

were put into cans) covered Terminal Island. The great harbor, which some people had thought could never be built, became one of the busiest ports in the world. The enormous amount of freight that passes through it each year has helped Los Angeles to become the largest city in California and the third largest city in the United States.

WATER FOR THE IMPERIAL VALLEY

The Los Angeles harbor was just one of several bold plans that were begun in California during the early years of the new century. Another plan involved bringing water to the Colorado Desert. The Colorado Desert lies in the southeastern part of California. It is blazing hot. The land looks dry and sandy. But the soil is fertile. If crops had water, they would grow all year long. Farmers could send vegetables to eastern cities when snow lay deep and people there had no fresh, green things to eat.

See if you can find the Imperial Valley on the map on page 24. It is part of the Colorado Desert. It is west of the Colorado River. The valley is about 100 miles long. Its bottom is lower than sea level. A canal from the Colorado River to the Imperial Valley would run downhill all the way.

Early in the century men started digging such a canal. They began the work on the California side of the river a few miles north of Yuma, Arizona. They could not go straight west. High dunes of loose, soft sand stood in the way. To avoid the dunes, the men ran the canal south into Mexico. There they found an old, dry stream channel. They let the water flow westward along the channel for several miles. Then they bent the canal north into the Imperial Valley. (The

canal is shown on the map on page 281.)

Thousands of people hurried to the desert and bought land. By the end of 1904 they were growing crops on 150,000 acres of rich soil. They were forming new towns—Callexico, Brawley, El Centro, and others.

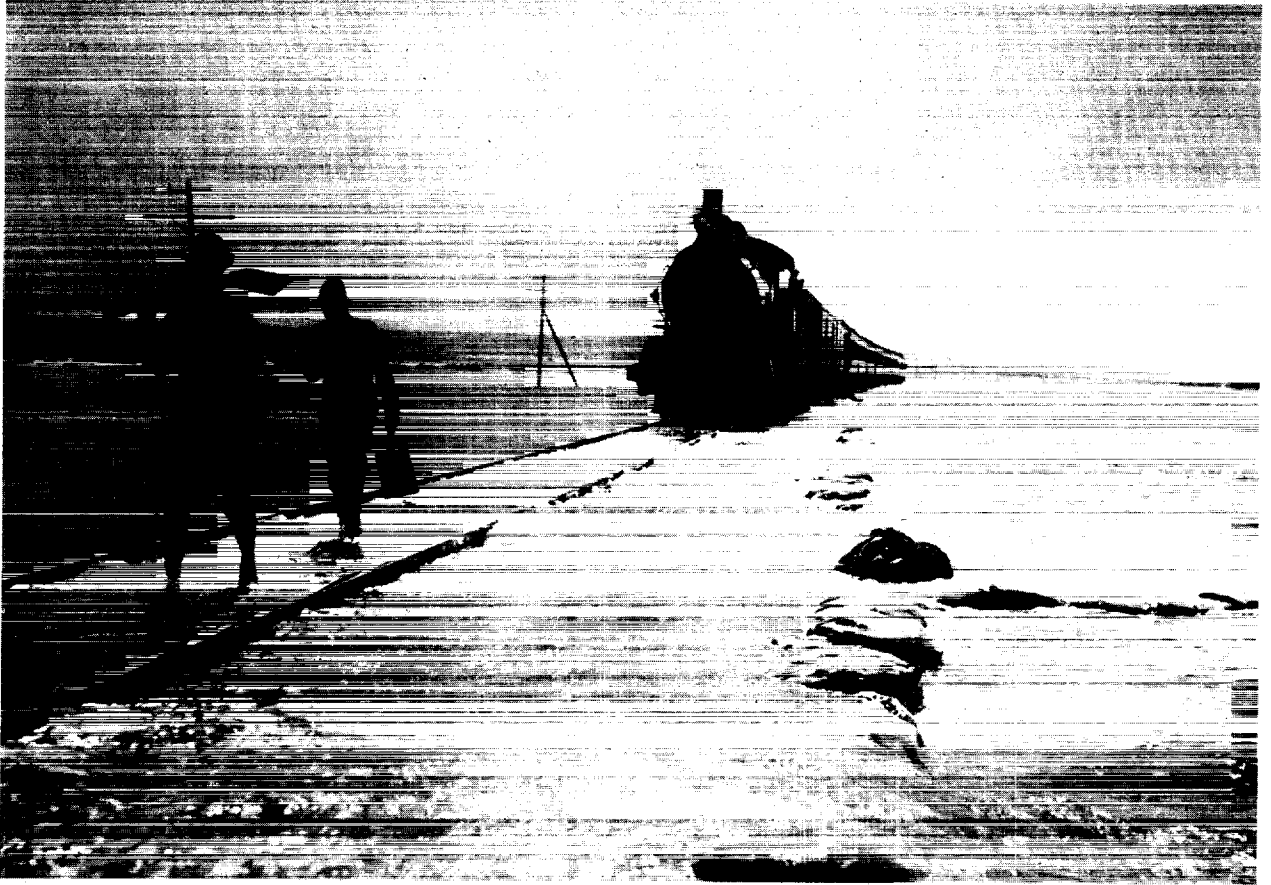
Then trouble struck. The water of the Colorado River is red with *silt*. Silt is mud carried in water. The silt of the Colorado River settled to the bottom of the new canal. It held back some of the water. The farmers could not irrigate all of their crops.

It was decided to dig a new opening for the canal. Workers cut this opening in the bank of the Colorado River south of the border, inside Mexico. Before they had finished, a flood rushed down the river. It tore a great gash in the bank beside the new opening. This happened in February, 1905.

Soon the entire Colorado River was pouring through the gash. It ran wildly along the old streambed used by the first canal. It gouged out new canyons a thousand feet wide. It poured through the Imperial Valley, destroying farm lands. It flooded into the lowest part of the valley. There it created a huge new lake called the Salton Sea.

The break in the riverbank grew until it was a half mile long. For two years workers tried to build a dam across the opening. They could not bring in material fast enough. The raging waters swept the half-built dams away as if they had been made of twigs. Each month the Salton Sea grew larger. If the water was not stopped, the sea would overflow the entire Imperial Valley.

The Southern Pacific Railroad Company, whose tracks ran through the valley, made a last desperate attempt to stop the water. Its workers loaded big boulders and tons of gravel onto 3,000 flatcars and hauled them



As trainmen check the track, a Southern Pacific train slowly crosses the flooded Imperial Valley in 1906.

to a special camp near the break. Meanwhile, other workers, mostly Indians, built two trestles side by side across the gap in the riverbank. They laid tracks on top of the trestles. For two weeks dozens of locomotives pulled trainload after trainload of rocks and gravel out above the swirling water. They dumped the material into the gap and hurried back for more. Working swiftly, they brought in new loads of boulders and gravel faster than the river could wash away the first loads.

Slowly the dam rose higher. In February, 1907 the work was finished. The Colorado River returned to its normal channel and flowed on to the ocean. The farms and

homes of 12,000 people had been saved. But the Salton Sea still sparkles in the middle of the desert to remind us of the time when a great river changed its course and threatened to destroy part of our state.

EARTHQUAKE AND FIRE STRUCK SAN FRANCISCO

Right while the water of the Colorado River was pouring through the broken riverbank, a far greater disaster struck our state. This was the San Francisco earthquake and fire of April, 1906.

Earthquakes occur because our earth keeps changing. During the centuries streams wear deep valleys into the mountains. They