

A HISTORY OF YUMA, ARIZONA,
1540 - 1920

FRANK D. ROBERTSON

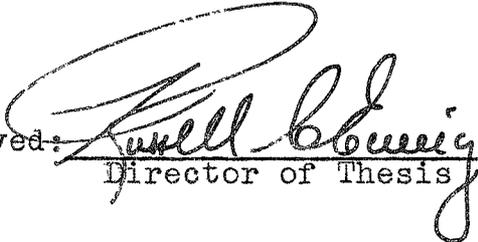
A HISTORY OF YUMA, ARIZONA,
1540-1920

by
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A Thesis
submitted to the faculty of the
Department of History
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Graduate College
University of Arizona

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Approved:


Director of Thesis


Date

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1942
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INTRODUCTION

Yuma, Arizona, three miles east of the confluence of the Colorado and Gila Rivers, is located on bluffs overlooking the Colorado and the sandy hills back of the bluffs. Adjoining the city on three sides is one of the largest irrigated areas in Arizona. Its soil supports extensive citrus, date, and pecan orchards, green fields of cotton, alfalfa, wheat, and barley, while miles of unclaimed sandy wastes and desert lie beyond, waiting to be cultivated. In every direction low, jagged mountain peaks show on the horizon, the Gila Mountains eastward, the Picacho and Chimney peaks of California to the northwest; and to the southwest are discernible the ranges near the Mexican border, about twenty miles distant from Yuma.

Almost the entire business district of the town is laid out within an area of four blocks. The streets included in this vicinity are of an unusually wide type, due to the fact that they were designed to take care of the pioneer need for room in which to turn the great lumbering transport wagons drawn by twenty-mule teams.

The history of Yuma is much older than the date of the first settlements, which were established about ninety years

ago. Three hundred years before this time, Spanish explorers and missionaries visited the region; but it was not until 1847, when United States troops marched through the Gila Valley during the Mexican War, that the country became generally known to Americans.

By 1857 Colorado City (later Arizona City and now Yuma) had a small, permanent population of a few hundred. But by the early sixties, the number of settlers had reached several thousand. The continued growth and prosperity of Yuma has been influenced by the great irrigation projects undertaken, especially after the beginning of the twentieth century.

In this narrative of the history of Yuma, it has been the purpose of the writer to describe the pre-settlement years, the struggle of the pioneer settlers, and the civic expansion after 1900.

CHAPTER I
THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN
AND THE YUMA INDIANS

The history of Yuma, the city as we know it today, probably had its beginnings between the years 1854 and 1861.¹ But the history of the vicinity around the junction of the Gila and Colorado Rivers, where the modern Yuma is located, may be traced back to the days of the early explorers in 1540. During this period of approximately 300 years, the confluence of the two streams was visited by Spanish land and water expeditions; missions were established and destroyed; and the travelers coming from the East and Sonora, Mexico, rested and took on supplies at this strategic location.

All during the exploration years the white man came in contact with the Yuma Indians, who lived in the Colorado and Gila River Valleys. The origin of these Indians, like most others, is rather uncertain and clouded with mythology. On the majority occasions the Spaniards found

¹ Bancroft, Hubert H., History of Arizona and New Mexico, 1530-1888, p. 499.

the tribes to be fairly friendly, although at times hostilities occurred which resulted in the loss of lives.

Hernando de Alarcón, the first European ever to penetrate the Yuma country, commanded a water force in the fall of 1540 which was supposed to support the northern march of Coronado. After navigating the Colorado River from its mouth some eighty leagues up past the junction of the Gila, Alarcón failed to find Coronado and returned to the region south of the Gulf of California.² On this venture the Spaniards found the Yuma Indians most friendly and always willing to help them pull their boats over the shoals.

Not having heard from Alarcón, Coronado dispatched Melchior Díaz and twenty-five men to the Gulf with orders to search for the lost party. Díaz, in the fall of 1540, traveled by land on to the Gulf of California and northward as far as the junction of the Gila and Colorado. There he found written on a tree instructions left by Alarcón to dig at the tree's base. This he did and found a message saying that Alarcón, after waiting in vain for Coronado, was forced to leave because his ships could proceed no farther.

² Hammond, George P. and Rey, Agapito, Narrative of the Coronado Expedition, Coronado Historical Series, Vol. II, pp. 7, 9, 15, 121.

After this news, Díaz and his men crossed the river on rafts and started down the west side of the Colorado River into Lower California. Before long they found their way blocked by beds of volcanic lava, so they retraced their steps and set out for Corazones, Sonora. While on the march one night, Díaz saw a dog molesting the expedition's sheep and started in pursuit on horseback. Going at full speed he hurled his lance at the animal, but unfortunately it missed and lodged in the ground; Díaz, unable to swerve his horse, came into contact with the weapon and it pierced his abdomen. The men carried their wounded captain several days, but he died before they reached Corazones.³

The next explorer who came to the region was Juan de Oñate who, in his search for the South Sea, left San Gabriel, New Mexico, on the 7th of October, 1604. He was accompanied by Father Fray Francisco de Escobar, Fray Juan de Buenaventura, and thirty soldiers. The majority of the latter were raw recruits.

The expedition traveled westward until it came to the Colorado River. This body of water was followed in a southwest direction until it was joined by a smaller river

³ Hammond and Rey, op. cit., p. 21.

from the east. Oñate called the latter stream the Nombre de Jesús, the present Gila. It was around this region that the Yuma and Cocopa Indians proved to be quite numerous, and more friendly than Díaz had found them some fifty years before.

After passing the confluence of the two rivers, the expedition pushed on down to the Gulf of Lower California.⁴ This expedition, like Coronado's, had slight effect on the real knowledge of geography; about all it did was to complicate the vagaries of the Northern Mystery.

There were no more explorations from any direction during practically the whole of the seventeenth century until Father Kino came to the region near the gulf shore between 1694 and 1705.

This Jesuit and his companions made five separate journeys to the Gila and Colorado Rivers. Several visitas or sub-missions were established around the gulf region and one at the mouth of the Gila. These were not permanent, and when Father Garcés came from Sonora while making his fourth entrada to the Gila and Colorado region in 1774, he visited the place where Kino had once

⁴ Bolton, Herbert E., Spanish Explorations in the Southwest, 1542-1706, pp. 268-280.

established the visita called Dionisio; but he does not speak of any remains of the former outpost.⁵

Further attempts to found missions at this location did not take place until 1775. In October of that year Juan Bautista de Anza left Tubac with three friars - Garcés, Font, and Eixarch - and thirty-five families. This was the first colony destined for San Francisco.⁶ The Gila was reached on November 28 without any serious mishap except the death of a woman in childbirth. After spending six days resting at the junction, the little party crossed the river with the help of Chief Palma and his Indians.⁷ Before departing, Anza had ordered a four months' supply to be left with Father Garcés and Eixarch, who remained to do missionary work among the savages. This was the beginning of the first white settlement at Yuma.⁸ Garcés made extensive explorations around the Yuma country, finally deciding that missions should be established on the California side of the Colorado River. In the fall of

⁵ Coues, Elliott, On the Trail of a Spanish Pioneer, Garces Diary 1775-1776, Vol. I, pp. 30-48.

⁶ Bolton, Herbert E., Spanish Borderlands, p. 270.

⁷ Ibid., p. 273.

⁸ Ibid., p. 274.

1776 the missionary returned to San Xavier del Bac. Three years later he again set out for the Gila to carry out his plans and promises to the Indians.⁹

During these three years, 1776-1779, the question of mission building was being discussed not only by the churchmen but by the high Spanish authorities in New Spain who gave much thought to Garcés' plans.¹⁰ In 1776 Jose de Gálvez became Minister General of the Indies and was in favor of improving conditions in northern Sonora. Also at this time, the commandant-inspector urged that the presidios of Horcasitas and Buenavista be transferred to the junction of the Colorado and Gila Rivers, as Bucareli had suggested several years before. The plans of Gálvez could not be carried out because a serious uprising occurred near the border of Sonora in 1777. Garcés continued to plead for help in establishing his missions and finally Hugo O'Conor, commandant-inspector under Bucareli, favored his project and secured authority from Spain to go ahead with it at the proper season; but at that time he deemed it wise to await the outcome of the second Anza expedition.¹¹

⁹ Bancroft, op. cit., pp. 387-397.

¹⁰ Coues, op. cit., pp. 9-19.

¹¹ Chapman, Charles E., History of California, pp. 316-322.

Teodoro de Croix became commandant-general of the Interior Provinces in 1777.¹² This authority was willing to listen to the mission idea, but at the same time he had become very much impressed with another venture of his own devising. He felt that it would be to his advantage politically if he could bring to an end the Indian wars and in particular reduce the wild Apaches. So, instead of helping to prepare the Indian for his future happy hunting grounds, Teodoro inaugurated a general campaign to reduce the Indian population by the use of musket balls. Therefore, in the light of this scheme the smaller undertakings proposed by Garcés and others were set aside by the Spanish ruler.

Even though Croix did drop the plan for establishing settlements at the junction, he promised that Garcés and another priest should go to the Yuma territory; but no precise date was set when the friars should found the proposed missions. The commandant-general also stated that places of worship should not be set up immediately because the warriors would be absent at war and the old men, women, and children, who would remain alone during the

¹² It was in 1776-7 that the northern provinces of Mexico were organized as the Provincias Internas, under the Caballero de Croix as commandant-general, independent of the viceroy.

war, would be little inclined to conversion.

In the meantime, the Yuma tribe could not understand the long delay in sending them missionaries. Chief Palma, the Spaniards' true friend, began to lose what little power and influence he had over his fellowmen and repeatedly requested the Spanish authorities in Sonora to hurry the mission plans. In 1778 he himself went twice to the presidio at Altar to beg aid. Finally in February, 1779, Croix issued definite orders for Garcés and another to proceed to the junction and establish a mission among the Indians. But for some unknown reason the general changed his mind and sent word to the friars not to carry out their undertaking. These orders reached Garcés too late. The little party had started upon their journey, and finally reached the junction with provisions about exhausted and without the supply of gifts for the Indian chiefs, which was almost a prerequisite to the establishment of friendly relations.

Not only were the Indians too busy planting corn to help build missions, but Garcés soon discovered that the Yumas were willing to be converted provided that there was plenty of gifts forthcoming. Also, it became apparent that Chief Palma was only one chief among many others, and

that the Indians were quite eager to go to war with their
¹³
 neighbors.

The situation of the missionaries at the junction
 grew steadily worse. Having been refused a loan by
 Governor Carbalan, Garcés was unable to make a decent pre-
 tense of missionary work. Consequently Garcés and Díaz,
 who had arrived a month after his leader, decided that the
 latter should carry a letter to Sonora explaining their
¹⁴
 troubles to the commandant-general.

Father Díaz reached Arispe, Sonora, in February, 1780,
 and presented his petition to Croix. Within thirty days
 it was decided that two settlements were to be founded at
 the junction, each of which was to combine the features
 of mission, presidio, and civilian town in one. Croix also
¹⁵
 provided for a 200 peso yearly grant for the friars. So
 by the fall of 1780 the two mission-presidios had been
 finally erected on the California side of the Colorado
 River at the place where the Gila empties into the larger
¹⁶
 stream. One mission, Purísima Concepción, was located

¹³ Chapman, op. cit., pp. 332-333.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 335.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 336.

nearer the junction than the other, San Pedro y San Pablo
¹⁷
 de Bicuner, which was a little farther down.

The Indians were anything but friendly to the newcomers. Trouble started at once. The Spaniards paid little attention to the Indians in allotting lands, and their cattle ruined the native crops. On the other hand, the Yumas demanded exorbitant prices to supply the missions with provisions when a scarcity occurred. Before long the natives were plotting against the intruders; even Palma, the friendly chief, turned against his former
¹⁸
 friends.

In July, 1781, an Indian uprising took place. In June some forty families arrived from Sonora on their way to California. These were in charge of a Captain Rivera and an escort of a dozen soldiers. Nothing happened in the way of an uprising until the new arrivals had departed, and then the Indian chief decided to act.

The following excerpt, taken from Chapman's History of California, describes the massacre in detail:

Rivera and his escort had meanwhile recrossed the Colorado and encamped there, in order to strengthen their animals before

¹⁷ Chapman, op. cit., p. 336.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 337.

proceeding on their way. They were still there when at last the long pent up wrath of the Yumas broke in full force against the Spaniards. On July 17, at about the same hour, the two settlements on the west bank were attacked in overwhelming force and destroyed. The two friars at Bicuner, one of whom was Father Díaz, and most of the men were put to death. The same thing occurred at Purísima Concepción, though Fathers Garcés and Barreneche were temporarily spared, only to meet the same fate as the others on the second day thereafter. The women and children at both places were held as captives. Rivera and his men, meanwhile, were just across the river, unaware, it would seem, of the dramatic happenings, which were taking place almost before their eyes. On the day after the destruction on the west bank, the Yumas fell upon the forces of Rivera and killed them to the last man.¹⁹

Only two men were known to have remained alive at Concepcion, and the whole number of the slain at the two pueblos and Rivera's camp was at least forty-six, probably more. There was no killing of women and children, but the captives were made to work.

Meanwhile the news was carried by the Pimas to Tucson, by one of the captives who had managed to escape to Altar, and thus Croix finally learned of the disaster a month after it had happened. On September 9 a council of war was held at Arizpe, and it was decided that the Yumas should be punished. The ringleaders were to be put to

¹⁹ Chapman, op. cit., pp. 337-338.

death and the captives freed.

In accordance with this plan, Croix dispatched a force of a hundred soldiers under the command of Pedro Fages and Captain Fueros of the Altar presidio. This expedition reached the scene of the disaster and immediately buried the bodies of the victims, which were found lying as they had fallen in the plaza and fields. The Yumas had abandoned the locality but were found some eight leagues down the river in a wooded tract, where it was thought not advisable to attack. Captain Fages managed to get the prisoners ransomed and the whole party returned to Sonoita late in October.

Here were found orders from the general to recover and bring back the bodies of the slain friars. These orders had been intended to reach Fages earlier, but for some reason they had been delayed. So Fages decided to return to the site of the massacre and carry out instructions.

Before setting out again for the junction, Fages heard the testimony of several men who had survived the massacre and was told where to find the remains of the dead missionaries. At San Pedro y San Pablo on December 7 the bodies of Díaz and Moreno were discovered in a good state of preservation, although the head of Moreno had

been cut off.²⁰ Soon after, the bodies of Garcés and Barreneche were recovered at Concepción by the soldiers. The remains of these four priests were carried south and buried in one coffin in the church at Tubutama.

The Indians at the junction were never subdued; no peace was made between them and the Spaniards; and the rebel chiefs, Palma and the rest, were not captured. The Yumans remained independent of all Spanish control, and²¹ always were more or less hostile.

Many people have blamed Croix for the failure of the settlement at the junction because he founded a mixed type of establishment - something that was not a mission, presidio, or pueblo, but a mixture of all - and because he took away from the friars the management of the temporalities. According to Chapman, the real criticisms that should be applied to him are that his delay in facing the problem resulted in the loss of time when the Yumas were most kindly disposed, and that he failed to understand the²² situation when once he had undertaken the establishment.

²⁰ Bancroft, Hubert H., History of California, 1542-1800, Vol. 1, pp. 364-370.

²¹ Ibid., p. 370.

²² Chapman, op. cit., p. 335.

The question of re-establishing the missions was finally settled in January, 1783, when Commandant-General Croix called a junta of the leading officers in Sonora to decide what action should be taken in regard to settlements at the junction. It so happened at this time that a traveler by the name of Felipe de Neve was in Sonora, after having just come from Upper California, and Croix invited him to the junta.

This person condemned the Colorado country, saying it was a region of salt marshes and sand with little rainfall and a lack of good pasture land. The prevailing opinion at the meeting was similar to Neve's, and the commandant-general decided not to rebuild the settlements. This decision automatically closed the land route to Upper California for over half a century, except for an occasional nomad and a few trappers, who came to the Gila for furs.²³ Although there were no actual efforts made to rebuild at the junction, there was some discussion in regard to the feasibility of doing so. In the writings of Don Ignacio Zunia, who had served for thirty-five years as commander of the northern presidio in Sonora, it was suggested that the establishments at the Colorado and the Gila again be

²³ Chapman, op. cit., p. 339.

founded, but no such reforms were ever carried out during his regime.²⁴

These Indians, who were characterized as being more or less hostile, seem to have caused more trouble during the late Spanish exploration period than when Alarcón and others first came to the Colorado River Valley between 1540 and 1605. Alarcón even commented upon the help they gave him; Oñate was much impressed with their physical strength; and Díaz, except for one occasion, did not have any great difficulty with them.²⁵

In comparison with the Apaches and other Indians found in different parts of the North American continent, the Yumas were not considered a dangerous nation. They lived pretty much at peace in a region extending from the Gulf of Lower California as far north as the Utah border. In her writings about the Colorado River tribes, Frances Densmore²⁶ stated that the Colorado River Valley was the early abode of three Indian tribes known as the Yumans. They consisted of the Cocopas, the Mohaves, and the Yumas.

In 1604, the Cocopas were known to be living about

²⁴ Bancroft, History of California, p. 404.

²⁵ Coues, op. cit., p. 21.

²⁶ Densmore, Frances, "Yuman and Yazui Music," Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletins 108-110, p. 1.

fifteen miles above the mouth of the Colorado River. Three centuries later they were found in Sonora, Mexico,²⁷ Lower California, and Southern Arizona. The Mohave Indians were found mostly in the north near El Dorado Canyon and today are living on a reservation located partly in Nevada,²⁸ California, and Arizona.

The Yumas lived between the Cocopas and the Mohaves, around Yuma, in the valleys of the Gila and Colorado, although in the early days the majority of them were found, as they are today, living on the west side of the Colorado at the junction.²⁹

Two legends of the origin of these Indians are related. The older legend states that they came from a mountain farther up the Gila River. From there they were sent to various parts of the country, each being given a few necessities of life that would be needed wherever the tribe might settle permanently. For example, the Yumas were given the arrow weed with which to build their houses,³⁰ and also a place to fish and hunt wild deer.

²⁷ Densmore, op. cit., p. 1.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 1.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

A more recent legend states that the Yumas traveled from a body of water, and at every place they camped they made a fire. According to the Indians, traces of these fires may still be seen.³¹ The earliest known Yumas were supposed to have been the size of giants, but have grown smaller since becoming civilized. The legend also states that they even fought with giants, and there is supposed to be a certain mountain where they are said to have hung their enemies.³² Father Kino seems to have been the first to use the name Yuma.³³

This tribe, like others, had its own customs and formalities. For example, the government of the Yumas was invested in two classes of chiefs, or captains - one head chief whose counsel and authority were supreme, and numerous sub-chiefs each of whom presided over his respective band. Questions that affected the welfare of the band were decided by the sub-chiefs; those affecting that of the whole tribe were referred to the head chief. Chieftainship was formally hereditary but Pascual, the head in 1878, was appointed by Major Heintzelman in 1852.³⁴

³¹ Densmore, op. cit., p. 4.

³² Ibid., p. 5.

³³ Kroeber, A.L., Yuma Tribes of the Lower Colorado, p. 478.

³⁴ Arizona Sentinel, June 15, 1878.

Their weapons of war were the customary bow and arrow; the arrow was tipped with small heads of chert,³⁵ obsidian,³⁶ old bottle glass, or iron; the tips were poisoned by thrusting them into the liver of a dead horse. The poisonous liver was prepared in several ways. One was to shut up scorpions, tarantulas, and rattlesnakes with the horse liver. After irritating the poisonous creatures the liver would then become saturated with the venom given off by the reptiles.³⁷

As to another custom of the Yumas, marriage took place early in life. It was preceded by a compact to live together as long as the parties could agree, and they were at liberty to separate at any time. Plurality of wives was tolerated, provided the husband was able to furnish support. Marriages among blood relations, even of first cousins, were strictly prohibited.³⁸ The offspring resulting from intercourse with whites were destroyed at birth, and to a great extent this custom was in practice as late as the eighteen eighties. The reason given for this opposition to a mixture of races was a fear that the

³⁵ A pebble with the hardness of quartz.

³⁶ A hard and brittle volcanic glass.

³⁷ Arizona Sentinel, June 15, 1878.

³⁸ Spier, Leslie, Yuma Tribes of the Gila River, pp. 219-228.

offspring, being superior to the mother and father, would at length overrule the parents. The crime of adultery was often punished by death.³⁹

The mode of fist fighting was rather peculiar in the manner in which it was carried on. Instead of striking out from the shoulder with the fists, each combatant made a grab for the other's hair and, having drawn his opponent as near to earth as possible, resting on one knee endeavored to beat the face of his antagonist with the other knee.⁴⁰

Tatooing was common with the Yumas. Many of the men had a zigzag line across their foreheads, and the women marked themselves with two lines from the corner of the mouth to the border of the jaw. The cutting was done with sharp flint, and the incision filled with charcoal. Both men and women painted their extremities with all the varieties of colored pigment they could obtain.

The Yumas were and still are very fond of tobacco, which was smoked but seldom chewed. Clay pipes were not common. Instead the Indians inserted a little tobacco in a hollow reed or cane, or they would roll some in corn husk or paper. They gathered leaves of a wild plant which

³⁹ Arizona Sentinel, June 15, 1878.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

they called "coyote tobacco."

The great American game of football was played by the Indian men over a hundred years ago. As is done today, the bladder from a hog was used for the ball. Horse racing was also a favorite pastime with those bands of red men who happened to be fortunate enough to possess the animals.⁴¹ Due to the fact that forage was scarce, only a limited number of domesticated animals was kept.

One of the most interesting and unique customs of the Yumas was their funeral rites. As soon as life was extinct, the body was laid upon a pile of dry logs and covered with more logs, as near as possible to the place where death overtook him. All effects of the deceased - armaments, cooking utensils, weapons, and all other property - were laid upon the pile and burned. Any crop he may have had, food or seed stored, all were destroyed.⁴²

This was a typical Yuma cremation and one of the main reasons why the tribe, as a whole, became poorer and poorer. After the deceased had been cremated properly, his name was never mentioned again by any member of the tribe, and the Indians never rebuilt on the spot where a death

⁴¹ Arizona Sentinel, June 15, 1878.

⁴² Spier, op. cit., pp. 300-305.

had occurred. On several occasions it has been known that a whole band of the red men moved to new camping grounds because several of their members had died within a certain locality.

Superstition played a major part in the Yuma's life, and especially was this true when it came to interpreting dreams. Four annual feasts were celebrated, the most important being the feast of the dead. In the fall of the year fires were built and clothing and food sacrificed to the dead. The tribe believed in some kind of God, but had no particular form of worship and looked upon heaven as being somewhere in New Mexico. In regard to the creation of man, it was believed that in the very beginning of the world all animals resembled man, but by eating grass some had become changed into beasts. After death, man goes back again and takes on some kind of animal form. They thought the thunder was the muttering of some enraged bird flying aloft in the heavens, and that the whirlwind was the spirit of an Indian.⁴³

Doctor W.H. Corbusier, a former army surgeon, stated that the Yuma medicine men met occasionally to make

⁴³ Arizona Sentinel, June 15, 1878.

"Medicine." He describes such a scene which took place on the Colorado River Reservation in 1874, as follows:

In the middle of the village they made a round ramada, or a house of boughs, some ten feet in diameter and under it, on the sand, illustrated the spirit land in a picture about seven feet across, made in colors by sprinkling powdered leaves and grass, red clay, charcoal, and ashes on the smooth sand. In the center was a round spot of red clay about ten inches in diameter, and around it several successive rings of green and red alternately, each ring being an inch and a half wide. Projecting from the outer ring were four somewhat triangular shaped figures, each one of which corresponded to one of the cardinal points of the compass, giving the whole the appearance of a maltese cross. Around this cross and between its arms were the figures of men with their feet toward the center, some made of charcoal, with ashes for eyes and hair, others of red clay and ashes, etc....

The medicine men seated themselves around the picture on the ground in a circle..... After they had invoked the aid of the spirits in a number of chants, one of their number..... solemnly arose and, carefully slipping between the figures of the men, dropped on each a pinch of yellow powder.....

After the medicine men finished performing, they were followed by the men, then came the women and children. The latter rushed to the spot in the crowd, grabbed handfuls of dust, tossed it in the air so as to fall back on them or rubbed their bodies with it, the mothers throwing the fine dirt over their children. This ended the ceremony. ⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Arizona Sentinel, June 15, 1878.

Relatively undisturbed in Spanish and Mexican times, the Yumas maintained their aboriginal culture almost unchanged until the fifties of the last century.

After that time the coming of so many white men and their association with the Indians tended to cause a rapid decrease in the latter's numbers. This was due mainly to the introduction of the white man's diseases.⁴⁵ The early Spanish explorers estimated the Yuma population at about 3000 in all, while Major Heintzelman placed their number around 972 men, women, and children in 1852.⁴⁶

After Fort Yuma was established the Indians around the junction were brought more under the control of the Americans. But in 1857 they still had one more tribal war with their old enemies, the Pimas and Maricopas.⁴⁷ This conflict was mainly due to the long-established belief that the Maricopas and Pimas were mortal enemies of the Yumas and Mojaves. The latter two tribes for generations had regarded the former as inferior races.

In 1856 the principal chief of the Yumas became mortally ill. Upon his deathbed he called his warriors

⁴⁵ Arizona Sentinel, March 9, 1878.

⁴⁶ Bancroft, History of California, pp. 544-545.

⁴⁷ Arizona Sentinel, May 5, 1878.

together and told them that if they organized an expedition against their enemies, the Pimas and Maricopas, it would result in the latter's destruction. After the chief's death the Yumas prepared for a secret attack upon the villages of their opponents. They notified the Mohaves of their intentions, and a large number of picked warriors united with the war party. The intended victims of the attack in the meanwhile - supposedly through the offices of the Cocopas - had got knowledge of the coming attack and not only mustered the whole of their own force to repel it, but obtained the help of the Papagos.

In September, 1857, the invading force, numbering between one hundred and one hundred fifty of the finest Yuma and Mohave fighting men, set out for the Pima villages under the guidance of an ambitious Yuma chief. They had no suspicion that their coming was known. The enemy set a trap which enticed the invaders through one village into a small canyon, where they were all killed except three or four.⁴⁸

Although the white man had been coming to the junction since 1540, no permanent settlement had yet been established there by the beginning of the nineteenth

⁴⁸ Ives, Joseph C., Report Upon the Colorado River of the West, p. 45.

century. All that can be said of accomplishments is that a better knowledge of the geography of the region had been obtained. But attempts to build a lasting white settlement failed completely, and the Yuma Indians remained in somewhat the same economic and social condition long after the Americans arrived.

CHAPTER II

TRAPPERS AND FORTY-NINERS

There was very little activity around the Colorado and Gila junction from the time that the two Spanish missions were destroyed in 1781 until about 1824. Chapman claims that the Anza highway from Sonora to California, which went through the junction, remained closed for half a century following the Indian massacre.

After the first quarter of the nineteenth century fur trappers began to make their appearance on both the Gila and Colorado Rivers. The Patties, father and son, seem to be among the first to come to this region to collect pelts. Also, there was an expedition led by St. Vrain to the Gila in 1826, and it is known that Pauline Weaver and companions came between the years of 1830 and 1850.

The younger Pattie, James, made three trips to the Gila; on two of these he visited the locality of Yuma. The first of the ventures was made in November, 1824. On the 24th of that month Pattie and a small group obtained permission from the governor of New Mexico to trap on the Gila. This trip lasted five months, and the hunters were

probably the first Americans to visit the upper valley of
the Gila.¹

The party returned to the New Mexico settlement, secured fresh supplies, and set out to bring in their buried hides, only to find that the Indians had stolen all of them. The Patties then obtained permission from some Mexicans to mine in the Santa Rita mountains in New Mexico. On January 26, 1826, James Pattie and a few companions again set out for the Gila to trap furs. They passed down the river to its junction with the Colorado. At this place they began an ascent of the larger stream and later crossed the Continental Divide, finally reaching Santa Fé, where the governor confiscated all the pelts.²

By the summer of 1826 the two Patties and about thirty other men set out once again for the Gila country. Early in November, many of their party having deserted and all their horses being gone, the rest built canoes and embarked upon the river. Through a mistake in sign language with the Indians, the trappers understood their informants to say that there was a Spanish settlement at

¹ Thwaites, Reuben G., The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie of Kentucky, pp. 9-19.

² Ibid., p. 14.

the mouth of the Colorado River. There they found nothing but deserted shores. The water was too swift to return, so they buried their furs and struck out across the peninsula of Lower California, finally reaching San Diego where both of the Patties were lodged in jail. James was released, but the elder man died in prison.³

According to certain governmental documents of Mexico, passports were issued on August 29, 1826, to the foreigners S.W. Williams and Seran Sambrano (St. Vrain) who, with thirty-five men of the same nation, were granted permission to pass to the state of Sonora for private trade.⁴ There is an uncertainty as to the exact number of passports that were issued. In a letter from Governor Narbona, governor of New Mexico, to the governor of Sonora, written two days after the issuance of the passports,⁵ the number was given at about one hundred.

The party started out from Fort Osage and at Santa Fe or Taos, probably the latter, the expedition divided into four parts. According to the Spanish documents these parties were known to be in various parts of

³ Thwaites, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴ Marshall, Thomas M., "St. Vrain's Expedition to the Gila in 1826," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, January, 1916, pp. 251-253.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 253-258.

Sonora. Once twelve men appeared at a place not far from Tucson. On October 28, 1826, information arrived at the presidio of Tucson that sixteen men were in that region. A searching party was sent out and was told by Indians that the fur trappers had gone north of the Gila River.⁶

Pauline Weaver was another trapper who visited the Colorado River vicinity before any permanent settlement was at the junction. It is not known exactly when he first came into Arizona. His name is scratched on the walls of the Casa Grande ruins with the date of 1832. This could not have been done by him, because he had never learned to write. He was interested somewhat in mining, but spent most of his time trapping on the Gila and Colorado. It is not known definitely just when he first visited the latter region, but it is possible that it was soon after 1830. In 1847 he was the military guide for the Mormon Battalion. He met the soldiers at the head waters of the Gila and guided them across New Mexico, Arizona, and on to California. In the late fifties he again was trapping in the region that extended from Fort Yuma north.⁷

⁶ Marshall, op. cit., pp. 258-260.

⁷ Hall, Sharlot M., The First Citizen of Prescott, pp. 1-5.

It was not long after these pioneer American trappers had been in the Southwest that wagon roads were opened up from points located in New Mexico and Texas. They extended across the states of New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

More extensively traveled than the routes to the Northwest by way of Salt Lake City were the trails to the Southwest by way of the Gila River. There were three such trails, but by far the most popular of these was the wagon road made by Lieutenant-Colonel Philip St. George Cooke and the Mormon Battalion between November, 1846, and January, 1847.⁸ Leaving the Río Grande at a point near the town of Rincon, New Mexico, this road extended to the southwest across the Río Membros and through the Guadalupe Pass to the San Pedro River, where it turned north and proceeded down the valley of this stream about fifty-five miles before turning west to Tucson. From this city it went northwest to the Pima Indian villages on the Gila River, where it connected with Kearney's trail and proceeded west along the south side of the Gila to the junction of the Colorado. After leaving the junction it went due west to San Diego. Many

⁸ Bieber, Ralph P., Southern Trails to California, p. 56.

of the immigrants diverged slightly from Cooke's road upon reaching the San Pedro, crossing that river a short distance southwest of the present city of Bisbee, Arizona, and arrived at Tucson by way of Santa Cruz and the Santa Cruz valley.

Kearney's trail was used by a considerable number of travelers. It was well known to the early fur traders ever since September, 1846, when Kit Carson guided General Stephen W. Kearney and his army of the West from New Mexico to California.⁹ It left the Río Grande a little north of the point where Cooke's road began, and proceeded west along the Gila River to the Pima villages, where it was joined by Cooke's road and continued on to California.

Almost a century before the above trails were used the Old Yuma Trail had come into existence.¹⁰ It came up from Sonora and after leaving Sonoyta went northwest to Tinaja Alta in the Yuma desert, where it branched off into two roads, both going in a more northerly direction, one to the Gila River ending approximately at Yuma, and the other connecting with the Gila Valley east of the

⁹ Bieber, op. cit., p. 57.

¹⁰ McGee, William J., The Old Yuma Trail, pp. 303-307.

city. The most important days for the Old Yuma Trail were in the century between 1749 and 1850. The route during this period was called "El Camino del Diablo." It formed the main overland tributary to the Royal Highway to California.

Both the Old Yuma Trail and the Gila trail were used by the gold seekers in 1848. Many came from Chihuahua and Sonora over the former road in that year, but the greatest numbers came during 1849 and for a few years after. The coming of so many immigrants necessitated the establishment of a ferry across the Colorado at the junction.

The Yuma Indians had been getting a lucrative income from aiding the immigrants across the stream before the Americans took it upon themselves to drive them out. From various reports it is known that for a short period during the late fall of 1849 both the Indians and Americans operated ferries. The first American ferry at the junction was operated by a Lieutenant Cave J. Coutts. This soldier was in command of an escort attached to the boundary surveyors under Whipple. The surveyors set up a camp on the California side and named it Calhoun.¹¹

¹¹ Farish, Thomas E., History of Arizona, p.234.

On the first of November, 1849, a flatboat which had made the voyage down the Gila from the Pima villages with a Mr. Howard and family and two men, a doctor and a clergyman, arrived at the surveyor's camp. The lieutenant immediately purchased the flatboat and used it as a ferry during the remainder of his stay. This, according to Bancroft, was the history of the first Colorado ferry.¹²

After the surveyors departed, the transportation of people across the river became a regular business enterprise headed by a Doctor Lincoln, formerly of Louisiana. The concern was financially backed by J.P. Brophie, whose home was in Hermosillo, Mexico.¹³ It appears that the Indians and their ferry were not molested by Lincoln until he formed a partnership with a man by the name of Glanton or Gallantine.¹⁴ John Glanton or Gallantine was a fugitive from justice. He and several others had been hired previously by the Mexican government to produce Apache scalps at the rate of twenty-five to one hundred dollars each. This business became very profitable within a short time because not only Apache scalps were taken, but those

¹² Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 1530-1888, p. 487.

¹³ Farish, op. cit., p. 235.

¹⁴ Bartlett, op. cit., p. 174.

of Opatas, Pimas, and even Mexicans. When the proper authorities discovered this, the scalp collectors were driven from Sonora to the vicinity of the Gila and Colorado, where they continued to cause trouble by plundering immigrants and molesting the Indians.¹⁵ It is possible that Lincoln did not know about Glanton's past when he took him in as a partner in the ferry business. The outlaws immediately got in trouble with the Yumas when they murdered the manager of the competing Indian ferry, who happened to be a discharged soldier.

The chief of the Yumas stated that trouble between his tribe and the Glantons arose over the rights of ferrying people across the Colorado. It seems that the Indians previously had made an agreement with the Americans whereby they were to transport all Americans at the rate of one dollar each. The same sum also applied to a horse and pack.¹⁶ After the departure of Major Anderson, who was in command of a few troops at the junction, the transportation of Americans had about ceased, but many

¹⁵ Farish, op. cit., pp. 236-238.

¹⁶ "Origin of the Trouble Between the Yumas and Glanton. Deposition of Jeremiah Hill," Historical Society, Southern California, Annual Publication, VI, p. 58.

Mexicans had arrived to cross at the Indian ferry. This caused Glanton to become angry. One day he sent his men down to the place where the other ferry was located and destroyed the boat. At the same time the white manager was brought to Glanton's camp and murdered by Glanton. Then the Indian chief, who had accompanied his murdered partner, was put out of Glanton's house. He returned to his people, held a council, and swore to kill all Americans at the ferry.

Not long after, Glanton and his men returned from San Diego in a somewhat exhausted condition, due to liquor and fatigue. The Indian chief went to the white men's camp and found them still drinking and eating; they offered him food and drinks also. After dinner five of the Americans lay down and went to sleep in a hut, leaving the Indian sitting nearby. The latter acted immediately. He contacted his own people, who were on the same side of the river hidden in bushes just below the ferry houses. Several were sent up the river after the three Americans cutting wood. The chief previously had posted about 500 Indians on the other side of the river with instructions to mix among the populace so as not to arouse suspicion. He himself then climbed a small mound to direct activities by signaling. This was done by waving a scarf attached to a long pole. When the time

was right, the signal was given and Glanton, Lincoln, and all the others were murdered and their bodies burned and thrown in the river. The only ones to escape were the three who were cutting wood some distance from the stockade.

Some reports state that after the killing the Indians stole the white men's money, an amount ranging from \$60,000 to \$80,000. The tale of the affair soon appeared in the California papers and was the cause for several men to come to the junction and try their hand at ferrying. George A. Johnson related that he read about the episode in the Los Angeles Star, and the part about the fabulous wealth so impressed him that he and seven others immediately formed a company and came to the locality to start up a ferry business.¹⁷

As soon as Governor Burnett of California had heard about the trouble on the Gila, he ordered the sheriff of Los Angeles County to muster forty men and the sheriff of San Diego County twenty men and prepare for an expedition to punish the Indians.¹⁸ The soldiers were placed

¹⁷ "Life of Captain George A. Johnson," Manuscript in the California State Library.

¹⁸ Guinn, J.M., "Yuma Depradations and the Glanton War," Historical Society of Southern California, Annual Report, 1903, p. 51.

under the command of Major-General Bean of the State Militia. He ordered his quartermaster, General Joseph G. Morehead, to furnish supplies for the troops. Morehead also was given the honor of leading the men to the Gila. By the time they reached their destination the number of recruits had increased to over a hundred, because many immigrants going west had joined the soldiers. Upon reaching the junction the whole party camped at the place of the ferry. Little or no fighting occurred with the Indians during the whole three months' stay of the army. As a matter of fact, nothing of importance was accomplished. Later it was found that the expedition had cost the state of California \$120,000. Neither Bean nor Morehead ever made an official report of the affair.¹⁹

George Johnson and his associates, who had rushed to the junction with the expectation of making a fortune in the water transportation business, soon sold out their interest to two men by the names of J.F. Jaeger and Hartshorn. Later Jaeger became the sole proprietor and continued the enterprise for many years. He also became one of Yuma's most prominent citizens during the town's early growth.²⁰

¹⁹ Guinn, op. cit., p. 51.

²⁰ Farish, op. cit., pp. 238-244.

Judging from an estimate of the number of immigrants arriving at the junction on their way to and from California between the years of 1849 and 1851, an enormous profit must have been made by the ferry owners. One authority maintains that there were as many as 60,000 people crossing the river in 1851. According to Bancroft this figure was too high. Ben Hayes, who made the trip across Arizona from Missouri in the fall of 1849, states in his diary that the fare to cross the river was two dollars for each person and each mule. But he himself was fortunate enough to have had the cost reduced to one ²¹ dollar for a person or mule.

Soon after Glanton and partners had been murdered, the military authorities in San Diego sent a body of troops to the junction under the command of Major Heintzelman. They arrived in November, 1850, and occupied Fort Defiance, where Glanton and other former outlaws had lived and carried on their ferry business. The arrival of these soldiers was the beginning of Fort Yuma.

The army leader called his camp Fort Independence; but by March, 1851, the troops had moved to the site of

²¹ Hayes, Ben I., Pioneer Notes from the Diary of Ben I. Hayes, p. 38.

the old Spanish mission, and this place was soon named
²²Fort Yuma. There was much trouble about supplies, but
the Indians were not hostile so in June the fort was left
in charge of Lieutenant L.W. Sweeney and ten men. Soon
the Indians did become unruly, killing a few immigrants
and attacking the post; at the same time, scurvy became
prevalent and supplies were exhausted. Captain Davidson
took command in November, 1851, and in the following
month both fort and ferry were abandoned for a short
²³period. Fortunately for the few white settlers and immi-
grants, Major Heintzelman returned in February to rebuild
the fort and reestablish the garrison. Complicated
Indian trouble, especially on the west bank of the river,
continued until later in the year when a treaty was made;
but it did not stop the occasional quarrels between the
Yumas and Cocopas.

Some information about the activities at the fort in
early years has come from the various travelers who
lingered there before continuing their journey. John
Bartlett, former boundary commissioner, described Fort
Yuma in June, 1852, as standing upon a rocky hill at the

²² Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico,
1530-1888, p. 488.

²³ Ibid., p. 489.

junction of the Gila and Colorado Rivers, on the north-west angle of the bank of the united streams. Traces of the old Spanish mission building could be seen. Some of these had been removed and used in constructing the army barracks. At this time the post held about 200 soldiers under the command of Major Heintzelman.²⁴ The majority of supplies for the fort were brought overland from San Diego at great expense. Before long, river traffic was opened on the Colorado and this reduced transportation costs considerably.

The early annals of Fort Yuma are given in a series of articles published in the Yuma Sentinel for May, 1875.

In October, 1852, the Yumans are said to have numbered 972. October 26th a fire destroyed most of the buildings, In December an earthquake made some changes in the river. In 1853 there was much fighting between the Indian tribes. In April, 1854, some of the Walker filibusters arrived from mouth of the Colorado. In July, Captain George H. Thomas took command. In January, 1855, a new treaty with the Yumas and Cocopas.²⁵

J. Ross Browne visited the fort about 1854, and in some of his writings he spoke of the pleasant climate in the winter, but while describing the weather in the summer he was

²⁴ Bartlett, op. cit., pp. 133-169.

²⁵ Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 1530-1888, p. 489, footnote number 26.

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not so complimentary.

By 1870 the army reservation had grown so it consisted of several commodious officer quarters, two storehouses, one hospital, a guardhouse, a supply depot with enough supplies to last two months, a carpenter, blacksmith and paint shop, and an underground powder magazine built of stone the walls of which were six feet thick.²⁷ Congress declared the site occupied by the military garrison a reservation on January 22, 1867.

On more than one occasion the commander at the fort was called upon to send out help to destitute travelers. One of the most famous incidents took place about two days' distance from the military post when Royce Oatman, his wife, and seven children were attacked by Tonto Indians.²⁸ This unfortunate family and others had left Independence, Missouri, on August 9, 1850, bound for the West. Mr. Oatman had been in failing health from an accidental injury received some time before and this, with previous business reverses, led him to consider seeking a

²⁶ Browne, J. Ross, Adventures in the Apache Country, pp. 57-59.

²⁷ Tyler, R.O., Revised Outline Descriptions of the Posts and Stations of Troops in the Military Division of the Pacific, p. 14.

²⁸ Hall, Sharlot M., Olive A. Oatman - Her Captivity with the Apache Indians, and Her Later Life, p. 217.

home in a less severe climate. He had relatives in California and it was his purpose to go on there if the Colorado River Valley did not prove satisfactory. All of the party were fairly well supplied with wagons, cattle, and household goods; in addition they carried what was believed to be sufficient food for several months, and a stock of articles that could be traded to the Indians for more food if the occasion arose.²⁹

Nothing of any consequence happened until the party reached Santa Fe' Pass. Here some dissension arose as to future plans and leadership, so the travelers split into two divisions. The larger number chose to follow a more northern route, leaving the Oatman family and their companions to go south toward Tucson. Before reaching Tucson the immigrants suffered the loss of a considerable number of horses and mules by theft of the Indians and through lack of sufficient feed for the animals.

The reduced rate of travel made necessary by the weakened animals also reduced the store of food, and it was found difficult to buy more at the Mexican villages since a drouth had limited the season's crops. The Oatman party finally crossed into Arizona in January, 1851.

²⁹ Hall, Olive A. Oatman, etc., p. 217.

Their horses had all been lost or stolen, the surplus cattle had been killed for food, and cows were yoked to many of the wagons in place of the lost oxen. A very short stay was made at Tubac. At Tucson, the next stop, they were begged to stay and take up farms, but feared that since there had been such a drouth they would not have enough provisions to last until a new crop could be harvested. A short distance out of Tucson the party was warned about the Apache raids all along the Gila River Valley and were urged to return to the town and remain until conditions improved. Two families decided to do this, but Oatman felt that he must push on if he expected his scant supply of provisions to last until he would reach his relatives in California. The idea of settling in the Colorado Valley had been given up some time before.³⁰ When Dr. John Lecount, a scientist and traveler, passed through Maricopa Wells on his way from Yuma to Tucson and said he had seen no Indians, Mr. Oatman decided it was safe to go on to the junction.

They still had two wagons and, though most of their belongings had been sold, traded, or stolen, the load was much too heavy for the exhausted cows to pull. So slow

³⁰ Hall, Olive A. Oatman, etc., p. 218.

was their progress that seven days later after leaving Lecount, the same man and his guide caught up with them while returning from Tucson on the way back to Yuma. The scientist had only his saddle horse and the Mexican guide so could render no immediate help; but he continued on as fast as possible bearing a letter from Oatman to Major Heintzelman at Fort Yuma, about ninety miles west. The following night the Apaches robbed Lecount of his horses, but he escaped with his life. Before continuing he posted on a tree beside the road a card warning the Oatmans. It was never known for sure, but his surviving children believed that Oatman found this warning and destroyed it to spare his family added anxiety.

The whole morning of March 29 was spent getting to the top of a steep hill. While resting there, Olive Oatman saw a band of Indians near by. There were about nineteen in all, armed only with clubs, knives, and a few bows and arrows. They approached and demanded food and tobacco, which were given them by Oatman. Then the Indians withdrew a short distance to hold a council. At this time Oatman started loading the wagons and preparing for the afternoon's journey. Suddenly the natives
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attacked the party before any defense could be set up.

³¹ Stratton, Royal B., Captivity of the Oatman Girls, pp. 61-89.

Each member of the family was clubbed and left to die except the two younger girls, Olive and Mary Ann, who were taken prisoners. Lorenzo, the oldest boy, who had been tossed over a ledge of rock, regained consciousness after the Indians had departed and managed to crawl and walk back toward Maricopa Wells. Before reaching that place several Maricopa Indians rescued him and took him on to his destination.³² A few days later Lorenzo was taken to Fort Yuma in a wagon, where he remained for two months. He begged help from the commander, Major Heintzelman, to retake his sisters; but the massacre had taken place on Mexican soil so the Major held that he had no authority to punish the offenders. He did send out a few men under Captain Davis but they did not accomplish anything. Lorenzo left the fort and went on to California, where he tried repeatedly to get help to send out a searching party; but no one would believe that his sisters could still be alive.

Before young Oatman had departed from the junction he had made friends with a carpenter at Fort Yuma by the name of Henry Grinnell. This man promised that he would some day find the captive girls. He attached to himself

³² Hall, Olive A. Oatman, etc., p. 224.

an invaluable assistant, a Yuma Indian named Antonio Francisco. It was through Antonio that Grinnell first got trace of the two girls. The former had returned from a big feast up the river and began boasting about his gambling success. He had won several horses and the Indian from whom he had won offered to let him take two women captives in place of the animals, which Antonio refused to do.³³ Grinnell seized upon this incident, and with the help of the Yuma Indian he found out what band held the captives and where they were camping. Antonio was sent back to the Mohaves with several horses, beads, trinkets, and blankets in an effort to get the women released. Almost two months later he finally urged the captors to give up their captives, but not before having to threaten the Mohaves with punishment at the hands of the troops from the fort. The women were finally allowed to accompany Antonio back to Yuma.³⁴ One was Olive Oatman and the other a Mexican.

Olive related that about two years with the Apaches, she and her sister Mary were traded to the Mohaves. Before long Mary died of starvation. Life with the Indians

³³ Hall, Olive A. Oatman, etc., p. 225.

³⁴ Stratton, op. cit., pp. 251-279.

was almost unbearable, but Olive withstood the ordeal for five years. After returning to civilization she married in 1865 and lived in Texas until her death in 1903.³⁵

Fort Yuma continued to stand watch over the Colorado River Valley until a few years after the coming of the railroad in 1878. The soldiers were withdrawn and the site became the center of the Yuma Indian reservation.

³⁵ Hall, Olive A. Oatman, etc., p. 227.

CHAPTER III
YUMA IN THE FORMATIVE PERIOD
FROM 1854 TO 1875

A few years after the middle of the nineteenth century semblances of several settlements began to appear on the Arizona side of the Colorado River at the junction. After Fort Yuma was established many former soldiers, who had passed on to the coast, returned to Arizona; and a few of these lingered on to try their fortune at farming, mining, and cattle raising in the Colorado River Valley. These few pioneers were increased by the return of some of the forty-niners. Before long three tiny settlements were noticeable at the junction, but not much was heard about them until after 1854.

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In that year Charles D. Poston and party, who were going from Arizona to California to raise money for a mining venture in the latter state, arrived at the junction of the Gila and Colorado Rivers. The ferryman,

¹ Charles Poston was born in Kentucky in 1825. He explored the southwest in 1854. After becoming interested in mining, he settled near Tubac for several years. In 1857 he was made Indian Commissioner for a short time. Once he was chosen delegate to Congress. In 1902 he died and was buried near Florence, Arizona.

Jaeger, demanded a price of twenty-five dollars a person for crossing the stream. Not one person in the group had that much money. So the travelers put their heads together and decided that if they handled the situation in the right way they might be able to entice the ferry owner to take them across the water. After discussing several plans, the following was decided upon. In a business-like manner the surveyors started to lay out the locality in city lots. This aroused Jaeger's curiosity to such an extent that he came to inquire what was going on. It was exactly what the schemers had hoped. When the boatman was told that a future city was being surveyed and that the engineers were willing to exchange a few choice city lots for ferriage across the stream, he eagerly closed a deal to transport the party to the other side of the river.

More light is thrown upon the survey by Poston in an article printed in the Overland Monthly, July, 1894. Here it is made clear how it so happened that Yuma, Arizona, was a part of the state of California. Poston stated that:

By a curious turn in the Colorado River, after passing through the gorge between Fort Yuma and the opposite bank, the boundary line of the United States included both banks of the river to the crossing at Pilot Knob, nearly nine miles below. When the state of California was organized in 1850, the constitution adopted the boundary line of Mexico as the boundary line of the state, and consequently assumed jurisdiction over the slip of land on the bank

of the Colorado River opposite Fort Yuma. When Fort Yuma was established as a military reservation, it included both banks of the Colorado River at its junction with the Gila.²

The majority of early writings about the vicinity at the junction of the rivers indicate that there were three settlements on the Arizona side of the Colorado River, all within a distance of a mile or so. One of these became known as Colorado City, and consisted of only one adobe building that was used as a custom's house. A short distance away was another small settlement called Arizona City which had half a dozen adobe buildings, including two stores, two saloons, and a post office. The third settlement was located at the ferry one mile below

² The Overland Monthly, July, 1894.

In this article the reason for Poston's mission to the Arizona territory and the subsequent Yuma survey is made somewhat clear. Pending the negotiation of the treaty involving the Gadsden Purchase, an agent of the Itrubide family had arrived with a Mexican grant in San Francisco. After the execution of the Emperor Itrubide, the Mexican government voted the family an indemnity of a million dollars. This could not be paid, so the heirs were given 700 leagues of land in Sonora and what is Arizona today. Poston undertook to locate the Itrubide grant. He first organized a syndicate which was given financial backing by some French bankers in San Francisco. Before long he and his party were in Arizona and Sonora. After locating the grant they were to plat all important sites for future towns and cities. All remaining lands in the grant were to be distributed to settlers. Poston failed to locate the land and the Mexican government still owes the million dollars to the descendants of Itrubide. But the town of Yuma was surveyed in an unofficial manner and recorded in the San Diego County court house where it became official. Although Poston failed to locate the grant, he took cognizance of the valuable mineral deposits and planned to solicit financial aid in California to be used in developing the deposits in Arizona.

the junction. Here were found two stores, two blacksmith shops, a hotel, several houses, and a stage station.³

Within the seven years between 1854 and 1861 the three settlements evolved into what is Yuma today, although it was not designated officially as such until a bill was passed by the Seventh Arizona Legislature in January, 1873, changing the name from Arizona City to Yuma.⁴

The town site that had been laid out by the Poston party in 1854 was duly registered in the records of San Diego County. In 1863 the taxcollectors arrived in the future Yuma to collect what was due them. Owing to the fact that many new settlers had come to the community and valuable merchandise was stored along the water-front, the amount in revenue receipts amounted to a considerable sum. The Arizonans paid the Californians, and continued to do so for about six more years.

In 1870 Arizona City was made the county seat of Yuma County. Consequently, when the San Diego tax collector arrived in the following fall there was trouble. When he demanded that the taxes be paid in gold coin, an excited citizen swore out a warrant charging the man with an

³ Bancroft, History of California, p. 489.

⁴ Kelly, George H., Legislative History of Arizona, p. 57.

attempt to collect money under false pretenses. Fortunately for him, some of the more calm citizens deposited bail for his temporary release to appear in court.

Immediately the troubled man wrote to San Diego to inquire what action he should take. His friends advised him to leave the place under cover of darkness. No time was lost in doing this, and his bondsmen were left in a bad state of mind. All of them declared they would never pay another cent to the San Diego authorities, and from that time on the citizens of Yuma have carried out their threat.⁵

During the years of uncertainty as to where the Yumans should pay their taxes, the business of driving cattle from Texas to California by way of Yuma came into existence.⁶ This venture of herding animals all the way from the Río Grande region to the markets on the Pacific coast started about 1847. The route followed was the famous old trail from the East which crossed the Río Grande River near El Paso and traversed the southern edge of both New Mexico and Arizona in a general westerly

⁵ Gordon, Ruth, Portrait of a Teacher, Mary Elizabeth Post and Something of the Time in which She Lived, p. 43.

⁶ Haley, J. Evetts, "A Log of the Texas-California Cattle Trail, 1854," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, January, 1932, p. 210.

course, until reaching the boundary between them, some two hundred miles, and thence in the same general direction several hundred more miles to Tucson. The trail turned north here for about ninety miles to the Pima Indian villages on the Gila River, then down the southern side of this stream to the Colorado River at Yuma.

Many outfits took the trail to California, for the profits were exceedingly large after the Mexican War. Among those on the road in 1854 was one owned by John James. With him was a young man named James G. Bell, who left an interesting diary describing this cattle drive to the coast.⁷

The herdsmen left San Antonio on June 3, 1854, camping near Tucson on September 23. While they were resting and preparing for the drive to the junction an inventory was taken. It was calculated that they had lost property valued at \$100,000. Some of the animals had died, but the Indians were accused of stealing several hundred.

On October 21 the junction of the Gila and Colorado Rivers was reached. An effort was made to swim about one hundred cows across the water by using a decoy ox, but

⁷ Southwestern Historical Quarterly, July, 1933, p. 47.

this effort failed. Finally eight hundred and fifty dollars was paid for transportation across the Colorado. The price was set at one dollar and fifty cents per head of cattle, two dollars apiece per person, and wagons crossed for eight dollars each.

The party encamped for the night a few miles west of the ferry, where some hundred animals died within a few hours from what was termed "careless weed" and stagnant water. This weed does not harm cattle unless they drink large amounts of polluted water soon after eating. In this case the cattle become bloated and must be rested immediately or they will die.⁸ This misfortune was the last the herdsmen encountered until they reached Los Angeles; there the price of beef had dropped to about twenty-five dollars a head.

The business of ferrying cattle across the water at the junction became so profitable that several concerns entered the field. If the cattlemen were fortunate enough to arrive when the water happened to be at a low stage, the animals waded or swam to the other bank. This would result in quite a saving. For example, several days before the arrival of the outfit with whom Bell had

⁸ Haley, op. cit., p. 210.

traveled there came another caravan which was forced to pay three thousand dollars for transportation to the west bank of the river.

The first mail route from the Pacific coast was the same one which had been used by the herdsmen. Mail east-bound from California started from San Diego in October, 1857. Stages were not used until supply depots had been established all along the road. Before this was done, the mail was carried in saddle bags.⁹

To take the letters on east from Yuma to Tucson required three days and two nights in a buckboard. Horses were changed every fifteen miles, and as a rule there was at least one passenger. Occasionally there were two or more fares. In this case several had to ride over the mail bags and two ahead with the driver. The greatest Apache danger came in the stretch of desert between the Oatman Flats, ninety miles east of Yuma, and Picacho Hill near Tucson.¹⁰

The following was taken from the San Diego Herald for November 21, 1857, describing the stage route from

⁹ Farish, Thomas E., History of Arizona, Vol. II, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ Figueroa, Paul, Manuscript, p. 23.

that city East:

Stage fares from San Diego are as follows: to Yuma, \$35.00, to Tucson, \$75.00, to El Paso, \$120.00, to San Antonio, \$150.00, including meals.

Each man proposing to go should provide himself with a Sharp's rifle (not a carbine) and 100 cartridges; a Colt's revolver and two pounds of balls, knife, and sheathe; a pair of thick boots and woolen pants...a soldier's overcoat.... Such money as he takes should be in silver and small gold.¹¹

Arizona City, which was the largest of the three settlements, had a lynching in 1859. A man by the name of Dow, said to have been a relative of Neal Dow the early prohibitionist, had a contract to cut wood for the steamers on the Colorado River below the confluence. One day he and a German boy in his employ were killed by a Mexican wood chopper. The murderer immediately started down the river with Dow's boat loaded with supplies with the expectation of joining a filibustering party at San Felipe, ninety miles away. Unfortunately for the criminal the boat was recognized by Captain Sun, chief of the Cocopas who, with the help of his tribesmen, seized the Mexican and started to take him back to town. On the

¹¹ The San Diego Herald, November 21, 1859.

way they discovered the bodies, which were sufficient evidence for the hanging that followed.¹² This episode was not unusual, for similar Southwestern settlements like Arizona City were the scenes of others.

Three years after this incident, a flood washed away practically the whole community. At this time the Gila River overflowed her banks to such an extent that water stood twenty feet deep on a ranch in the bottom lands just above the town. The settlement soon was rebuilt.¹³

By 1864 Arizona City (soon to be known as Yuma) was becoming the distribution station for military posts in all parts of western Arizona and southeastern California. During this year the United States government erected a large quartermaster's depot near the banks of the Colorado River. Fire destroyed this building in 1867, but it was rebuilt the same year. Upon completion, the government billeted some nine hundred mules under its roof, with quantities of army supplies.¹⁴

From this time forward Arizona City began to grow; one of the most important early families to come here was the

¹² McClintock, James H., Arizona, the Youngest State, pp. 139-40.

¹³ Hinton, Richard J., The Handbook to Arizona, pp. 244-250.

¹⁴ Sloan, Richard E. and Adams, Ward R., History of Arizona, pp. 321-322.

Contreras family. Before Mrs. Contreras died, she had brought twenty-one children into the world. A brief history of these pioneer Mexicans taken from Father Paul Figueroa's manuscript throws considerable light upon the earliest activities of the future Yuma.¹⁵

Francisco Contreras and wife, Dolores, went to California from Sonora, Mexico, in 1833. After living in that state for twenty-five years they came back to the junction of the Gila and Colorado to farm and prospect for gold. At the time of their arrival the family consisted of nine children in addition to mother and father. They settled about ten miles north of Fort Yuma on the west bank of the Colorado, and called the place El Colorado.¹⁶ This site happened to be near the ruins of San Dionisio Mission which had been destroyed a few years after the middle of the eighteenth century.¹⁷

A few days after the settlement had been made one son, Antonio, returned to Los Angeles to induce a former friend to come back with him to establish a general merchandise store. The other members of the family started

¹⁵ Figueroa, op. cit., p. 1.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

to prospect for gold. They were soon joined by an old friend, Matapeño, who was better acquainted with the surrounding country. Not having any success in their efforts to find "pay dirt" around their camp site, the miners crossed the river going some distance to the foothills, where gold was found.

About this time the brother who had gone to Los Angeles returned with his partner and a large load of general merchandise and settled in Laguna, the new mining site, to sell their supplies to the many gold seekers coming from Altar, Sonora, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino.¹⁸

The gold excitement began to subside in about six years. By that time many people had started to farm and raise cattle on both sides of the Colorado. This was the period when all the Contreras family moved from Laguna and Colorado Camp to the town site of Yuma, which was soon a flourishing village. At first only temporary huts of sticks and mud were erected, but within the ensuing year all the residents began to construct adobe houses. This all took place in 1867, after the territorial government had made a survey of the Yuma site.¹⁹

¹⁸ Figueroa, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

John M. Redondo, who had married one of the Contreras girls, built a good-sized adobe cottage for his family, and at the same time a part of the building was used for a grocery store. This was located at the corner of First and Main Streets, one block from the bank of the Colorado River.

Another member of the old family began to build. Antonio Contreras, the former Laguna merchant, constructed a family residence and one for business, the latter being located at the intersection of Second and Maiden Lane Streets. Francis Hinton set up a general merchandise business; James and Frank O'Donel kept a dry goods store at the corner of Main and First Streets; John Jones established a combination hotel and saloon with a large square yard walled by adobe material. Within this enclosure were kept the horses and mules of the patrons, and it was called The Exchange.²⁰ Mrs. Sarah Booman, a former wife of one of the soldiers at Fort Yuma, opened the first²¹ restaurant in the town.

With the help of most of the citizens a Catholic

²⁰ Figueroa, op. cit., p. 17.

²¹ Ibid.

church was erected by 1869.²² The Reverend John Salpointe visited Yuma that year and blessed the edifice under the title of Immaculate Conception. Father Peter Bourgady became the pastor in 1870.

According to Father Figueroa, the majority of people in Yuma in the very earliest years did not work for wages. Their means of living consisted of farming and hunting. Splendid crops of corn, beans, pumpkins, and melons were raised. Most of the farming depended upon the overflows of the rivers. While the waters were ebbing, wild grass²³ was planted which came up in about thirty days. The Indians had been cultivating this crop for years and used the harvest to make flour. In places where the soil was full of clay the grass grew four feet high. Mesquite beans also were gathered, both by the natives who used them for making a kind of sweet meal, and by the white people who stored them away to be used during the winter months. The beans also were mixed with corn to feed the horses, cows, and to fatten hogs. A great deal of barley was raised in the river bottom and sold as high as sixty²⁴ dollars a ton to the freighters around Yuma.

²² Figueroa, op. cit., p. 19.

²³ Sonora millet.

²⁴ Figueroa, op. cit., p. 36.

In the early years the village usually was crowded with heavy freight wagons. Many of the freight outfits were owned by Yuma men who hauled to San Diego or Tucson and even into Mexico. A great many other freighters came from as far as Texas and Colorado. At this period Yuma was considered a seaport by travelers from across the desert because goods were brought from the west coast, especially from San Diego and San Francisco, to the mouth of the Colorado River where they were transferred to the river boats or brought on to Yuma by mule team.²⁵

In order to keep the freighting equipment in the best of condition, the wagon factory and repair shops did a thriving business. Carpenters, blacksmiths, and harness makers were kept busy day and night making repairs for the desert journeys. On their trips the teamsters would pick up hay and grain at various depositories along the route. The drivers always kept a handy supply of feed for their animals at these stations, for which they paid storage space. Sometimes the party owning the freight line kept his own warehouses along the road. Such was the case of James M. Barney, an early Yuma merchant, who had a contract for providing grain and hay for government trains.

²⁵ Gordon, op. cit., p. 52.

By 1871 Yuma's child population was large enough to warrant an elementary school. Consequently the board of supervisors decided to establish one and, not having a suitable building for that purpose, they rented one on Main Street from James Perry. Miss Bishop and Miss Clara Skinner of San Diego, who happened to be in Yuma, were hired for the ensuing school year. Although the term was a happy one, the teachers did not choose to be elected again to their positions. As soon as vacation arrived they left for San Diego. This necessitated the employment of a new teacher by the name of Miss Mary Post.

Before coming to Arizona, Miss Post had taught school in Iowa. In 1871 she came to Ehrenberg, Arizona, where she kept classes for one year. When the new instructor took up her work in the Yuma school, the forty-four pupils were housed in one room of a private residence. A great deal of time was spent in locating the children, who became tired of attending classes. The youngsters were encouraged by some of the parents to remain away from school because they resented the fact that their boys and girls were expected to attend regularly.

²⁶ Gordon, op. cit., p. 37.

The majority of Miss Post's time was spent in teaching classes and going among the Mexican families; but during the holidays she came to know the English-speaking people better. The wives of the army officers across the river at Fort Yuma soon became her closest friends.²⁷

The school year passed by quickly and by the time that vacation had arrived Miss Post had accepted another position to teach in San Diego. She remained in that city one year. In the meantime school conditions were unfavorable in Yuma, and the board of supervisors decided to ask Miss Post to return and teach the girls. Soon after she came back to Arizona she was given permission to send for her brother in Iowa to come and take over the duties of teaching the boys.²⁸

A few months after Miss Post returned to Yuma she was initiated into some western atmosphere by way of the first legal execution in the territory of Arizona. One of the prominent merchants, known as "Rawhide" McCartney, had been murdered at his place of business and his store looted. The authorities were not slow in apprehending the

²⁷ Gordon, op. cit., p. 47.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 49.

criminal, Manuel Fernández, who was given what was called a trial and sentenced to be hanged. Since this was the first supposedly legal execution in the territory, great care was taken by the court in its deliberations. The sheriff, being quite proud of the occasion, sent out invitations for the event, which was set for mid-morning. Unfortunately the school house was across the street from the jail and the scaffold could be viewed by all the children. Miss Post dismissed classes, but this was more or less a formality since most of the pupils witnessed the gruesome affair, which went off with military precision.²⁹

The former Iowa teacher continued to instruct the boys and girls for some years until Albert Post married and turned to a more gainful occupation.³⁰ As to Miss Post, Father Figueroa spoke most kindly of her:

Miss Post with the practice of a teacher and her splendid disposition in a few months was able to learn the Spanish language and teach it to the English speaking people. She was wonderful in all her dispositions. Having her own science for teaching, refused the unnecessary elements for the up to date instructions.....³¹

²⁹ Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, footnote p. 566.

³⁰ Gordon, op. cit., p. 47.

³¹ Figueroa, op. cit., p. 48.

After living ninety-three years, Miss Post died in 1934 and was buried in Yuma.

Three years after the public school was opened, a parochial institution was completed in 1874 through the efforts of Father John Chaucout, pastor of the Immaculate Conception Church. Three sisters from Saint Joseph's Academy at Tucson came to open the school. This institution existed until the flood of 1892 destroyed the property. It was rebuilt but was abandoned permanently about thirty years later.³²

It was only a few years after the first legal execution took place in Yuma that the political leaders of the territory decided a penitentiary was needed. When the legislature convened in Tucson in 1875, it passed an act establishing the Territorial Prison at Yuma. Two years later territorial bonds to the amount of twenty-five thousand dollars were sold to finance the construction of the prison.

A description of the place was given by the Arizona Gazette for June 25, 1885:

³² Figueroa, op. cit., p. 49.

The edifice is inclosed on the east, south, and north by walls 16 feet in height, 8 feet thick at the base, and 6 feet on top, a wall of similar dimensions and strength being in process of erection on the east side.....Three tiers of cells extend through the prison proper, which are ventilated in an original and skillful manner... In addition to these corridors of cells there is the hospital, barber shop, kitchen, dining room, baking room, washing and bathing room....

The superintendent and turnkey's office is neatly fitted up, the armory and electric bell system being prominent attractions to the visitors. This bell system is connected with the dwelling of the superintendent and precludes the possibility of surprise or sudden outbreak. Outside the heavy sombre walls once more we are conducted to the reservoir... Mounted on this structure and ready for instant use can be found a formidable piece of warfare, called a Lowell battery, similar to the more generally known Gatling gun... This gun holds the entire penitentiary at its mercy, having a stationary sweep of twenty-five yards and firing 600 shots per minute.³³

Five years later there appeared an article in the Arizona Republic complaining bitterly about the high upkeep of the prison. To run the institution some fifty thousand dollars were being spent annually, a cost of one dollar to each man, woman, and child in the territory. Few improvements had been made since the first superintendent was in charge. He left in 1886, and his successor,

³³ Arizona Gazette, June 25, 1884, p. 2.

Mr. Gates, made a few constructive changes but the old buildings were not being maintained. With all this the expenses had been steadily kept up or increased, and the number of prisoners had not increased. The writer of the article made the following statement in regard to the situation:³⁴

What under the circumstances has been done with the money can be readily conjectured, but will not be fully explained for a few months. In the meantime, the fact that the superintendent's house, which is furnished by the Territory, is long on champagne glasses and short on water goblets, may explain matters.

An official report from the prison in 1884 stated that the number of prisoners was one hundred six, and that the Territorial Prison Commission in its recent session adopted the San Quentin uniform for convicts and the new uniform for officers; these had been used recently as an experiment. A standing reward of fifty dollars was offered for escaped prisoners. The report concluded by saying that the inmates had a great deal of leisure time on their hands.³⁵ Like all other objects of civic pride, the institution continued to grow until 1909, when it was moved to Florence, Arizona.

³⁴ The Arizona Republican, August 24, 1890, p. 4.

³⁵ Elliott, Wallace W., History of the Arizona Territory, pp. 153-154.

After the removal, some of the old buildings were used to house the students of the high school. Several classes graduated from the prison walls. It was during these years that the Yuma High School football team received its name, "Yuma Criminals."³⁶ In 1941 part of the old prison was made into a historical museum under the direction of Mrs. Clarissa Winsor, a native Arizonan.

By 1875 Yuma had developed into a settled community. No longer was it just a place in which to rest before continuing the journey. Many of the former travelers, who had passed through the town, returned and became citizens. The period between 1854 and 1875 was not a long one, but it was most important in the early history of Yuma.

³⁶ Yuma Chamber of Commerce, Yuma, The Sunshine Capital of the United States.

CHAPTER IV

YUMA, THE CENTER OF COLORADO RIVER TRADE

The Colorado River rises near the eastern border of Utah where the Green and upper Colorado Rivers join, and flows in a southwesterly direction for 1,800 miles, finally emptying into the Gulf of California. It drains large areas in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Nevada, California and Mexico.

At times during the year the flow of water is much decreased, especially in the fall months after the snows have run off. At this season the channel of the river about thirty-five miles above Yuma is often only two feet deep. During the low-water period there is great danger to navigation due to the narrow reefs of rocks and bars of boulders and gravel. For years after the river trade became profitable, the people around Yuma petitioned Congress for aid in making the waters safer for travel. But they did not receive any help until about 1870, when the federal government sent a dredge that was used to make the channel deeper above Needles, California.

The earliest white men to explore the Colorado River were closely connected with the explorer Coronado, who had set out in 1540 from Sonora, Mexico, in search of the famous seven cities. Between these early years and the first quarter of the nineteenth century very little was known of the history of the lower Colorado River region. Sometime during 1828 a person known as "Pegleg" Smith¹ and his party of eight prospectors crossed the river near Yuma. Also about this time Pauline Weaver, the Patties (father and son), who were all famous hunters and trappers, began working up and down the streams in search of beaver.

Previous to the development of the river trade, the supplies for Fort Yuma were landed near the mouth of the Gulf of California and then hauled overland by wagon to their destination. The excessively high cost of this transportation, seventy-five dollars a ton for the 175 miles, caused the government to seek a cheaper way of bringing necessities up the river. Consequently in 1850 Lieutenant Derby was dispatched to make a survey of the Colorado from its mouth to Fort Yuma.

¹ Gordy, J.S., "Steamboating on the Colorado," Progressive Arizona, December, 1928, p. 8.

As soon as Derby proved the river route feasible, commercial transportation came into existence and lasted until the bridging of the river at Yuma by the Southern Pacific railroad in 1878.

Much of the colorful early history of Yuma is concerned with river navigation, which was a matter of skill and experience since there were constant difficulties and dangers to overcome. Sometimes at the mouth of the great stream tidal waves raged through the delta. Other menaces in the lower river were shallows, concealed mud, snags, and sandbars; farther up the river were hidden pebble bars and submerged boulders. At times boats were grounded for days.

Upstream traffic carried general merchandise, mining and milling machinery, foods, and miscellaneous items, passengers, troops, and military supplies. The downriver loads consisted of bullion, ores, hides, pelts, wood, passengers, and troops. Each river town was a terminus of freight route; the principal points above Yuma were Ehrenberg for shipments to and from Wickenburg, and Hardyville for Prescott. Callville, the Mormon settlement on the Colorado a few miles below the Virgin River, was first reached by barge in 1866. It soon became an important shipping center for wagon transportation as far as Salt Lake City.

By 1850 activity around the junction of the Gila and Colorado Rivers had increased to such an extent that General Persifer Smith sent Lieutenant George H. Derby to make a reconnaissance of the Colorado from its mouth to Fort Yuma with an idea of establishing a river route from the Gulf of California to the military reservation. If this could be accomplished, it would be possible to bring supplies from San Diego and San Francisco much more cheaply than they could be brought by land over the desert route from the coast.²

Derby and his party in the schooner Invincible, under the command of Captain Wilcox, arrived at the mouth of the Colorado in 1851.³ Because of the shallowness of the water they could ascend the stream only about twenty-five miles. At this point flatboats were used for another sixty miles.⁴ By then the expedition clearly showed the feasibility of the river route, and it was adopted immediately.⁵

In the spring of 1851 another schooner, the Sierra Madre, under the command of George A. Johnson, arrived at

² Gordy, op. cit., p. 10.

³ Farish, op. cit., p. 251.

⁴ Gordy, op. cit., p. 11.

⁵ Ibid.

the river's mouth with supplies for the troops at the fort. Shortly thereafter Ben Hartshorn,⁶ Captain Wilcox,⁷ and George Johnson⁸ made a contract with the federal government to bring stores from the schooners to the fort. The waters were so shallow above the mouth of the river that it was necessary to transfer all goods to barges and then tow the barges. This was the beginning of a profitable river trade on the Colorado.

Soon the Hartshorn, Wilcox, and Johnson Company became the Colorado Steam Navigation Company. Although this new concern did not own a single boat when formed, it immediately purchased one that Captain Turnbull had brought from San Francisco to the head of the Gulf. There the steamer was torn down, shipped to Robinson's Landing at Yuma, re-assembled, and named the Uncle Sam. She was sixty-five feet long, sixteen feet wide, and three and a half feet deep. Like most river craft of those days she was a side-wheeler, powered by a locomotive boiler of twenty horse power. After three years of service between the mouth of the river and Yuma, the Uncle Sam sank at

⁶ Partner of J.F. Jaeger in the ferry business at the junction.

⁷ Made first reconnaissance up the Colorado with Derby in 1851.

⁸ First came to Yuma in 1851.

her moorings near Pilot Knob, nine miles west of Yuma.⁹

In 1854 Captain Johnson, one of the navigation firm members, brought the steamer General Jessup to Yuma. This being her maiden voyage, she carried only thirty-five tons of freight although her capacity was sixty tons in two feet of water. She was one hundred and four feet long, seventeen feet wide, and was powered by two fifty-horse-power engines.¹⁰ The General Jessup was the first steam-powered craft to ascend above Yuma when she carried mining supplies some twenty miles above Hardyville in 1858. On the return trip she met the small iron-clad, stern-wheeler Explorer in which Lieutenant J.C. Ives and a group¹¹ of topographical engineers were exploring the Colorado.

In 1854 the United States' government paid seventy-five dollars a ton for transporting supplies from the mouth of the Colorado to Fort Yuma. The freight bill for fourteen months amounted to \$94,000.

While making a trip to the mining camp of Pichacho, the General Jessup struck a submerged boulder and sank. Fortunately the Colorado Navigation Company had another

⁹ Gordy, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Sloan and Adams, op. cit., p. 231.

sea-worthy ship called the Colorado Number 1. This vessel was dispatched to the assistance of the ill-fated General Jessup. Eventually the sunken craft was raised and towed to Yuma for repairs. A few months after returning to service, the unlucky schooner finally came to an end when one of her boilers exploded while she was running the rapids near Ogden's Landing about twenty-five miles above Lerdo Colony, which is a few miles above the mouth of the river. Two men were killed in the explosion, and the boat was condemned shortly. Her machinery was removed and shipped to San Francisco; her hull was towed to Menturn Slough and sunk.¹²

The little iron-clad steamer Explorer, which Lieutenant Ives brought to the Colorado River in 1854, had been built in Philadelphia, shipped to the mouth of the river, and assembled. She was used in the river trade on the Gila and Colorado until 1864.¹³ On one of the trips the Explorer was caught in the strong eddie where the Gila joins the larger stream and whirled out of control down the Colorado to Pilot Knob; there she was put under control again and made secure to a large cottonwood tree

¹² The Arizona Sentinel, September 28, 1878.

¹³ Ibid.

on the river bank. The bank caved in soon after and the ship floated down stream into a slough eight miles below. Since the river changed its course after 1864, the remains of the steamer could be seen as late as 1930 in the middle of a thick cottonwood grove.¹⁴

The next steamer of any importance to operate around Yuma was the Colorado Number 1. She had been shipped in parts and put together at the Yuma shipyards, located at the foot of Main Street. In 1858, after springing several leaks, she docked at the Port Ysabel shipyards for repairs. The shipyards were located a few miles from the mouth of the river and at one time employed more than 150 laborers. After her overhaul, the Colorado Number 1 was chartered to the United States' Government for \$500 a day. When she finally was condemned and put out of commission her hull was left at Port Ysabel but her engines were placed in the company's new steamer, the Colorado Number 2, which was built soon after her sister ship went out of service. The boiler of the first craft was still lying just south of the old quartermaster's building in Yuma as late¹⁵ as 1928.

¹⁴ Sloan and Adams, op. cit., p. 232.

¹⁵ Gordy, op. cit., p. 31.

The Colorado Number 2 was constructed at the Yuma shipyards during the Civil War. She was the fifth vessel to be put into service by the Colorado Steam Navigation Company. The shipyard at Port Ysabel was the more popular place for repairing and building vessels, but great precaution was taken in erecting the Colorado Number 2 because of the fear that a Confederate cruiser might invade the waters around Port Ysabel and destroy the ship before it was completed.¹⁶

The Colorado Number 2, like her predecessor the Colorado No. 1, was put into service on the river and navigated between the river's mouth and points as far north as Fort Mohave, which was over 200 miles north of Yuma. In March, 1878, she was taken into the shipyards and given a complete overhaul. This was done by taking out every defective plank from her bottom and replacing with new ones. Her seams were re-caulked and pitched, and her bottom painted with coal tar. Also, due to the presence of a great deal of driftwood on the water's surface, the ship's bottom was fitted out with large knobs under her counters for future protection against the menace.¹⁷

¹⁶ The Arizona Sentinel, September 28, 1878.

¹⁷ Ibid.

After faithfully serving her owners for over fifteen years, the Colorado Number 2 went to the bottom of the muddy stream. Her hull was hauled out at Port Ysabel and used as a foundation for a large warehouse, which later burned and nearly destroyed the entire port. Her machinery, being still in good condition, was dismantled and shipped to San Francisco where it was later used in the ¹⁸ Hattie Ficket, a steamer plying the Sacramento River.

A competitive boat line came into existence on the river when the surrounding regions experienced a mining boom about 1858. This new company was founded by Captain T.E. Trueworthy, owner of the steamer Esmeralda, which had been navigating from San Francisco to Port Ysabel under the command of Captain C.C. Overman. Captain Trueworthy had been operating a steamship business on the Sacramento River before coming to the Colorado region in 1861. In this year he purchased the steamer Nina Tilden in San Francisco and organized the Pacific Colorado Navigation Company.

On the trip from San Francisco to the Gulf of California, the Nina Tilden transferred forty-two tons of

¹⁸ Gordy, op. cit., p. 31.

freight to the barge Black Crook, and the latter was towed by the Esmeralda, which was under the command of Captain Bob Rogers, to Eldorado Canyon. From there the cargo was hauled by team to Callville, Nevada. The trip required five months, two and a half of which were by water.¹⁹

The new competing steamboat line lasted only about six years. The end came in 1867, when the Colorado Steam Navigation Company purchased the steamers Esmeralda and Nina Tilden, and the barges Black Crook and White Fawn.

The Nina Tilden was built in San Francisco in 1864 for a Philadelphia mining company that was working copper mines on the California side of the Colorado River above Aubery, California. Captain Paddy Gorman sailed the ship down the coast and up the Colorado to the mining camp. For the next ten years she was used very little by her owners and in 1874 was tied up, leaking badly, at the Port Ysabel shipyards. While moored at the docks during a big tide her port bow line parted, but her port after line held, causing her to swing around and land bottom side up. Later her bottom was chopped free from her boiler, and she floated away. Not long after this disaster her

¹⁹ Arizona Sentinel, September 28, 1878.

boiler was raised by Captain Mellon and placed on the
 20
 steamer Victoria.

After selling out to the Colorado Steam Navigation Company, Captain Trueworthy invested a small fortune in another sailing venture. He converted a large 182-foot Sacramento River barge into a four-masted schooner, and christened the craft the Victoria. The intention of the owner was to load her with lumber, sail to China and construct barges for use on the Yang Tse River. But instead of going to the Orient the Victoria, under the command of C.E. Qualin, left San Francisco for the mouth of the Colorado River with 4,000,000 feet of lumber, 50 tons of groceries, and 800 barrels of whiskey. Her voyage from the seacoast port was uneventful and she anchored twenty-five miles up the river. While riding at anchor there a strong, incoming tide caused her to drift over her own anchor, and a protruding fluke tore a hole in her bottom. The ship stayed afloat, probably because she carried 4,000,000 feet of lumber; later she was towed to Starvation Point about 125 miles south of Yuma, and tied near the bank. There the Indians, for some unknown reason, set fire to the weeds and underbrush. The flames spread

²⁰ Arizona Sentinel, September 28, 1878.

rapidly, finally reaching the Victoria. The groceries were saved, the lumber was set free and floated out to sea, but the whiskey is reported to be resting on the bottom of the river. This catastrophe nearly ruined Captain
²¹
 Trueworthy financially.

The Colorado Steam Navigation Company was very prosperous from the day it started business. At one time there were twelve steamers and as many barges operating on the river between its mouth and Yuma and points north of Yuma. Except the mining supplies and a few necessities for the Fort at Mohave, most of the freight was taken off the steamers at Yuma and reshipped by mule teams to all parts
²²
 of Arizona and cities in Sonora, Mexico.

The barges used in the river trade played almost as prominent a part as the steamers which towed them. The barge Black Crook was the first to bring freight to Yuma. She was one hundred and twenty-eight feet long and twenty-eight feet wide, and was constructed at the river's mouth in twenty-eight days by Charley Overman, Charley Tyson, Jack Mellon, and two others. The White Fawn was built in 1864 and lengthened in 1867. She was constructed in

²¹ Arizona Sentinel, September 28, 1878.

²² Gordy, op. cit., p. 32.

San Francisco, sent in pieces and assembled at Port Ysabel near the mouth of the river. In 1867 the barge Pumpkin Seed, loaded with iron, was moored to Jaeger's Landing when a heavy rain came and filled her, causing her to sink. Due to a change in the channel since, she may be seen lying somewhere under Grow's ranch.²³

During all these early years that the steamboat company was operating it occupied four rooms in an old adobe building along the river's edge in Yuma. It was in this building that the various boat captains and construction experts were called together to plan new river crafts as fast as the trade demanded them or when one vessel was condemned or sank. After the disaster of the Colorado Number 2, the company put the Cocopa Number 2 and Mohave Numbers 1 and 2, and the Gila into service. By 1878 when the railroad bridged the Colorado at Yuma, the steamers Mohave and Gila were the oldest boats in operation. These had been in service for twenty years. In order to prevent any competition, the Southern Pacific Railroad bought out the Colorado Steam Navigation Company in the same year it bridged the river.

²³ Arizona Sentinel, September 28, 1878.

As was stated before, the people of Yuma had sent numerous petitions to Congress asking aid in making the river safer for navigation; and in 1870 a sum of money was appropriated to purchase a steam barge for dredging. This craft was brought to Yuma, where it caused much commotion because of a rumor that it was a Mexican gunboat flying the American flag. The barge was used for several years in dredging above Needles, California, and greatly helped navigation on the river. It was later sold to an individual by the name of Whitcombe, who used it for a pleasure barge.

The river trade decreased considerably after the coming of the railroad, but several steamers were built either at the Yuma shipyards or at Port Ysabel during the eighties. These were known as the Searchlight, Cochan, and the St. Valier. The Searchlight happened to be above Laguna Dam when it was completed in 1900, and had to be²⁴ lifted over the structure by the government.

Navigation on the Colorado River was not all pleasure, but it was not all grief. William H. Hardy, an early Arizona pioneer, gives a rather pleasing account of

²⁴ Gordy, op. cit., p. 8.

the early river traffic:

About the Colorado River, as it being a navigable stream, there is yet some discussion. In 1861, two steamers - the Colorado and the Cocopah - were owned and run by George A. Johnson and Company. These steamers, though well built and good steamers, were not fit for the Colorado River, as they lacked in two material points - they drew too much water for low water and had not power for high water.... the company resolved to build one more....

She only draws seventeen inches of water, light, so she is fit for low water and tows a barge with great ease....²⁵

The above steamer, known as the Cocopa, made a round-trip from Hardyville to Camp El Dorado, a distance of about one hundred and twenty miles, in a little less than twenty-four hours.

In 1874 a distance of 200 miles consumed eleven days. The pleasure trip experienced by Hardy was far different from what Mrs. Martha Summerhayes endured while going from Fort Yuma to Fort Mohave. Mrs. Summerhayes and her husband, a lieutenant in the army, sailed up the river on the Gila which was loaded with supplies and towed a barge full of soldiers. The thermometer varied from 107 to 122 in the shade. Even at night it was impossible to sleep in the staterooms. Mrs. Summerhayes described the situation as follows:

²⁵ Alta California, June 23, 1867.

And thus began another day of intolerable glare and heat... There was nothing to relieve the monotony of the scenery. On each side of us, low river banks, and nothing between those and the horizon line...at last on the eighth of September, we arrived at Fort Mohave, eleven days from Fort Yuma. "A quick trip," said the captain. I listened and wondered if I had heard right, for those eleven days in midsummer on the Great 26 Colorado had burned themselves into my memory.

A story of the Colorado River navigation would not be complete without a brief history of one of its greatest steamboat captains, Isaac Polhamus.²⁷ He was born in New York City in 1828. As a boy he helped his father on a Hudson River steamboat. When the California gold fever came over the land, Polhamus set sail for the West by the way of Cape Horn.

After reaching California he worked on the California River a few months at placer mining; but after a flood had carried away all his supplies, he returned to his old vocation. This time it was steamboating on the Sacramento River instead of on the Hudson.

After several years of working on the Sacramento, Polhamus went to Yuma and immediately found employment with the Colorado Steam Navigation Company. About the only

²⁶ Summerhayes, Mrs. Martha, Vanished Arizona, pp. 47-54.

²⁷ Lockwood, Frank C., Manuscript awaiting publication.

house of any importance in Yuma at that time was an adobe building one hundred feet long and twenty-five feet wide, divided into four rooms. Two of these rooms were occupied by the steamboat company. The chief engineer of the firm was a former New Yorker by the name of David Neahr. In 1860 Polhamus and Neahr took an overland trip back to their native state. During the journey the men had several exciting experiences, among them a hold-up by the Apache Indians at Pantano, Arizona. Upon returning to Arizona the boatmen resumed their former positions with the navigation company on the Colorado.

In relating his various experiences on the river, Captain Polhamus states that at first the help was Indian. The pay was fifty cents a day. Not being able to count coins, each Indian would keep count of the number of days he worked by tying knots in a string worn around the neck. Each knot stood for a day's work and the native demanded as many half dollars as there were knots in the string. When an Indian became unruly the captain would punish him by pitching him overboard and then pull him back on the boat.

Father Paul Figueroa states that Polhamus was the most experienced navigator on the Colorado River. On one occasion, while piloting the Gila, he made a trip from Yuma to Needles and back - a distance of 250 miles - in

ten hours, counting out time spent at Needles for unloading. On another trip when the boat was passing through a dangerous canyon below Fort Mohave, Polhamus had to let the steamer in stern foremost and she drifted on half way before she turned bow down; but by the time the end of the canyon was reached she had turned again and came out as she had entered, wrong end foremost.

The voyage from Fort Mohave to Yuma was accomplished easily in one day. But it was different when going upstream. On one trip in 1869 it took the captain twenty-eight days, so swift was the current. When the water was very low, it took three days to reach Ehrenberg and five to get to Mohave. Polhamus had the honor of transferring all the county officials, records, and documents from La Paz, Arizona, to Yuma when the county seat was changed in 1870.

Although the river trade became negligible after the railroad arrived, the old captain ran a line of steamers of his own until the Yuma Reclamation Project was erected. He specialized in excursions up the river as far as Pichacho. A folder owned by one of his married daughters describes an excursion up the Colorado River to

²⁸ Mrs. James Fleetwood Fulton, Salt Lake City, Utah.

the head of navigation, which took place between the first and middle of June, 1894:

Through the wonderful Black Canyon and Devil's Tale Canyon on the steamer Mohave, Polhamus and Mellon, owners. Polhamus, master.

The trip sounds very intriguing, as may be judged from the following extracts taken from the contents of the folder:

The foremost object of this excursion is to show the possibilities of mining and agriculture of the country through which it will extend. But it will have other attractiveness as well. With none of the hazardous hardships and privations of roughing it, in saddle or on foot, the trip will be through the heart of the most weird and awesome scenery on earth, nowhere else to be seen except in the abysmal chasms and gorges of the Colorado River. ... The trip is full of thrilling interest. At times the view will be unobstructed on either side for miles... Again the gritty little craft will be puffing and wheezing through narrow gorges with walls so high and abrupt as to almost obscure the light of day..... In four places along the route the rapids are so heavy and fierce that, but for the aid of a sturdy shore line, they would be quite impossible. Ringbolts have been securely fastened into the walls of the canyon, and a cable suspended therefrom to a steam capstan in the bow of the boat.

The time consumed for the round-trip was five days, and the trip cost \$65.25 from San Francisco and \$57.75 from San Diego.

Captain Polhamus' steamer was one of the last to come down the river in 1908 after the great dam was built. From this year on the old boatman became less and less active and finally died on January 16, 1922, after having lived in Yuma for sixty-six years.

CHAPTER V
THE COMING OF THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD
AND THE FLOOD OF 1891

In March, 1854, Congress appropriated \$150,000 to make such explorations and surveys as were deemed advisable to ascertain the most practicable and economic route for a railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific.¹ During the same year Jefferson Davis made a speech in the United States Senate favoring the southern route. Part of his address was as follows:

The most favorable point for crossing the Colorado is at the junction of the Gila, where the river is narrowest, 650 feet wide, and has a bluff on both sides.²

Before this, in 1846, Congress had had Lieutenant Emory make a survey of a railroad route. Upon the completion of this work it was suggested that the most desirable place to build the road was up the Arkansas River, down the Rio Grande and Gila to San Diego and Los Angeles.³

¹ Sloan and Adams, op. cit., p. 527.

² Mowry, Sylvester, U.S.A., Arizona and Sonora, p. 221.

³ Drake, Samuel A., Making of the Great West, p. 320.

A bill authorizing the construction of the Pacific Railroad finally passed Congress in 1859, but owing to the Civil War actual work on the project did not begin until several years later.⁴

The early Arizona pioneers were relentless in their efforts to bring a road through the state. Beginning with the creation of the territory, virtually every governor found occasion in messages to the legislature to encourage the building of railroads. Every inducement, from high rates of fares to tax exemption for long periods and free lands, was offered.⁵

According to the Arizona Sentinel for May 25, 1878, Congress, by an act which had been passed three years before, granted to all railroads in territories a right-of-way fifty feet wide for a road-bed and one hundred feet for stations.⁶ So in 1877 the Arizona Legislature granted authority to the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, a California corporation, to maintain telegraph and railroad lines across the territory of Arizona.⁷ In the same year

⁴ Drake, op. cit., p. 320.

⁵ Sloan and Adams, op. cit., p. 63.

⁶ Eighteen Statutes at Large, p. 482.

⁷ Sloan and Adams, op. cit., p. 63.

the Yumans showed their generosity by donating to the Southern Pacific one hundred acres of choice land within the city limits.⁸

While this was going on the road-bed was rapidly approaching Yuma from Colton, California, and finally reached the Colorado River bank opposite the city of Yuma in May, 1878. By fall all the bridge across the river had been constructed and the citizens of the town were waiting anxiously for the first train to cross. But at this time there arose a serious dispute with the United States authorities, who had allowed the building of the road-bed and bridge but had consistently denied the train company the right to run rolling stock across the Colorado or on the military reservation at Fort Yuma on the west side of the river.

The responsibility fell to the small force of soldiers, which was still occupying the fort, to enforce the order to keep the railroad from crossing the newly-completed bridge. The trainmen bided their time and were well rewarded when one early November morning, while the garrison was asleep, several train engineers boarded a couple of flat cars and were quietly pushed by an engine

⁸ Arizona Sentinel, June 2, 1877.

past the fort over the bridge to Arizona ground. At this moment the crew tied down the whistle and used all the steam in the boilers to celebrate the event.⁹

The first bridge at Yuma to span the river was located on the high bluffs, as was suggested in Senator Davis' speech in 1854. This wooden structure was what was known as a Howe Truss, 187 feet in length; it could be pulled around by one man, and was provided with machinery by which it was opened and closed in less than three minutes. It was composed of six spans of eighty feet each, on piers of seventeen cedar piles, each driven to a depth of twenty-six to thirty-two feet. Each span was an independent truss itself.¹⁰ The approximate cost of construction was around \$200,000.¹¹ In 1884 a flood destroyed one pier and two spans of the bridge. About one year later the whole edifice burned completely to the water's edge.¹² After being rebuilt again, the bridge was damaged several times by high water, and finally in 1915 the wooden structure was replaced by one of steel.

⁹ Rupp, Alta E., Colorful Events in Yuma's History.

¹⁰ Elliott, Wallace W., History of Arizona Territory, pp. 245-246.

¹¹ Arizona Sentinel, July 5, 1884.

¹² Ibid., October 24, 1885.

When the railroad reached Yuma the people were not any too sure that it was the best thing after all. Until 1878 Yuma was the distributing point for all goods coming by boat from the coast by way of the Colorado River and overland from San Diego. Many of the old timers saw that the river traffic would pass away with the famous old freighting outfits. They also feared the building of a competitive railroad, the Texas Pacific. This is shown by the following quotation taken from the Arizona Sentinel for March 23, 1878:

The last news received from Washington seems to indicate that Yuma is to be the permanent terminus of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The house committee had reported back the Texas Pacific Bill, recommending its passage, and now the senate committee has done the same thing. The bill has been placed on the calendar and a vote will be had on it at no distant day... It will undoubtedly take some time for the road to penetrate Arizona from either direction, east or west. During this time Yuma will be, as now, the distributing point for all importations of the Territory and the chief outlet for its products. The Texas and Pacific Bill, as it now stands, provides that work must commence at San Diego within six months and be continued without interruption.... This condition of the Railroad may or may not be favorable to the Territory at large, but for the immediate importance and prosperity of Yuma, no aspect of affairs could be more promising.¹³

¹³ Arizona Sentinel, March 23, 1878.

The dreams of those people who had the idea that Yuma was to be the terminus of a transcontinental railroad suddenly came to an end in October, 1878, when the stockholders of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company of Arizona held a meeting in which carefully-prepared maps were presented and a route was adopted from Yuma eastward as far as Maricopa Wells.¹⁴ At the same time a large force of surveyors was already at work in Pima County mapping out the line on east, and by the first week in October fifteen carloads of construction materials arrived.¹⁵

By the end of November, 1878, track was being laid at the rate of one-half mile per day.¹⁶ On the twenty-third of that month a distance of four miles beyond the city was reached. The Pacific Improvement Company had the contract for this portion of the job and, according to the Arizona Sentinel, it was taking the place of the Western Development Company as railroad builders. Additional ties were arriving daily on regular trains, and besides this a special construction train of twenty carloads came every

¹⁴ Maricopa Wells was about 180 miles east of Yuma.

¹⁵ Arizona Sentinel, October 12, 1878.

¹⁶ Ibid., November 30, 1878.

other day. At this date an installment of 10,000 tons of steel rails was expected in Yuma.¹⁷ For a while some trouble was encountered in getting enough Chinese labor, but by the end of 1878 there were over 600 employed.¹⁸ By January 25, 1879, track had been laid for one hundred and eighty miles beyond Yuma, and two years later it reached El Paso, Texas.

On the night of May 17, 1879, a pioneer excursion train with 216 weary passengers came through Yuma on the way to Maricopa. There were nine passenger cars, one hotel car, one baggage car, and a fruit car. The Yumans never had seen anything like this before and were on hand the next morning to see the train pull out after changing engines and crew. An industrious real estate agent took advantage of the occasion to sell choice lots in the town of Maricopa to the sightseers. There was some doubt as to just what county the new town was in, but the promoter had provided himself with a license to do business in several counties. A fine map of Maricopa was circulated and fifty-one lots laid down upon it in five blocks. These were sold for a price ranging from

¹⁷ Arizona Sentinel, November 16, 1878.

¹⁸ Ibid., November 23, 1878.

twenty-five to one thousand dollars, amounting to a grand total of more than ten thousand dollars. The Sentinel stated that the celebrated train returned through Yuma the next day and, although the tickets had been marked "not transferable" and each bore the owner's signature, the returning excursionists looked very different from those who went to Maricopa.¹⁹

The coming of the railroad had a more or less civilizing effect upon the Indians. Before the iron horse arrived the red men wore practically no clothing. A few had secured old uniforms from the soldiers at excessive prices and wore them only for special occasions. Also, a few had obtained clothing from immigrants whom they had ferried across the river; but as a whole they had not adopted the white man's ways of covering the body.

Since the Indian was most curious and always appeared at the depot when the trains arrived, a shrewd business man thought up an idea by which he was able to make some quick money. He first purchased all the old pants he could from the soldiers and miners; then he got an ordinance passed by the town council that no Indian would be allowed to appear at the station without trousers. The

¹⁹ Arizona Sentinel, May 17, 1879.

promoter soon sold his stock at a nice profit, and the Indians continued to meet all trains. Also, since the bridge had been built the Indian women no longer swam the river as was the custom, but now became most efficient in walking the ties, balancing their load upon their heads.

As was stated before, freighting by wagon team came to an end when the Southern Pacific reached the town of Yuma. Many of the old-time muleteers moved to the interior of the Territory where the train had not yet penetrated. A few stayed in Yuma and tried to adjust themselves to new conditions, but for the most of them life became
²⁰ rather difficult.

The rates the train company charged seem rather high if compared to present fares; but compared to what the stages charged, the picture is not too bad. For example, passenger rates were ten cents a mile on the train, or about twenty-two dollars and ninety cents from Yuma to Tucson. The same trip by stage was sixty dollars. Freight went to Tucson for about one and a half cents per pound and the trip took less than one day; while by wagon it cost five to five and a half cents per pound and took
²¹ twenty days.

²⁰ Gordon, op. cit., pp. 68-82.

²¹ Yuma Sentinel, January 11, 1879.

Even though the railroad charges were an improvement over old transportation rates, the people and merchants of Yuma began to inaugurate a campaign for reductions. An analysis of the railroad's financial affairs appeared in the Yuma paper in 1878, giving the following statistics and comments:

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The Company's charter allowed it to issue bonds at the rate of \$20,000 per mile, or nearly \$3,000,000 for building the road over a nearly level country, which could not have cost more than \$2,000,000, including bridges and equipment. The Company was ahead a mere \$1,000,000.

As to the operation. One train, mixed, is run daily between here and Los Angeles, at a cost of less than \$200 for wages, coal, wear and etc... Maintenance of track from here to Colton costs less than \$100 per day. Total daily expense does not exceed \$300 a day.. The yield from passenger fare is \$200 daily. That of freight receipts amounts to \$2,700 a day. In 365 days the Company gets nearly a million dollars from this latter source a year. So it is calculated that the trade of Arizona pays the Southern Pacific a million or more in profits each year.

Several years after the railroad arrived, Yuma had two hotels, one restaurant, four stores of general merchandise, four groceries and variety stores, two drug stores, one stationary shop, three butcher shops, two blacksmith shops, one saddle and harness shop, four

22 Arizona Sentinel, April 20, 1878.

barber shops, four Chinese wash-houses, three attorneys-²³ at-law, two telegraph offices, and eleven saloons. Evidently the old pioneers were fond of their liquor.

Another railroad enterprise was inaugurated in 1898. A road was planned to go from Yuma south to the Gulf of Lower California. It was to be about a hundred miles long. The idea was to tap all the fine agriculture lands between Yuma and points south of the border, which were in the process of being irrigated. The Mexican government granted a right-of-way concession and the road-bed reached several miles beyond the border, but never was completed.²⁴ It was just another case of too much overconfidence in a possible agricultural boom. The stockholders lost all their investments in the attempted enterprise.

The next great event in Yuma's history came in the form of a flood disaster in February, 1891. At this time the Gila River overflowed its banks. For hours before the water reached flood proportion, several hundred citizens and fifty convicts from the State Penitentiary had been working with teams and gangplows trying to build up

²³ Arizona Sentinel, January 29, 1881.

²⁴ Morning Sun, September 15, 1899.

the levee. But by four o'clock in the afternoon of February 22 the levee was abandoned because the water was making headway faster than the embankment could be built. Attention then was directed toward the levees in the town district, from 200 to 400 yards from the main levee, on the Gila River banks.

Two hours later these levees broke and the water rushed into the city streets, ten feet deep, rapidly spreading out. It soon reached the top of the embankments surrounding the buildings, in many instances breaking through and completely destroying the buildings which were all made of adobe. The flood waters continued to rise until about midnight, and by Monday morning all the buildings east of Main Street were washed down or wrecked. Hundreds of people were camped on the hillsides, drenched with the winter rain which had fallen continually for twenty-four hours. Later in the day the United States quartermaster's abandoned depot in West Yuma was filled with all the unfortunates it could hold.

All the stores but one, every restaurant except two, and all saloons except that at the railroad hotel went down in the flood. The school house, lodge buildings, and churches were not spared; in fact, every structure of any consequence not fully destroyed was surrounded by water.

Several deaths resulted from exposure, but only one person is known to have drowned. Thirty families had to be rescued from the top of houses in the south of town, and hundreds of carcasses of livestock came floating down the raging river.²⁵

When Yuma was rebuilt the levees were made higher and stronger; but no permanent flood relief came until after the Lagune, Imperial, and Boulder Dams were built.

²⁵ Los Angeles Examiner, February 24, 1891.

CHAPTER VI

YUMA'S FARMING LANDS

Physically and climatically the Colorado delta is similar to the ~~delta of the~~ Nile. Like that great river of Egypt, the Colorado rises in far-distant mountains and empties through tidal flats into an almost inland sea.¹ Both above and below Yuma may be found some of the most fertile lands in the world. On the left bank of the Colorado south of the city is an extensive bottom over fifty miles in length and eight miles wide. The whole of this region extends on to the Gulf of Mexico.

Before the white man moved into the Yuma Valley and the Imperial Valley of California, Indians cultivated the soil for centuries. It is now known that small plots of ground had been farmed and land had been irrigated by water taken from the Gila and Colorado Rivers around the present city of Yuma and as far south as the Gulf of California for over a thousand years.²

¹ "The Reclamation Project," Forest and Irrigation, March, 1906, pp. 143-152.

² Baker, Roy S., "The Great Southwest," Century, July, 1902, pp. 361-373.

When the early Spanish explorers and settlers first came to the region around Yuma they found the Indians depending upon the rivers to overflow their banks before planting their crops. This haphazard method was also adopted by the first immigrants. Between 1849 and 1860 the population around the river junction increased to such an extent that the problem of feeding the people became serious. By the latter date Yuma had begun to be settled, thousands of immigrants had passed through to California, the fort across the river had been established, and mining and freighting activities had expanded rapidly. During this period of early growth, most of the food was brought from the Pacific coast. Some of this came by steamer to the mouth of the Colorado and was re-shipped to Yuma on the river boats and barges. The cost of freighting supplies overland from the coast was almost prohibitive.

Among the first elaborate schemes to bring water to the desert was one by Doctor O.M. Wozencraft, who worked out a plan to irrigate and colonize lands in the Imperial Valley west and south of Yuma. This proposition involved a diversion of water from the Colorado River toward the west into the region drained by the Alamo River, which would then carry it to points in California. From these places it could be distributed by a canal system. To

carry out Wozencraft's idea the Federal Government was asked to grant the state of California some 3,000,000 acres of land. The California legislature approved the idea, but the United States' Congress failed to pass the necessary legislation. The reason for Congressional disapproval was that part of the canal system to be constructed would have to be located on Mexican soil. Seventeen years later, in 1876, a survey was made to determine whether or not it would be feasible to reach the Imperial Valley without following a route through Mexico. The report of the American engineers indicated that it would be unfavorable to build the canal entirely in the United States, and again called attention to the natural route through Mexican territory.³

This news was rather discouraging to those desiring to have water supplied to the desert in a canal located throughout its entire length on United States' soil, but efforts to develop irrigation continued although on a smaller scale than was suggested by Wozencraft. Large-scale or modern irrigation did not begin until near the end of the century, although various small enterprises were tried, as well as numerous private endeavors.

³ "Problems of Imperial Valley and Vicinity," Letters from the Secretary of the Interior, p. 72.

In regard to the latter, one of the very earliest efforts to raise crops by individual irrigation was undertaken by Jose Redondo, who was one of the first settlers in Yuma. He, with his brother, operated the San Ysidor Ranch, which was located between the Colorado and Gila Rivers. Attempts to divert the river waters were made in 1862. A series of canals was constructed at an approximate cost of \$25,000. For the next twelve years no profits were realized, but by 1878 over \$6,000 was made. That year some 500,000 pounds of barley were harvested; 300,000 pounds of wheat; and 500 pounds of hay. The Federal Government purchased the majority of these crops, paying three to five cents a pound for the grain and forty dollars a ton for the hay. Besides the government, the freighters, mail contractors, immigrants, and the railroad construction gangs caused an active demand for all that could be raised around Yuma. Redondo also made experiments in cultivating sugar cane and cotton. The cane grew so well that a small mill was set up and brown sugar made. All in all, there were about a thousand acres under cultivation, and up to 1878 there were some

⁴ Hinton, op. cit., pp. 277-280.

twenty-seven miles of irrigation ditches in operation. In addition to what was sold locally from this ranch, several carloads of wheat were shipped to Los Angeles in 1877.⁵ As to wages paid at that time, the usual amount of pay was twenty dollars a month for common farm hands, while the overseer received ninety-five dollars.⁶ This compares favorably with the same kind of wages paid during recent depression years.

In 1878 an experimental farming venture, known as the Lerdo Colony,⁷ was started on the east side of the Colorado River about seventy miles south of Yuma and twenty miles from the Gulf of Lower California. It was partly on Mexican soil. Agreements were made with the Mexican government and a tract of land fifteen miles wide was to be cultivated. The first work undertaken was to establish an experimental and supply ranch. A kind of plant nursery was tried, in which various fruits and cereals were grown. Several thousand young fruit trees were set out with the idea of having a sufficient supply for future use when more settlers came to the colony.

⁵ Arizona Sentinel, April 27, 1878.

⁶ Hinton, op. cit., p. 280.

⁷ Arizona Sentinel, September 14, 1878.

The land was cut up into small farms and sold to bona fide settlers on very liberal terms. The colonists, when not working on their own lands, were to help construct a proposed large canal on the west side of the Colorado River. Stock was sold in this venture with the idea that much of the money was to be used in building the canal, which would begin some place near Pilot Knob, a distance of about nine miles west of Yuma in California, and run through the center of the tract to the river's mouth. Some 600,000 acres were to be irrigated. Yuma was to benefit greatly from the project; but due to the instability and dishonesty of some of the officials, the venture did not prove very successful and the canal undertaking was never started. Fundamentally the idea was sound, as was shown in later irrigation projects in the same district.

Another farming enterprise was undertaken in 1885 when the Mohawk Canal Irrigation District was established. The part of the Gila Valley which was to be irrigated is located from sixty to seventy miles east of Yuma.⁸ The expense of taking water from the river varied from one to five dollars per acre. At that time an abundance of

⁸ Arizona Sentinel, January 1, 1887.

surface water could have been had at a depth of ten to
 twenty feet.⁹ Stock was sold for twenty-five dollars a
 share and by January, 1887, several canals had been fin-
 ished at a cost of \$20,000. Before long about 23,000
 acres of irrigable land were opened up under the Desert
 Land, Pre-emption, and Homestead entries, practically in-
 cluding the entire Mohawk Valley.¹⁰ By this time there were
 nine irrigation canals over Yuma County, which were cap-
 able of furnishing water enough for 150,000 acres, al-
 though there were only about 2,500 under cultivation.¹¹

Just before 1900, one of those troublesome early
 Mexican Land Grants came to life again. It seems that a
 large tract of land, including the Yuma and Gila Valleys,
 was given to a man named Don Fernando Rodriguez in 1838.
 This gift came from the Treasury General of the state of
 Sonora. For years the claim lay idle and when the United
 States came into possession of Arizona, no knowledge was
 had and no cognizance taken of Senor Rodriguez' title.
 The matter rested until February 2, 1898, when the

⁹ Arizona Sentinel, February 12, 1887.

¹⁰ Ibid., January 22, 1887.

¹¹ Ibid., February 5, 1887.

Algodones Land Grant Company instituted suit for recovery of the domains granted to Rodríguez. A special land court which sat at Santa Fe, New Mexico, decided that the grantee's claim, which had been transferred to the Algodones Land Grant Company, was valid.

After this decision many people came to the Yuma district purchasing land and water rights for the purpose of making their homes in the Colorado River Valley; but the government soon put an end to this, and once more the lands were taken off the market. This action did not stop immigration completely, for many new farmers came as squatters, and about a thousand acres were put under cultivation by the new arrivals and those old settlers who had remained. Later the case came up in the United States Supreme Court, which gave a decision in favor of the United States Government on the grounds that the power of Sonora to grant lands had ceased in 1836. At that time Mexico was divided into states and the prerogative of granting lands remained only with the federal government of Mexico. Furthermore, at the time this grant had been made to Rodríguez, the state of Sonora was in rebellion.

¹² Sun, June 3, 1898.

The history of modern Imperial and Yuma Valleys began in 1892, when Engineer Charles R. Rockwood took preliminary steps in making large-scale plans to irrigate the land with water brought from the Colorado River. As a result of Rockwood's efforts the California Development Company was formed.¹³ The chief promoter of this firm was Colonel Ferguson. He induced J.W. Shenk, editor of the Omaha Christian Advocate, to invest \$10,000 in the company. This event took place in 1899. One year later a hydraulic engineer, George Chaffey, discovered that water could be brought from the river more cheaply than had been anticipated. So he also invested in the California Development Company. In April, 1900, work was started on the canal system and the intakes, in order to bring water to the firm's lands some sixty miles west of Yuma in the Imperial Valley. The first water was delivered in June, 1901. Before long an agricultural boom had started. At the end of the fourth year the Shenk family sold out part of their original holdings for \$45,000 and the remaining portion brought another \$40,000 several years later. This was quite a profit on an original investment of \$10,000.

¹³ Woehlke, W.V., "Lands of Before and After," Sunset, April, 1912, pp. 391-400.

Like many other business enterprises, the California Development Company encountered its share of troubles. The first setback came when an agent of the United States Department of Agriculture began to write most discouraging articles about the soil in the Valleys. When circular number nine was issued by the Bureau of Soils in 1902 the settlers were astounded. This pamphlet stated:

Aside from the alkali, which renders the soil practically worthless, some of the land is so rough from gullies or sand dunes that the expense of leveling it is greater than warranted by its value. In the 108,000 acres surveyed 29,840 acres, or 27.7 per cent, are sand dunes and rough land... The remainder of the level land, or 51 per cent, contains too much alkali to be safe except for resistant crops.¹⁴

In the meantime the Development Company was having internal disorder. Not only that, but in 1906 the Colorado River suddenly abandoned its old-time bed to the Gulf of California and headed northwest into the Salton Sea. For the next twenty months three unsuccessful attempts were made to get the river back into its regular channel. Finally, a fourth endeavor resulted in the water's flowing again its old course to the Gulf.

¹⁴ Woehlke, op. cit., pp. 391-400.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 395.

Now more and more people were coming into the vicinity around Yuma and the Imperial Valley. Most of these went south and southwest of Yuma. As additional land came under cultivation more water was needed, and after several experiments it was decided that the best place to construct new canals from the Colorado was south of Yuma. The soil here was more desirable from a seepage standpoint, but unfortunately the site where the proposed new canals would be located belonged to Mexico. Our government had failed to purchase these lands in the Treaty of 1848 or when the Gadsden Purchase was made in 1853, and consequently the only solution was to negotiate with Mexico for the right to carry water through her territory to the Yuma and Imperial Valleys.

After much discussion about water rights and maintenance of the canal, the Mexican Government agreed to permit its construction through the desired territory.¹⁶ The American farmers agreed to finance all costs and supply machinery needed to dig the artificial river bed. In return they were to receive one-half of all the water

¹⁶ "Boulder Dam Project," Congressional Digest, 6:39-61 (February, 1927).

which flowed through the canal.¹⁷ The Mexican farmers, who in reality were American land owners, were to have the other fifty per cent of the water going through the canal at a cost to be fixed by the Mexican Government. Later the rate proved so inadequate that, although the amount of water used there over a period of years averaged more than a fourth of the total carried, the amount of money paid to the canal owners did not meet so much as one-eighth of the expenses of maintaining that portion of the project in Mexican territory.

In addition to this unfortunate condition, the people around Yuma felt they should have more water in order to irrigate lands south and north of the city. Consequently the Laguna Dam was built about ten miles northeast of Yuma. This was part of the Yuma Reclamation Project and was started in 1904.¹⁸ Two years before, Congress had passed the Reclamation Act which provided for the construction and maintenance of irrigation works in the territories, and the creation of a reclamation fund.¹⁹ Prior to the enactment of legislation defining

¹⁷ Parten, Agnes E., "The Imperial Valley Carries On," The Independent, 118:652-653 (June 23, 1927).

¹⁸ "Problems of the Imperial Valley and Vicinity," Letters from the Secretary of the Interior, pp. 62-71.

¹⁹ United States Statutes 32, pp. 388-390.

water rights and creating irrigation districts, the settlers in the irrigable areas of the territories formed organizations for the establishment of reclamation projects; but in every case they operated as private corporations, co-partnerships, and sometimes, as among the Mormons, through a religious organization.²⁰

The Yuma Project of the United States Reclamation Service claims an early valid right to diversion of water; this right is based upon an act of Congress which authorizes the diversion of water for the Yuma Project and for the Indian country.²¹²²

The lands included in this enterprise lay along the Colorado River between the Mexican boundary and a point forty miles north. The part to be reclaimed comprised an ultimate area of 130,000 acres. Of these 15,000 acres were public lands and 55,000 were under private ownership in 1904. The Arizona lands were all located within Yuma County; 55,000 acres of bottom land were between Yuma and the international boundary line while 20,000 acres were

²⁰ Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 1530-1588, p. 532.

²¹ United States Statutes 33, p. 224.

²² "Problems of the Imperial Valley and Vicinity," Letters from the Secretary of the Interior, pp. 69-71.

in the low Gila Valley just above the city. The plans included also 40,000 acres of mesa land south and east of Yuma. These are above frost and probably are so situated as to make them the most attractive citrus area of this country.²³

The contract for building the dam was let to J.G. White and Company on July 6, 1905, and operation began on the 19th of the following month. In August, 1906, the contractors petitioned relief from their contract, stating that they were meeting with excessive losses. Within a few weeks a conference was held in Los Angeles between the contractor's representatives and a board of engineers. It was decided not to relieve the builders of the contract, but it was recognized that the materials available for construction of the dam were somewhat different from what both parties had expected. Under these conditions a supplementary contract was drawn and approved by the Secretary of the Interior, whereby compensating prices were allowed for certain portions of the work. This resulted in an advance of the original contract price of \$797,650 to \$1,129,135 and an extension of the

²³ "United States Reclamation Service, Yuma Project, Arizona-California," Data prepared for the Board of Engineers, U.S.A., September 10, 1905, pp. 1-45.

time for completion from the original date of July 19, 1907, to January 19, 1908.

During the latter part of 1906 the contractors again petitioned for relief, and after another conference the work was ordered taken over by the Reclamation Service on January 23, 1907. It was carried to completion on March 20, 1909, by force account, under the direction of the engineers of the above agency.

Materials were delivered to Yuma and then either shipped by steamboats or sent by team to the site of the work. Ordinary cooking facilities were maintained for those workers who desired to take advantage of them, and well-stocked commissaries were maintained for the accommodation of the men and their families. The labor was mostly Mexican, but there were a few Indians and during the cooler months a fair per cent of wandering American whites were carried on the payroll. Of course the skilled labor such as engineers, firemen, derrick runners, pipe fitters, and others, was American white. From October to June little trouble was encountered in keeping help, but in summer it was almost impossible to employ a sufficient working force.

²⁴ "United States Reclamation Service, Yuma Project," op. cit., pp. 1-45.

The reason for the private company's failure to complete the dam was due mainly to the large difference between the estimates and the actual figures on first-class excavations. Also, the concrete quantities estimated covered only the core walls but because of the disintegrated materials encountered in the quarries, it was necessary to pave the top of the entire dam; and the uncertain nature of the rock in the sluiceways made imperative the pavement of their bottoms and sides also. In addition to this, there was needed more rock fill in the dam than had been planned. D.R. Willer, writing in the Scientific American, stated that 35,600 cubic yards of concrete were required to complete the Laguna Dam, which had a displacement of 600,000 tons.²⁵

In order to protect the surrounding country from overflow in flood season an intricate system of levees, similar to those on the lower Mississippi River, was built. According to C.J. Blanchard these levees were the first perfect ones ever constructed.²⁶ The bases are six or seven times as wide as their height, a necessary

²⁵ Willer, D.R., "Yuma Irrigation Dam," Scientific American, 99:293-303 (October 31, 1908).

²⁶ Blanchard, C.J., "The Delta of the Colorado River and Its Problems," Review of Reviews, 33:428-31 (April, 1906).

requisite to insure absolute resistance to water. Their construction was complicated and expensive because the areas protected are in the drainage basin of two streams, the Gila and Colorado Rivers, both of which are subject to sudden and tremendous floods.

When finally completed, the dam was almost a mile long and raised the water ten feet from its natural elevation. The cost of the project up to 1910 including dam, levees, and some canals, was \$4,120,000 or about fifteen dollars for each acre that was expected to be irrigated in the future. A water users' association was formed, and each member was to pay on the basis of number of acres irrigated. Eventually the project is to be self-liquidating. The main canal, which is about twenty feet wide, taps the river just above the dam. When water is needed for irrigation the gates are closed and the silt-laden waters are impounded in a "settling basin" until a depth of twenty feet is reached. Then the waters are "skimmed" over the top and flow on down to the fields, leaving all the heavy sand in the bottom of the "settling basin" to be sluiced out when the gates are raised. The main canal runs about twelve miles through the state of California, and then the water is conducted to the Arizona side of the Colorado through an inverted siphon fourteen feet in diameter. The siphon carries sufficient

water to irrigate 150,000 acres of land. It is designed to carry 1,800 cubic feet per second, which is enough to cover 3,600 acres one foot deep in water every twenty-four hours.

Because of climatic conditions, the Yuma Project furnishes the earliest vegetables and melons that are shipped to market; and the citrus fruits grown on the mesa are out of the market long before citrus fruits from any other section of the United States.²⁷

Previous to the construction of the dam by the Reclamation Service, lands within the limits of the project sold for the small sum of five to twenty-five dollars per acre. At the end of 1919 these same lands commanded a price from \$200 to \$700 dollars per acre. The Yuma County Chamber of Commerce stated in 1926 that if the soil was planted to "garden truck" it would produce upwards of \$1,000 an acre. When it was properly planted and cultivated in short staple cotton, \$200 an acre should be realized. It was said also that seven to ten cuttings of alfalfa hay are not unreasonable to expect. The same source went even further and stated that the Yuma Project lands will produce more per acre than any known lands in the United States.²⁸

²⁷ "Yuma, Arizona." Issued by the Yuma County Chamber of Commerce, 1926.

²⁸ Ibid.

The total crop value produced from the day water was first made available for irrigation purposes up to and including the year of 1925 was \$80,000,000. During the first year the water was used there were 11,000 acres in cultivation as against 80,000 for 1925. There yet remain 62,000 acres to be reclaimed from the desert.²⁹

Experts claim that in the Yuma Valley the pecan tree finds almost ideal conditions. This is attributed to the excellent soil and the fact that there is no late frost nor rain in the spring and no severe wind storms. A tree can be grown to make a profitable commercial production in five or six years. In 1927, a twenty-two-year-old tree yielded 400 pounds of nuts. The market price of one dollar a pound made pecan raising rather attractive. One grove of eighteen-year-olds, belonging to W.D. Tate, for the previous ten years had produced a crop averaging \$100 per tree.

In another instance records kept on a grove show the production age of trees as follows: six-year-old, 688 pounds per acre; eight-year-old, 1224 pounds; ten-year-old, 1581 pounds; twelve-year-old, 2113 pounds. These are not typical yields, but are indicative of the

²⁹ "Yuma, Arizona." Issued by the Yuma County Chamber of Commerce, 1926, p. 6.

possibilities for heavy yields in well-managed orchards of the Yuma Valley. The United States Department of Agriculture states that the typical yield for a southern pecan district in 1932 was six to eight pounds a tree, or 100 to 150 pounds per acre.³⁰ Once the grove is in production the greatest expense is over and the upkeep small. There is no pruning nor spraying to do; the crop is not perishable, requires no processing and no expensive containers to bring it to the consumer. After falling to the ground, the nut is picked up and sacked ready to be sold.³¹

Even though the soil in the Yuma Valley is one of the most fertile in the Southwest, the farmers had their share of difficulty during the depression years. This is shown by the fact that in 1932, although the ordinary cost to water users was \$9.74 per acre, they were unable to meet expenses. President Hoover on April 1, 1932, signed a bill which made possible deferment on construction charges due for that year until the end of the repayment period, with interest at five per cent. This had

³⁰ An Economic Survey of Yuma Valley and Yuma Mesa Agriculture, May, 1932, p. 25.

³¹ Borum, Ruth, "Prosperity in a Nut Shell," Progressive Arizona, December, 1927, p. 9.

the effect of deferring for one and a half years both the construction charges and installments of previously-deferred operation and maintenance, and the construction charges due the government in the year of 1931 and one-half the amount due in the year 1932.³²

Some of the claims made in regard to the fertility of the soil in the vicinity of Yuma may be exaggerated; but if this region is put to scientific farming, it should produce agriculture products throughout the entire year. During the twenties much effort was expended in truck gardening. The future for this occupation is exceptionally bright because of the improvement in fast transportation. Yuma, of course, will be the shipping depot for the products going to Arizona or California cities and other sections of the country.

³² An Economic Survey of Yuma Valley etc., p. 25.

CHAPTER VII

YUMA FROM 1900 TO THE END OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Yuma experienced its greatest growth between the years of 1900 and 1920. The majority of the buildings erected and other civic improvements undertaken during this period may be seen today. More people began to come into the city and surrounding territory as soon as the Yuma Reclamation Project became a reality. People with surplus funds were encouraged to invest their money in irrigation enterprises when water from the Colorado and Gila Rivers became obtainable at reasonable rates.

Within a very few years after the turn of the century, new buildings began to be erected. In 1906, when Arizona was still a territory, a bill passed the legislature directing the Yuma County Board of Supervisors to issue bonds for the amount of \$75,000 for the purpose of building a court house and jail in the city of Yuma. This was not approved by Congress until February 6, 1909, but the federal lawmakers reduced the appropriation to \$50,000. Consequently, the board of supervisors took no further action because it thought that \$50,000 was not enough to complete the building.

In April, 1909, John Gandolfo, Thomas D. Malloy, and the Southern Pacific petitioned the supreme court of the territory to issue a writ of mandamus compelling the board of supervisors to sell the bonds of Yuma County and proceed to build a court house as authorized and directed by the 24th legislature.¹ The same appropriation bill, which had been passed by the territorial legislature in 1906, also directed the board of supervisors to pay the above petitioners the sum of \$3,545 with interest at twelve per cent from March 1, 1906. These men had purchased and were holding the ground designated for the court house site, as trustees of the county, and had executed their joint note for the same. The Arizona Sentinel made this statement in regard to the affair:

If the transaction were a matter of speculation, figuring that the said trustees own divers and numerous lots adjacent to the court house site, it was not a losing one; whether the court house be erected there or not a handsome profit could be realized on the investment, even now. That property is worth double what it was two years ago.²

There was little else for the board to do but go ahead and issue the bonds as ordered by the supreme court. Even though the \$50,000 would not be sufficient to erect

¹ Arizona Sentinel, April 15, 1909.

² Ibid.

a suitable building, the decision had to be obeyed. Also many of the people in Yuma thought that the new building should have been located on Prison Hill, where a great saving could be made. They had visions of its being seen by visitors, since the hill is higher than the main highway and in a location near the California line. By July \$50,000 worth of five per cent bonds were sold at a premium of \$6,000 and bids were let to start work on the edifice at the intersection of Second Street and Second Avenue, not on Prison Hill as many of the citizens had hoped.

In August, F.S. Allen, a Pasadena architect, sent the members of the board of supervisors his qualifications as an architect. He also enclosed a twenty dollar bill for each member.³ The money was to be used by the supervisors to defray their expenses to San Pedro, California, where Mr. Allen had constructed a building similar to the proposed Yuma courthouse. This caused much ill feeling on the part of the opposition, and the members of the board were accused of accepting a bribe. Fortunately for all concerned the charges were not taken too seriously by the majority of the taxpayers, and on

³ Arizona Sentinel, August 26, 1909.

November 4 at ten o'clock in the morning the construction bids were to be opened. But by this hour the clerk of the board had not received a single bid. Consequently, when Charles Olcester, a Yuma contractor, offered to file a bid at ten minutes past ten, the board refused to accept it and decided to re-advertise for more bids on December 3, 1909.

Following the adjournment of the board, an affidavit was filed immediately by Attorney Thomas D. Malloy, stating that the supervisors had not obeyed the mandate of the supreme court in the matter of erecting the courthouse. He cited chairman Shanssey and supervisor Marvin to appear before the supreme court on the eighth of November to show reason why they should not be punished for contempt of court. Supervisor Kent had not been cited because he had voted to accept Olcester's bid. Evidently Mr. Malloy became convinced that the supervisors were sincere in their efforts, because he wired the clerk of the supreme court at Phoenix not to file the citation against the two board members. Finally in January, 1910, a Los Angeles architect by the name of R.B. Young was chosen to supervise the construction of the building, and two contractors - John Wadin and Charles Olcester - started and completed the long-delayed courthouse and

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jail.

The authorities ran into less trouble when they built several new schoolhouses. Before 1908 there was a grammar school on Main Street, and during this year a new one was built on Second Avenue at a cost of \$45,000. The cost of operating these two institutions was about \$25,000 a year. The major part of the expenditures was used to pay teachers' salaries, which ranged from seventy-five to ninety dollars a month.⁵

The citizens had enough foresight to purchase a high school site in 1909. During that year the mayor, Mr. J.H. Shanssey, sold at public auction block number 121 of the city plat to the board of trustees of the Union High School for the sum of \$1,000. In 1912, bonds for \$60,000 were sold and by the fall of 1914 the new Union High School was ready for occupancy. This building is located on the mesa between Fourth and Fifth Streets and Fifth and Sixth Avenues.

In addition to the structures described above, a new Elks' Hall was built at a cost of \$20,000. It, too, is located on the higher ground above the city.

⁴ Arizona Sentinel, June 30, 1910.

⁵ Morning Sun, December 14, 1913.

The banks also came in for their share of expansion after 1900. The Yuma National Bank was granted a charter by the comptroller of the currency on December 14, 1909,⁶ and was open for business by January of the new year. This bank at first occupied office space which had been used by the Yuma Title Abstract and Trust Company on Second Street. Four months after it opened its doors there was a reorganization, and a month after that the firm consolidated with the Farmers and Merchants Bank under the name of the Yuma National Bank. At the same time the banking facilities were moved from Second Street to the quarters occupied by the Farmers and Merchants Bank. In 1916, the concern moved to their new home at the corner of Main and Second Street.⁷

The First National Bank also had a healthy growth. It, too, began to expand after the turn of the century until, in 1913, the capital had increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000. This institution and the Yuma National Bank were important factors in financing the business life not only of the city, but of the farming and mining activities in the adjoining territory as well.

⁶ Arizona Sentinel, December 23, 1909.

⁷ Morning Sun, September 13, 1914.

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According to McClintock, the Bank of Yuma, another competing firm, failed in 1904. It closed its doors with only \$400 on hand and with a deficit of \$41,000. The depositors lost practically all their money. The failure was due to bad management on the part of bank officials. In addition to the prosperous banks, there was a small private institution owned by Mr. Sanguinetti. The owner retired from the banking field in 1914 and asked all his former clients to transfer their accounts to the Yuma National Bank.⁹

A comparison of Yuma as it was in 1872 with the Yuma of 1913 reveals that only five of the Americans who had lived there at that early date still remained thirty-three years later. Main Street was the same, but only two houses were left in 1913. Gila Street also remained the same as far as location, but not one original house was discernible by that year. Madison Avenue from Second Street to Third coincided with the streets of 1913. On or near Madison Avenue were found nine houses that had been built by 1872, although it was hard to recognize them at the turn of the century. In the section beginning with First Avenue and extending toward the west and south

⁹ Morning Sun, August 1, 1914.

not a single home could be found that had been there in '72. By 1913 the mesa had become the residential district of the city. Before this date the locality had been the favorite resort for horseback riding and driving, and the site of a race track.¹⁰

Yuma had several scandals that were aired in the courts during these ten or twelve years of civic growth. In 1902, Eugene S. Ives sued the editor of the Yuma Sentinel, Mr. Dorrington, for \$25,000 because he had been humiliated by a little innocent political paragraph in the Sentinel. The case was dismissed and Ives paid court costs. The editor was sued again in 1909 for the same amount by Frank Baxter, the city attorney.¹¹ The defendant was accused of damaging Baxter's reputation when he stated that the lawyer was influential in putting through a city ordinance licensing "bawdy" houses in a certain section of the town. Dorrington had made a statement in his paper that to issue such a license was illegal in the territory of Arizona. The case finally reached the state supreme court where a decision was handed down favoring Dorrington.

This last court case was a factor in having the

¹⁰ Morning Sun, December 14, 1913.

¹¹ Arizona Sentinel, June 10, 1909.

grand jury make an investigation of the "Red Light District" in the early part of 1913. The investigators looked into ten cases and found it difficult to get witnesses to testify. No evidence was found to substantiate the charges that the inmates of certain houses in the "Red Light District" had been bribing the police force in order to secure protection; but the sanitary condition in that district was ¹²bad. The grand jury went on to make recommendations in regard to better police protection and better regulation of boxing contests; the food was examined in the county jail and found good, but sanitary conditions were not satisfactory.

Regardless of the recommendation made by the grand jury, Yuma's sanitary conditions remained about the same. Three years after the above report was made, Colonel Baker, commander of the 25th Infantry, which was stationed in the town, demanded that a thorough clean-up be made to improve sanitary conditions. The order was accompanied by threats to move the troops to another locality if something was not done about the matter. The commander also complained about the way in which several citizens had tried to raise the rent of certain apartments after agreements had been

¹² Morning Sun, March 12, 1913.

made between owner and renters. In one case an army officer had made a written contract with a property owner to lease a certain apartment for \$30.00 a month with gas and light furnished. A few days after the agreement, the owner demanded \$45.00 a month.¹³ At the same time that the army was complaining, the city health authorities stated that the condition of the town was anything but sanitary.

During these same years the school board had its share of trouble. In February, 1913, Miss Irene Taylor, a Yuma grammar school teacher, was dismissed by the board of trustees. She appealed her case to County School Superintendent John H. Hess.¹⁴ While the case was pending before the board of trustees and being investigated, Mr. Hess wrote Miss Taylor a letter pledging his support in her behalf. At that time Mr. Hess knew the case would be appealed to him.¹⁵

¹³ Morning Sun, August 25, 1916.

¹⁴ Arizona Code Annotated, 1939, pages 54-1004.
 "In case of the dismissal of any teacher before the expiration of any contract entered into between such teacher and the board of trustees, for alleged unfitness or incompetence, appeal may be had to the county superintendent."

¹⁵ Morning Sun, February 6, 1913.

Many of the Yumans began to complain about the conduct of the superintendent. Stories were circulated which were uncomplimentary to his reputation. Consequently there appeared a demand for Mr. Hess to vacate his position and let some disinterested party pass upon the merits of the schoolteacher's case. Outside pressure was so strong that the chairman of the board of trustees had the county attorney file an affidavit stating that Hess had already committed himself upon the affair and could not give an impartial hearing. The board member based his own action upon parts of a letter written by Mr. Hess to Miss Taylor. Some of the letter appeared in the Sun for February 11, 1913.¹⁶ It was said that Mr. Hess had written several other damaging letters to Miss Taylor, and these were in the hands of the county attorney.

¹⁶ "Dear Miss Taylor: Had not thought I deserved that note. Two long pages and not one kind word.....

"In your recent danger, they were called on for proof, and were told by myself and one of the best lawyers in town they could not discharge you without my consent... I hope I have the reputation of standing by my friends...

"They came to me with the Fishbaugh story of your going back, etc. Of your keeping two sets of rooms, one at McClures' and one at Fishbaughs'.....I told them it was lie... That you might have some things there you were taking your time to move... but your conduct so far as I could see and hear was exemplary....

"What I can do to defend you and aid you, I hope it is not a little, I stand ready to do."

According to the newspaper article pertaining to the case, it was stated that Miss Taylor had been dismissed from her position because she had taken a drink of intoxicating liquor in public. It was alleged also that Superintendent Hess had taken the stand that Miss Taylor was discharged without cause, and he was attempting to revoke the order of discharge made by the board. The consensus of opinion was that it was impossible for Mr. Hess to place the teacher back in the school system, but she was in a position to bring civil suit for whatever salary she might claim. In this case the teacher had the right to sue in the courts. The controversy reached a climax at the trial in February. Miss Taylor sued the two school trustees, J.H. Westover and Doctor J.A. Kitcherside. The editor of the Morning Sun also was held to answer to the grand jury, but was allowed to go free without bail until the jury passed on his case some time later. Finally, when the jurors did meet at a later date they did not indict the accused man.

The Taylor trial continued several days and the proof introduced the last day vindicated both of the defendants in every way, and showed that they had acted for the best of the school and community in discharging

Miss Taylor.¹⁷ A few weeks after the court's decision, some of the citizens in Yuma started to circulate a petition to have Hess recalled. According to the Morning Sun for March 9, 1914, this was the first attempt to use the recall since the constitution of Arizona had been adopted. The petition had to contain the names of twenty-five per cent of those who had voted in the election when Hess was elected. The school superintendent was accused of improper conduct with Miss Irene Taylor, the dismissed schoolteacher. The petition stated that he had visited her apartment and had called her endearing names such as "Princess Irene," "Ma Chere" and "Zoe Mow Sas Agaba." It was also alleged that since Mr. Hess was a husband and a father, he was guilty of conduct not becoming to his position in the school system. By March, 1913, about 200 people had signed the recall petition.

On March 19 Mr. Hess filed with the board of supervisors a letter of resignation to take effect on the following June 30.¹⁸ But before that day arrived, he had¹⁹ withdrawn his resignation. The Sun stated this was only

¹⁷ Morning Sun, February 22, 1913.

¹⁸ Ibid., March 19, 1913.

¹⁹ Ibid., April 10, 1913.

a political trick to deceive the people and prevent their filing the recall petition. Evidently the so-called trick did not prove a success because the petition was soon signed by 310 persons and presented to the board of supervisors. At this time the names of ten signers were found to be false as far as the county register was concerned. Finally the recall election became a reality.²⁰ On May 31 the people voted to put Superintendent Hess out of office and elected Miss Louise Boeinger to take over his duties.²¹

Two years later Judge Baxter gave an opinion that the recall provision in the state constitution did not apply to school trustees. He stated that the clause did apply to county officials, but believed the argument good that it did not apply to school trustees, "as the state legislature failed to vitalize the constitutional amendments to include such officials."²² His opinion failed to alter the Hess case in any way.

The next event to make the headlines in the paper in

²⁰ Morning Sun, April 17, 1913.

²¹ Ibid., June 1, 1913.

²² Ibid., November 17, 1915.

Yuma occurred on New Year's Eve, 1914. At this time Bert McBee, a white citizen, was murdered by a negro soldier of the 10th Cavalry. Five negroes had stopped at a bar about 12:30 in the morning on their way back to camp. Soon McBee and several companions arrived at the same saloon and, according to witnesses, McBee addressed one of the troopers as "Slick." The colored men said that the whites insulted them by calling them nasty names, especially "nigger." One negro named Charles McDonald objected to the abuse. This caused McBee to draw a revolver; whereupon McDonald instantly drew his gun and shot the white man to death. The negro soldiers returned to their camp and the sheriff followed to arrest McDonald. When the authorities arrived at the cantonment, it was discovered that the murderer had fled. A posse was organized quickly but the negro changed his mind and came back to camp where he was arrested and placed in jail.

In the meantime a coroner's jury, after hearing the evidence, rendered a verdict that the deceased had come to his death by a gunshot fired by Charles McDonald with murderous intent. Six months after the incident McDonald was acquitted and freed. In a preliminary trial the white witnesses swore that the gun, which was found near the body of the deceased at the time of the murder, did not belong to the victim. The colored men and the

defendant said that McBee had drawn first. In the final court trial it was established definitely that McBee did own the gun in dispute, although the dead man's friends continued to swear that the victim had never owned the weapon. The jurors acquitted McDonald on the grounds of self-defense. The citizens of Yuma were so pleased over the verdict that they began to boast that even a negro²³ could get fair treatment in their law-abiding city.

A few years after the first decade of the 20th century the automobile began to appear in Yuma in ever-increasing numbers. On January 16, 1913, Mr. W.M. Winn received his first carload of Fords direct from the factory. The coming of so many automobiles brought about demands for a new highway bridge across the Colorado River. Consequently by February the United States government had passed a measure matching the Arizona legislature's \$25,000 appropriation. It was now up to California to vote a similar amount in order to construct the proposed²⁴ bridge. Before many weeks had passed the California legislature had fulfilled its promise, but Governor Johnson

²³ Morning Sun, July 2, 1914.

²⁴ Ibid., February 26, 1913.

failed to sign the measure. Furthermore, no action could be taken for two more years, when the lawmakers met again; but instead of waiting, the people in southern California put on a campaign and raised the necessary funds through donations.²⁵ Then a contract to build the bridge was let to the Omaha Structural Steel Works of Omaha, Nebraska, for the amount of \$72,500.²⁶

By April, 1915, the job was completed and a great celebration undertaken. On the 11th of the month twenty-five automobiles passed over the new structure on their way to Holtville, California.²⁷ No difficulties were encountered by the excursionists except a few punctures. They found the road across the sand hills west of Yuma in fine condition. At this place the plank road was seven miles long. On each side were laid three planks ten inches wide for the wheels of the automobiles. No sand had gathered and the traveling on the boards was excellent.

The coming of the automobile also created a demand for paved highways. The first large project in Yuma was

²⁵ Morning Sun, July 17, 1913.

²⁶ Ibid., June 24, 1914.

²⁷ Ibid., April 13, 1915.

the Main Street paving job. The contract was let to the O. and C. Construction Company in November, 1916, and the work was completed by March, 1917. Plans for similar improvements were adopted; by the spring of 1918, however, the War Department stopped all further work of the kind²⁸ except that pertaining to war necessities.

It was during these years that the city experienced its first bond issue. In November, 1915, the city council decided to sell \$38,500 worth of six per cent, fifteen-year bonds. The money was to be used to pay off past debts and liquidate several damage suits that were pending. It was not necessary to have the people vote on the issue, since the law read that such a debt may be incurred providing the bond issue did not exceed a cer-²⁹tain limit of the taxable property in the city limits. In the past the city had been fortunate in not having to float bond issues; this situation was due to the fact that the original town site was given to the city by the Federal Government and not to speculators for their exploitation. As late as 1913 the authorities still held

²⁸ Morning Sun, May 28, 1918.

²⁹ Ibid., November 17, 1915.

several hundred lots valued at \$200,000. In addition to these lots the city owned "Penitentiary Hill" and a strip of land cut off from the old military reservation on First Street valued at about \$50,000.³⁰

The citizens of Yuma experienced their share of liquor enforcement trouble after the territory obtained statehood. For a while the populace was pleased with the way the liquor situation was being handled. According to reports, no arrests had been made for drunkenness; the bakeries, grocery stores, soda fountains, and other business places were having an increase in trade. Also, the churches were attended better.³¹ The prohibition law had been passed by the legislature in 1914, and the first arrest for bootlegging in the state came at Phoenix when two men were caught by the authorities, who had used marked money for evidence.

Early in January, 1915, the people in Yuma were shocked to learn that a large saloon was being established in Algodones, a small community just across the international line. From this time on for several years, enforcing the liquor law was a major problem for the

³⁰ Morning Sun, December 14, 1913.

³¹ Ibid., January 12, 1915.

police officers of the town. The inhabitants were further dismayed to learn that the liquor concession in Algodones was backed by a local Yuma capitalist.³² In connection with this new enterprise there was an automobile or "jitney bus" line which operated from the end of the railroad bridge to the new resort, and the fare was only five cents. In order to prevent sightseers or those not wishing to buy liquor from taking advantage of the cheap fare and riding down to the international line for a joy ride, a plan was put into effect whereby anyone caring to take advantage of the bargain fare had to purchase a five-dollar coupon book, which was good also for buying liquor. No passenger was allowed to ride unless he had a coupon book.

To make business better at the resort, there was a large dance hall and a number of women for customers to dance with. Alcoholic drinks could be obtained on the floor without going to the trouble of entering the regular barroom. The local authorities soon made it plain that intoxicated persons returning from the border would be thrown into jail, and no favoritism would be shown to anyone.

³² Morning Sun, January 24, 1915.

One of the first cases tried in Yuma pertaining to the enforcement of the liquor statute involved five bootleggers: George F. Colton, Paul Moretti, Julius Levy, Barney Orella, and A.C. Apey. They all pleaded guilty. Colton was fined \$200 and paid court fees amounting to another \$36.00; he was also sentenced to one year in jail. The others were given the same fine, except that they did not have to pay such high court fees. All the jail terms were suspended, and this was approved by the people of Yuma since the violators had been law-abiding citizens and among the leading taxpayers.³³

The next liquor case to come before the judge resulted from a raid made on a room in the Gandolfo Hotel. When the chief of police was put on the stand he produced a small grip with six bottles of "Kentucky Ford", and a dozen empties which he said were confiscated during the raid.³⁴ The occupant of the room, Bob Berry, had been arrested on July 15 and held for importing liquor into the state of Arizona; his bond was set at \$500. Mrs. Minnie Haas, one of his partners, was released because of insufficient evidence.

³³ Morning Sun, March 19, 1915.

³⁴ Ibid., July 17, 1915.

Lydia West, another of the three being tried, stated that she had sent ten dollars, which had been given to her by Berry, to a friend in Los Angeles. The friend had purchased the liquor and shipped it to Arizona in a trunk belonging to Miss West. J.H. Carvis, who worked for the Reclamation Service, testified that he had bought more than one bottle of liquor from Berry before the trial. Prosecuting Attorney Timmons accused Miss West of being "fixed." It seems she had been talking to Chief of Police Levy, Constable Purtile, and Attorney Malloy while she was in jail awaiting trial. The defendant said that all she was promised by the attorney and others was that if she told the truth she would be allowed to go free. The outcome of the trial was that she was released, and Berry was fined \$25.00 and given a six-months' suspended sentence providing he would leave town immediately, which he did.

Berry's case and several others like it raised the question of shipping liquor into Arizona from other states. Many believed that the provision in the Arizona prohibition law which prevented the importation of liquor into the state was unconstitutional. On October 3, Judge Baxter in the superior court handed down a decision against W.J. Sturgeon, holding that the provision of the

law was not unconstitutional.³⁵ Sturgeon appealed his case and in February, 1916, the state supreme court reversed Judge Baxter's decision. In rendering the verdict, the supreme court said that the prohibition law of Arizona did not make the personal use of liquor a crime and therefore the prohibition of importing liquor into the state for a purpose which was not a crime was interfering unlawfully with interstate commerce. A Kentucky case, which had been decided in a similar manner by the United States supreme court,³⁶ was cited.

Now liquor began to flow into Yuma faster than ever. On one occasion two men, after hearing about the Sturgeon case, thought they would be within their rights if they brought liquor across the Arizona boundary line for personal use. They hid a supply in an automobile and crossed the bridge into Yuma. The sheriff seized the men and confiscated the car; the case was tried in the superior court and both men set free.³⁷

The prohibitionists became greatly alarmed over the way events were developing and put on a strenuous campaign to stop the so-called liquor evils. Most of their

³⁵ Morning Sun, October 3, 1915.

³⁶ Ibid., February 15, 1916.

³⁷ Ibid., March 19, 1916.

efforts were futile, and the situation became similar to that which existed throughout the United States after the national prohibition law came into effect. Yuma's nearness to the Mexican border complicated the situation. Especially was this true during the twenties.

In the years that Yumans were confronted with the prohibition trouble, they also found themselves in the midst of several controversial political issues.³⁸ A special election was called for July 17, 1917, to vote on three important propositions: the Sunday closing law, which was to prescribe the closing hours for commercial establishments; the Sanguinetti-Ewing franchise, known as proposition number 5; and proposition number 1. The last two issues concerned municipal power rates. All three of these propositions were adopted by the people.³⁹ The law pertaining to the closing of commercial establishments lasted only a week or so. Not only were the stores to close all day Sunday, but during the week a two-hour fiesta was prescribed at noon; also, the stores were to be closed by six o'clock each evening.

³⁸ Morning Sun, October 3, 1915.

³⁹ Ibid., July 20, 1917.

Many of the merchants resented the law; the smaller ones were hurt the harder. The first to disobey the ordinance were the Wing Lick Young stores, the Yuma Fruit Company, John Ghiotto's, and several others, which remained open during the supposedly-closed noon hours. Within a very few days thereafter not a single store paid any attention to the closing orders, and nothing was ever done about it.

Propositions one and five pertained to a long-standing fight between some of the citizens and the public utilities' owners over lower rates and better service. For a number of years municipal ownership of utilities had been advocated. In November, 1916, the light and power plant was purchased by a new concern for a sum of \$200,000. The capital was furnished by the Continental Securities Company, and the new corporation was to spend \$50,000 on improvements. By the time the special election of July, 1917, had arrived, the people were still dissatisfied. In proposition number one a demand was made to give the city council power to amend the city charter so that the power and light rates could be fixed. In proposition number five Mr. Sanguinetti and his partner wanted a franchise to purchase electric power from the Southern Sierra Power Company; the power was to be used only outside the city limits of Yuma. Mr. Sanguinetti

argued that small customers were paying eighty per cent more for service than were the people in the Imperial Valley. The utilities companies in these places were buying electric current from the Southern Sierra Power Company. In order to bolster his position, Mr. Sanguinetti published the comparative rates listed below:

Yuma Rates		Imperial Valley Rates	
<u>K.W.</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>K.W.</u>	<u>Price</u>
15	\$2.40	15	\$1.50
20	3.20	20	2.00
30	4.80	30	3.00
40	6.40	40	4.00
50	8.00	50	5.00

He also stated that at the time of the flood in 1891 his ice plant, which made its own electricity, had furnished the town of Yuma electricity eight months for two cents a kilowatt hour, and not sixteen cents as was charged by the Yuma Electric, Gas, and Water Company. He went on to say that if his ice company's property was valued on the same basis as the power company's, the price of ice would have to double in order to make the customary eight per cent.

As soon as the people of Yuma had adopted propositions one and two, the utility authorities began a campaign to keep the city council from lowering rates. They contended that it was for the corporation commission to fix rates within the city limits. The councilmen paid no attention to the power company and passed an ordinance reducing the rates for electricity about twenty per cent, and those for water fifteen per cent; but they raised them for muddy water quite considerably. The gas rates were not changed. The new schedule was based largely on prevailing prices at El Centro, where conditions were about the same as in Yuma.⁴¹ No one was quite certain what Governor Campbell would do about the council's action; from what he had told the mayor and city attorney, it was believed he did not favor such action. If the governor did intervene, the people were ready to adopt municipal ownership. This was proved by the city council when it passed a resolution October 30 to provide for the sale of 800 bonds valued at \$500 each, with interest at six per cent.⁴² The cost to put in the proposed plant

⁴¹ Morning Sun, July 28, 1917.

⁴² Ibid., October 31, 1917.

was estimated to be about \$367,000. The remainder of the money was to be used for fire-fighting apparatus and to pay off an outstanding debt of \$21,000.

A month later Judge Baxter handed down a decision that the city had the right to fix rates within the city limits regardless of the state corporation commission. According to his opinion, the charter was clearly the organic law of the city and in matters relating exclusively to its citizens, its authority superceded that of the state. After this verdict the utilities corporation let well enough alone for awhile and the idea of municipal ownership was dropped. But by March, 1918, Mr. Moore, president of the power company, asked to have the rates increased ten per cent because the war had caused the price of materials and labor to advance. Also in 1919 Mr. Sanguinetti had the charter of his ice company amended to read as follows:

To make contracts...to buy, sell, import, export, handle, and deal in ice and refrigeration products...to carry on, and engage in the general business of manufacturing....selling, and distributing electricity and electrical energy for power, lighting and heating purposes, in the state of Arizona and California or elsewhere.⁴³

⁴³ Morning Sun, September 25, 1919.

Even though Mr. Sanguinetti did have his ice plant charter amended, he has never sold electrical energy in competition with the utilities corporation in Yuma. Today the power rates are comparable with those found in other localities in the state of Arizona.

When war was declared in 1917, Yuma at first had a little difficulty in filling her quota for the draft. One hundred and twenty men were notified to appear for physical examinations in August; but only forty-eight came and thirty of them claimed exemption. Eight aliens were not examined; twenty-five of those who asked exemption did so on the grounds of support, while five thought they should be allowed to remain at home because they were farmers.⁴⁴ Several days later the Morning Sun said:

Securing the Yuma County quota for the war is anything but a pleasant task, and so far it has been anything but a successful one.

Out of 150 men notified to appear Monday for examination, only fifty-six showed up; sixteen out of twenty-eight who were examined were rejected on physical grounds.⁴⁵

Not long after, four cases came before the draft board. One locomotive engineer was rejected, one farmer was

⁴⁴ Morning Sun, August 12, 1917.

⁴⁵ Ibid., August 21, 1917.

refused exemption, another allowed to get in his crops, and a third farmer was told to report in October. At the same time the Phoenix draft board refused exemption to twenty-two farmers and one banker.⁴⁶

Finally the quota was filled and fifty men were told to appear in Yuma ready to leave for Fort Riley, Kansas. When the day arrived only twenty-eight were accounted for; after calling the roll, the sheriff gave final instructions for the draftees to be ready to depart on the following Wednesday, and all those who were absent were to be classed as deserters. When Wednesday came, some of the future soldiers were still missing. Several alternates had to be chosen in order to send the full quota of fifty. Eight men were declared slackers and reported to the adjutant general. Henry L. Mitchell had answered roll call in the morning, but disappeared before the train left. Thomas Black, a Mohave Indian, said he did not care to go so a substitute was taken. The Sun said:

Henry S. Shattuck, who was running a ranch down in the valley owned by a multimillionaire mining man from Bisbee, came up missing. It is reported that he went to Mexico. His brother, Warren A. Shattuck, at Bisbee and he had filed exemption claims and were refused. Warren is reported to have fled to Mexico.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Morning Sun, September 22, 1917.

⁴⁶ Ibid., August 23, 1917.

By April, 1918, Yuma was experiencing less difficulty in filling her draft quota. Once during this month fifteen men were called to report and eighteen arrived ready to go. The authorities obtained permission from Phoenix to let the three additional men leave with the others. The last draftees left the city the day before the Armistice was signed. Twelve of these went to Fort McDowell in California; the others were sent to Camp Funston, Kansas. All during the conflict the citizens of Yuma were very generous in their support of the Red Cross and always over-subscribed their quota of liberty bonds. The third liberty loan was over-subscribed by thirty-three per cent.

The Yumans were glad when the conflict ended in the fall of 1918. Several of the boys who had gone into military service failed to return. The American Legion Post in Yuma is named for Harold Donkersley. The men who left the country to evade the draft were not prosecuted after the war; this was generally the custom throughout the United States.

By the end of these twenty years of civic growth, Yuma had developed into a fair-size community. Her schools were adequate to take care of any unusual increase

in enrollment, her banks were sound, her commercial establishments were in a stable condition and, due to the fact that there were no factories turning out war materials between 1916 and 1918, she did not feel the depression after the conflict as did many other cities.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Many changes have come to Yuma since the days when it consisted of three tiny settlements on the Arizona side of the Colorado River in about 1854 and the thriving community of 1920, with its population of 5,000 people.

The majority of the changes occurred after the turn of the twentieth century. Before that time the settlers were kept busy building homes and providing for the bare necessities of life. Their wants were few, and the rich soil in Colorado and Gila Valleys produced food with very little effort. But after the railroad and the ocean-to-ocean highway arrived, Yuma began to take on the appearance of a thriving western town. This new era also brought about more competition, and life became far less simple than it had been for the early pioneers and settlers.

Even before the over-expansion period of the twenties, Yuma could boast of several modern hotels, entertainment facilities, churches of twelve denominations, numerous civic clubs and fraternal organizations, an efficient

educational system, and many other ordinary necessities which make a community a worthwhile place in which to live.

Nearly every crop that can be grown in a semi-tropical climate is produced on a large commercial scale around Yuma. There are no interruptions due to adverse weather conditions. Completion of the Laguna and Imperial dams assures water for irrigation, and also assures the area protection from dangerous floods.

The future existence and prosperity of any city depend largely upon its location. Yuma is no exception. It is most fortunate to be surrounded by some of the most fertile farming lands in the country, which will support the present population for some years to come. Another source of income for the inhabitants will be derived from the great tourist traffic passing over United States highway 80. The town will always be a haven to the tired automobile traveler, the same as it was to the weary pioneer during the days of the covered wagon.

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