

Copy for
Mr. Matthews

April 24, 1914.

Mr Rufus Choate,
Secy. San Diego Water Commission,
San Diego, California.

Dear Sir:

Relative to our communication of March 21st, 1914 will say that we have found out that the elevation of the Carrol damsite, according to the geological survey map made by the Government, is an error between 25 and 30 feet. Our surveyors in the field have found this error since our letter to you of March 21st; the result being that there will be no necessity of building a dam in excess of 100 or 110 ft in height at the Carrol damsite. This will hold all the flood waters back to the present County highway bridge at Bernardo store. We are making an actual survey to determine the capacities and cost of dam.

We are furnishing you this day a map of the Volcan Water Co. and the Cuyamaca Water Co. reservoirs etc., showing the height of the dam, areas, flooded elevation and capacity. As soon as we get our survey completed we will inform you as to the acres flooded and capacity of the Carroll damsite. The error in this survey is in our favor, as we do not believe the capacities will be materially changed, but the cost of the building of the dam will be reduced 50%, and the elevation of 20 or 30 ft is that much gained, for we find that the Carroll damsite is between 25ft.

March 22, 1937

Mr. Rufus Choate
Union-Title Insurance Co.,
1028 Second Avenue
San Diego, California

My dear Rufus:

Answering yours of March 15th, enclosed find copy of letter I have written Ed Hyatt.

It is so late, I question whether I can do anything regarding the \$25,000 or not - it should have been in the Budget and submitted last Fall, also, it should have been introduced last January during the session, as we have no right to introduce Bills excepting two by a three-fourths majority of the Senate. The Governor is death on new appropriations, but I will see what I can do. Both of my spaces are already pledged on important matters.

Where are you going to get the \$50,000? It looks good to me if it can be worked out some way.

With kind regards,

Sincerely yours,

EF/jv

Mr Rufus Choate -2-

and 30 ft higher than the Government maps show.

Respectfully submitted,

FK

CUYAMACA WATER COMPANY,

Mgr.

March 22, 1934

Mr. Rufus Choate
Union-Fidelity Insurance Co.,
1028 Second Avenue
San Diego, California

My dear Rufus:

Enclosed for you of March 19th, enclosed find
copy of letter I have written to you.

If you are able, I would like to see you
regarding the \$25,000 or not - I should have been
in the budget and submitted last fall, also, I should have
been introduced last January during the session, as we have
no right to introduce bills regarding two by a two-thirds
majority of the Senate. The Governor is dead on new ap-
propriations, but I will see what I can do. Both of my
sisters are already obliged to important matters.

There are two going to see the \$50,000 if
I can go to see it is one we would not want to.

With kind regards,

Sincerely yours,

WJ

Dear Ed:-

Nov 17/39

I applaud you and concur
in your statement regard Sutherland
funds - I will fight any attempt
to take those funds for any other
purpose - ^{except} Sutherland Dam - Pipe line
or San Vicente - Fresh and not salt
water is King here in San Diego County
Sincerely Rufus Choate

September 15, 1950

Mr. Rufus Choate
243 Upas Street
San Diego, California

Dear Rufus:

Answering your telephone request, I furnish you with the following information, as I remember it:

The Mountain Springs grade in Imperial County was built by private subscription from San Diego County totaling approximately \$61,000.00. The Chamber of Commerce appointed a committee consisting of Fred Jackson, Rufus Choate, John Forward, Jr., M.F. Heller and myself, to raise the funds. I was President of the Morse Construction Company at that time and donated the use of our grading outfit to build the road. James Morse was our superintendent and had an interest in the company; later I bought him out. Our engineer was Fred Rhodes, who staked out the route; Fred Jackson and I were the two active members of the committee during construction. The road was built with dynamite and mules and four-horse Fresnos.

After we built the Mountain Springs grade into Imperial Valley and Los Angeles was insisting on a road direct to Yuma, following the Southern Pacific Railroad, the fight was to get a direct route from El Centro to Yuma to create the San Diego-Arizona Highway Association. I appointed delegates from Imperial County and by train U.S. Grant, William Gross, Fred Jackson and I went to Yuma; 92 delegates came by train with Governor Hunt; they elected me president of the San Diego-Arizona Highway Association and our first order of business was the building of the Yuma Bridge. The estimated cost by Arizona's state engineer was \$75,000.00; Governor Hunt agreed that Arizona would raise approximately \$25,000.00 and as one end of the bridge was in the Yuma Indian Reservation we decided to ask Congress to appropriate \$25,000.00 and California the other \$25,000. Within less than five months bills were introduced and passed in Congress, in the Arizona Legislature and in the California Legislature appropriating the money; but Governor Johnson vetoed our bill, giving as his reason that the State Engineer had said the bridge would cost over \$150,000 and was a waste of money. I personally undertook raising the \$25,000 for the Yuma Bridge by private subscription. \$5000.00 was raised in Yuma, about \$6000 in Imperial Valley and the rest of it I raised in San Diego and sent the \$25,000 to Washington. The government advertized for bids and the bridge was built for \$73,800.00—the bridge that is there today! Governor Johnson told me I could introduce a bill at the next session of the Legislature, which I did, the State of California to Ed Fletcher, Dr. for building of the Yuma bridge. It was wholly illegal, but it went through and we got our \$25,000 back.

Regarding the plank road through the sandhills: Our highway engineer was ~~Austin~~ B. Fletcher, my cousin. I sold him on the idea of going through the sandhills from Holtville when they were deciding the 7th system route to the Arizonaline. At a hearing in Sacramento when I advocated the plank road for the reason that it cuts off 46 miles of the distance across the continent as compared with going around by the Southern Pacific railroad, J.B. Lippincott, the famous engineer, who was sent up to Sacramento to the hearing on the question of route, testified before the Highway Commission that it was the most assinine thing he had ever heard of--to attempt to build it and maintain a highway through the sandhills. I pleaded with the highway commission to postpone any action until we could put in a temporary plank road through the sandhills at our own expense and make the demonstration. Darlington, Whitmore and Mansfield were Highway Commission members at that time and all friends and they postponed action.

I made a deal with Supervisor Ed Boyd of Imperial Valley, in whose district the proposed road would be built. He agreed, with the neighbors to lay the plank road if we would furnish the plank, so I raised every dollar of the money; bought 37 carloads of plank--it landed at San Pedro and we had to pre-pay the freight to Ogleby and the plank road was laid--with the result that we made the demonstration satisfactory to the highway commission that a road could be maintained and Ed Boyd did his part--we owe him a debt of gratitude for playing the game with us when no other supervisor in Imperial County would have anything to do with the project.

If you want any further information, let me know.

I have sent a copy of this to Frank Forward.

Sincerely yours,

November 18, 1950

Dear Rufus:

I am certainly pleased to see the interest you and Frank Forward are taking in the original construction of the Mountain Springs Grade and the plank road, and the building of the road from Holtville to Yuma and the Yuma Bridge.

Imperial County had just been created and they had no funds. When the time came for the State to connect all County Seats, under a bond election of \$18,000,000.00, the State having passed an \$18,000,000.00 bond issue for that purpose, Los Angeles wanted the highway paved between San Bernardino and El Centro. We wanted it paved between San Diego and El Centro. I was chairman of the State and National Highway Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, at that time. Fred Jackson was a member. Spreckels, Scripts, and Spaulding were Commissioners. San Diego County had voted bonds to build 1,250 miles of county roads. A. B. Fletcher, chief engineer of the Massachusetts Highway Commission was the engineer of the County Highways Commission and they built the road to within about a mile of Mountain Springs from San Diego. They also violated the law and used some of San Diego County's funds to complete the road to Mountain Springs itself. The road cost approximately \$20,000.00. Then the Chamber of Commerce, on my recommendation, officially approved the raising of funds by private subscription to build the road from Mountain Springs to the desert in Imperial County. A Committee was appointed, consisting of Fred Jackson, John Forward, Jr., Rufus Choate, M. F. Heller, and myself to raise the funds. The banks of San Diego approved our effort to get a road to Imperial Valley and gave twenty percent of the funds. George Spreckels gave ten percent, George Marston gave ten percent, and Harry Jones of Billsby and Company, who owned the Electric Company gave ten percent. Our Committee raised the balance, \$60,000.00 in all. James A. Morse and I were partners together, at that time, in the Morse Construction Company. We loaned our entire grading outfit, free, for the construction of the road. Our engineer was Fred Rhoades, who later became City Manager of San Diego for 25 or 30 years.

It was a terrific job. Fred Jackson and I went out there 40 or 50 times, at least. I remember one time during construction Simon Levi, M. F. Heller, and John Forward, Jr., as a committee, were sent out to see how the work was progressing. We were blasting off a 150 foot point to complete the highway and the Committee decided it would cost us \$150,000.00 to complete the work. They were a very dis-spirited Committee, and made a very adverse report, but we fooled them. The day of the celebration, our guest of honor was William Allen White, of Emporia, Kansas, who wrote a remarkable editorial on our far sightedness in fighting for State and National Highways. The President of the Chamber of Commerce was Chairman of the meeting.

[to Rufus Choate
re S.D. to Yuma Hwy]
c87

November 18, 1950

With the construction of the road making it possible to get to Yuma, at about that time Congress commenced to take official notice of the necessity of national highways and legislation was passed creating the so-called Seven Percent System. We had national highway aspirations and the U. S. Bureau of Public Roads was scouting around determining where the first national highways were to be located. The Auto Club of Southern California and Los Angeles were fighting for a direct road going from Los Angeles to Blythe and Phoenix while we were urging that the national highway system first go through Yuma to Phoenix, as the distance was only slightly longer and gave us a chance to connect up at Miland or Yuma, but Los Angeles would have none of it, so it meant as direct a route as possible from San Diego to El Centro and Yuma as possible. It was 46 miles longer to go to El Centro to Miland, thence following the Southern Pacific Railroad to Yuma, as compared to building a road direct to Yuma from El Centro via Holtville and through the sand hills.

Austin B. Fletcher, my cousin, was then State Highway Engineer, appointed by Governor Hiram Johnson and was very sympathetic with San Diego at a hearing in Sacramento called by the State Highway Commission to discuss the question of national highways. I advocated a plank road through the sand hills from Holtville east, as, if constructed, it would save the cost of constructing 46 miles of highway and its future maintenance, saving 46 miles across the country in travel. J. B. Lippencott, the famous engineer of Los Angeles was sent to Sacramento to attend this meeting and, on the question of route, urged the Los Angeles-Blythe route as the national highway route to Phoenix. When asked his opinion of a road through the sand hills, he said, "It is the most assinine thing I have ever heard of to build and maintain a highway through the sand hills." I pleaded with the Highway Commission to postpone any action, promising to put in a temporary plank road through the sand hills, at our expense, and make the demonstration. Messrs. Darlington, Whitmore, and Mansfield, the three Highway Commissioners and personal friends of San Diego agreed to postpone any action, officially, until we could make a demonstration of the plank road.

I immediately invited Highway Engineer A. B. Fletcher and the U. S. Bureau of Public Roads representative in San Francisco, Dr. L. I. Hawes, to San Diego. They accepted and, in my car, we made the trip, by team, through the sand hills, sending our automobile around, then proceeded to Yuma and over the highway to Phoenix, returning via Blythe to San Bernardino. We got across the river by ferry. Their decision was that if the sand hill route could be maintained it was the logical route for the national highway location.

I made an arrangement with Supervisor Ed Boyd of Imperial Valley, in whose district the plank road would be built. He agreed with the neighbors to lay the plank road, if we would furnish the material at the nearest shipping point, Ogoby. Imperial County Supervisors had no funds to help make the experiment. I immediately proceeded to raise roughly \$25,000.00 by private subscription. Nine thousand came from previous subscriptions on the Mountain Springs Grade, as I remember it, and the balance came from San Diego City, Imperial Valley, and Yuma. The two inch plank was brought to San Pedro, by boat, from Oregon and we prepaid the freight to Ogoby, shipped by Southern Pacific Railroad approximately 25 miles west of Yuma. Supervisor Ed Boyd, of Imperial Valley, fulfilled his obligation and we owe him a debt of gratitude. The plank road was a success and it has since been demonstrated that one of the best, hard-surfaced highways in the state can be built and maintained on sand. I understand the records will show that the maintenance, per mile, of our present State Highway is very materially less than the average in the State of California.

Regarding the plank road through the sandhills: Our highway engineer was Austin B. Fletcher, my cousin. I sold him on the idea of going through the sandhills from Holtville when they were deciding the system route to the Arizona line. At a hearing in Sacramento when I advocated the plank road for the reason that it cuts off 46 miles of the distance across the continent as compared with going around by the Southern Pacific Railroad. J. B. Lippencott, the famous engineer, who was sent up to Sacramento to the hearing on the question of route, testified before the Highway Commission that it was the most assinine thing he had ever heard of--to attempt to build it and maintain a highway through the sandhills. I pleaded with the Highway Commission to postpone any action until we could put in a temporary plank road through the sandhills at our own expense and make the demonstration. Darlington, Whitmore and Mansfield were Highway Commission members at that time and all friends and they postponed action.

I made a deal with Supervisor Ed Boyd of Imperial Valley, in whose district the proposed road would be built. He agreed with the neighbors to lay the plank road if we would furnish the plank, as I raised every dollar of the money; bought 2 1/2 carloads of plank--it landed at San Pedro and we had to pre-pay the freight to Ogoby and the plank road was laid--with the result that we made the demonstration satisfactory to the highway commission that a road could be maintained and Ed Boyd did his part--we owe him a debt of gratitude for playing the game with us when no other supervisor in Imperial County would have anything to do with the project.

If you want any further information, let me know.

I have sent a copy of this to Frank Forward.

Sincerely yours,

November 18, 1950

It was a happy day when the State and Federal Government, together, let the contract for the hard-surfaced road from Holtville to Yuma.

In the meantime, we had gone over to Arizona and campaigned for a system of State Highways, particularly one from Phoenix to Yuma and to Tucson. The Yuma Bridge was a vital matter in connection with our National Highway aspirations. Governor Hunt of Arizona wired me to appoint delegates and hold a meeting at Yuma to create the San Diego-Arizona Highway Association. I appointed the delegates from San Diego and Imperial County while Governor Hunt appointed his delegates and brought a train load of 92 delegates to Yuma. San Diego delegates consisting of U. S. Grant, Jr., William B. Cross, Fred Jackson, and myself had to go by train via Los Angeles to Yuma. The convention was organized and they elected me President of the San Diego-Arizona Highway Organization. Our first order of business was the building of the Yuma Bridge. The State Engineer of Arizona had estimated the cost of the building of this bridge at \$75,000.00. Governor Hunt agreed, at the convention, that Arizona would raise \$25,000.00 if California would do likewise, and, together, we were to get \$25,000.00 from Congress for the reason that one end of the bridge was in the Yuma Indian Reservation and the highway travel had only a ferry to cross the Colorado River. Within less than five months, bills were introduced and passed in Washington in the Arizona Legislature and in the California Legislature, each in the sum of \$25,000.00. Unfortunately, Governor Johnson vetoed California's bill, giving as his reason that the State Engineer of California had made a report to him that the bridge would cost over \$150,000.00, not \$75,000.00 and, therefore, it was a waste of money.

San Diego was sure mad and I, personally, undertook the raising of \$25,000.00 by private subscription. Again, the banks, John D. Spreckels, George W. Marston, and Jones of the Gas and Electric Company put up 50% of the cost and we raised the balance by private subscription, sending same to Washington. The United States Government advertised for bids and the bridge was built for \$73,800.00. That bridge is there today, thirty or forty years later. Governor Hiram Johnson was very much embarrassed for having vetoed the bill. He told me I could introduce a bill at the next session of legislature for \$25,000.00 which I did through our good Senator Ed Luce, the State of California to Ed Fletcher debted for the building of the Yuma Bridge. I have Senatore Luce's telegram today, in 1950, stating that the bill had passed the Senate. I understand the whole thing was wholly illegal, but the bill passed the legislature and we got our money back for those who had subscribed.

Please remember, Rufus, that we were fighting for a National Highway, an all year route free from snow along the Mexican border, via El Paso and the shortest distance from ocean to ocean. As President of the San Diego-Arizona Highway Association, I campaigned in Yuma County, Arizona, for a County bond issue to pave from Yuma to the west Maricopa County line. Maricopa County, in which Phoenix is located, had already paved to the Yuma line. The bonds carried, but, under the State Law, the bonds had to sell for par and the highest bid for the bond was 91, so, again, San Diego, by private subscription, put up the money, excepting \$5,000.00 that Yuma put up, and donated something like \$12,000.00 that Yuma County might sell its bonds at par and help to that extent in paving out State and National Highway.

November 18, 1950

Again, when Phoenix refused to play ball with us, working with Los Angeles, we built a dirt road from Gila Bend to Casa Grande following the Southern Pacific Railroad, cutting out Phoenix, and shortening the distance 88 miles across the continent. That road was built wholly by private subscription, excepting in Pinal County where Walter C. Smith, the County Engineer, did remarkable work. The farmers by the roadside did the grading with their bull dozers and teams and we raised five or six thousand dollars to help on the good work. Today, that road is a State Highway, paved.

Then, again, when Douglas and Bisby did not play ball with us, we cut off another 92 miles across the continent by first building a dirt road via Benson and Wilcox to Lordsburg, now a State Highway and hard-surfaced.

I could go on telling you of our fights all across the nation; U. S. 80 to Savannah, Georgia, where we had similar experiences, and, in every case, San Diego did something toward the national highway effort with the result that U. S. 80 was the first paved highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

I hope this is the information you want and I have all the pictures in relation thereto, so, in case you want any pictures of any of these events, let me know and I will be glad to cooperate for old time's sake and for what you have done for County, State, and National Highways for over fifty years, to my knowledge, in helping to build up San Diego.

Your old friend,

Ed Fletcher

EF:sj

Ed Fletcher Papers

1870-1955

MSS.81

Box: 4 Folder: 38

General Correspondence - Choate, Rufus



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