an agreement that would provide for regulation and use of Owens River water in a manner mutually beneficial to the City and the Valley. All these negotiations were fruitless. In the meantime conditions were shaping themselves in a manner destined to force the situation to a sharp and bitter issue.

On the one hand, Los Angeles found itself growing in a manner that amazed the entire world. Its population was increasing by leaps and bounds. More and more water was required to supply the needs of its new residents numbered by the hundreds of thousands. To meet this need it was necessary constantly to increase the flow of the Aqueduct and to make proper provision for the future.

On the other hand, the entire Southwest, beginning in 1920, was slipping into a cycle of abnormally dry years.

Even on the peaks of the Sierra Nevadas the winter snow falls were far below normal. By 1923, conditions had become serious.

Practically all of the Owens Valley ranch land irrigated from the River was above the Aqueduct intake. Consequently the irrigators had first call on the water from the river.

As the situation presented itself to officials of the City, there was only one course remaining open. Los Angeles must purchase ranch land having water rights on Owens River so that the water attaching to this land could be diverted into the Aqueduct should the need arise.

With the view of disturbing the situation in the Valley as little as possible, the Board of Water and Power Commissioners, in 1923, authorized the purchase of the ranches in what was known as the McNally Ditch area. These ranches, being situated on the east side of the river, were detached in a great measure from the remainder of the irrigated region in the Valley on the west side of the river.

Prices offered for the lands were believed to be liberal, since they amounted, on an average, to about twice the market value of the ranches. But in the midst of these purchases, a group of men from the town of Bishop organized the McNally land owners into a pool and demanded prices which the City regarded as unreasonable. In order to secure the water land urgently needed, the City was forced to cross the river and purchase lands on the west side of the stream.

The City's policy in buying lands watered from Owens River was violently opposed by certain groups in the Valley. They declared that the Valley desired to be left alone—that the people did not desire to sell their holdings.

Confronted with these objections, the City temporarily ceased its land purchases. Then, following a trip through the Valley, the Water and Power Commission in October,

1924, adopted a resolution in which it offered to buy all ranch lands watered from the River with the exception of 30,000 acres. It was pointed out that there rarely ever had been more than 30,000 acres of ranch land actually under cultivation at any one time along the river. To these 30,000 acres, the Water and Power Commission officially offered to guarantee, by proper regulation and conservation, a 100 per cent irrigation supply. The City offer was rejected, and spokesmen for the Valley demanded that the City buy all of the ranch land in the Valley.

Accordingly, the Commission rescinded its 30,000-acre resolution and announced that it was prepared to purchase all of the ranch land watered from Owens River. Since 1923, the City has purchased approximately 80,000 acres of land in Owens Valley, and now owns about 90 per cent of all the Owens River water land. For this land the City has paid Valley land owners more than \$12,000,000.

CHAPTER VIII

The City's Methods



FACED with the grave responsibility of protecting the Aqueduct water supply, upon which depended the health and the very lives of a million people in Los Angeles, the City's Water and Power Commission in 1923 had authorized a program of water land purchases in Owens Valley.

This step was taken after years of negotiations with Valley residents had failed to bring about any sort of workable agreement that would provide

for better conservation and regulation of the Owens River water, and after a succession of abnormally dry years had so diminished the flow of the river as seriously to endanger the Aqueduct supply.

With the launching of these land purchases, the Los Angeles officials almost immediately found themselves violently attacked by an active and hostile group in Owens Valley. This group of ranchers and townsmen headed by W. W. and Mark Q. Watterson, operators of the Valley's five banks, declared that the City's land purchasing program was ruining the Valley.

It was charged by the hostile Valley group that the City was "beating down" the ranchers and forcing them to sell their holdings at sacrifice prices. It was further asserted that the City was "drying up" the Valley ranchers' lands, and destroying their crops. In answer to these declarations, the Los Angeles officials called attention to the actual prices being paid for Valley land and pointed out that these prices amounted to twice the previous market value of the holdings. Concerning the charge that the City was "drying up" the ranchers' lands, Los Angeles officials drew attention to the fact that the irrigators' holdings were all situated above the point on the river where water was diverted into the Aqueduct. Consequently, it was shown that it would be a physical impossibility for the City to take any water from Valley ranchers, since the ranchers had first call on the water.

In fact, the City's representatives declared that the ranchers not only were getting all their own water but the water belonging to the land purchased by the City as well. When the City bought a piece of water land situated above the Aqueduct intake, the water belonging to this land never reached the intake, but invariably was diverted to the holdings of some other irrigator farther up the river, Los Angeles officials declared. As proof of this assertion, the City's representatives drew attention to large areas of Valley ranch land that had been entirely

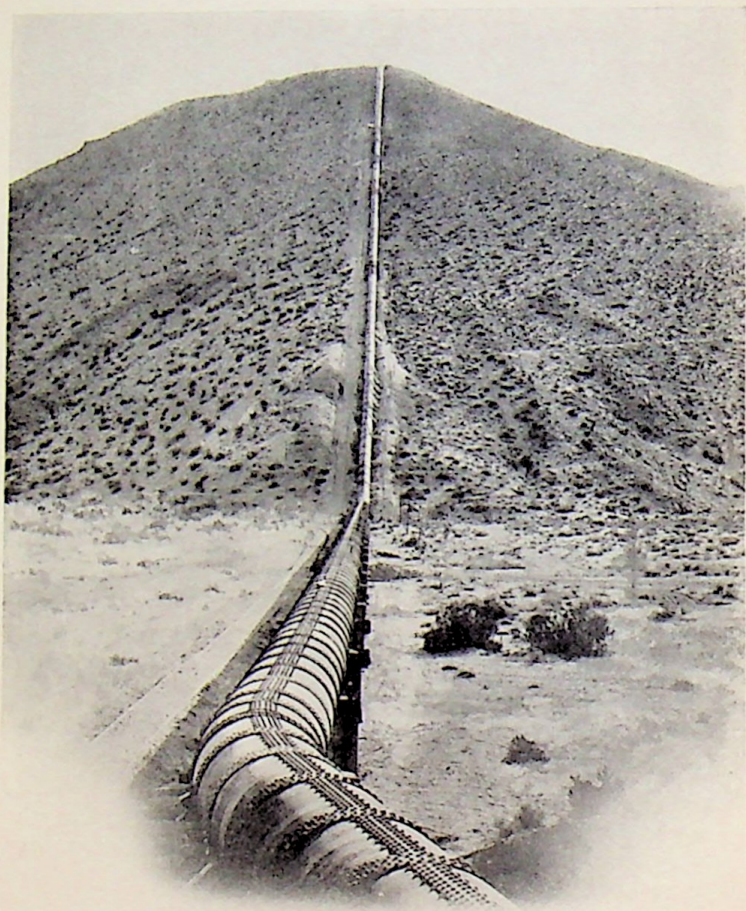
submerged by the ranchers in their effort to prevent the water from flowing on down the river to the Aqueduct intake.

In January, 1925, after the Valley ranchers had refused to accept a plan of leaving 30,000 acres permanently under cultivation, the Water and Power Commission authorized a general land purchasing program.

The Commission retained three prominent Owens Valley residents to act as a board of appraisers with the duty of appraising every piece of property and recommending the price to be paid by the City. The men on the appraisal board were George Naylor, chairman of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors; Vivian Jones, Inyo County Assessor, and Grant Clark, former County Assessor. The records show that the prices recommended by this board invariably were paid by the City.

As the City's purchases proceeded, the agitation in the Valley against Los Angeles constantly grew more violent. The group hostile to the City continued to maintain that Los Angeles Water officials were devastating the Valley. Threats were made against the lives of these officials. Night riders carried mysterious messages to and fro between the Valley towns. Peaceful residents of the Valley, who happened to view the situation from the City's standpoint, were ordered to leave their homes, or suffer death. Under cover of darkness, attempts were made to dynamite the Aqueduct, and thus cut off the water supply of a million people in Los Angeles.

Terror had spread its black shadow over the length of Owens Valley. Violence was in the saddle, challenging the authority of the law.



Jawbone Siphon Section of Aqueduct

Aqueduct Dynamitings



CHARGING that the City of Los Angeles was devastating Owens Valley, a group of Valley ranchers and townsmen, headed by W. W. and M. Q. Watterson, financial barons of the region, had launched a violent attack upon officials of the City's Department of Water and Power in 1923.

In newspaper articles, prepared by writers working for the Watterson group, it was asserted that the Valley was being ruined and its citizens despoiled because of the water land purchases in that country by the Los Angeles water officials. Los Angeles was pictured as a powerful ogre stalking up and down the Valley and laying waste the homes and ranches of that region.

"The Los Angeles water officials are forcing the Valley folk to sell their lands. Our people do not want to dispose of their homes; they want to be left alone." This, in substance, was the burden of the first charges that rose from the Watterson group. But when the City offered to purchase all of the less fertile water land and leave 30,000 acres of the best holdings permanently under private ownership with a guarantee of a 100 per cent irrigation supply, the same group rejected the offer and demanded that the City buy all of the Valley land.

When the City, in response to these demands, resumed its land purchases, attempts were made to organize the Valley land owners into pools and to demand for these

holdings prices amounting, in some instances, to ten times the assessed valuation of the property. On the City's refusal to pay such prices, charges of unfair dealings and ruinous tactics were hurled against the Los Angeles officials and spread broadcast throughout the state and nation.

The City's land purchases, the Watterson group next declared, were wrecking the Valley towns and undermining commercial activity. To recompense the merchants and townspeople for these asserted losses, the City was called upon to pay damages or "reparations."

Early in 1924, it occurred to the hostile Valley group to emphasize their demands and their charges by various acts of violence. It was at this point that there arose within the Valley a reign of terror that held that region in its grip for more than three years. Those responsible for the campaign of violence and terrorism first revealed their methods on the night of May 21, 1924, when a band of men, under cover of darkness, dynamited a section of the Aqueduct near the town of Lone Pine.

On November 16 of the same year a mob of Valley townsmen and ranchers, under the leadership of M. Q. Watterson, seized the Alabama Hills spillway gates of the Aqueduct, and for three days wasted the full flow of the Aqueduct upon the barren sands of the surrounding desert.

Following the seizure of the Aqueduct there was a period of comparative peace for almost a year and a half. On May 14, 1926, however, the dynamiters again resumed their activities. On that date a ten-foot section of a concrete-lined section of the Aqueduct was blown out one mile south of the Alabama Hills spillway gates.

Another year passed, and then, on the night of May 27, 1927, ten masked men overpowered the City's guards at the No Name Canyon siphon and destroyed by dynamite a 450-foot section of this gigantic siphon pipe. The following night the penstock of the City's Big Pine power

house was dynamited, and on June 5 a section of the Aqueduct near the Cottonwood power house was partially destroyed by dynamite.

Then followed four more dynamite attacks on the Aqueduct on June 20, June 24, July 15 and July 16.

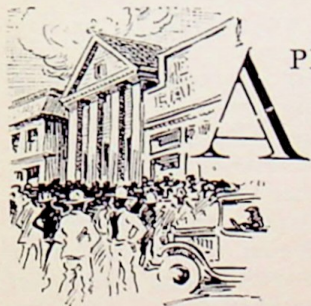
All of the Aqueduct dynamitings were perpetrated at night, and up to the present time not a single person has been arrested by Inyo County authorities as a result of these criminal acts.

Fortunately for the citizens of Los Angeles, none of the dynamitings seriously affected that city's water supply. Interruptions in the Aqueduct flow resulting from these nine attempts to destroy the great waterway were all brief and occurred at times when there was more than sufficient water in Los Angeles storage reservoirs to meet the people's needs.

It has been estimated, however, that more than \$250,000 in damages were suffered by the City through these numerous thrusts at its Aqueduct.

CHAPTER X

Reparations



PPROPRIATING a term that has become well known since the close of the World War, a group of Owens Valley townspeople in 1924 launched a campaign to secure "reparations" from the City of Los Angeles.

Speaking through organizations formed in the towns of Bishop and Big Pine, this group asserted that the residents of these two communities had suffered financial re-

verses through the purchase by Los Angeles of the adjacent ranch land. It was demanded that the City pay the townspeople reparations to compensate them for the losses which, it was alleged, had been suffered by business houses, property owners and the like.

During the 1925 session of the State Legislature, an Owens Valley group caused to be enacted a law under which it was proposed to enforce collection of reparations from Los Angeles. Following the enactment of the law, the City waited for the Valley claimants to file their suits for damages. Months passed by, however, and no such suits were filed. Instead the "reparationists" devoted themselves to a bitter attack upon the City through various newspaper mediums and through the circulation of pamphlets.

In response to the claims for reparations, officials of the City's Department of Water and Power made two answers.

First. They stated that they did not believe that the Valley towns had suffered any such losses as were claimed. The reparationists had declared that the Valley was being depopulated; Los Angeles officials produced records showing that 70 per cent of the purchased ranches had been leased to tenant operators, in many instances, the original owners. The claim that the City was permitting the Valley lands to go back to sagebrush was contradicted by the City when it revealed that it had expended more than \$200,000 in one year in improving and modernizing the ranch houses in the purchased area. Assertions that the City was cutting down sources of revenue for the Valley towns was met by the showing that the City's Aqueduct payroll during the past several years has amounted to more than \$75,000 a month and that this payroll, in a great measure, is spent in a region with a total population of about 7,000. The City further presented figures indicating that it was paying 43 per cent of the entire Inyo County tax bill.

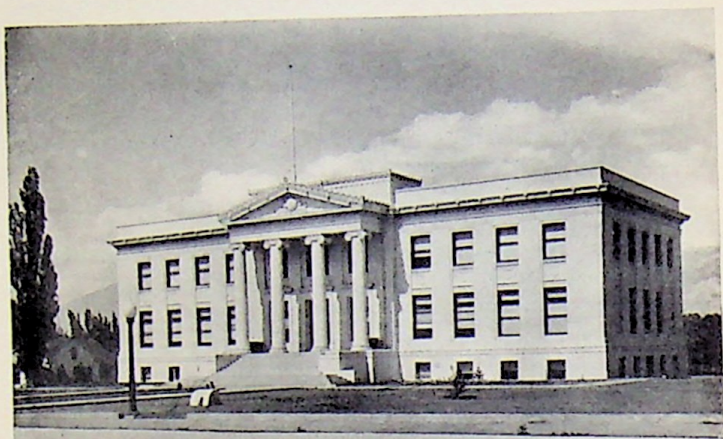
Second. The Los Angeles officials stated that if the Valley towns possessed just grounds for damage claims they should file the proper action in the Courts and permit the cases to be decided on their merits, the same as any other person or group of persons seeking damages. The Water and Power Department officials pointed out that they had no legal right to authorize the payment of any public money for reparations until the legality of the claims had been established.

At last, in 1926, the Valley reparation group filed claims for reparations with the City of Los Angeles. The claims revealed that 548 separate demands for damages totaling \$2,813,355.43 were being made by persons in Bishop and Big Pine. Included among those asking reparations were business men, garage owners, doctors, dentists, beauty parlors, churches, mechanics, stenographers, Indian farm laborers and a large number of individuals requesting damages for injury alleged to have been suffered by household furnishings through the City's land purchases.

When the claims came before the Board of Water and Power Commissioners, that body declared that it could not pay the damage claims merely upon the demand of the claimants.

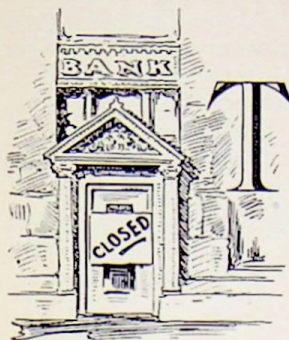
This answer was met by a renewed dynamiting attack upon the Aqueduct. In the midst of these Aqueduct dynamitings, Governor C. C. Young issued a public statement in which he condemned the tactics of the Owens Valley dynamiters and declared that the only reasonable way to settle the reparations dispute was to take the question to the Courts.

Following the Governor's statement, the Board of Water and Power Commissioners adopted a resolution declaring that in the event action was started in the Courts on the reparation claims, the Board would do everything in its power to help hasten the hearing of such a suit.



*Inyo County Court House in Independence, scene of Watterson
Brothers' trial and conviction.*

The Wattersons



THROUGHOUT the years of negotiations and strife between the City of Los Angeles and the people of Owens Valley that have followed the completion of the Aqueduct, two men have stood out conspicuously and continuously as the leaders of those who have opposed the plans and policies of the City. These two men are Wilfred W. and Mark Q. Watterson.

Brothers and business associates, the two Wattersons for many years owned and operated the five banking institutions in Owens Valley. In addition to their banking monopoly, the Wattersons also were engaged in divers commercial and industrial enterprises. Through the medium of Watterson Brothers, Incorporated, they engaged in the garage, hardware and general mercantile business. As the officers and principal stockholders in other corporations, they operated soda refining plants, mineral water dispensaries and sundry mining concerns.

Any man desiring to borrow money for business development or for any other purpose must look to these two men, since they operated the only banks in the Valley. A large proportion of the ranches in the Valley were mortgaged, and these mortgages, in almost every instance, were held by the Watterson brothers. In short, the Wattersons controlled the economic and financial life of Owens Valley. Because of this influential status, they likewise were able to mold the spoken opinions of a large share of the 7,000 inhabitants scattered throughout the countryside and in the four principal towns of the Valley.

Almost from the beginning of its operations in Owens Valley, the City of Los Angeles found itself openly or indirectly opposed by the Watterson brothers. These men explained their opposition to the various City programs and policies by declaring that they were thus attempting to protect the best interests of the citizens of the Valley. Officials of the City expressed the belief, in many instances, that the Wattersons were motivated by a desire to reap financial advantages for themselves rather than by purely altruistic impulses.

As grounds for this belief, officials of the City cited the conditions surrounding various controversies between themselves and Valley groups represented by the bankers.

When the City had offered to build a dam 100 feet high in Owens Gorge and thereby create a reservoir in Long Valley for the purpose of storing water for use by the Owens Valley ranchers, the Watterson brothers strenuously and successfully fought the project, it was pointed out. These two men had insisted that the City should build a dam 150 feet high, and the City engineers drew attention to the fact that construction of a 150-foot dam would necessitate the purchase by the City of several thousands acres of land in Long Valley at a price which was regarded as exorbitant.

During the spring and early summer of 1927, the Wattersons were active leaders in a bitter fight on the part of Valley townspeople to force Los Angeles to pay them "reparations" for damages alleged to have resulted from the purchase of ranch land by the City. The amounts demanded totaled approximately \$3,000,000, and of this total, the Wattersons claimed more than \$400,000. As the summer progressed, the demands for payment were emphasized by numerous dynamite attacks on the Aqueduct.

It was in the midst of this campaign for "reparations" that the Watterson's banks, on August 4, closed their doors. In printed notices pasted on the closed doors

of the Watterson Brothers' five banks, they declared that the banks had been forced to suspend business because of the "destructive operations" of the City of Los Angeles. When examiners from the State Banking Department had completed their investigations, however, they charged the Wattersons with embezzling \$460,000 from their depositors in the Valley. Criminal charges were filed against the bankers. They were prosecuted by District Attorney Hession of Inyo County, and on November 10 were found guilty on 36 counts by a jury of Owens Valley residents. On November 14 they were sentenced to San Quentin penitentiary by Superior Judge Lambert.

Failure of the Watterson banks wiped out the life savings of scores of Owens Valley citizens—men and women who for years had been led to believe that the Watterson Brothers were their best friends and greatest benefactors.

CHAPTER XII

Owens Valley Today



SINCE 1923 the City of Los Angeles had been pouring money into the little Valley at the foot of the High Sierras. It had distributed, through its water land purchases, a total of more than \$12,000,000 in a region with a population not exceeding 7,000. It had made Owens Valley the richest community per capita of any similar area in the country. Then, overnight, the Valley had been plunged into economic chaos.

There were scores of ranchers who had spent their lives wresting a modest living from the soil of the Valley.

When the City launched its land purchases, they had sold out, many of them receiving from \$20,000 to \$100,000 for their holdings. They placed their money on deposit with the Wattersons and counted themselves comfortably wealthy and independent for the rest of their lives. Many of these people were made penniless by the failure of the banks in which they had possessed unquestioning faith.

It soon became apparent that there were many in the Valley in need of immediate financial aid. Several weeks after the bank failures, a committee of citizens from the Valley appeared before the Board and urged that the City provide as much work and as large a payroll as possible for the Valley people during the winter months. In response to this request, the Board immediately took action, authorizing a special \$200,000 construction program during the coming winter in connection with the Aqueduct system. The work included in this program, ordinarily, would have been deferred until the following summer, but in order to provide a large winter payroll for Owens Valley, it was decided to push the work through at once. The construction program included the building of a permanent Aqueduct warehouse and headquarters in Independence, the drainage of a large area of water-logged land near Bishop and the drilling of a number of wells in the same region.

In addition to the special work authorized by the Board, the Water Bureau already had under construction, near the town of Big Pine, a new water storage basin known as the Tinemaha dam and reservoir. This construction work, coupled with the regular Aqueduct and power plant operation and maintenance work, provided a payroll for the Valley people exceeding \$75,000 a month throughout the winter season.

With the coming of Spring and Summer, the Valley is well on its way toward better and happier conditions. With the Summer come the vacationists and the tourists. In fact, there are those who believe that the matchless

scenic beauty of the High Sierras is destined to make Owens Valley a nationally famous resort center, with all the prosperity that accompanies such activity.

That a large percentage of the best agricultural land will be kept under cultivation by the City has been plainly indicated by officials of the Water Bureau. Already the City has expended a quarter of a million dollars in improving purchased ranch properties. It is now busily engaged in drilling wells to be used largely for the benefit of the irrigators.

The dominant economic force in Owens Valley today, of course, is the City of Los Angeles. Responsible representatives of the City repeatedly have declared that they stand ready to co-operate with the Valley people in the working out of a constructive program of development. For twenty years, the consummation of such a program has been thwarted by those who have preached hatred and violence against the City. But the failure of the Watter-son banks apparently has marked the passing of the night-rider and the dynamiter. And now, perhaps, the time has arrived when the City and the Valley will be permitted to join hands in peace and mutual helpfulness.

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