

HISTORICAL NEVADA SERIES 63

Congress Ends Bitter Wrangle May 15, 1929 Enacting Boulder Bill

In today's installment, number 63 of her exciting series on historical Nevada, "Mom" Squires continues with her narrative on incidents which led to construction of Hoover Dam.

By DELPHINE SQUIRES

During those years between 1920 and 1929, when Nevada's representatives working for legislation on the Boulder Dam Project, were hurrying about from one meeting to another, hoping to bring a more cooperative feeling between the Colorado River states, they were either riding on the crest of the wave in anticipation of a great victory or bowed down in the slough of despondency over what might be a failure of all their hopes and plans.

But during those years our representatives learned many important things of the great preponderance of eastern men in both houses of Congress who had no knowledge of conditions or the needs of the west which made it difficult for the west to get any legislation adopted or receive help of any kind.

They did not realize that the southwest was at the mercy of the Colorado River at each spring run - off when flood waters inundated great areas of fertile land, washing away ranches and homes and claiming many lives.

They had no definite knowl-

edge of the size of that land beyond the Rocky Mountains nor of the thousands of acres of desert land just waiting for water and power to be brought into productivity and the mines awaiting the same things in order to pour out their hidden wealth.

Then along in the early part of 1928 things began to look up and headlines in large, bold, black letters appeared on the front pages of our dailies announcing that the "Boulder Dam Bill" might soon be passed by the House of Representatives. This news was heartening but we kept our fingers crossed. Then, on May 25, 1928, the bill passed the House by a favorable majority, and our task was half completed.

The Senate was due to adjourn for the summer and the state representatives made a concerted effort to get the bill out of committee and voted on before adjournment but a filibuster developed which consumed the remaining time and we were unsuccessful to get any action at that session.

For several years Arizona had been the thorn in the flesh of California and Nevada as the Governor of that state was "agin" the whole project and his representatives followed his leadership implicitly.

It was not until the Senate had adopted a number of unimportant amendments favorable to Arizona, and proposed by them, did they cease to fight the bill.

This action was taken by the Senate during the next session of Congress which convened in the fall of 1928, and the bill was passed by a favorable

majority on May 15, 1929. Thus ended the long, bitter and heartbreaking fight for the Boulder Dam Project.

The day after we received the good news a long automobile procession formed and proceeded to the Colorado River where a grateful people knelt together on the sand by the river and raised their voices to God in a prayer of thanksgiving. It was a beautiful service united in by a reverent people who then quietly returned to their homes.

On June 21, 1929, there was another celebration, which marked the day that the Boulder Dam Project Bill became effective and was carried out with eclat, as the people of Las Vegas felt that a great load had been lifted from their shoulders and that they could really begin to plan for the future with the certainty that their hopes would be fulfilled.

If any formal proof were needed of the determination of the United States government to proceed promptly with the construction of the dam it was certainly furnished by the visit of the Secretary of the Interior, Lyman Wilbur, Dr. Elwood Mead, and chief engineer Walters of the Reclamation Bureau, under whose direction the construction would be carried out on the very day that the bill went into effect.

The promptness with which they appeared on the scene to undertake the preliminaries was most gratifying to our people who had been waiting so long and also most reassuring to the whole southwest whose future depended on the outcome.

One of the "high lights" of this celebration was the general radio hookup of Las Vegas and the outside world which enabled the voices of our illustrious guests to be heard all over the country. All of the speakers, interested in Nevada, gave voice to this one idea — that after all the years of confab over royalties and revenues; division of water and allocation of power, this fact remained — the same old truth that was recognized as paramount many years