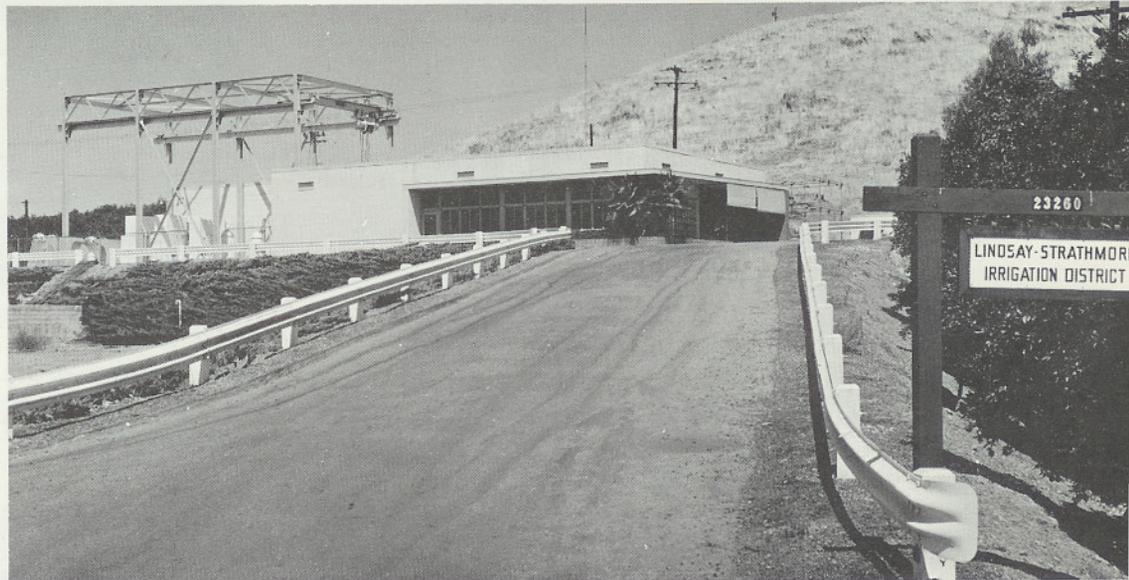


# Lindsay-Strathmore

## IRRIGATION DISTRICT 1915—1965

Few real life narratives contain more stirring episodes than does the story of the pioneer men and women of the Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District in their struggle to find a sufficient and assured source of good water for their orchards . . . There were the engineering and financial problems, the 20 long, costly and often bitter years of litigation, and many other challenges that had to be met. . . The dramatic events covering the span of half a century, crowned eventually with success, are told in the succeeding pages by Ford A. Chatters, editor and publisher of the Lindsay Gazette, 1952-64, and a co-publisher since 1916. Much of the information comes from the files of the Gazette; some from the records of the irrigation district . . . There were citizens, literally numbered in the hundreds, who, the record shows, contributed substantially to the happy ending this Golden Anniversary notes. To name them all is a task too impossible to be attempted here, though the part they played may have been large.



### THE TRAUGER PLANT --

Present main pumping plant and offices of the Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District, east of Lindsay. Operations here began in 1953. . .

BELOW—The original booster plant north of Lindsay which the Trauger station replaced. Shown is an ingenious wheel developed by the district for removing algae from the water before it was boosted into the bench flume on Elephant's Back. In the foreground, George W. Trauger and Donald F. Burr.



The Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District this mid-October is observing its golden anniversary, without formality or fanfare, but with well-deserved pride of achievement measured against long years of legal struggle and other discouragements; and with full assurance now that ample water always will be available for its 15,000 fertile acres.

But it was not always so. There is the story of 20 years of litigation in the courts, accompanied by bitter and potentially deadly battles at pumps and headgates. At times the legal, financial and operational problems appeared almost insurmountable—and indeed they would have been were it not for the determination and intelligent tenacity of the men who founded the district just fifty years ago. Their purpose was to import water from some legitimate outside source, for the underground reservoir rapidly was being depleted without compensating replenishment.

It was some years later that growers representing approximately 26,000 acres west of the S. P. tracks formed the Lindmore Irrigation District. Recently the Lewis Creek Water District was formed to serve 1250 acres north and west of Lindsay. Together, including LSID, this area of more than 40,000 acres has attained assured water for its complete development.

#### **Depended On Underground Water**

When, in the '90s, steam and gas-driven pumps began drawing water from underneath the Lindsay plains, the supply was called inexhaustible. And inexhaustible it appeared to be for a time. However, as pumping plants grew in number, by the thousands throughout the county and all drawing from the same pool, the water began to rapidly recede and, as well, to deteriorate in quality.

Of all the developed areas in Central California, Lindsay-Strathmore was most dependent upon underground water. All others used the water stored beneath the surface as auxiliary to a surface supply, at least in the beginning. But Lindsay-Strathmore, with its thriving orange and olive groves and, by 1910 the county's richest agricultural area, had no surface flow at all, save perhaps a brief spring freshet down Lewis Creek. Fifteen miles to the north was the Kaweah and St. Johns and 10 miles to the south, the Tule. Actually we were served by no watershed of consequence, as the courts later were to determine.

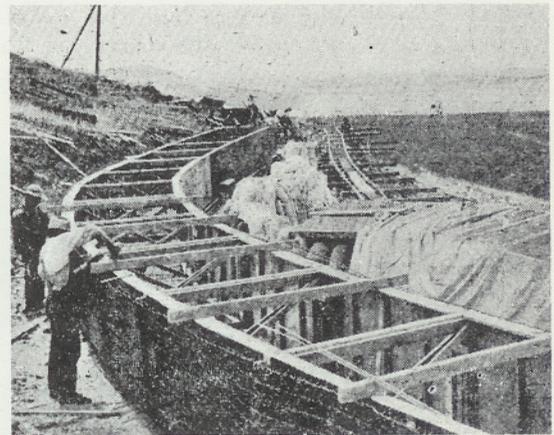
#### **Wells Began To Dry Up**

By 1912 the situation had become critical. Worried landowners began looking for a solution. In October, 1914, R. D. Adams, an orange grower here but a one-time

"sour-dough" of Alaskan gold rush days, undertook an investigation, along with Raymond Wyseur. This study resulted in a proposal to store water from both the Tule and the Kaweah rivers in Yokohl valley northeast of Lindsay. Soon after, Stephen E. Kieffer, a prominent California water engineer then employed by the Terra Bella Irrigation District, submitted preliminary sketches of seven different proposals by which Lindsay and Strathmore might secure additional water.

#### **Kaweah Delta Water Sought**

None of the storage plans met with much favor, because of the cost, but a suggestion by Kieffer that water might be pumped from the wet river-bottom lands in the Kaweah-St. Johns delta and brought to Lindsay by canal appeared most feasible and finally was adopted. Some 1100 acres, known as the Hyde or Mineral King Ranch, were purchased a short distance south and west of



**OVER THIS, MORE THAN \$1½ MILLION WAS SPENT IN YEARS OF LITIGATION**

Showing the Kaweah-to-Lindsay flume under construction in 1918. It was the first large gunnite job of its kind ever attempted. Compared now to CVP's huge Friant-Kern canal through the heart of LSID, this flume carried a relatively insignificant head (65 to 75 second feet), yet some million and a half dollars was spent over a 20-year period in the legal battle that followed its completion—more in fact than the original bond issue (\$1,400,000) voted to construct the entire irrigation system.

Woodlake. Subsequently it was known as the Rancho de Kaweah. A series of 39 wells were sunk in this shallow well field and facilities were constructed for collecting and transporting water to the Lindsay-Strathmore district, a distance of 15 miles.

Other necessary features included the construction of a low level canal, a main booster station north of Lindsay and six miles of bench flume on the western slopes of "Elephant's Back" to allow maximum gravity flow; also some 90 miles of distribu-

## FOR THE RECORD

### FIFTY YEAR ROSTER OF DISTRICT OFFICERS

#### BOARD PRESIDENTS:

E. L. Daniells - - - 1915-1942  
John Burr - - - 1942-1953  
S. A. Warson - - - 1953-1959  
Dick Neece - - - 1959-

#### DIRECTORS, DIVISION ONE:

John Burr - - - 1915-1953  
A. N. Green - - - 1953-1956  
Archie Sheldon - - - 1956-

#### DIRECTORS, DIVISION TWO:

C. K. Towt - - - 1915-1931  
R. E. Stark - - - 1931-1950  
Dick Neece - - - 1950-

#### DIRECTORS, DIVISION THREE:

E. L. Daniells - - - 1915-1942  
Frank Bohland - - - 1942-1946  
A. A. Daniells - - - 1946-

#### DIRECTORS, DIVISION FOUR:

D. A. Eckert - - - 1915-1931  
S. A. Warson - - - 1931-1959  
G. H. Waddell - - - 1959-

#### DIRECTORS, DIVISION FIVE:

F. M. Pfrimmer - - - 1915-1918  
D. H. Davidson - - - 1918-1931  
W. G. Koepp - - - 1931-1957  
George G. Cole - - - 1957-

#### SUPERINTENDENT-MANAGERS:

C. H. Elgar - - - 1917-1918  
E. C. Eaton - - - 1918-1919  
Geo. W. Trauger - - - 1919-1953  
Donald F. Burr - - - 1953-

#### SECRETARY-TREASURERS:

C. W. Wright - - - 1915-1917  
E. G. Natzke - - - 1917-1920  
H. R. Huebert - - - 1920-1955  
W. C. Zimmerman - - - 1955-

tion mains, all underground, and a secondary booster plant and a balancing reservoir in El Mirador.

#### District Organizers Shown

And here some names that should go down in California irrigation history can be recorded. It was on October 30, 1914, that the first actual move toward the formation of the Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District was taken, at a mass meeting of orange growers held in what now is the Masonic Temple building. G. V. Reed, local bank cashier and manager, was chosen chairman and he was authorized to appoint a committee on organization. He selected E. L. Daniells, Charles K. Towt, J. B. Firth, C. J. Carle, C. W. Wright and R. D. Adams to serve with him. Wright was in charge of securing names to a petition to the Board

of Supervisors calling for an election to form the district. (A roster of officers covering the 50 year period is shown elsewhere on this page.)

A hearing was held before the supervisors on September 17, 1915, the petition was granted, and October 16, 1915, was set as date for the election. The proposal carried with 150 votes for and 20 against. At the same time a bond issue for the sum of \$1,400,000 was approved and, subsequently, in 1919, an additional \$250,000 was voted to complete the distribution system and other improvements. It was on October 25, 1915, that the Tulare County Board of Supervisors took action formally creating the district.

At the October 16 election there also were chosen as officers a group of men, purposeful, experienced, unafraid, and strong-willed enough to carry on their shoulders the struggle for district survival that was to last for the succeeding 20 long years. They were: John Burr, Charles K. Towt, E. L. Daniells, D. A. Eckert and F. M. Pfrimmer, directors; E. B. Gould, assessor and tax collector, and McKee Mhoon, treasurer. All were interested in citrus.

#### Strong Leadership Chosen

Daniells, who was named president, came here from Leadville, Colorado, where he served as sheriff in the "two-gun" days. He was one of the organizers of Lindsay's first bank and the big Rochdale general store. Coincidentally it was the law enforcement business that brought John Burr to the Lindsay district. His father was sheriff of Los Angeles county back in the '90s and when two prisoners escaped and later were reported in the San Joaquin valley near here, Sheriff Burr deputized his two husky sons, John and Charles, to find and bring them back. They didn't "get their man" but they liked the looks of the country and returned to play a prominent role for many years in the orange growing and packing business of the district. (Charles later served as mayor, and for some 25 years was a member of the Lindsay City Council.

Charles K. Towt, with a background of pioneering experience in the Pacific islands, grew oranges here and headed Lindsay's other bank. He built a home at the south end of what now is called Towt Hill. His orchard was just below, extending south to the Tulare road.

D. A. Eckert came here to serve as the first principal of Lindsay High School and later retired to an orange grove. He likewise was a forceful and intelligent individual.

Fifth member of the board was F. M.

Pfrimmer, an orchardist who later served for some years as supervisor from this district, and chairman of the county board. He was a native of Corydon, first capital of Indiana, and later participated in one of the land rushes in Oklahoma in the early 1900s when another tract was opened following the famed Cherokee strip stampede. He farmed successfully near Tulsa for 13 years before coming to the Lindsay-Strathmore district.

E. B. Gould, the new assessor and tax collector, was a law graduate at the University of California, but he chose to be a farmer in this district rather than practice. Later, to put to use some of his legal training, he served as Justice of the Peace of Lindsay Township.

Treasurer McKee Mhoon was an agricultural specialist and later established an office and staff in Lindsay to engage extensively in orchard management.

In the years that followed other men of like strength and capacity have staffed the Board and other offices of the district. They will be noted elsewhere in this story.

#### **Threats of Injunction Suit**

Though there had been some threats of injunction from water interests in the delta, the project was not undertaken without some assurance that enough water would be found for all and that any such move, if taken to court, could be successfully met. As was also pointed out at the time, there in fact was nothing else to do if the groves of the district were to survive.

A few weeks before the election to form an irrigation district, Lindsay - Strathmore landowners were invited to an all-day picnic and fiesta at the rancho. Test wells poured out "unending streams of water before the eyes of the entranced picnickers." Engineer Kieffer and State Senator L. L. Dennett, Modesto, a top water lawyer of that day, assured the throng that "so abundant was the supply, and so great the annual replenishment, that there never would be any successful opposition to the scheme." Later events proved they were too optimistic.

#### **Construction Starts in 1917**

A contract for the construction of the system was let to James Kennedy of Fargo, N. D., and work started early in 1917. Kennedy was beset with difficulties from the start. The United States had entered World War I and prices began rising sharply, particularly in the construction field. Much more disturbing was the destruction wrought by I. W. W. members of the labor force.

Water for a part of the distance between the Kaweah rancho and Lindsay was to

flow through a 48-inch redwood pipeline. The "wobbly saboteurs working by night systematically loosened the iron bands holding the pipe staves together. When water was turned in to test the line, the staves floated off and the line was almost wrecked," the Lindsay Gazette reported.

The project eventually had to be taken over by the contractor's bondholders to complete the works.

#### **"Modern" Methods Used**

Part of the line from the Kaweah wells to the booster plant north of Lindsay was of gunnite construction. (This plant was abandoned with the completion of Trauger Station in 1952.) It was one of the first large-scale uses of gunnite method up to that time and the cement canal lining, as well as the canal on the western slope of Elephant's Back east of Lindsay, still stand as a testimonial to the initiative of the engineers.

Construction work for the irrigation district was supervised by Engineer Kieffer. The late George W. Trauger, who subsequently served as superintendent and resident engineer for almost 34 years, was Kieffer's assistant. Courtland Eaton was the resident engineer in charge of building the ditch. He previously had been chief engineer for the Los Angeles County Flood Control District and remained for a time after the work was finished, as engineer for LSID. He was succeeded by C. H. Elgar, who was district superintendent, 1917-18. Eaton served about a year and was followed by Trauger. It was Trauger who actually surveyed the canal route from the Rancho and supervised much of the construction detail. Later he was to play an important role in the physical aspects of the defense litigation and the eventual moves to compromise with the appellants. Succeeding Trauger was Donald F. Burr, the district's present superintendent and manager.

The system was ready for the irrigation season of 1918 when what seemed an ample supply of pure water began flowing into the district and on to parched orchards. For many it came just in the nick of time and for others, too late!

#### **Litigation Begins in 1916**

Then began two decades of costly litigation. On July 15, 1916, the Tulare Irrigation District with many other plaintiffs filed suit to enjoin LSID from pumping water in the Rancho and taking it out of the Kaweah Basin.

The ensuing 20 years of litigation cost the two sides, it is said, well over the sum voted initially by Lindsay-Strathmore to construct the entire system. The truckload of transcripts, briefs and evidence that eventually was packed off to the Supreme

Court was said to be the largest volume of evidence ever filed in a single action with the Court. It included 37,000 pages of transcripts, plus briefs, and 600 exhibits, mostly maps and water charts.

The litigation and the attending struggles, often bitter between the several communities of the county, is a chapter too long to be more than briefly covered here, nor is it necessary . . . the decisions seemed to be always against the Lindsay district, based perhaps on the alleged illegal removal of water to another watershed or the depletion, by our pumps, of water from a vast underground "cone of depression."

#### **Array of Legal Talent**

Both sides had an array of water lawyers and engineers, some of the ablest in the State of California. Principal counsel for the Lindsay district was Judge M. C. Sloss, former justice of the State Supreme Court. He was a member of the firm of Sloss, Ackerman and Bradley of San Francisco. Associated in the defense were W. G. Irving, prominent Riverside water attorney, and Power and McFadzean of Visalia. The plaintiffs were represented by the firm of Larkin and Bailey (the former a one-time state senator from this district), and by Farnsworth, McClure & Burke, of Visalia, with H. Scott Jacobs, Hanford, representing Kings county ditch interests. Atty. Wheaton Gray of Los Angeles also was engaged to assist the plaintiffs.

#### **The Court Struggle**

The action, Tulare Irrigation District, et al, vs. Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District, began in 1916 before Judge W. B. Wallace in the Superior Court in Visalia and continued for several years, when Judge Wallace rendered a decision favoring the Delta interests.

Lindsay-Strathmore appealed and Judge Wallace, who owned property within the plaintiff districts, was disqualified and the suit began all over again. An outside judge was named to rehear the case, and sat for a year or two, but accepted appointment to the Appellate Court before a decision could be reached. The case then was assigned to the late Albert Lee Stephens, from the Los Angeles Superior Court.

#### **Ten Years of Litigation**

It was almost ten years from the time the suit was instituted until Judge Stephens gave his decision. He also found in favor of the delta companies, but a stay subsequently was granted under certain stipulations.

These were black days in the Lindsay-Strathmore district. It looked as though years of struggle to survive had come to naught. The district was now harnessed

with a sizeable bond issue on which \$99,000 must be paid every year. Annual assessments to meet the litigation costs alone had run as high as \$30 per acre. And now, those who had dreamed of a great citrus empire here came face to face with what looked like final judgment against them.

#### **Citizen's Committee Named**

But here again the pioneering spirit of the builders of this district once more came to the fore, with the desperation of their plight giving impetus to their efforts. To them no defeat was final. A citizen's advisory committee was named to assist the directors and two steps were taken to keep water flowing—at least until other water could be found to keep the district's orchards alive. Later this group aided substantially in effecting the final compromise that ended the long litigation.

This ex-officio group consisted originally of W. B. Kiggins, Lindsay's first mayor, W. A. Bohland, Walter S. Cairns, C. B. Bowker and S. A. Warson. To Warson, then on the LSID board, was assigned the full-time job, as managing director, of representing the district in its contacts with the plaintiffs, particularly as a director on the numerous ditch companies in the Delta in which this district held stock. At this time Richard E. Stark and David Davidson, together with Warson, had replaced Towt, Eckert and Pfrimmer on the LSID board, the latter three having moved from the district.

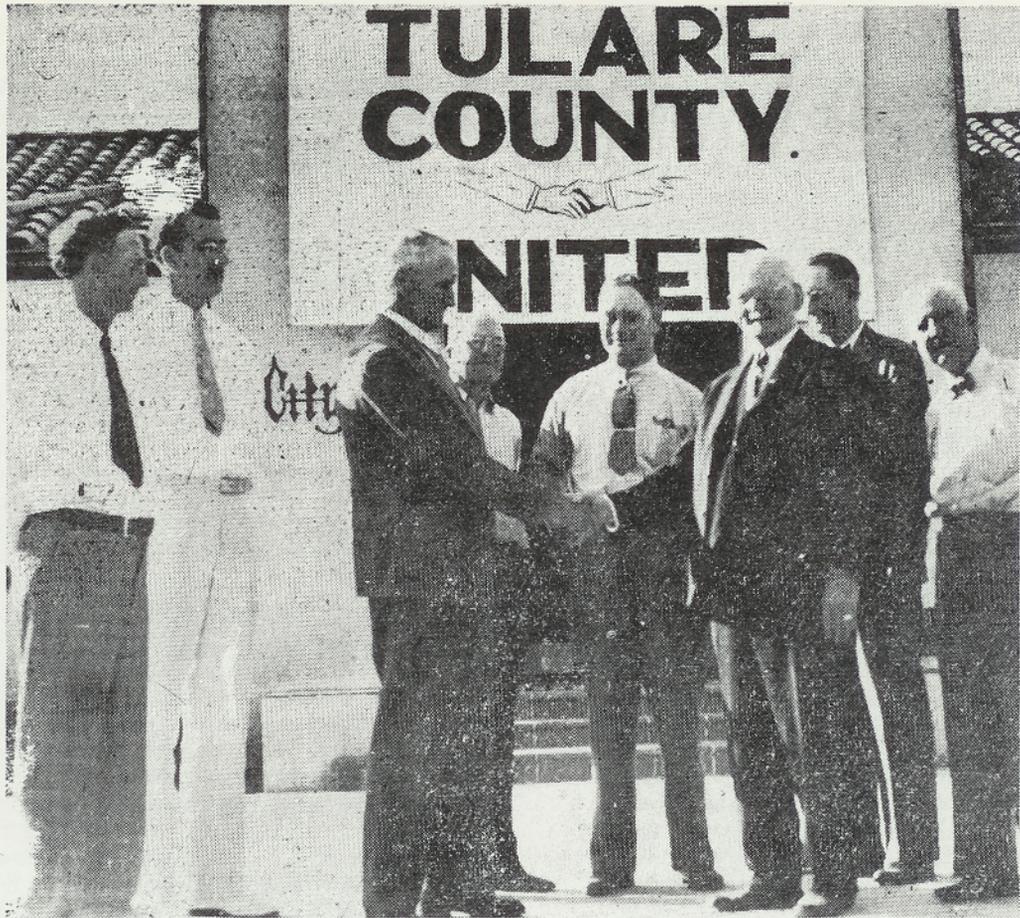
To the list of those persons actively and effectively engaged in efforts to bring about a settlement were A. L. Evans, then co-publisher of the Lindsay Gazette; Secretary R. I. Clearman of the Lindsay Chamber of Commerce, and a succession of chamber officers and directors who lent their support as did hundreds of citizens throughout the area. Nor to be overlooked is H. R. Huebert, district secretary for 35 years. The post currently is held by Wes Zimmerman.

Too much credit cannot be given Director Warson for the role he played, and the tact and fine sense of diplomacy employed, in ultimately bring the warring factions together.

#### **Judgment Stay Granted**

First came the plea to Judge Stephens to grant a stay of execution pending an appeal to the State Supreme Court. This was granted with the provision that \$10,500 per year be deposited with the Court against damages to the Delta plaintiffs.

The second step, suggested it is said by Supt. Trauger, was to buy stock in the various ditch companies in the delta. Such purchases subsequently amounted to some \$125,000, including stock bought in the Wutchumna Water Company which divert-



#### HANDSHAKE BRINGS PEACE AFTER 20 YEARS

E. L. Daniells, (r), president of the board of the Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District, and Ed Hart (l), leader of the Kaweah Delta interests, shake hands at a ceremony in front of the Lindsay city hall to demonstrate the long fight over water is ended. Others in the photograph, taken Dec. 18, 1936, the day the accord between the two districts was signed, are, left to right, Starr Warson, R. E. Stark, both LSID directors, W. B. Kiggins, Mayor Charles Burr, R. I. Clearman, secretary of the Lindsay Chamber of Commerce, and A. L. Evans of the Lindsay Gazette. The entire California Supreme Court came to Lindsay to attend "en banc" the celebration marking the end of the litigation. Attending the precedent making event also were numerous other jurists who had been connected with the case. (Photo from Gazette files.)

ed water from the Kaweah river at White Bridge above Lemon Cove, and stored it in "Bravo" lake at Woodlake. Lindsay-Strathmore eventually owned 26 per cent of the company. This water it still owns and its quota is available for current use. All the other stock, plus the impounded moneys, eventually was turned over to the plaintiff companies as part of the final compromise. In some of the major delta ditch companies our interest was substantial. The district also owned Lindcove reservoir site near Lemon Cove.

#### Armed Guards Employed

It was when LSID tried initially to divert the water it thus owned into its own canals for transport here that some of the bitter fights were waged. "Night Riders," so the headlines of that day proclaimed, had torn

out our diversion works. For a year then Pinkerton detectives were employed, in addition to some 30 armed guards, for the protection of the local district's operational facilities.

It was during this time that feelings ran highest and there was much bitterness on both sides, but there was no actual bloodshed.

With low farm prices, the depression of the early '30s and other lean years, there were times when not hundreds of acres but the entire district appeared destined to dry up.

Eventually the movement to compromise the involved case gained strength, and both sides appeared ready to talk settlement. It was at this point that Superior Judge Erwin Owen of Kern county came into the picture

and on December 17, 1936, the following compromise agreement was signed:

#### Compromise After 20 Years

The Lindsay-Strathmore district was to drop its appeal and judgment against the district was to be entered. However, LSID was allowed to pump from the Rancho 15,000 acre feet and use 3,000 acre feet additional which it owned in the Wutchumna, on payment of \$1.50 for the first 10,000 acre feet and \$2.50 for the next 5,000 acre feet. LSID was to turn over to plaintiffs the stock it owned in the various Kaweah delta ditches, except the Wutchumna.

LSID also agreed to use its best efforts to secure water from the Central Valley Project, then under construction, and this task it prosecuted with vigor. Over a period of many years much money and some of the top leadership in the move to hasten the Central Valley Project came from here; impelled by the recognized need to bring in water from some larger outside source. In this program the whole South San Joaquin Valley eventually joined, as they looked to the Sacramento with its 26 million acre feet annually flowing wastefully into the ocean. This is another lengthy story, to be told another time, but CVP was a major element in the settlement.

#### Seek Sacramento Water

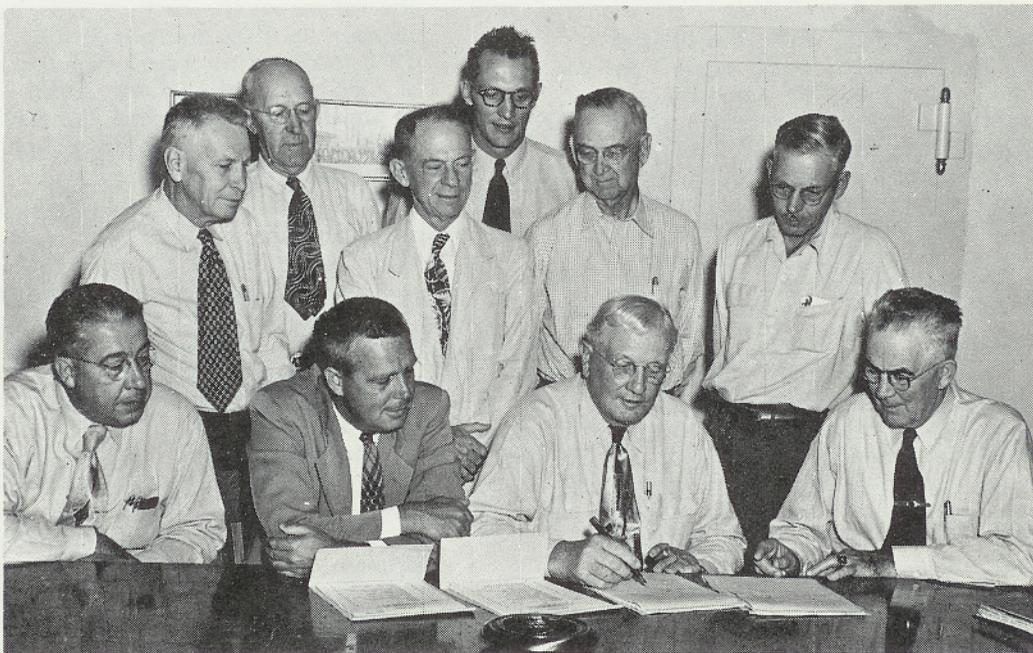
The State legislature in 1933 had approved a \$170,000,000 revenue bond act and had created the California Water Authority for the purpose of bringing water into the San Joaquin Valley from the Sacramento river, with a huge dam and storage reservoir near Redding, Shasta county. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt, elected in 1932 and almost immediately faced with heavy unemployment, sought public works projects that were planned and "ready to go," the State turned the CVP project over to the Bureau of Reclamation for construction.

Lindsay-Strathmore, upon the completion of the Friant-Kern Canal, was the second agency in the valley to sign for the purchase of water. This was on August 5, 1948, when the district contracted for 30,000 acre feet at canal side, all Class I water. Some water had been siphoned from the uncompleted canal in 1949.

In the meantime, on July 1, 1936, the outstanding indebtedness of the district was refunded through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation at approximately 60 cents on the dollar. The total debt assumed at that time was \$640,000 at 4 per cent. This obligation will be paid off in 1969, less than four years from now.

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**LSID DIRECTORS** are shown here signing with Bureau of Reclamation officials, on September 12, 1950, for the latest major district improvement job. This included construction of the Trauger plant and district offices east of Lindsay and 10 miles of connecting lines, all underground. Seated, (l. to r) Jack Rodner, Fresno, the Bureau's district manager for construction and operation; Richard L. Boke, Sacramento, regional director for the Bureau; John Burr, LSID president; Geo. W. Trauger, superintendent and engineer. (Standing), H. R. Huebert, secretary; Director W. G. Koeppe; Atty. Jas. R. McBride; Donald F. Burr, then asst. supt.; Directors S. A. Warson and A. A. Daniells.





**THEY MANAGE DISTRICT TODAY**—(Seated, 1-to-r) Directors Archie W. Sheldon, George G. Cole, A. A. Daniells, Dick Neece, G. H. Waddell. (Standing) Wes Zimmerman, secretary-treasurer; Donald F. Burr, manager. Other officers of the district, but not in the picture, are: Harvey Hartig, assessor and Domer Power, tax collector. Currently serving as legal counsel for the district is the firm of McCormick, Mook & McCormick of Visalia and Lindsay.

### Lands Back In Production

By the time the Central Valley Project water reached here at the end of the long struggle, LSID had acquired ownership, principally through tax and assessment delinquencies, of over 5,000 acres or about one-third of the district's lands. Today all of these have been resold and most of them already have been put into production and are back on the tax rolls. Most of the new plantings are in oranges and olives.

Fifty years ago today, when the district was formed, it comprised 15,250 acres. In the intervening years there have been many inclusions and exclusions of parcels but the net, including 300 acres in the Friant-Kern canal right-of-way, is just over 15,400 acres.

Following the settlement of the lawsuit and voting of the refinancing program the district replaced most of the old pipe lines through a Works Progress Administration undertaking.

### New Construction

It might be pointed out here that with the acquisition of the additional CVP water, changes in points of delivery and certain other facilities were necessary. The Wutchumna water, for instance, was diverted from Wutchumna canal into Friant-Kern near Woodlake and delivered here through the big canal.

LSID had acquired the Lindsay Heights Water Company north of Lindsay in 1945 and new wells were put in service there to provide domestic water during winter

months when the canal was not in operation.

On September 12, 1950 a contract was signed with the Bureau of Reclamation for construction of a new pumping plant (Trauger Station), reservoir and ten miles of connecting lines.

### And a Happy Ending!

The Trauger plant, which also houses the offices of the district, was built east of Lindsay in 1952 and put in full operation in 1953 to divert the district's full summer supply from the Friant-Kern Canal. This plant is capable of delivering 120 cubic feet per second or in excess of 78 million gallons of water per day.

Involved also was the construction of a new El Mirador plant at the east end of Third Avenue. This was in 1955. It included new feeder mains and balancing features designed to serve 2200 acres in the El Mirador "pressure" zone. Other new mains have been built as new plantings and redevelopment has progressed during the past ten years.

These are some of the highlights — though much is left untold—of long years of struggle and heartbreaking reverses . . . but the ending is a happy one! Farmers nowhere in California can boast a more certain supply of fresh, sweet water for their orchards than can the men and women whose property lies within the boundaries of the Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District!