

Date	Event
1853	Lt. K.S. Williamson (US Topographic Engineers) lead expedition with William Blake (Geologist) surveyed Salton Basin for railroad routes. Blake claims that the basin could be productive if it could be irrigated.
1857	Dr. Oliver M. Wozencraft, a prominent San Francisco physician, seemed most impressed with the agricultural possibilities of the Salton Sink. In 1857 he moved to San Bernardino and launched a campaign to irrigate the desert.
1859	<p><i>Wozencraft Plan</i></p> <p>Wozencraft secured the complete cooperation of the California Legislature. On April 12, 1859, by joint resolution, it asked Congress to give the state approximately six million acres, including the entire Salton Basin and more. Three days later, the Legislature conveyed to Wozencraft all rights that it had, or might later acquire to that vast tract, conditional on his developing an irrigation system to water it. Wozencraft had explained that his title to all that land was necessary to secure financing for the project. In Congress, the House Public Lands Committee took a least a conditionally favorable view of the project, although it ruled out almost half of the requested land, pointing out that land in the San Bernardino, Orocopia, Chocolate and other mountains were far too high to be irrigated by Colorado River water and might have mineral value. As for the remaining 3,000,000 acres, the committee asked advice from knowledgeable witnesses. Most agreed that the land was not only worthless without irrigation, but was an impediment to travel. A commissioner from the US Land Office felt that such a huge land grant to a single individual would essentially extend the system of land grants inherited from Mexico and was not in accordance with the general policy of the country. Newspapers wrote that they saw no obstacle to the success of the plan except for porous nature of</p>
1861	Outbreak of the Civil War diverts federal attention and support.
1873	<p><i>Widney sea proposal</i></p> <p>In 1873 a proposal was made to turn the Colorado River deliberately into the Salton Basin and re-create Lake Cahuilla. Dr. Joseph Pomeroy Widney wrote an article in the January issue of the Overland Monthly, presenting tentatively perhaps, a plan for creating a great fresh water lake. From this he concluded that when the desert had large bodies of water, the rainfall was greater, and the weather was cooler because of evaporation and the effect of prevailing winds. If the basin were filled again, he reasoned, the evaporation would be comparable to that of the Bay of Bengal which had been computed at 16 feet annually. It would be enough, he thought, "to supply 12 inches of rain to the 86,400 square miles," and would change a vast amount of head from an active to a latent condition and this would lower the temperature of all the adjacent territory.</p>
1874	Stretch reported that the weather change issue needed further study, but he felt it was "evidently wiser policy to retain the land than to destroy it by submersion." Stretch's report, dated February 8 1874, struck Congress as good thinking. So far as Congress was concerned, that was the last formal action on the Widney Sea proposal,....Congress overturns Widneys proposal to flood the basin based on lack of evidence that wheather would change
1876	First survey for an "All American" canal by Lt. Eric Bergland.
1885	Desert Act opens area for homesteaders and developers. Dependant on artesian wells.
1885	Durbrow was granted Articles of Incorporation for the New Liverpool Salt Company on January 15, 1885. He actually had begun work on the salt beds in 1884, when he shipped over 1,500 tons of this "white gold" to San Francisco. The vast salt deposits, comprising over 1,000 acres of unusually pure rock salt, were considered one of the largest in the country. During the company's active years, Cahuilla Indians provided the labor force. Historian George Wharton James described the operation in these words: "They moved across the brilliant, glaring white fields, tilling the deposits. The salt was plowed by means of plows attached to bands that traveled across the salt bed from one engine to another. The furrows cut were eight feet wide and six inches deep and each plow was capable of harvesting over 700 tons per day."
1887	Wozencraft continued to advocate his proposal in the West and in Washington, where in 1887, confident that he was on the verge of success, he died unexpectedly, and the proposal was again shelved.
1891	Only in 1891, twenty-nine years after his (Wozencraft) bill failed in Congress, was a serious attempt made to realize the "dream" of turning water into the Salton Sink and creating a fertile oasis in the In 1891, John C. Beatty of California, another man of imagination and foresight, became interested in the agricultural possibilities of the Colorado Desert and formed a corporation under the name of "The California Irrigation Company", for the purpose of carrying water into the Salton Sink from the Colorado River. He engaged as his technical advisor Mr. C. R. Rockwood who had been employed by the U.S. Reclamation Service, and who was regarded as a "shrewd and clever man and engineer," words used to describe him by Mr. H. T. Cory, Chief Engineer of the California Development Company.
1893	Owing to a lack of public confidence in reclamation experiments, Mr. Beatty and his associates were unable to secure enough capital for the proposal and in the monetary panic of 1893, they were forced into bankruptcy. The company's maps, records and engineering data were turned over to Mr. Rockwood in satisfaction of a judgment he obtained in a suit for his unpaid salary of \$3,500.
1898	At last, however, in 1898, Mr. Rockwood secured a promise from certain capitalists in New York that they would advance the necessary funds, but two days before the papers were to have been signed, the American battleship "Maine" was blown up in the harbor of Havana, and this catastrophe, together with the war that followed it, put an end to negotiations.

1900	George Chaffey, a civil engineer and irrigation expert, of Los Angeles. He had already successfully established irrigation systems in other parts of California and throughout the world. Most men, he reasoned, would be frightened by the prospect of having to do hard agricultural labor in shade temperatures of 110 to 120 degrees, and sun temperatures of perhaps 140 to 150 degrees. They simply would not go to a place where they would be subjected to such heat. After his experience in the interior of Australia, however, where the temperature in the shade often reached a maximum of 125 degrees, but where men worked without danger or serious inconvenience, he changed his view of irrigation in the Colorado Desert. He sent word to Rockwood that he was interested in the project and he offered to finance it. On April 3, 1900, Chaffey signed a contract that made him president and, chief engineer of the California Development Company. The contract bound him to construct canals, at a cost of not more than \$150,000, which would carry to the Imperial Valley 400,000 acre-feet of water per annum.
1900	Calexico founded by G. Chaffey as a tent city for workers on Alamo Canal.
1901	In March 1901, the Imperial Land Company was incorporated for the purpose of attracting colonists, laying out town sites and bringing lands into cultivation. When Mr. Chaffey and the Land Company began an advertising campaign for the purpose of interesting the general public in the area, and in order not to scare off settlers and small investors by using the ominous words "desert" and "Sink", they changed the name of the basin that they proposed to irrigate, calling it "The Imperial Valley." → late nit problems
1901	Alamo Canal opens into Imperial Valley, May 14.
1901	The work throughout was pushed with great energy, and on the 14th of May, 1901, a little more than a year after Mr. Chaffey assumed direction of affairs, water was turned into the Pilot Knob head gate, and the irrigation of the Salton Sink became a certainty, if not a fully accomplished fact.
1901	The New Liverpool Salt Company operated its works for almost 20 years, without competition. In 1901 a rival concern, the Standard Salt Company, discovered that title to the land was vested in the US government, and the New Liverpool Company had no rights to harvest the salt. A hastily passed congressional bill required companies to file claims on saline lands. Both Liverpool and Standard had representatives in Washington DC ready to telegraph the news that President McKinley had signed the bill and the land was up for grabs. Word arrived at the Mecca telegraph station and the Liverpool men took off down their railroad tracks in a pumphand car, intending to race to the most choice locations to file their claims. The Standard men took off in a horse and buggy in a great cloud of dust, "knowing smiles" on their faces. When the perspiring Liverpool boys got to the salty area, they found that the Standard men had rigged up a series of mirrors to flash the message, and, in fact, the word had arrived at their camp before the racers were out of Mecca! Ultimately the two companies worked together, but salt mining was doomed to a very short future.
1902	Settlers soon began to come in, mutual water companies were organized, and before the 3rd of April 1902, four hundred miles of irrigation ditches had been dug, and water was available for 100,000 acres or more of irrigable land.
1902	In the early part of 1902, the Bureau of Soils of the US Agricultural Department published the results of a survey of the irrigable lands in the Colorado Desert. They reported that the lands were so impregnated with alkali that very few things could be successfully grown on them. The report said in part, "One hundred and twenty-five thousand acres of land have already been taken up by prospective settlers, many of whom talk of planting crops which it will be absolutely impossible to grow. They must early find that it will be useless to attempt their growth No doubt the best thing to do is to raise such crops as sugar beet, sorghum and the date palm (if the climate will permit), that are suited to such alkali conditions, and abandon as worthless the lands which contain too much alkali to grow those crops." This report was widely quoted and commented upon and was a real deterrent to further colonization. If it had been issued two or three years earlier, it might have been fatal to the whole irrigation project. Fortunately, though, the crops raised by a few farmers who had already been cultivating this "alkali impregnated" land proved conclusively that the report of the analysis of the soil made by the Government experts was unduly pessimistic, if not wholly erroneous.
1902	There were two thousand settlers on the ground at the end of 1902
1903	There were seven thousand in 1903
1904	ten thousand in 1904
1904	before the first of January 1905, one hundred and twenty thousand acres of reclaimed land were actually under cultivation, while two hundred thousand acres more had been covered by water stock.
1904	Alamo Canal silting up, plans to relocate intake on Colorado River.

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