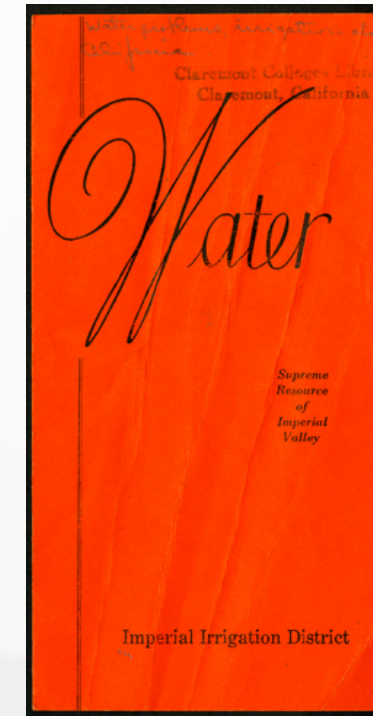
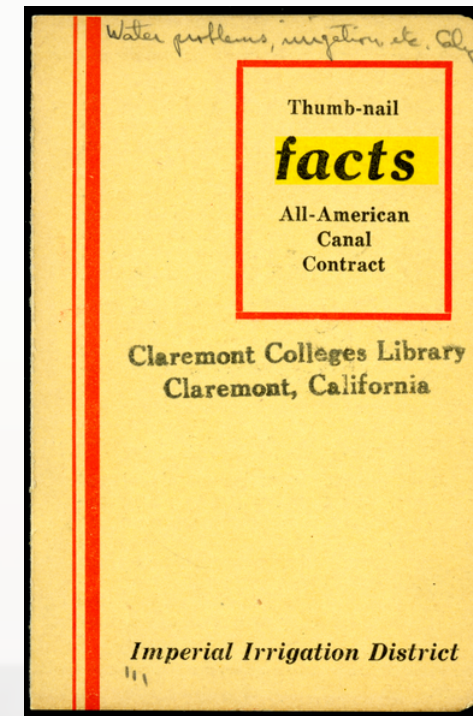
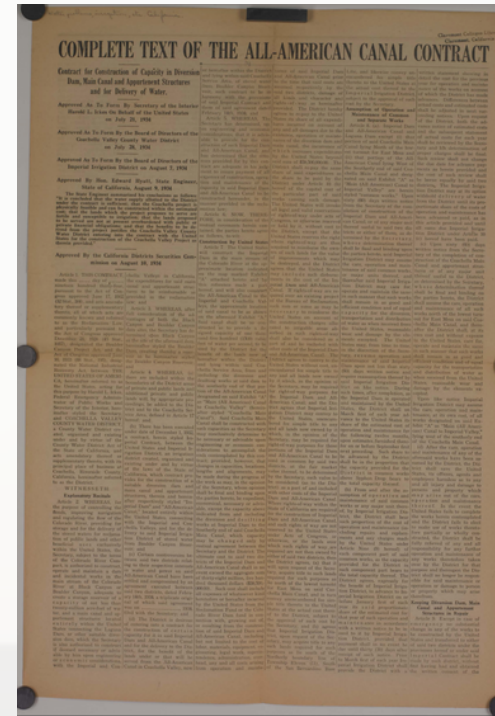


# COUNTY OF CANALS

## AN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF THE ALL-AMERICAN CANAL

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Western Water Archives Student Poster Showcase | Spring 2021



### 1. PROJECT ABSTRACT

My research on southernmost California's All-American Canal explores the ways in which water development projects in the Imperial Valley have irrigated arid desert lands, facilitated industrial agricultural growth, and transformed power relations in water politics. Since 1941, the All-American Canal has rerouted Colorado River water to the Imperial Valley. In this poster, I examine archival materials to highlight the significance of water in the Imperial Valley through the All-American Canal. To broaden the scope of my work, I utilize materials in the Imperial Valley Records, Water Resources Collection.

### 4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

My dissertation project will place archival materials in the Imperial Valley Records in conversation with Imperial Valley's mid- to late twentieth-century environmental and labor history. Materials referenced in my bibliography will be situated within their historical context alongside regional water and labor histories.

### 2. BACKGROUND + SIGNIFICANCE

I conducted research on the All-American Canal to better understand background information for my dissertation project. The construction of the All-American Canal is seminal to Southern California water history and the materials in the Imperial Valley Records highlight the aqueduct's significance to the region. Materials in this collection (e.g., "Chronological historical synopsis of exploration and development of Colorado River Basin," and "The epic of the Imperial Valley: an address by United States senator Hiram W. Johnson of California") underscore historical moments and public perceptions that transformed regional waterways.

### 5. FINDINGS + CONCLUSION

Materials in the Imperial Valley Records illuminate how the All-American Canal became a lynchpin in the environmental, socioeconomic, and political landscapes of people's everyday lives in the Imperial Valley. Documents in this collection underscore the relationship between water and power—a discussion informed by this project, but fully unpacked in my dissertation work. This is a developing project which aims to contribute to the fields of labor studies and environmental histories in the American West. You may contact me at [isoto5@ucmerced.edu](mailto:isoto5@ucmerced.edu) for more information.

### 3. HISTORICAL METHODS

I employ historical methods to contextualize the Imperial Valley's environmental history. Materials in the Imperial Valley Records of the Water Resources Collection broaden the scope of my work by offering invaluable information on water development projects through: contractual obligations with the Department of the Interior; concrete objectives by the Imperial Irrigation District; and speculative financing behind the aqueduct's potential in hydroelectric energy production. Documentation of political propaganda and legislative lobbying demonstrate institutional support for the All-American Canal.

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*One thing  
and one thing alone  
makes the Imperial Valley  
possible for productivity  
and habitation.*

*One thing transforms  
this hideous desert  
that has cruelly taken  
its human toll into  
a modern paradise.  
And that thing is water.*

—US SENATOR, HIRAM W. JOHNSON  
"THE EPIC OF THE IMPERIAL VALLEY," 1925. (IMPERIAL VALLEY RECORDS)

of the  
Imperial  
Valley



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