

(41-28)

edition Irrigation in ~~the~~ the Kaweah River Delta
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Probably no single factor has contributed so much to the advancement and progress of the community comprising the Kaweah River Delta, and including the area within and adjacent to the city of Visalia, as an abundant supply of irrigation water. The development of any agricultural area depends largely upon good soil, an ample supply of irrigation water at a reasonable cost and an energetic group of inhabitants, eager and willing to make the most of their opportunities. The Kaweah River Delta has enjoyed and taken advantage of most of its possibilities and these respects.

Situated in the very heart of the Kaweah River Delta, a triangular body of rich alluvial soil comprising some 350,000 acres, which often has been compared in fertility to the Valley of the Nile, Visalia was one of the first areas within the great interior valley of California to become settled, and its irrigation canals date back to the very earliest among those chronicled in valley history.

The earliest record of any organized attempt to construct an irrigation canal in the Delta indicates that in about the year 1854, numerous settlers in and near Visalia joined with Dr. Reuben Matthews in constructing a mill race from Mill creek to a grist mill within the town, the water being used for irrigation after serving its purpose in the operation of the power wheel at the mill. Originally supplied from the Matthews Mill race were the Watson ditch and the Jennings ditch, both passing through the ~~southwestern part of the~~ city of Visalia, and ~~present~~ the Evans ditch, which runs through the southern part of the metropolitan area of that city.

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ad one irrigation by bailey

Coping in quick succession and ~~xxxx~~ at about the same time, other canals were constructed, including the Persian, Farmers, Matthews, Fleming and Oakes, and, also, a group of ditches which later became the Consolidated Peoples Ditch system, now serving the Farmersville area. Following shortly, other groups of settlers constructed the Ketchum, Modoc, Uphill, Little Tulare, Lakeside, Watchumna, Kaweah canal, Settlers ditch, Tulare canal of the Tulare Irrigation District, Packwood canal and many others.

The Kaweah canal and Settlers ditch were soon acquired by the Tulare Irrigation District and added materially to the subsequent growth of the city of Tulare and its surrounding territory.

Following the construction of these many canals and due to the increasing demand for irrigation water, especially in times of shortage, which generally occurred when the need was greatest, various controversies ~~xxxxxx~~ ensued, and resulted in much litigation over the question of the division of the available supply among the various claimants.

The fact that the ~~xxx~~ main Kaweah river, after leaving the mountains, divides into several wide but shallow channels, made it easy for ranchers interested in having the water flow into the particular channel which supplied their land, dam up or obstruct the flow into the other channels and thereby deprive such channels of their normal flow. Nature, through floods, often deposited debris in the heads of the various channels and shifted the water back and forth, adding to the controversies between those concerned.

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ad two irrigation by bailey

In the interest of obtaining harmony and cooperation between the various groups, there were organized in the early years, at least 50 years ago, two associations, known respectively, as the St. John's River Association and the Kaweah River Association.

The St. John's River Association comprised those canals and ditches receiving their supply from the St. John's river, which leads out of the Upper Kaweah river at a point near the town of Lemon Cove known as McKay Point, and the Kaweah River Association included those canals supplied by the Lower Kaweah River Association included those canals supplied by the Lower Kaweah river below McKay Point. These associations both still are in existence, and for many years have been entirely harmonious, cooperating at all times in matters of common interest.

The matter of maintaining a continuous and constant division of the waters at McKay Point was undertaken by the two river associations at an early date and accomplished through the efforts of the leaders of both groups.

The two associations first constructed a rock and brush division dam at McKay Point, replacing it in about the year 1910 with a cement dam, which divided the waters equally between the two rivers until it was damaged badly by floodwaters in the winter of 1937-1938. In the fall of 1938, a new steel and reinforced concrete structure was constructed on the same location at the expense of the state and the two river associations, which no doubt will remain for many years to come and perform the same service.

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ad three irrigation by bailey

During the past 30 or 35 years, the development of the county, particularly the "plains" along the eastern foothills, where water supplies have been scarce, has caused farming communities in these areas to look with envious eyes upon the water supply of the Kaweah Delta and, in some instances, has resulted in attempts of these outside interests to invade the Delta and to obtain for themselves a part of the supply.

These efforts resulted in some rather intense legal controversies and were also, in ~~part~~ a large part, responsible for the inauguration of the campaign for the construction of the Central Valley Water Project, with the importation of an additional supply of water from the San Joaquin river, and it is believed generally that the completion of this project, portions of which now are under construction by the United States government, will largely solve the water problems of the entire county, and provide an adequate supply to those areas where material deficiencies exist, and leave the Kaweah Delta area again at peace with its neighbors.

Because of the fact that the natural flow of the Kaweah is entirely unregulated and the bulk of its water is supplied to the gravity canals in the months of March, April, May and June, ranchers found it advisable, and in most cases necessary, to supplement from other sources their supply of water obtained from the canals. The boring of wells for domestic use had^{at}/an early date indicated the presence of an adequate supply of underground water at practically all points within the Delta, and the development of the electric pumping plant made it possible for the landowners to make full use of pumped water as a supplemental supply.

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The earliest record of pumping water for irrigation use in the Visalia area was in the year 1868, and was accomplished with the use of a steam engine by a man named Wilcox. In the year 1871 a large windmill was used for irrigation purposes at the residence of R.E. Hyde, a pioneer Visalia banker, and in the years that followed many pumping plants were installed. It was not, however, until about the year 1910 that extensive pumping operations were conducted in the area, and the increase in the number of such plants from that time to the present time has been continuous. Conservative estimates now place the number of pumping plants within the Delta area at more than 5000, practically all of which are in use for six months or more.

Fully realizing the value to the community of this underground water supply, and looking to its protection and better utilization, there was organized in 1927 the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, a public district comprising the entire delta area. The affairs of this district are administered by a board of seven directors who are at all times alert to the solution of the problems within their province, and are always working toward the interests of the agricultural and metropolitan areas within the boundaries of the district.

With local controversies largely adjusted, with the importation of additional water for deficient areas reasonably assured, and with everyone interested in water problems now working in harmony, a return of reasonably adequate prices for ~~farm~~ ranch products bids fair to bring to the Kaweah River Delta and to the cities of Visalia and Tulare county, an era of prosperity and progress such as never has been enjoyed in the past.

(4/58)

The Visalia Delta, ever a champion of the Union cause even when a majority of the residents of the Visalia region were sympathetic with the Confederacy, waged a bitter fight against what the newspaper termed traitors during the Civil War days, it is revealed in the old files of the publication.

Editors of the 1860's were somewhat more abrupt and caustic than are those of the present day. It is believed excerpts from the old Delta will give the picture better than a review in modern news style so the Delta is quoted word for word in one of its battles, that against a state senator whose loyalty was doubted by the newspaper. Since the senator involved never was ousted from his office and because the temper of the times may have led to excessively abusive attacks, the name of the senator has been eliminated and he is called "Senator Blank" in the old articles.

An article headed "Turn Out the Traitors!" appeared in the issue of September 18, 1862. It follows, in part:

"We want the next legislature to purge itself of treason by expelling Senator Blank of this district, and next, to devise prompt and efficient means to remove from the county offices every individual who abets treason by word or deed--which list will include nearly every official in this county. We shall call attention to this matter again more than once.

"The following excerpts from a public address delivered in Visalia on the 16th day of August form a portion of the reasons why Senator Blank should be expelled:

"I have come to the conclusion that it is a public necessity that this country shall be under two separate governments."

"There is not a single vestige of the constitution but what has been violated by the party in power."

"The people of the South have a right to set up a government

ad one traitors

"A state cannot be indicted for treason. We owe our allegiance to our respective states in preference to the general government--the Union platform to the contrary ~~notwithstanding~~ notwithstanding."

"What I am speaking here today is considered treason and I expect I am standing on slippery ground, but I am in a back woods place where General Wright and his military power cannot get at me and I will exercise the liberty of free speech, if I have to look through the grates of a prison."

"The advocates of the Union go prowling around as a wolf, holding up a flag which is nothing but a rag worth twenty-five cents, to gull the ignorant. Sir, this flag has been prostituted to the lowest iniquity."

"I have spoken in strong terms but no stronger than my conscience dictates."

"We would respectfully inquire of General Wright whether, in his opinion, the above extracts have a tendency to 'discourage enlistments,' and if so, how long will they be tolerated?"

Blank The arrest and release upon his own recognizance of Senator ~~Baker~~ are recorded in the Visalia Delta of October 23, 1862, the release arousing the ~~united~~ ire of the Delta editor. In commenting upon the reported speech and arrest of *Blank* ~~Baker~~, the newspaper said:

Blank "It (~~Baker's~~ speech) was of the most treasonable character and such as if made use of, should consign Baker to Alcatraz for life. But he has since denied giving utterance to any such treasonable sentiments. On the contrary, it is said that on every occasion of late, he has protested his loyalty and devotion to the Union.

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ad two traitors

^{Blank}
"About 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon ~~Baker~~, while walking on the opposite side of the street from the U.S. Marshall's office, was tapped upon the shoulder by that official personage and politely requested to accompany him to his apartment. The result of a brief visit was his discharge on his own recognizance. We understand he gave the most solemn assurances of his loyalty to the general government during the interview. On the strength of his assertions he was given his liberty, but is not yet beyond the jurisdiction of the federal authorities. In justice to Senator ^{Blank}~~Baker~~, it should be stated that a rumor very generally prevails that he is a native of Ohio and was an abolitionist in that state.....

"We would advise Marshall Rand to ~~re-examine~~ endeavor to post himself in regard to his duties. If he had no evidence against ^{Blank}~~Baker~~, what business had he to lay a finger on him? If he had evidence, why did he release him? Did the sapient marshall expect ^{Blank}~~Baker~~ to pronounce his own sentence by pleading guilty? The example ofothers ought to convince any sane man that the word and oath of a traitor are not to be relied on under any circumstances."

The Delta of October 30, 1862, reports the rearrest of ^{Blank}~~Baker~~ by Deputy U.S. Marshall W.S. Powell and ^{Blank}~~Baker~~ was taken to Camp Babbitt ~~Babbitt~~ where he was given into the custody of Colonel Evans. The prisoner had asked to be released upon his parole of honor pending his trial but was informed by the colonel that the latter had no authority to grant such a request.

The Delta of November 6, 1862, reviews the August speech of the senator and prints the oath which ^{Blank}~~Baker~~ took as state senator which included a pledge of loyalty to the federal government. Editorial comment upon the senator's oath was "And it didn't choke him!"

ad three traitors

42 The Delta of January 30, 1863, reports:

"In the legislature there have been some proceedings of interest to our citizens. In the senate, Mr. Chamberlain introduced the following resolution and asked that it be referred to a committee:

"Resolved that a committee of five be appointed by the chair to inquire whether the Hon. ~~Thomas Baker~~ ^{Sanford Blank}, a member of this senate, has, at any time, been guilty of uttering seditious language, and especially on or about the 16th of August last past, in a public address in the town of Visalia, in this state, and to report the facts, and what action, if any, should be taken thereon; and that the committee have power to send for persons and papers."

^{Blank}
"Mr. ~~Baker~~ said he was not unwilling to have the committee appointed. He could justify everything he said in Visalia and would utter the same sentiments in the presence of the senate. He went into a long rambling exposition of his position, and talked a-deal about the Delta, but without doing his case much good, apparently, for the resolution was passed by a vote of 31 to 4."

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ad four traitors

As stated at the beginning of the article, the prosecution of Senator Blank probably was discontinued as there is no record in the old files of the charges ever having been pressed.

While the old Delta was, for a period, in sympathy with ~~democratic~~ the democratic party, it never swerved from the stand that the Union should not be divided.

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Early Visalia business establishments frequently were located according to their proximity to better known hotels or saloons, it is indicated by a survey of early advertisers. "Opposite" such and such a hotel or "adjoining" a specified saloon was, in the opinion of the advertisers a better guide to their establishments than a name or street number.

A survey of early business advertisements in Visalia follows:

BUSINESS HOUSES

In Visalia, June 25, 1859, as shown by first issue of Tulare County Record & Fresno Examiner.

Palmer & Hatton, Architects, Builders, etc.

Drs. George and Roberts, next door to express and drug store.

Dr. J.D.P. Thompson, First door east of Billup's hotel.

Morris and Freman (William ~~San~~ Gouveneur Morris--J.W. Freeman) Office on Court street.

S.C. Brown, in the brick building on Court street, opposite court house.

Warner's hotel, Main street.

Billups hotel, Corner Court and Mill (Main) streets.

Express Drug Company (H.D. Bequette).

Cosmopolitan Saloon ~~NEAR~~ Mill (Main) street, next door to

Freeman and Company's express. C.G. Sayle and Francis Warren, props.

Joseph H. Thomas, Lumber.

Harris and Sawyer, livery stable, south of Eagle hotel.

Joseph N. Thomas, blacksmith, brick shop opposite Billups hotel.

Riche Bostwick and Brother, groceries, provisions, hardware, etc.

Mill (Main) street, opposite Billups hotel.

On July 2, 1859, in addition to above advertisements, appear the following:

Dry goods, clothing, groceries and provisions, furniture, crockery, hardware, tinware, etc. D.R. Doyglass, Mill (Main) street.

F. Jordan and Company Mill (Main) street, opposite postoffice.

Paints, oils, farming implements, boots shoes, hats, bonnets, ribbons, trimmings, etc.

Brick Manufacturers: C.P. Majors.

Saloons: Pioneer Billiard and drinking saloon, Court street, adjoining the Overland Mail Stage office.

Stages:

U.S. Express and Mail Line, Visalia to Hornitos, via Kings river and Millerton. W.L. Rice, Prop.

Livery Stables:

Visalia Livery and Sale Stables. Corner Court and Mill (Main) streets. Goodhue and Poer, Props.

Chinese goods and laundrying:

Sam Sing, Mill (Main) street, opposite Metropolitan saloon.

(2) (4/20)

edition topography based on derby report
on the area including Tulare county
An interesting statement made in a topographical report/
in 1850 by Lieutenant George H. Derby for Assistant Adjutant
General Ed. R.S. Canby in 1850 is that the major portion of the
valley was "incapable of cultivation" and "little better than
a desert."

Derby was ordered to examine the country on the eastern
side of what is now Tulare lake (then Tache Lake) from approximately
the southern extremity of the valley to the San Joaquin river to
the north for the purpose of selecting a suitable position for the
establishment of a military post to protect the frontier east of
San Luis Obispo from Indian raids and to control the Indians
inhabiting the borders of the lake.

Reported ~~May~~ Lieutenant Canby in those early times:

"The Tulare valley, from the mouth of the Mariposa to Tejon
Pass at its head is about 120 miles in extent and varies from 80
to 100 miles in width. With the exception of the strip of fertile
land upon the rivers emptying into the lakes from the east, it is
little better than a desert. The soil is generally dry, decomposed
and incapable of cultivation.

"The only point in the whole valley which struck me as at all
suitable for a military post was a small portion of the interval
land contained by the five creeks of the River Frances. The land is
excellent for cultivation, well timbered and an abundance of building
material may be found close at hand. The country is eight miles in
length by six miles in width between these branches; it is a
beautiful, smooth, level plain ~~savanna~~ covered with clover of
different kinds and high grass and thickly shaded by one continuous
grove of oaks of a larger and finer variety than I have ever seen
in the country."

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ad one topography based on derby report

The River Frances mentioned is now known as the Kaweah river and the fertile area described is the territory now occupied by Visalia and the surrounding country so it is apparent Lieutenant Derby early recognized the possibilities of the Visalia section although he did overlook the fertility of the large area which has become one of the world's greatest fruit producing sections as the result of irrigation.

Lieutenant Derby tells of arriving on the shores of "the great Tache lake" in May, 1850.

"We were unable to get close to the water, in consequence of the tule which environed it," he reported, "the tule extending into the lake from 200 yards to one-fourth of a mile, as far as the eye could reach.....The peaks of the Sierra Nevada, at this place 12,000 feet above the sea level and covered with perpetual snow, appeared in close proximity, and, rising ~~shewn~~ far above the horizon, seemed to us to come down precipitously to the very edge of the water."

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Derby tells of arriving/and inspecting the area about Moore's Creek (Moore's Creek appears to be the present Deer Creek) and of crossing the ravines in the mountains to Tule river "which runs in the same direction as the former stream (a little north of east) and at about eight or ten miles north of it, emptying into the southeastern extremity of the Tache lake. This stream has two branches the upper portions of which are well timbered, but the banks are swampy near the lake, and for a long distance in the plain, the tule running up to within five miles of the hills. At this time the stream was about 100 yards wide, from 12 to 20 feet deep, and very rapid.....

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ad two topography based on derby report

"Upon its upper banks and their vicinity in the hills, ~~there~~ plenty of large pines are found; lower down, it is well timbered with the different species of oak, sycamore, cottonwood and willow."

The lieutenant tells of arriving at the River Frances (the Kaweah), "a large stream 19 miles to the north of the Tulare. This stream flows nearly west from the hills and empties into the Tache lake about 20 miles north of its southeastern extremity. It is, at the point upon which we arrived, divided into five branches of sloughs, four of which separate from the main river, about five miles above, joining again from one to 10 miles below, while the southern branch has a separate and distinct course from the Sierra, and joins the main stream in the marshy ground near its junction with the lake.

"The country, some eight miles in length by six in width, contained between these branches, is a beautiful, smooth, level plain, covered with clover of different kinds and high grass, and thickly shaded by one continuous grove of oaks ^{of} ~~and~~ a larger and finer description than any I have seen in the country."

Further on, the Kings river is pictured as the largest stream in the valley "with a rapid current and the water as cold as ice. It is about 60 miles in length, rising in two branches high up in the Sierra, which, uniting about 40 miles from its mouth, flow in a southwest direction through the hills and valley, and empty into the Tache lake at its northeast extremity. Its banks are high and well timbered and the country in its immediate vicinity is apparently fertile....."

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ad three topography based on derby report

"The Tulare valley," says Derby in the latter portion of his report, "from the mouth of the Mariposa to the Tejon pass at its head, is about 120 miles in extent and varies from ~~th~~ eight to 100 miles in width. With the exception of a strip of fertile land upon the rivers emptying into the lakes from the east, it is little better than a desert.

"The soil is generally dry, decomposed and incapable of cultivation, and the vegetation, consisting of artemisias and wild sage, is extremely sparse. The only point in the whole valley which struck me as at all suitable for a military post was the small portion of internal land contained by the five creeks of the River Frances.

"A position here would be central, being easy of communication with the Kings river to the north and with Kern river to the south, upon which two streams and their tributaries are situated the greater number of Indian rancherias in the valley. The land is excellent for cultivation, well timbered, and abundance of building material may be found in the vicinity, either stone or heavy pine and oak timber.

" road leading through the Tejon pass from Los Angeles, and intersecting the emigrant trail through Walker's pass near Kern river, passes directly through this point to the northern mines of the San Joaquin valley. This road will undoubtedly be much travelled when brought into notice, and the post being established at this point will contribute much to its safety and protection.

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ad four topography based on derby report

"The post could be supplied with wagons through the pass of San Miguel, either from San Luis Obispo or Monterey, or by a wagon road from Monterey through the pass of Pacheco or Santa Anna, crossing ~~from~~ the San Joaquin at its southern bend and the Kings river at the lower ferry.

"From the information regarding the character of the San Joaquin between Stockton and the southern bend, I have no doubt that it may be navigated by small steamboats to the latter point during eight or nine months of the year.....

"The whole number of Indians in the valley as near as I can judge is about 4000. These are by no means connected with each other; the rancherias upon the southern rivers being, in fact, ignorant of the existence of those situated further to the north. Those who have ^{had} an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the whites, are friendly and well-disposed; the others, although ignorant, mischievous and perhaps maliciously inclined, may easily be kept in subjection by a small force, and by kind treatment."

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