

**Central Arizona Project Association:**

**The Founding**

**by Earl Zarbin**

## The Founding of CAPA

In 1945, with allied victory in World War II growing near, the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce began reorganizing to bring its programs in line with the economic changes and population growth brought to the community by the war-time economy. One change was to create a separate Committee on Reclamation out of the Chamber's Committee on Agriculture, Cattle, Dairying, and Reclamation. George W. Mickle, vice chairman of the old committee, was named chairman of the new Reclamation Committee.

Though Mickle was president of Phoenix Title and Trust Company, he was an ideal choice to lead the Committee on Reclamation. Mickle had practical experience as a rancher and grocer as one of the organizers of Pay'N-Takit markets in Arizona, later was sold to Safeway Stores in 1927 and he was a past president (May 1932-May 1934) of the Salt River Valley Water Users' Association. The association had been started in 1903 to work with the federal government in building Theodore Roosevelt Dam on the Salt River to provide irrigation water for more than 200,000 acres of Salt River Valley land.

On September 17, 1945, a little more than a month after its formation, the Committee on Reclamation issued a report containing five recommendations. The first of these said:

"Every effort be made to secure use of water from the Colorado River for the benefit of: first, existing districts, projects and other irrigation developments within the state requiring such for continuous and successful farming operations; second, cities, towns and industries requiring water for domestic and industrial uses; third, new lands to such extent as such water may be economically available, and as determined by the (U.S.) Bureau of Reclamation and the State of Arizona."

Other recommendations included asking the Arizona Legislature to pass a law to regulate the pumping of underground water, and working with the state's congressional delegation and state officials "to the end that...a Colorado River-Arizona project...be started at the earliest possible time."

The state's congressional delegation, and Arizona Governor Sidney P. Osborn, already were working toward bringing Colorado River water to central Arizona, but the process was slow, and it was destined to be made even slower by opposition from farming and municipal interests in Southern California.

Arizonans themselves had delayed state planning for using Colorado River water by fighting for more than two decades over whether to ratify the Colorado River (or Santa Fe) Compact of November 24, 1922. The compact had been approved by the other six Colorado River basin states, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming and Colorado, and the U.S. government.

Only in February 1944 had the Arizona Legislature approved the compact, and also provided up to \$200,000 to the Bureau of Reclamation to cooperatively study with the state the means for using Colorado River water in Arizona. Arizona's senior U.S. senator, Carl Hayden, had asked the Bureau of Reclamation to prepare a list of irrigation projects to be built following World War II. The state's other U.S. senator, Ernest McFarland, had conducted hearings in July and August 1944 in Phoenix and Florence, Arizona, about the bureau's plans for "the Central Arizona diversion" of Colorado River water.

Governor Osborn, early in 1945, got the legislature to abolish the Colorado River Commission of Arizona, thereby leaving him "to manage personally the state's interests in the Colorado River." From the commission, Osborn retained its attorney, Charles A. Carson, Jr., to advise him. That surprised no one familiar with the state's water situation: Osborn, upon taking office in 1941, had assigned Carson "the task of steering Arizona's water policy," which suggests the commission's demise may have been inspired by Carson.

Thus, the recommendations made by the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce's Committee on Reclamation were in step with the goals of the congressional delegation and the governor. And well they should have been, because Carson also was a member of the Chamber's board of directors, and had "been

working diligently on this important program along with...Mickle" and attorney John H. (Hub) Moeur, who was one of the founders of the Arizona State Reclamation Association.

At Mickle's suggestion, Moeur was invited to speak before the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce board of directors on February 18, 1946. Moeur told the board that the progress and growth of agricultural production in Arizona was dependent upon the availability of water, and the underground supply was diminishing rapidly. This ancient water was being used to irrigate several hundred thousand acres of formerly desert land in Maricopa, Pinal and Yuma counties that had been opened during World War II. With the water table dropping, the operators of these recently opened lands were afraid they would soon run out of water, destroying their investments. Moeur read a statement from Carson, which said in part:

"Investigations by the Bureau of Reclamation in cooperation with the State of Arizona have now progressed sufficiently to necessitate the working out of a definite tentative plan by the Arizona Congressional Delegation and State officers for the diversion of main stream Colorado River water to furnish a needed supplemental supply for cultivated lands along the Salt and Gila Rivers, which do not have an adequate supply of water...."It is hoped that the further studies as to the feasibility of the Bridge Canyon-Central Arizona development now being made will show that it is feasible, and that a bill can be prepared for submission to Congress before Congress adjourns this summer."

The Chamber's board directed that the board's Executive Committee "draw up a resolution approving the work of the Reclamation Association, extending any cooperation possible." Part of this cooperation was to have the Chamber join the Arizona State and National Reclamation associations.

The Chamber, in its monthly publication for March 1946, announced that it was "Determined to do everything within its power to assure speedy action on bringing Colorado river water to Central Arizona..."Putting words into definite action, the chamber has begun gathering pertinent data to be forwarded through proper channels to our state and federal representatives. Other methods to expedite the project are being devised by chamber officials, with the cooperation of other interested agencies."

One of the "other methods...to expedite the project" was considering the formation of a separate organization to promote construction of a central Arizona diversion project. Presumably, Mickle and

others decided that the project was beyond the scope of the Chamber of Commerce, and it was proposed that it be handled by the Arizona State Reclamation Association. However, a major objection to this was that the association's board of directors was "widely scattered and appointed by the county boards of supervisors, and hence lacks the power and drive necessary to handle an effort of the type and size required."

On May 1, 1946, Mickle went to the Chamber's Executive Committee and asked it to approve advancing funds for "continuing the present work designed to bring more Colorado River water into Central Arizona." Mickle wanted \$4,400, of which \$1,400 was to be donated to the Chamber "through sources known to Mr. Mickle," leaving the Chamber's net outlay at \$3,000. The Executive Committee approved the expenditure pending ratification at the next meeting of the board, which came May 20.

Meanwhile, attorney Riney B. Salmon, of the Phoenix firm of Jennings, Trask, Strouss and Salmon, was asked to help in creating a new organization. Just who solicited Salmon is unknown, but a good guess would be Carson, Moeur, or both. Salmon, in turn, sought the aid of one of his clients, Wayne M. Akin, president of Western Farm Management Company of Phoenix. The company was the operating agency for the owners of several farms and ranches in Pinal County. In asking Akin to assist, Salmon went to the right person. Akin took the idea of a group to promote the use of Colorado River water in central Arizona as his own. Akin acted behind-the-scenes to spur its formation, but emerged publicly as a chief booster and spokesman.

Akin, born February 21, 1894, in Ft. Collins, Colorado, studied finance and business administration at the University of Pennsylvania before being awarded a bachelor of science degree from Colorado Agricultural College.

In 1933, stopping for gasoline at a Denver service station, Akin spotted a friend and former college classmate, L. D. Klemmedson, who was director of agricultural education at the University of Arizona in Tucson. Klemmedson was spending the summer teaching at a Colorado college. He mentioned to Akin he had been approached by Walter R. Bimson, president of the Valley National Bank in Arizona, about how to dispose of farms on which the bank had foreclosed. Klemmedson suggested that Bimson find

someone to rehabilitate and to operate the farms on a profit-sharing basis until they could be sold. Bimson proposed that Klemmedson start a company to do this. Klemmedson thought about it, and, several months after the chance meeting in Denver, telephoned Akin. Klemmedson said the bank was willing to sign a contract paying a 5 percent commission for every farm that was rehabilitated and sold. Would Akin be willing to run a company to do this? Yes, he would. Akin moved to Phoenix, and with Klemmedson and two other men, organized what became Western Farm Management Company.

The formal drive to start a new group to boost bringing Colorado River water to central Arizona began with a June 6 letter from Salmon to 17 businessmen, farmers, and attorneys inviting them to a meeting at 8:00 p.m. June 11 at the Hotel Westward Ho in Phoenix. Salmon's letter said, in part:

"As you, of course, know, due to the acute water shortage in Central Arizona and the rather unsatisfactory outlook for future agriculture in such area, many of the citizens of this area are interesting themselves in the matter of seeking to bring in water from the Colorado River for the purpose of firming up the present supply of irrigation water and eliminating the hazards of future water shortages. Several people vitally interested in the matter have approached me with the statement that individually little could be accomplished, but collectively very desirable results might be obtained. They have asked that I request a number of people to meet for a discussion of the matter and to determine whether or not some organization should be set up for the purpose of exerting what influence a representative group may exert to bring about some solution to this most serious problem.

"Your name as one of those vitally interested in the matter was, of course, suggested to me."...It should be distinctly understood that this request is made by me for the purpose only of getting a group together to initiate some permanent plan for the solution of this problem if that course seems advisable."

Recipients of the letter, besides Akin, Mickle, Carson and Moeur, were Dean Stanley, Jack S. Kleck, E. W. Hudson, Delbert L. (Del) Stapley, R. M. Hess, E. Ray Cowden, Anthony L. (Tony) Van Wagenen, Jr., A. W. Bodine, Ben Ormand, O. W. Rugg, W. W. Lane, John M. Jacobs and Glenn C. Taylor.

Akin wanted the meeting to be more than an opportunity to "initiate some permanent plan...if that course seems advisable." He wanted the organization created then and there. He expressed his desire in a letter to Salmon on June 8:

"It occurs to me that it is extremely important that something specific be prepared to submit at the meeting Tuesday night so that this *will not be just another meeting but will in fact bring about the organization which we contemplate* (emphasis supplied).

"Everyone present will be thoroughly familiar with the need for Colorado River water and in my opinion any discussion of the details pertaining to construction should be side tracked. This meeting is for the purpose of forming an organization. To this end you should assume the temporary chairmanship since you have called this meeting, and inasmuch as I would like to see John Jacobs, the permanent president, in my opinion, it is better not to have him chairman of the Tuesday night meeting. You can direct the action so that it will not go off on a tangent. In order to crystallize your thinking and be of possible assistance to you, I am suggesting an agenda, and appending comments. Of course, you may throw this in the waste basket or use it as you see fit."

With Akin's letter came a five-point agenda and accompanying notes. The agenda was terse and aimed at accomplishing the creation of the organization. It said: "1. Discussion of need for organization, and appropriate motion. 2. Election of officers. 3. Motion to authorize executive committee made up of the officers to draft constitution and by-laws. 4. Set time and place of next meeting. 5. Adjourn."

Commenting on the first point, Akin wrote that "someone in advance should be primed to start out by making a motion to form an organization so that specific action will be quickly taken and unnecessary palaver avoided." Akin suggested Jacobs for this, but in a copy of Akin's comments that survives, someone (presumably Salmon) scratched out Jacobs' name and substituted Akin's. Immediately following approval of the motion, Akin said that Salmon should arrange with Kleck "to make the nominations (of officers), which he can state he is making as a result of conferences which have been held by various interested parties over the last few weeks." Akin suggested that Jacobs be nominated for president; Salmon for vice president; Stapley for secretary, and Taylor for treasurer. Again, Jacobs' name was lined through in favor of Akin.

"In any event," Akin said, "the officers should all be from the same town so that they can get together easily, and committeemen should represent the various sections of the State and agricultural interests involved."

Akin's remarks concerning points 4 and 5 were that the Executive Committee, besides being directed to prepare a constitution and by-laws, be instructed to invite to the next meeting "a larger group of individuals which...will be invited to become members under the provisions of the constitution drawn up by the Executive Committee in the interim." Following that, the meeting should adjourn.

"It is my opinion that all of this can be accomplished in an hour or less," Akin told Salmon, "and that a brief meeting strictly attending to business will improve the feeling and help greatly in giving impetus to the organization. What I am saying is that the meeting has to be planned and carried on in accordance with the plan but avoid the appearance of having been railroaded. You will know how to handle it.

"By all means keep the reins in your hand throughout the meeting. Otherwise, the chances are great that somebody will come up with ideas that are half cocked and they will stymie the ultimate success of the enterprise...." Also, this bunch of notes is for your use only and should certainly be filed in the waste basket forthwith."

Akin did not attend the June 11 meeting, and it did not come off as he had scripted it. Instead, he, Salmon, Taylor, Stapley and Van Wagenen were appointed a committee "for the purpose of drafting plans for a projected association...and thereafter arranging for an organization meeting at which the plan will be acted upon." Van Wagenen, an attorney, cotton grower and cattle rancher, also was president of The Irrigation and Power Districts of Arizona.

Undaunted, Akin again wrote to Salmon on June 17, this time including "a rough draft of a constitution" he put together. Akin also said he had arranged a luncheon meeting June 20 at the Hotel Westward Ho.

Included with his rough draft, Akin suggested three names for the organization: Arizona Water Resources Development Association, Greater Arizona, Inc., and Central Arizona Development Association. He proposed the organization have a five-member board of directors.



At the June 20 luncheon, the organization apparently got its permanent name: Central Arizona Project Association, which often was shortened to the acronym, CAPA. The diners also worked on the articles of the association.

The next step for the five committee members was for each of them to develop a list of individuals they thought would be interested in the CAPA and to invite approximately 100 of them to a dinner meeting at the Hotel Westward Ho at 7:00 p.m. Monday, July 1, to formally organize.

Earlier that day, the Board of Governors of the Salt River Valley Water Users' Association passed a resolution endorsing formation of the CAPA providing the water rights of its members were not disturbed. The Water Users' Association "was opposed to that part of the (Central Arizona) project proposing a canal from Stewart Mountain Dam (on the Salt River) to the Casa Grande valley, where farms already are relying solely on pumps (for groundwater) because Coolidge Dam on the Gila (River) is empty."

Akin presided at the dinner, at which Moeur was the main speaker. Moeur explained the purpose of the proposed Central Arizona Project, described the growing opposition from California, and outlined the need for a united effort by Arizonans to win congressional approval for the project. Jacobs listed the CAPA's aims:

- \* 1. To promote the bringing of Colorado river water into Central Arizona primarily to augment the present water supply.
- \* 2. To co-operate with the Arizona Reclamation Association and other agencies to the end that this may be accomplished as soon as possible.
- \* 3. To gather and compile statistics in justification of the proposed project.
- \* 4. To co-operate with other communities and organizations of the state in matters pertaining to irrigation."

Akin was elected the CAPA's president. Other directors selected were Salmon; Van Wagenen; Taylor, senior vice president of the Valley National Bank; Stapley, president of the O. S. Stapley Co. of Mesa, a hardware and farm equipment firm; Jacobs, operator of the 3,000-acre John M. Jacobs Farms in Deer Valley, northwest of Phoenix; W. W. Lane, chief engineer of Maricopa County Municipal Water Conservation

District No. 1; Victor Corbell, a rancher and member of the Salt River Projects Board of Governors; and Kenneth W. Houston, who operated a ranch near Chandler.

Membership in the CAPA was set at \$100 per person.

The CAPA's board of directors met formally for the first time July 15, 1946, and its first official vote was to offer Howard J. Smith the position of executive secretary. Smith was not present, but he was reached by telephone and was asked to come to the meeting. Akin, Salmon and Lane met with Smith the following day to discuss employing him, and on July 17 he was officially hired, effective August 1, at a salary of \$750 per month.

Smith, was born in Kingman, Mohave County, Arizona, on May 19, 1899, and was educated in county schools. He became an assistant state treasurer in 1925 and Governor George W. P. Hunt named him state land commissioner in 1930. Smith became manager of the Goodrich Building for the First National Bank of Arizona in 1936, and also founded and edited The Arizona Stockman.

At its first recorded meeting, the CAPA also heard a report from Moeur concerning pre-organization contributions, including \$2,200 from the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce and \$300 from Phoenix Title & Trust Company; authorized Moeur, who was the CAPA's attorney, to attend a water meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, and named four men to the CAPA Advisory Board so they could serve on a Research Committee (renamed the Engineering Committee the following month). The four named were Lewis E. Haas, general manager of the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce; Elliott S. (Jack) Humphrey, manager of the Chamber's Agricultural Department; A. F. Morairty, part owner and managing director of Jokake Inn and a member of the Chamber's board of directors, and Herbert A. Leggett, a Valley National Bank official.

On August 26, the directors approved a program outlined by Smith that included the start of statistical and publicity departments, including a speaker's bureau in the latter, employment of a public relations counsel, and "preparation of a pamphlet setting forth by pictures, graph and word, the rights and equities of the State of Arizona into the waters of the Colorado River." After the pamphlet was completed, a more comprehensive report was to be prepared for use in Washington, D.C., by the state's representatives. Smith

estimated the CAPA's first year's costs, including salaries, at \$100,000, and the board authorized him "to employ such individuals as were necessary to effectuate the program outlined by him."

At a luncheon September 16, Smith announced the appointment of C. Pat Engelbreth as public relations counsel; W. J. Bryan Schimfessel as statistician, and Mrs. Huan Madden as director of the proposed speakers' bureau.

The same day, Mickle made a report to the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce board of directors about activities of the Committee on Reclamation. Among Mickle's remarks were these:

"As Godfather, your Reclamation Committee is now engaged in rendering all assistance possible to the Central Arizona Project Association. The Directors of this Association are all men possessing energy, ability, and integrity, and deserve the whole-hearted support of your membership. The job confronting them are gigantic, but the benefits, if they succeed, are also tremendous."

"Arizona's future growth depends almost entirely on our securing a supplemental water supply for our presently irrigated land. This is our only remaining source of supply. Given an ample supply of water, with our soil and climate, our per acre production is almost unlimited."

"CAPA is now fully staffed and functioning under the management of Mr. Howard Smith. They are assembling statistical data to convince a very probable economic-minded Congress of the economic feasibility of this development....".

"Another major task they are undertaking is to prepare publicity to the end that our citizens will stay united, and that we will support the route finally recommended by the Bureau of Reclamation and approved by our state officials and congressional delegation. In my opinion, this is not a partisan political question."

On the last day of September, the CAPA board of directors approved a budget from the day of organization through November 30, 1947, and adopted an "organizational schedule." The schedule included Bimson as chairman of the CAPA Advisory Board, and a Coordinating Council made up of the chairman of the Advisory Board and committee chairmen. Besides an Executive Committee, headed by

Akin, there were seven other committees. Two of them dealt with money, the Finance Committee chaired by Norman S. Hull, an attorney and president of the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, and the Budget Committee chaired by Taylor. The remaining five committees, their chairmen, and specific assignments were as follows:

Engineering, Lane, "To determine the most feasible means of conveying Colorado River waters to lands of Central Arizona; to study and condense reports of the reclamation service pertaining to river flow, and to substantiate the use and future requirement of Colorado River water within California."

Education, Milton G. (Tiny) Sanders, an electric company executive, "To prepare, in association with the engineering, statistical and legal committees, a comprehensive report upon the Central Arizona Project for submission to Congress; to secure the support of and appear before service clubs and chambers of commerce; to prepare and supervise publicity for release through local press and radio; to provide publicity for consumption outside Arizona."

Statistical, Leggett, "To determine (agricultural) production in Central Arizona since statehood; to determine federal and state income taxes from Central Arizona; to determine percentage from Central Arizona of population, taxable wealth and property taxes; to determine sales and purchase with and from California."

Legal, John L. Gust, subject to acceptance, "To assess and determine the relative legal rights of Arizona, California and Nevada to waters of the Colorado River; to study and report upon reclamation bureau statistics and contentions."

Legislative, Charles L. Strouss, an attorney, "To select the best available committee for service in Washington; to assure availability of members for required period of service, and to arrange transportation and other facilities for use of a committee."

With everything in place to conduct business, the CAPA issued its first press release the week of October 12, 1946, "formally announcing the formation of the organization." It quoted Akin as saying the

CAPA was "composed of Arizona farmers, ranchers, businessmen, professional men, 'the man in the street', and civic and industrial leaders representing every walk of life in Arizona, and hailing from every section of the State.

"The purpose of the Association, its main objective,' Akin declared, is simply to preserve and enhance the existing agricultural and business economy of Central Arizona, and the remainder of the State, by seeking Congressional action to supplement Arizona's presently inadequate supply of irrigation water with a portion of Arizona's rightful share of Colorado River waters."

"The success of the program, he said, will depend in large measure upon the showing of a united front to Congress by all Arizonans--not only by those residing in Central Arizona. Because, he added, while Central Arizona will be greatly benefited by supplemental water for the acreage now under cultivation, the remainder of the State will also naturally benefit economically and socially in proportion."

In time, the CAPA's goal of importing Colorado River water was accomplished (the first water for irrigation was delivered May 22, 1985), but the major focus of the Central Arizona Project had changed from preserving agriculture to providing water for cities, industries, and Indian reservations in Maricopa, Pinal and Pima counties. Non-Indian farms and ranches in those counties are permitted to receive water only after the other users get their water.