

INTERVIEW WITH HUGH MAGEE

March 9, 1932

Fletcher: What was the name of the Morena that built the early ditches below Pala?

Magee: Francisco Morena

Fletcher: Was he there when California was still a part of Mexico?

Magee: No.

Fletcher: Do you know any records before him?

Magee: The man that first took the place was a Mexican by the name of Sylvestre Gomez who was married to an Indian woman. Francisco Morena married their daughter.

Fletcher: When did Sickler go in there?

Magee: in 1881

Fletcher: How many years did he run the griss mill?

Magee: Barnes and Cunningham took an option on the property in about '87 and bought out Sickler on an option but the option went back. They had options on the Pauma ranch, Major Utt and all lands to be flooded.

Fletcher: How long have those Indians lived on the Pauma Ranch?

Magee: They were there in the '70's. I was born at San Ysidro in '64 at the old Elsdale place. Lived in El Cajon until '68, moved to Descanso in '68, Fallbrook in '74. In '81 moved to Condor's Nest.

Fletcher: The Rincon Indians, how long have they been there?

Magee: They have been there from early in the '70's.

Fletcher: Who made the diversion on the Monserate?

Magee: Challey McComber in April '87. He bought it from Thomas Alverado. They had lived on it as a Spanish grant for many years.

Fletcher: Who made the first diversion on the Monserate?

Magee: McCombers

Fletcher: What is the early history of the San Luis Rey Mission?

Magee: There were many ditches around there. I have a vivid recollection of the San Luis Rey Mission around 1870. There was no regular priest there at the time as the Mission had Indians had all been driven away.

Magee -2-

Fletcher: What Father came there first?

Magee: Our beloved Father O'Keefe came there in 1889 and commenced the reconstruction of the Mission with the help of the citizens. I went to school at the little school opposite the Mission in '74. About the same amount of ditches are there now that existed at the time.

The Mission Fathers got their water from wells just north of the Mission which had been lined with tile and covered over. They are there today.

There were two attempts made to develop water and take it to the coast. The first was by Barnes & Cunningham under the name of the San Luis Rey Flume Company. There was a man name Johnson who was planning to put in a submerged dam at Bonsall bridge and have it run by gravity to the coast.

Fletcher: What is your earliest recollection of attempts to build a dam at Nigger Canyon and by whom?

Magee: The first attempt that I know of was about 1894. At that time the bank had taken the property over on a loan, a San Francisco Bank or trust company. A man by the name of Pulyo had the grant. The grant was known as the little Temecula. He lived in San Francisco.

The banking firm from ~~the~~ San Francisco ~~bank~~ conceived the idea of putting in a dam at Nigger Canyon and put the water all over the Temecula. At the time they proposed this work Mr. Richard O'Neill got a restraining order in court and stopped their work. There was no other attempt to build a dam there until the Vailes started to build and that started the litigation.

Fletcher: What was the first attempt to get water to Fallbrook, by whom and when?

Magee: About '80 they formed an irrigation district for Fallbrook intending to take the water out by gravity near Temecula known as the Fallbrook Irrigation District. O'Neill was forced into the district under the laws and paid his taxes but the whole thing blew up. Bartlett and Scott started it.

(check up Fallbrook Irrigation District and find out when it was organized and by whom. Get a newspaper account of it on that date. Either late 80's or early 90's.)

Fletcher: When did O'Neill build that lake down in Santa Margarita?

Magee Richard O'Neill came in '82. He bought from Don Juan Foster's son and James C. Flood went in with O'Neill in 1882 having bought the Santa Margarita Ranch of 260,000 acres from Don Juan Foster's son. Don Juan Foster got it from Governior Pico ~~max~~ while it was a part of Meixoc.

Fletcher What about he water development by O'Neill on the Santa Margarita?

Magee They have built ditches and diverted water thru Santa Margarita Valley.

Fletcher At Las Flores, there is a nice dam site. About how many miles from the ocean?

Magee Probably a little less than threemiles. We made a ditch two miles long and irrigated about 100 acres.

Babcock

EF Were you ever identified with the Flume Company?

ESB No

EF Did you negotiate with them at all?

ESB They wanted me to go in there. I went all over San Diego County looking for water, to San Luis Rey, and everywhere else.

EF Why didnt you go in with the S.D. Flume Co?

ESB They didnt have water enough.

EF Did you ever get into any fight with the S.D. Flume Co?

ESB All the time, until Healion came out.

EF Who were the original promoters of the S.D. Flume Co.?

ESB Van Dyke and Robinson, so far as I know.

EF Where did Sefton come in?

ESB After it was pretty well started.

EF Did Sefton lose any money on that?

ESB Yes, he lost money, and Shaw's father in law lost money.

EF When did you first get into a row with the S.D. Flume Co.?

ESB When I would not go in with them and start the Otay, when they bought the Tecate and started the Otay.

EF You started the Otay first? You and Mr. Spreckels?

ESB No, Storey and I. That was before Spreckels was in on the thing at all.

EF What were Mr. Storey's initials?

ESB H. L.

EF He and you decided to build the Otay?

ESB Yes.

EF That was the first development that you went into, on water. About what year was that?

ESB About 1885 or 6. H. L. Morrill, Arthur G. Nason, Storey and myself.

EF Did you form a corporation? what was the name of it?

ESB I have forgotten, I think the Otay Water Company.

EF Did you four gentlemen construct the dam?

ESB No, noth Morrill and Nason sold out.

EF Who to?

ESB Practically to us, then we got some San Francisco men interested slightly.

EF Did you and Storey build the Otay Dam? and afterwards sell out to Mr. Spreckels?

ESB Storey sold out to Spreckels.

EF That is what made you and Spreckels partners in the Otay Water Co.? About what year?

ESB Along about 87 or 88.

EF Then when was the Tecate formed? Mount Tecate Water Co. if I remember.

ESB I dont remember the year.

EF Who started the Mount Tecate Water Co.?

ESB That newspaper man. was interested in it, I dont remember his name--

EF McCarty?

ESB Yes, his father was a real estate man in Los Angeles.

EF Was anyone else associated with him?

ESB Yes, I don't remember who they were.

EF Where were they intending to take the water?

ESB They were going to bring it here but around through Mexico and McCarty wanted something-- that is he wanted to make his ranch more valuable, so they spent all the money they could raise building a reservoir.

EF what reservoir did they build?

ESB They just graded-- they didn't finish.

EF Up on the Otay Mesa?

ESB Up here on the upper Otay Mesa-- the upper end, where the McCarty ranch was, above the present flying field.

EF You don't mean that dam site that was planned near San Ysidro Mountain?

ESB Yes. All the money that went into that concern McCarty got.

EF You acquired it from them?

ESB Yes, Bought their stuff.-- acquired their water rights down near Moreno Valley.

EF Who started the Moreno and Barrett Proposition?

ESB Some fellows that lived out here in Dodge's old place, and Judge Compton, and Barrett-- I have forgotten the names of the others that were interested in it. They did not do much more than make plans. They didn't spendmch money.

EF I remember when I first came here you offered to sell to the City for \$600,000-- everything you had at Lower Otay. It was known as the Mt. Tecate Water Co.--

ESB Major Sweeney was in the Council. I think it was called the Otay Water Co.

EF Your offer to sell for \$600,000 wasfor evrything -- Lower Otay Dam, together with the pipe line

ESB There wasn't any pipe line-- To sell it just as it was.

EF Did that include Barrett and Moreno?

ESB No. Just the Lower Otay itself and its drainage.

EF When was it you and Mr. Spreckels joined forces?

ESB We were both interested in the Beach Co. Storey sold out-- it got too heavy for us to carry--

EF Then you and he organized the Southern California Water Co.?

ESB I think that was organized. I think he just bought Storey's stuff.

(Discussion as to whether Grumbach and Collett were interested .)

EF Who conceived the idea of the Southern California Mountain Water Co.?

ESB I did it.

EF You had to have assistance. Was it Spreckels and Storey who helped you?

ESB Yes.

EF When you acquired the Mt. Tecate system you only acquired the water rights, dam sites, -- Did you get the Barrett site through the Mt. Tecate? How did you acquire the Moreno site.

ESB By filing on it and then bought lands from different parties.

EF Did you interest Spreckels in it?

ESB He bought out Storeys interest in the water system.

EF Storey was with you up to that time?

ESB Yes.

EF Then you and Mr. Spreckels gave it the name of Southern California Mountain Water Co., and proceeded to build Moreno Dam. You started about '91 didn't you?

ESB Yes, I should judge su.

EF You spent a good deal of money at Barrett trying to find bed rock?

ESB Yes.

EF You don't remember when Moreno Dam was completed?

ESB They stopped me in '98. I had it up 70 feet above the surface--

EF When was it completed?

ESB In nineteen-something. I had an agreement with them when they bought in that they would furnish the money to finish and then they laid me off-- Harry Titus failed me-- read *recharged* the minutes-- swore me right out of court.

EF The facts are, Spreckels entered into a written agreement with you to finance the proposition?

ESB Yes. It was all down in writing--

EF You made a mistake then in bringing that suit?

ESB Yes, I relied on the facts-- Titus went over to Spreckels--

EF In other words, if you had not brought that suit, you could finally have had a good claim for damages?

ESB Yes, but I failed to control the Company-- it was Titus' testimony about the minutes that did it---

EF Who built the Lower Otay Dam?

ESB I did.

EF Your plans?

ESB Yes. I started to build a concrete Dam. I put in 47 ft up and down stream and 100 feet wide of concrete-- that is what was left there (after the flood?) Then I had the rock tested on both sides by engineer who found the worst sort of rotten porphyry-- about 95 feet. That made the cost of a concrete dam prohibitive-- I had to abandon it. I happened to see plans for the Bear Valley dam- iron dam and I

ESB looked into, and then the steel core idea came to me- so I started in on that.

(Discussion about flood-- ESB- Never had any gates--West weir 30 ft. wide 7 ft deep. 24" pipe was only outlet. Water that came down the stream was 10 times greater than we had planned for-- and we had allowed for 10 times more than had ever been known.)

EF You felt then that the spillway was large enough for all ordinary---*floods*

ESB Ten times more than anybody ever knew of--

EF In other words, the spillway was not large enough.

ESB Yes. *no*

EF And you laid it to lack of ^{*rainfall*} records (?)--

ESB Or something fundamental-- it was never known before-- just ran over the dam-- it was never meant to run over.

EF You never had anything to do with the Sweetwater Water Co. at all?

ESB I went up there before they started-- looked it over and decided not to go into it. I visited every dam site in the County.

EF I wish you would tell me, if you care to, two or three humorous scraps that you had with Sefton and the San Diego flume company. Can you remember any of the fights you had?

ESB In 1888-- They objected when we had the flume-- Flint was my man; he was a very positive fellow; he was angry all the time at both Sefton and Doolittle. They were guilty of dirty tricks all the time. Howard was President then. One day in February, 1888 they were to open up their pipe line. (they were building a pipe line for the San Diego Flume Co. into town, to join on our pipes.) I had been over their pipe line when they were building it and saw they didnt know anything about a pipe line-- there were no air valves in the whole pipe line. Flint commenced to talk to me about a week or two before they were going to turn the water into that pipe, wanted to know what I was going to do about it-- nothing would run through their pipe-- he was mad. I said to get our pumps in order--

EF Did you control the pumping plant on the San Diego River?

ESB Yes. About nine o'clock or ten o'clock they had no water. (I had quietly told Howard I would help him out) Sefton and Victor Shaw were worried. Howard came to me about nine o'clock and told me they couldn't get the water through. I him what the trouble was, and told him I would have the power up. At ten o'clock we began pumping. The celebration was to be up on 5th near the old Florence Hotel. They had the Fire Department out, and were going to show the pressure and

the nice clear water (they had had samples of water from our pipes in the drug stores, with a lot of bugs in it.) When they turned on the water it shot out of the pipes, they must have had 90 pounds pressure up there. It took more than one man to hold the hose. By George, it was such a big stream of water it looked like 6 inches! It was in all the papers- and everything-- when they found out what was the matter they put in air valves. Sefton never appreciated it. Howard knew I was going to do it-- they had a big crowd - probably a thousand people.

EF when did you commence-- How many years have you been in this city?

ESB I came in the winter of '84.

EF How was San Diego getting its water then - the city?

ESB They had an old puming plant up about four miles-- where the wagon road goes down, about a half mile west of the Mission-- Jacob Grumbach, and Levi Chase.

EF When was it put in- when did they commence to pump out there-- when did the City of San Diego first commence to take water out of the river?

ESB They first took water out of a well in the City Park, about 11th Street, a well 80 feet deep. They found it cost too much to pump the water, so they came down to the River again and started to pump. They had a tunnel to Washington Street.

EF You don't remember how many years they had been taking water out there?

ESB I know the Water Company never got any money out of it.

EF The point I want to make is this-- They commenced pumping out of the San Diego River- Grumbach and Chase- about what years?

ESB Before I came here.

EF They were also pumping water from wells in PowderHouse Canyon-- that was the first they ever pumped-- before you came here in 1884 they were pumping out of the River?

ESB They had been for several years. They found they were making a mistake pumping everything up 400 feet to a 50 ft level. They came down about the Mission Cliffs somewhere, put in a pump, running a tunnel through into another canyon-- into Washington Street. They followed the same canyon up there a quarter of a mile from where Washington St. leaves 4th St. I don't know unless it is the old BrickYard Canyon. That goes up Washington St. It goes up back of Hollebbeck's House, goes on up Turners road. They had a pumping plant just above Old Town-- that is the one I am speaking of--

ESB they came up through the canyon and tunnelled under to Washington St.

EF You have not from recollection or history any record of water having been used out of San Diego River in ditches at any time?

ESB It was pumped out of the San Diego River, excepting for the Old Mission.

EF Then you bought from Chase and Grumbach in 1886 or 7. their water system and you furnished the city with water. You don't remember what you charged?

ESB No. We started the water company for Coronado.

EF Did you own the San Diego Water Co. at one time?

ESB We bought that.

EF Then did you later sell that distributing system to the City of San Diego?

ESB Yes.

EF Didn't the San Diego Flume Co. own the distributing system?

ESB We sold to them.

EF You bought from Grumbach and Chase the San Diego Water Co. then rebuilt the system, then you sold out to the Flume Company?

ESB The Englishmen bought the Water Co. and sold to the Flume Co. & wanted to consolidate, but I had the minority interest 49% and would not do it. They had an election here in the office-- Titus was my attorney. I decided I would get a majority of directors, so kept perfectly still and said nothing. First came the names of the directors they wanted and I voted for them. I had five shares (to vote?) so I voted it and when it came to me as trustee I worked cumulative plan and elected three directors----They threatened to send to the Sheriffs office and have the assistant sheriff take charge-- and it finally resulted in their paying me \$15,000 for abandoning my position. The San Francisco men were here at that time. Then they got together and sold the distributing system to the City. The one I built and planned is out there now. The highest stand there was in the city. Then they put a stand pipe out here near Stockton Drive somewhere.

EF You don't remember what you used to charge for water?

ESB I don't remember- the city had the rates.

ESB I went everywhere looking for water before I found it. Spent \$4000. on water analyses. There was not any water that could touch that water on the sand belt (?) There was always a tendency to have brackish water after pumping any time. We were down 30 feet in wells. After you pumped a certain length of time the water was brackish. You could not taste it- the water was hard.

EF I know there were petitions-from owners of boilers--

ESB We had one well 700 ft deep--

EF You personally bought the San Diego Water Co. stock- 49 % of it?

ESB I bought all of it. I sold to the Englishmen. I held 49%. ~~These Englishmen~~

EF These Englishmen-- had they taken over the Flume then?

ESB Yes. I don't remember about what the bond issue was-- about \$600,000.

EF Did the Bond holders, or not, take over the Flume Co.?

ESB These Englishmen took possession of the system. Healion was their man, I think.

EF What about the stock holders of the San Diego Flume Co.?

ESB I don't know, I guess they turned the stock in.

EF You don't know about when the bond holders took possession of the San Diego Flume?

ESB In 90-something.

EF Did they immediately put Healion in charge?

ESB Yes.

EF So then, after nearly twenty years, until June, 1910 when we bought the system, the bondholders really controlled the San Diego Flume Co. They paid, I think \$600,000 for it. Were you interested with them at that time?

ESB I was handling the Company here -- I had to sell out to get money to pay my debts. They bought me before they went to England and then they stuck me-- made me take the stock to Europe and stuck me for 13 1/2 ¢ on the dollar. That made me feel I was not under obligations to them any more. They sold back to you for \$150,000 didn't they?

EF Yes. How did the Englishmen ever come to San Diego?

ESB They were the International Company. They were the ones that bought me out.

EF Who were the men you did business with?

ESB Quilter-- I have forgotten. Major Scott had charge of it for a while.

EF At the time the Englishmen bought 51 percent of the San Diego Water Co. they didn't own bonds of the San Diego Flume Co. did they?

ESB No. they bought afterwards. Studebaker and Sefton persuaded them to buy.

EF Then was when you had your falling out with them?

ESB It was when they wanted to consolidate the San Diego Water Company and the San Diego Flume Co. I refused to do it-- they never did.

EF How long were you in partnership with the Englishmen? -- Before you sold out to the City.

ESB A year--maybe two.

EF Did you have any more scraps with Sefton- or anything that will make it humorous?

ESB We were scrapping all the time--(harks back to his story) Shaw knew they were physically weak-- he didnot know what the trouble was.

EF What was the cause of the bad leak in the Moreno Dam?

ESB Must have been seams-- We had to go 113 feet there to bed-rock.

EF At one time you were supposed to be half owner with Spreckels.

ESB Yes, I was, but I couldn't carry it, I simply withdrew.

EF Do you remember any other water developments--

ESB There was the one Puterbaugh started-- the San Luis Rey--

EF Were you interested in that?

ESB I have forty acres out there.

EF What about Dye Canyon-- there was some talk about that.

ESB Van Dyke was interested in that. - - -The first survey for Moreno was around Dye Valley.

EF You realize now that water is very expensive--

ESB I was thinking of developing the country-- thinking of alfalfa fields-- they could not afford to pay more than we asked.

Ed Fletcher Papers

1870-1955

MSS.81

Box: 72 Folder: 25

**Writings and Interviews - Water History - Papers
assembled for history from U.S. Grant, Jr. (for
Grant photo see "Writings: Autobiograph")
- Fletcher interviews re Grant/Babcock**



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