



# The Historical Development and Use of Water from the Salt River in the Salt River Valley

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Salt River Project

April 7, 2003

Maricopa County, Lower Salt River  
03-005-NAV  
4/7/03  
Evidence Item No. 036

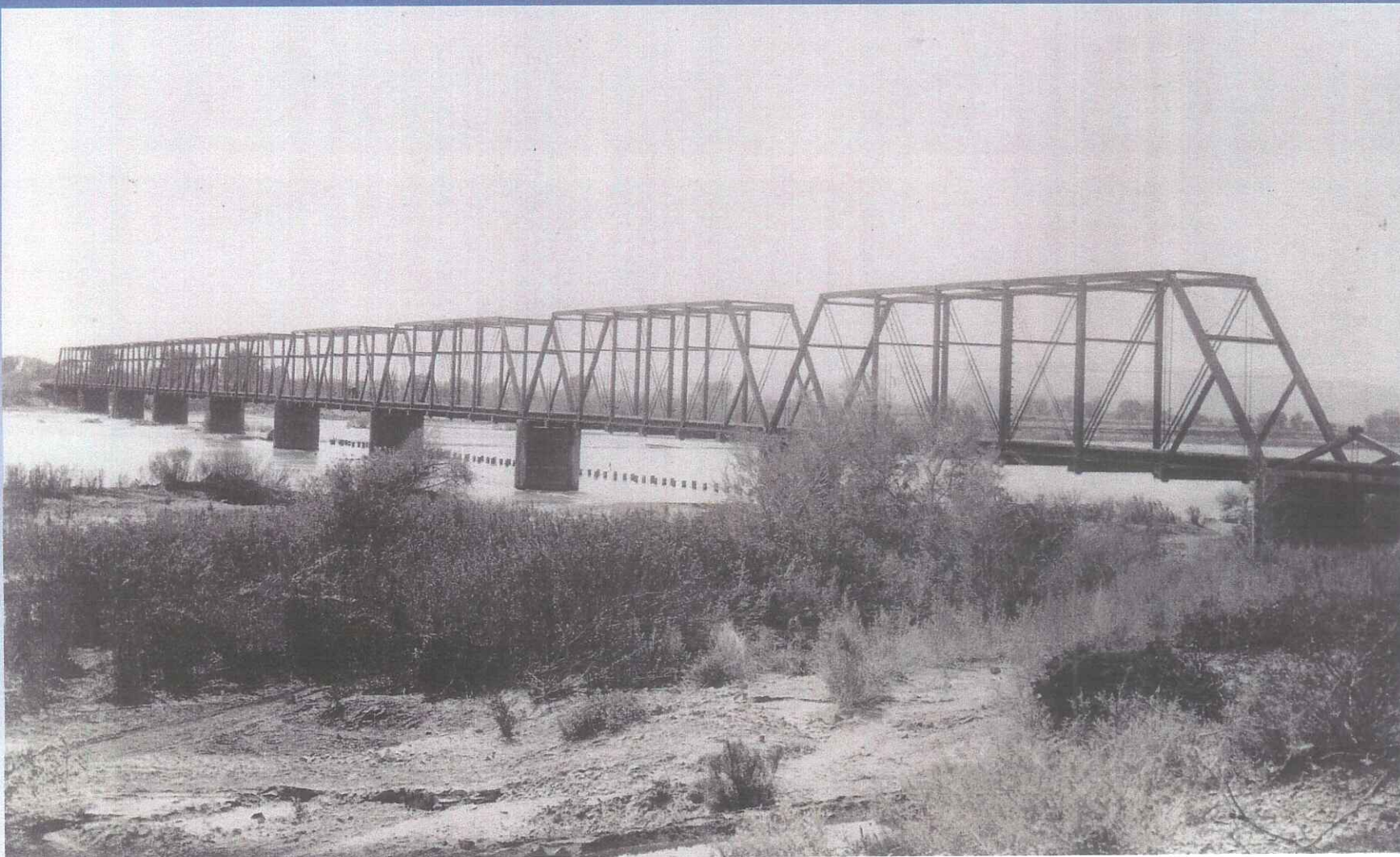


# Use of Salt River Water

## Agenda

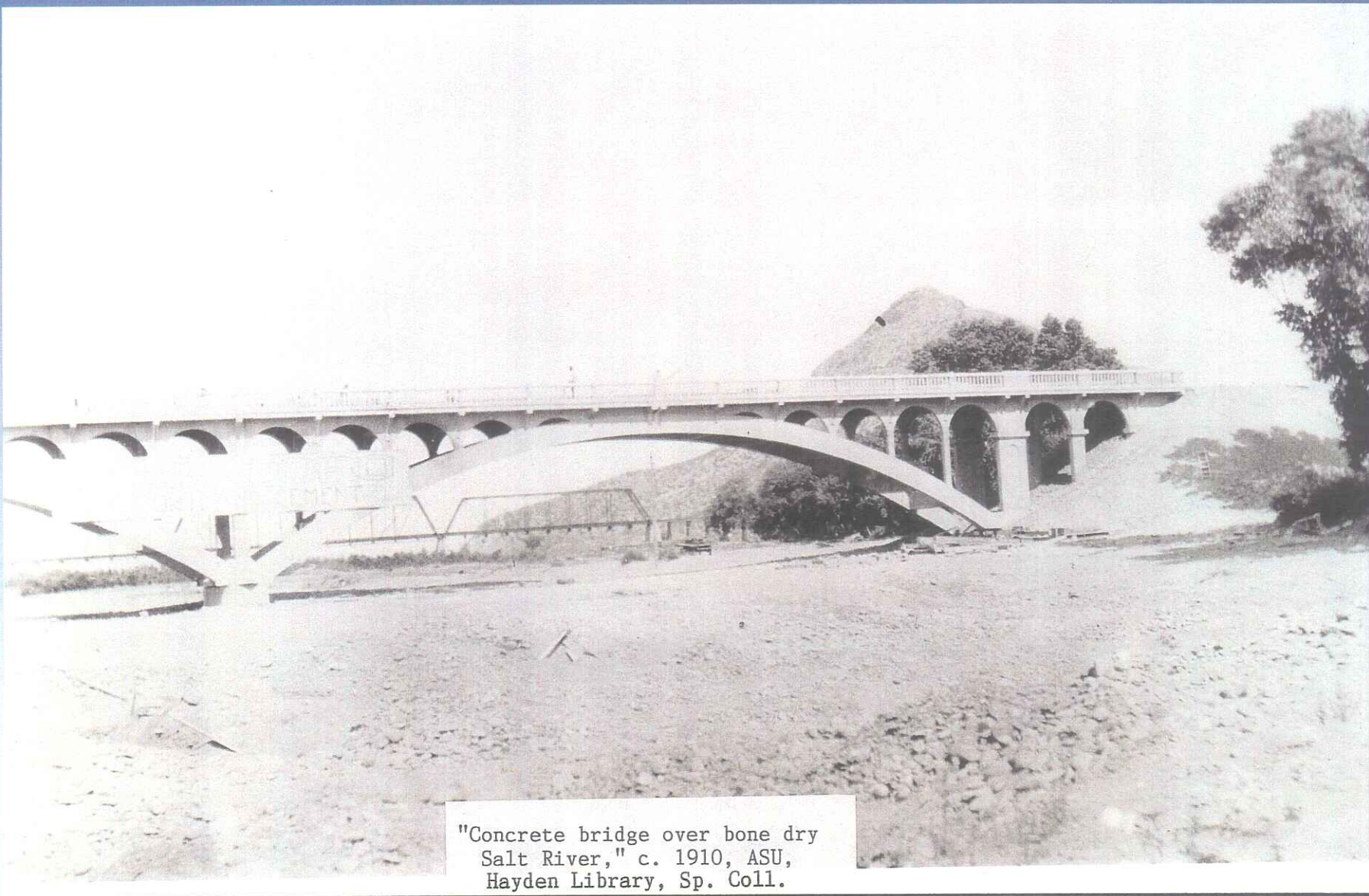
- ◆ Early Appropriators - diversions and canals
- ◆ Kibbey Decree - settling water disputes
- ◆ Controlling the river and increasing the Valley's water supply – the quest for a water storage dam and a permanent diversion dam
- ◆ The Reclamation Act - authorization of SRP
- ◆ Kent Decree - adjudicating water rights
- ◆ Summary





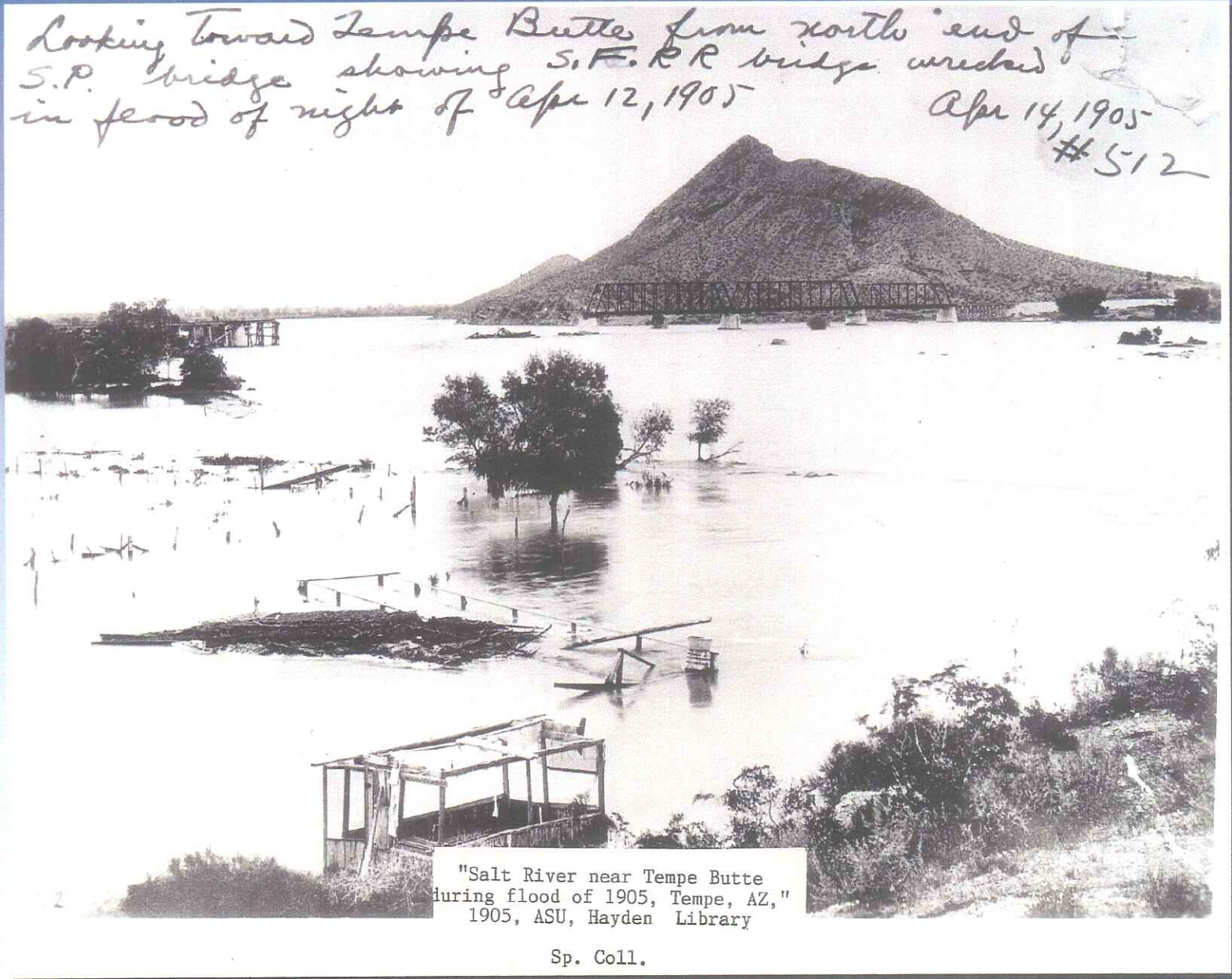
"Railroad Bridge at Tempe, AZ  
'Normal Flow in Salt,'" c. 1900  
ASU, Hayden Library, Sp. Coll.





"Concrete bridge over bone dry  
Salt River," c. 1910, ASU,  
Hayden Library, Sp. Coll.





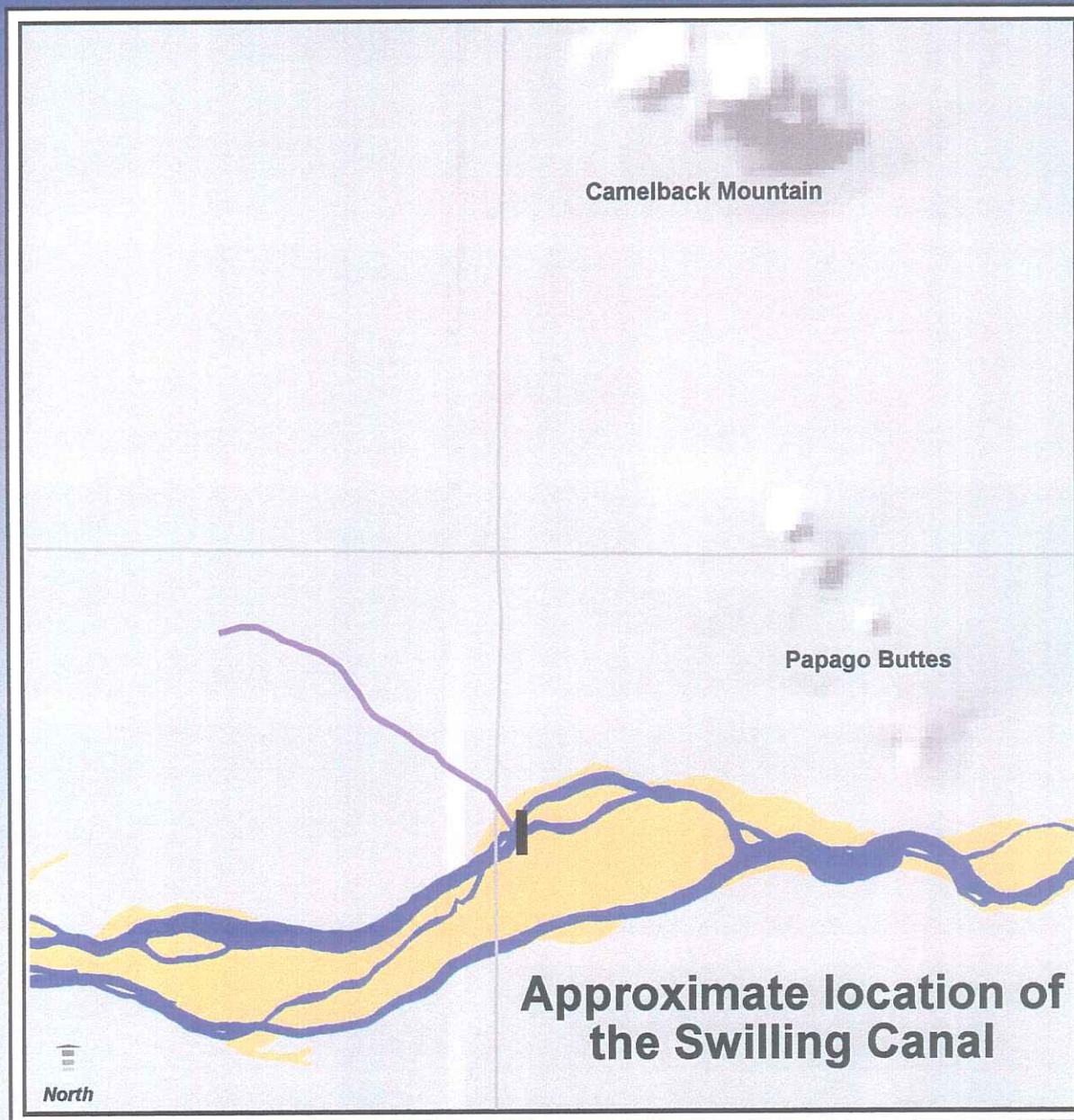


# Use of Salt River Water

## Early Appropriators

- ◆ Settlement of the Valley by non-Indians began in the mid-1860s - Camp McDowell; Phoenix
- ◆ Settlers began appropriating water from the Salt River beginning in 1867 - Jack Swilling
- ◆ The Swilling Canal (Salt River Valley Canal) took water from the Salt River near present day 48<sup>th</sup> Street







# Use of Salt River Water

## Early Appropriators (cont.)

- ◆ In the early 1870s several other smaller canals were dug near the Swilling Canal:
  - ✓ Wilson; Salt River; Griffin; Monterey; Farmers
  
- ◆ Later in the 1870s many other appropriators filed for water rights in the Salt River Valley:
  - ✓ Salt River Ditch Company
  - ✓ Salt River Farming Ditch Company
  - ✓ Hayden Milling & Farming Ditch Company
  - ✓ Virginia Ditch Company
  - ✓ Prescott Ditch Company
  - ✓ Phoenix Ditch Company



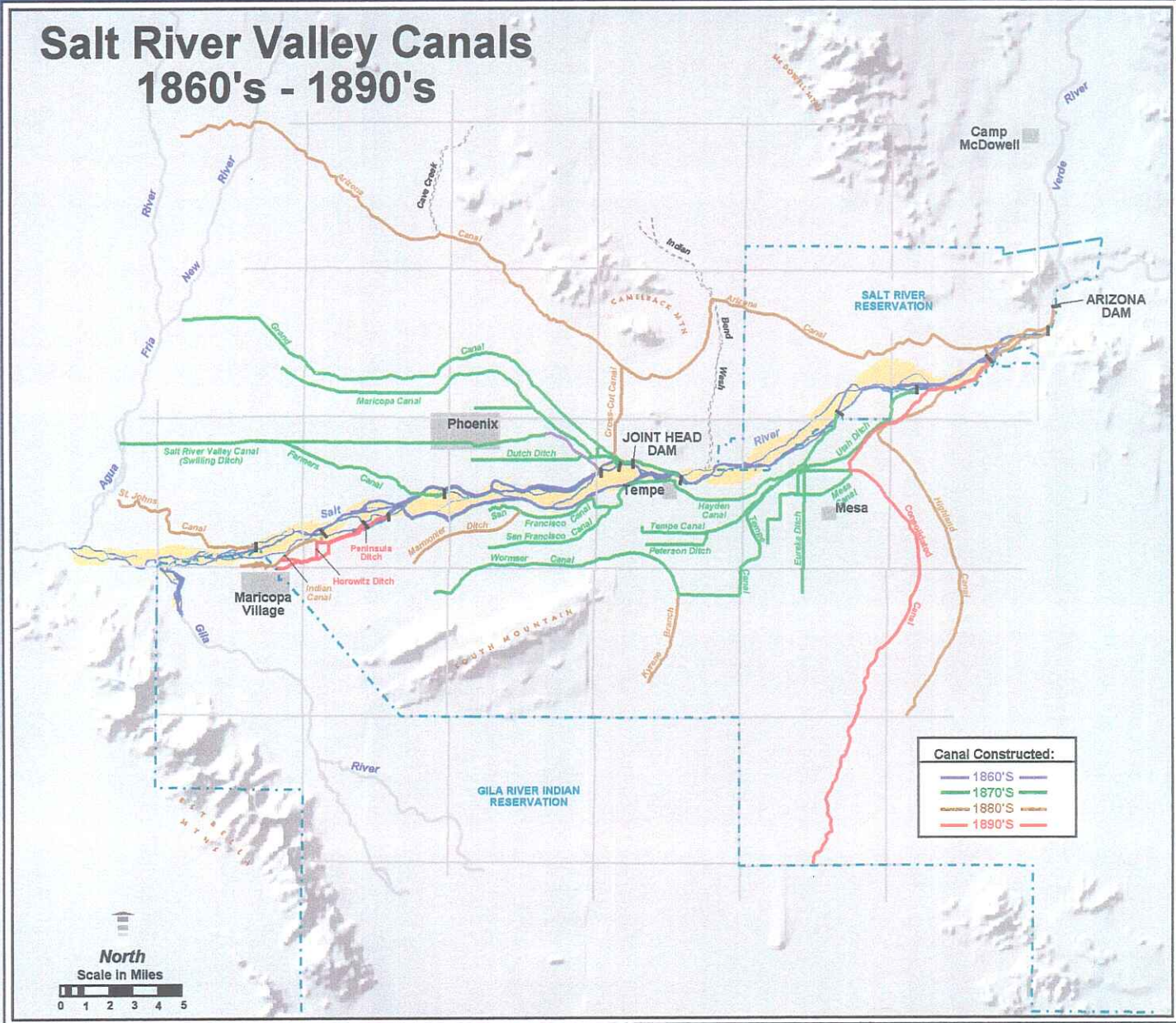
# Use of Salt River Water

## Early Appropriators (cont.)

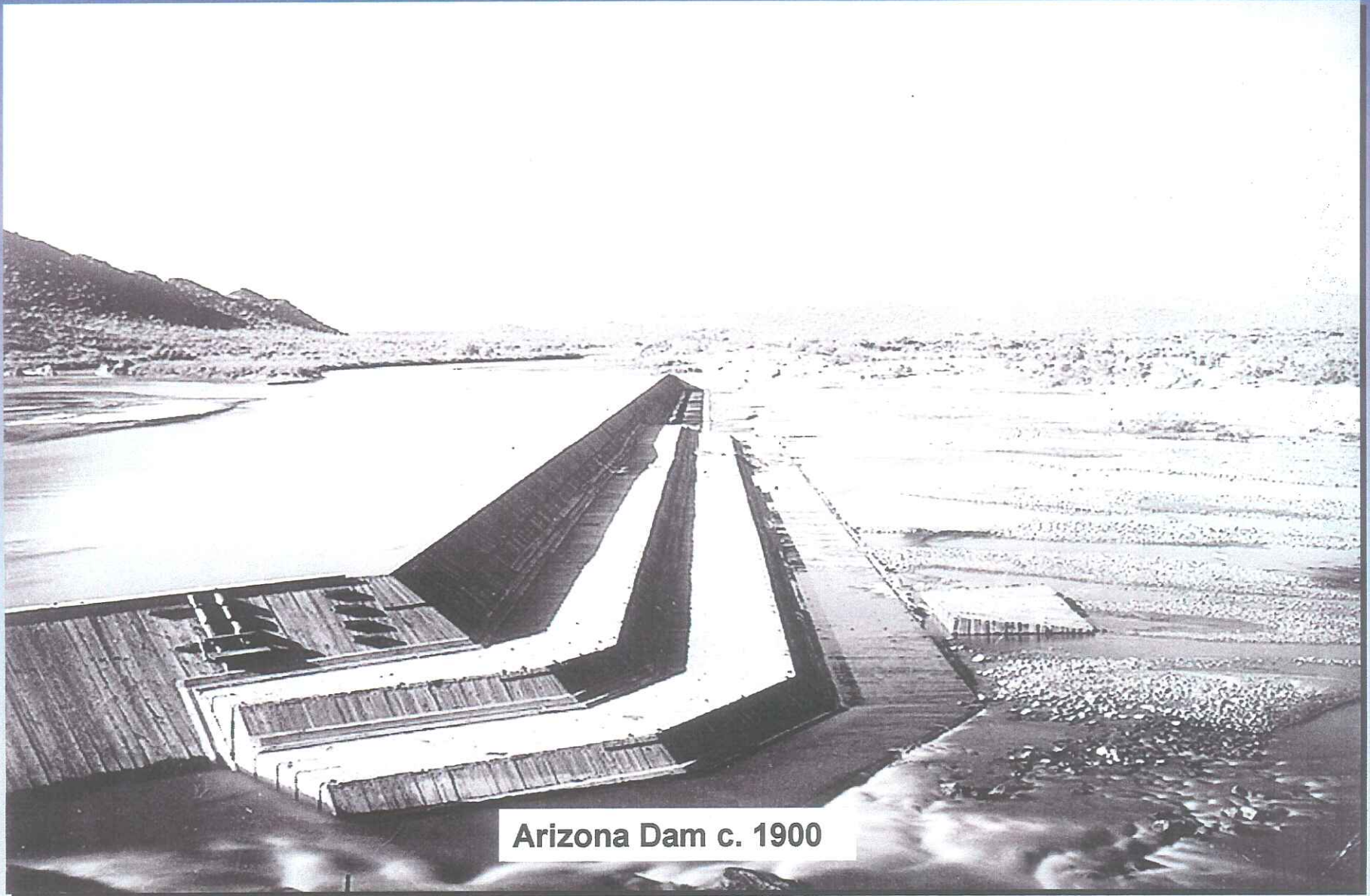
- ◆ Over time the claims far exceeded the supply as appropriators kept moving upstream to enhance their opportunity for wet water
- ◆ During this period numerous canals were constructed and tens of thousands of acres were farmed throughout the Salt River Valley
- ◆ By the turn of the century more than twenty canals were operating in the Valley



# Salt River Valley Canals 1860's - 1890's







Arizona Dam c. 1900



# Use of Salt River Water

## Kibbey Decree

- ◆ In 1892 Judge Joseph Kibbey resolved the dispute among the canal companies and water users and issued a decree:
  - ✓ prior appropriation governs the use of water
  - ✓ water rights are appurtenant to the land
  - ✓ canal companies are carriers of water – the right to water belongs to the person who uses the water on the land
  - ✓ 151,360 acres of land were entitled to use water from the Salt River



# Use of Salt River Water

## Water Storage

- ◆ Despite the decree, during the 1890s constant battles arose over the diversion and use of the Salt River - land speculators; increased water claims; variable water flows
- ◆ To control the Salt River and increase the Valley's water supply, water interests turned their focus to damming the river and storing its water - site surveys; water right claims; financing methods - private vs. public
- Hudson Reservoir & Canal Company – 1893 water right claim to the Tonto Dam site



# Use of Salt River Water

## Reclamation Act

- ◆ In 1902 Congress passed, and President Roosevelt signed into law, the Reclamation Act
- ◆ The Act made available federal monies (via loans) for water storage and distribution projects (Reclamation Projects) from the sale of public lands in the west
- ◆ However, putting the Act into effect in the Valley required cooperation of water users, control of water distribution, and resolution of continuing water disputes



# Use of Salt River Water

## Salt River Project

- ◆ In early 1903 water interests in the Valley created the Salt River Valley Water Users' Association (Association) to represent Valley landowners with the federal government
- ◆ Shortly thereafter, the federal government authorized the construction of the Salt River Federal Reclamation Project
- ◆ In 1904 the Association and the federal government agreed to develop the Salt River Federal Reclamation Project



# Use of Salt River Water

## Salt River Project (cont.)

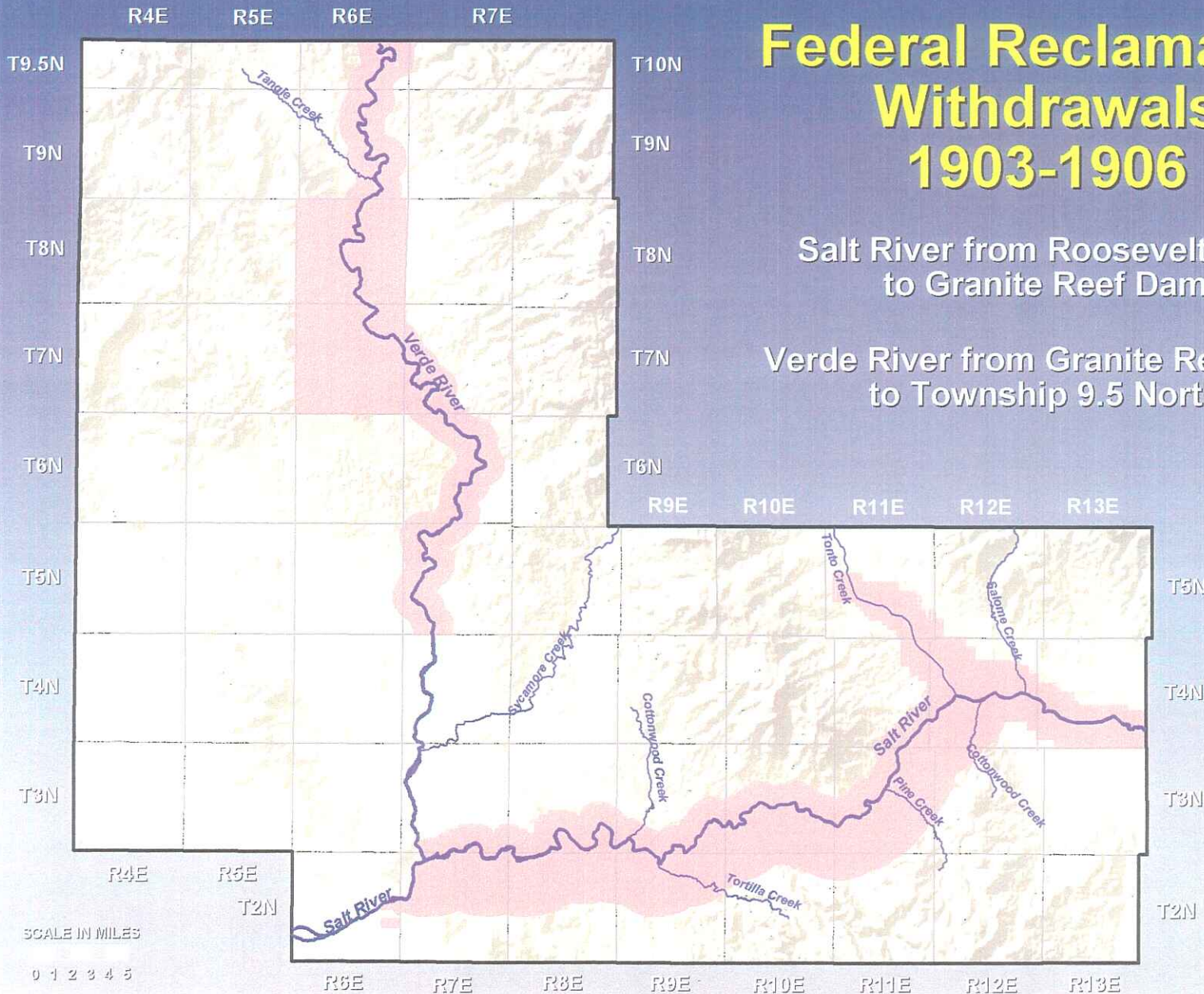
- ◆ Between 1903 and 1906, on behalf of the Association and its shareholders, the federal government:
  - ✓ acquired the water rights and assets of the Hudson Reservoir & Canal Company
  - ✓ withdrew lands along the Salt and Verde Rivers from public entry by others
  - ✓ filed water right claims for all of the surplus and flood waters flowing, or to flow, in the Salt River for distribution to the Association shareholders
  - ✓ acquired the water rights and assets of most of the Valley canal companies



# Federal Reclamation Withdrawals 1903-1906

Salt River from Roosevelt Lake  
 to Granite Reef Dam

Verde River from Granite Reef Dam  
 to Township 9.5 North



SCALE IN MILES

0 1 2 3 4 5

April 7, 2003

Arizona Navigable Stream Adjudication Commission

020863SS-17



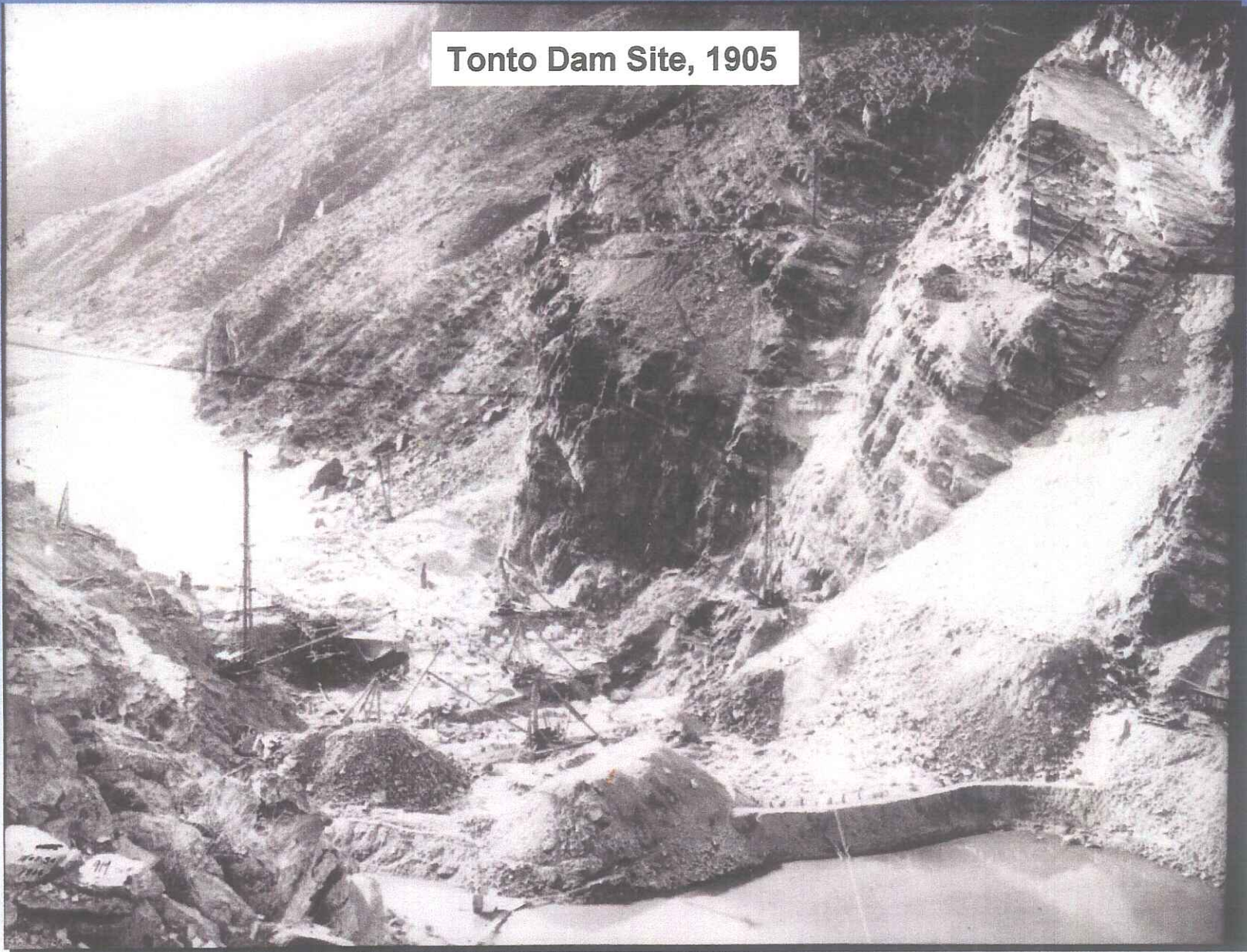


# Use of Salt River Water

## Salt River Project (cont.)

- ◆ Soon after the federal government began construction of the water storage dam (Roosevelt), a permanent diversion dam (Granite Reef), and the South Canal; Apache Trail; Power Canal
- ◆ Water began to be stored behind Roosevelt in 1908 and in 1910 it was declared complete
- ◆ Construction of Granite Reef Dam was completed in 1908; the 1,100 foot concrete dam, anchored in bedrock in the Salt River, was designed to divert all of the water in the River

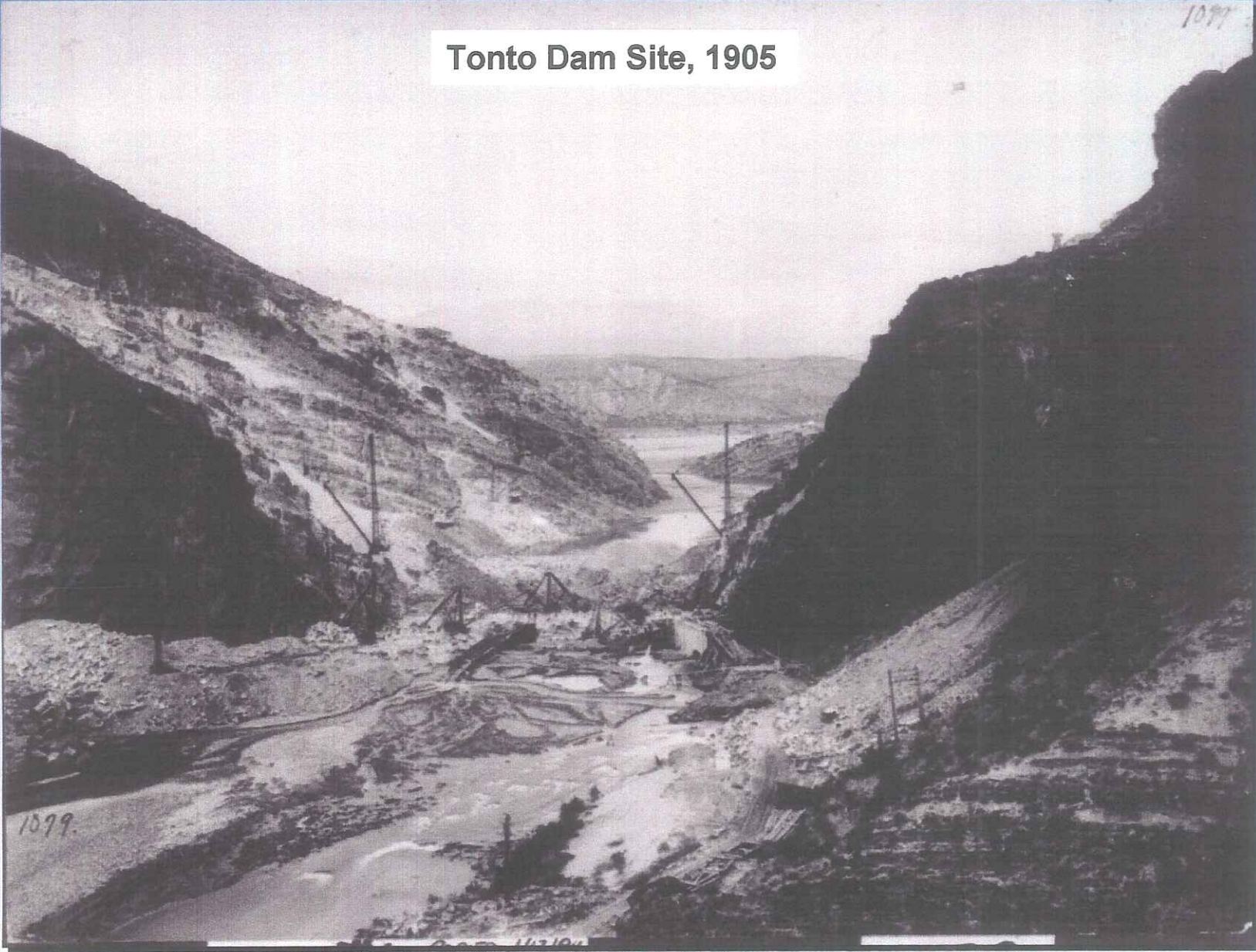




Tonto Dam Site, 1905

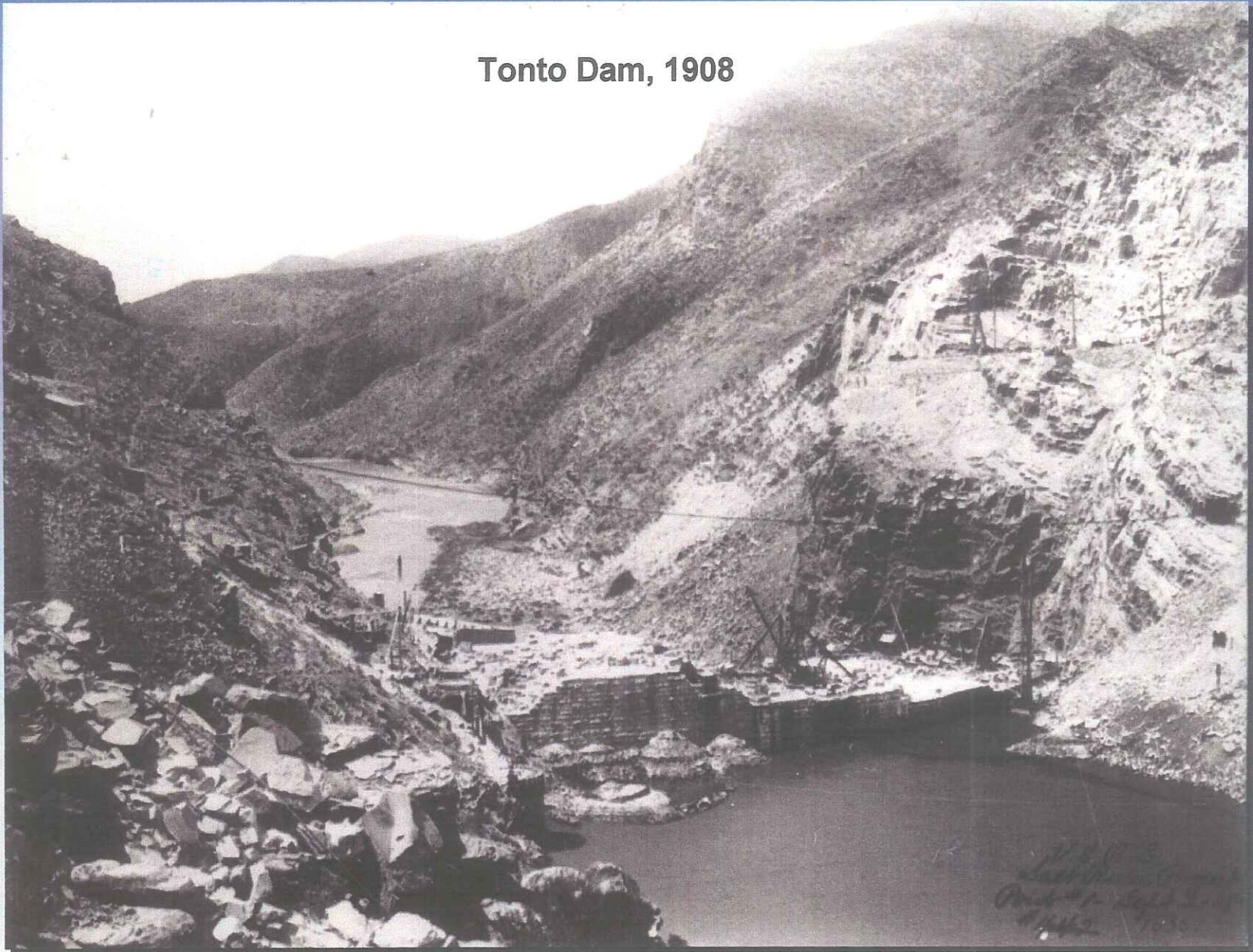


Tonto Dam Site, 1905



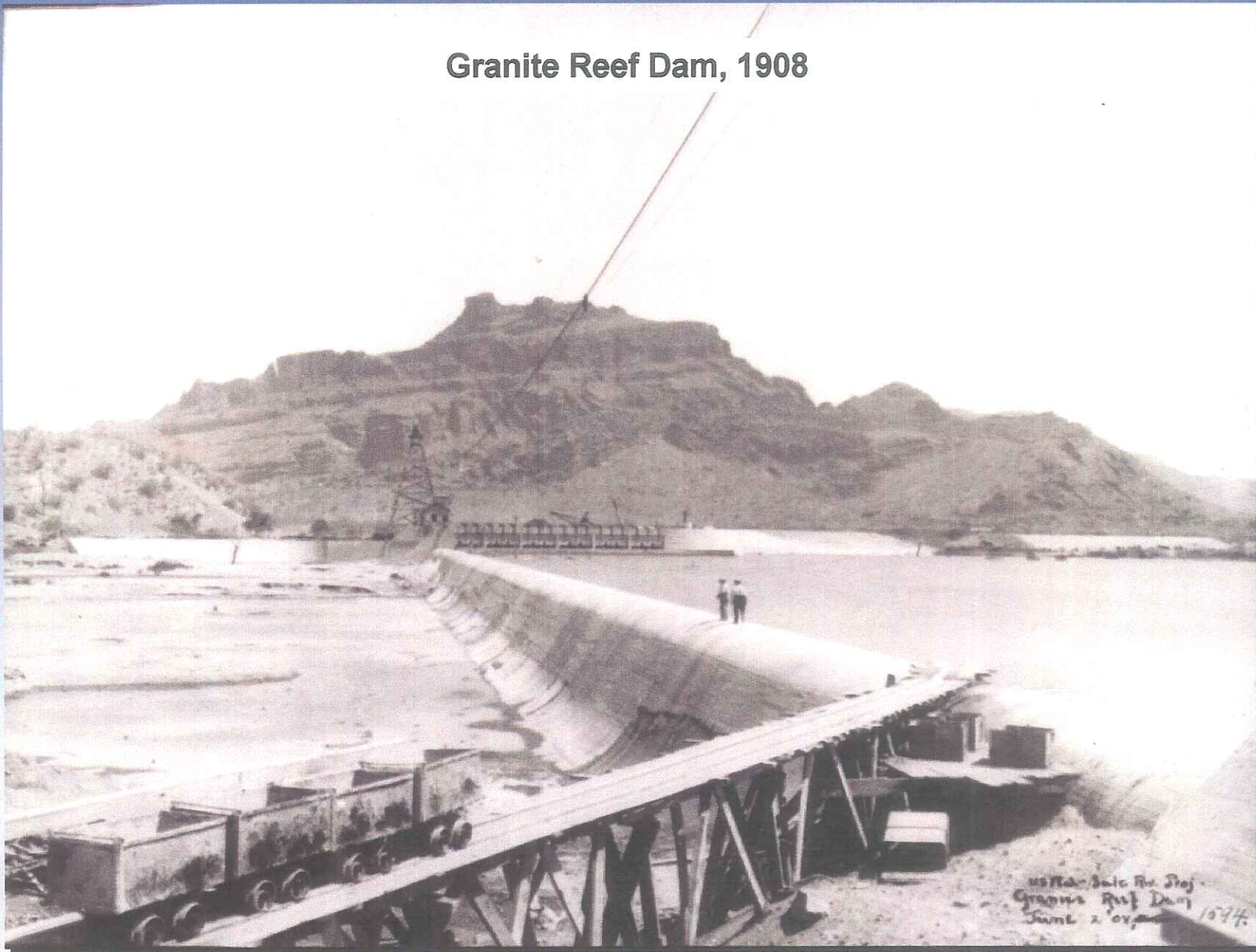


## Tonto Dam, 1908



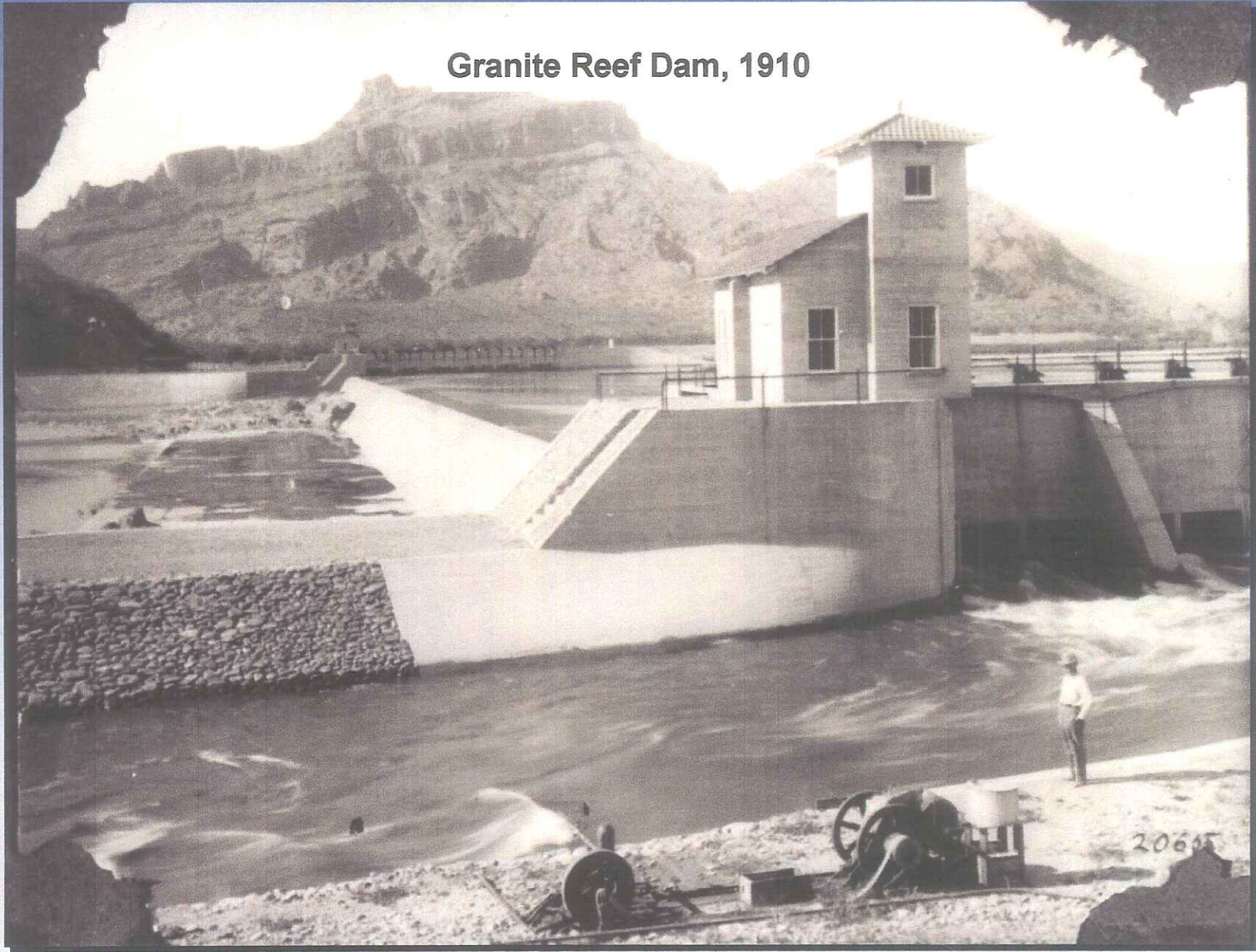


# Granite Reef Dam, 1908



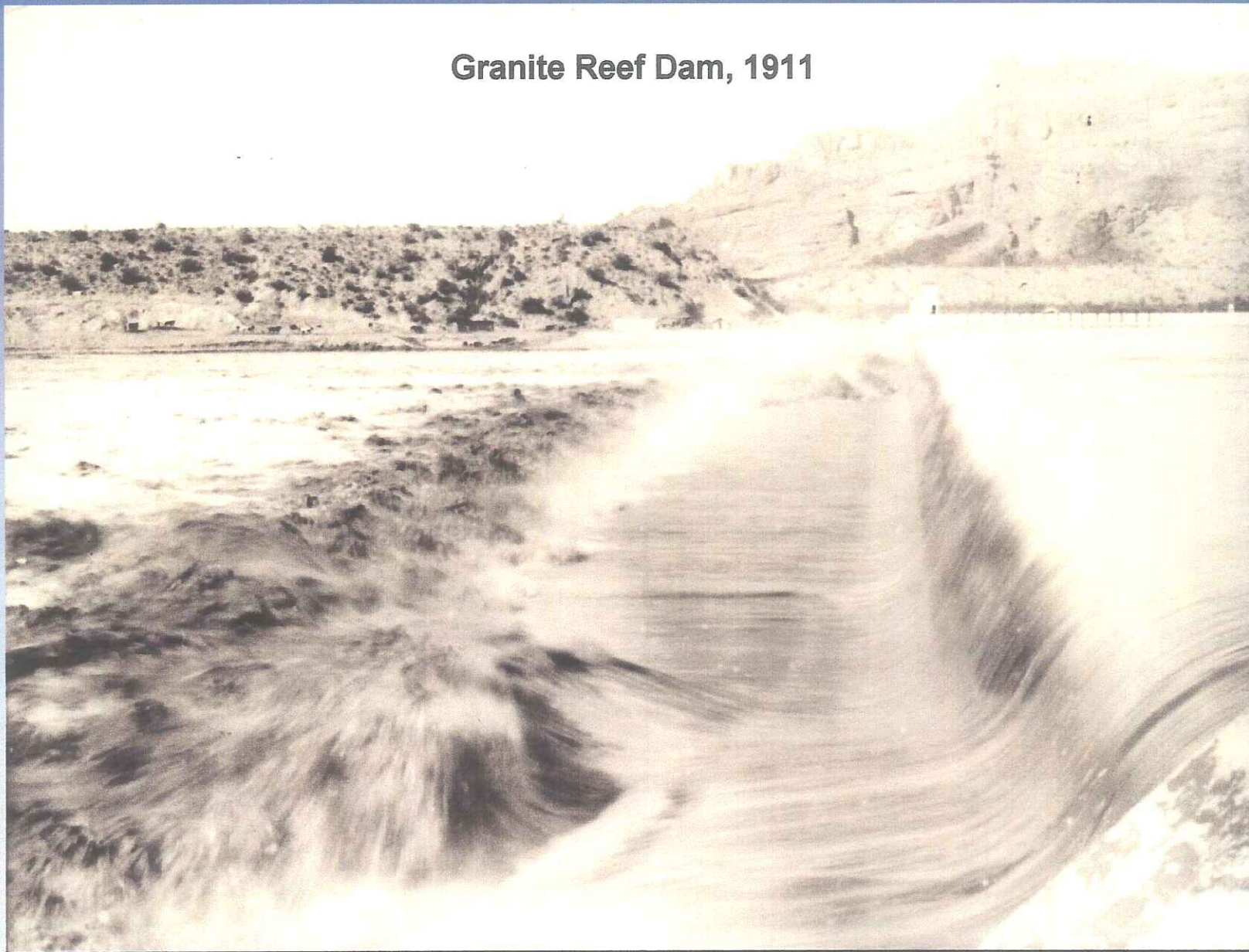


# Granite Reef Dam, 1910





## Granite Reef Dam, 1911



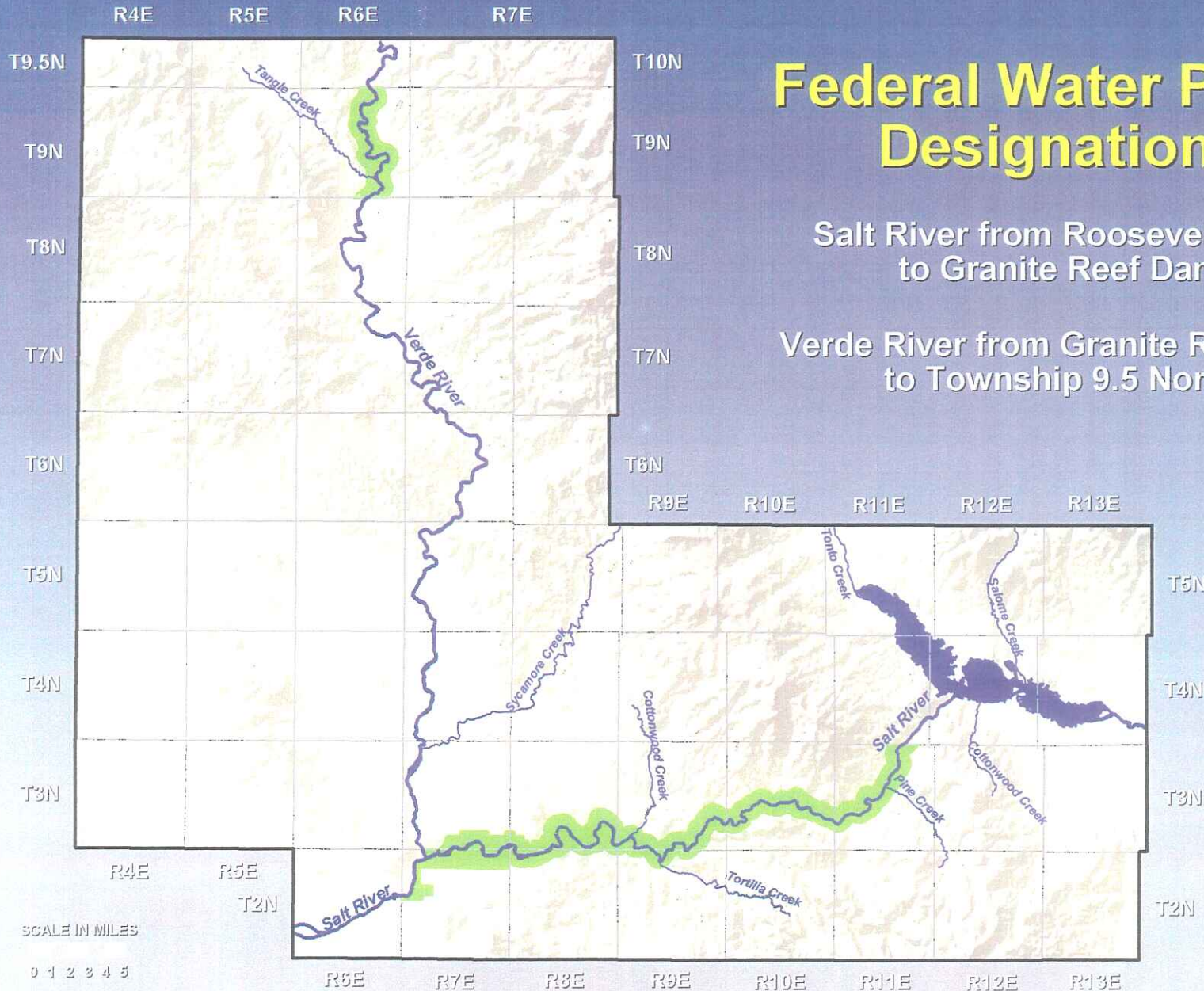


# Use of Salt River Water

## Salt River Project (cont.)

- ◆ In 1910 Congress reserved from the Arizona Territory land along the Salt and Verde Rivers for hydro-electric power use; these reservations were later effectuated through the Arizona constitution and approved by the federal government in 1917
- ◆ In 1911 Roosevelt Dam was dedicated by President Roosevelt; at the time more than 500,000 acre-feet of water was in storage





# Federal Water Power Designations

Salt River from Roosevelt Lake to Granite Reef Dam

Verde River from Granite Reef Dam to Township 9.5 North

SCALE IN MILES

0 1 2 3 4 5

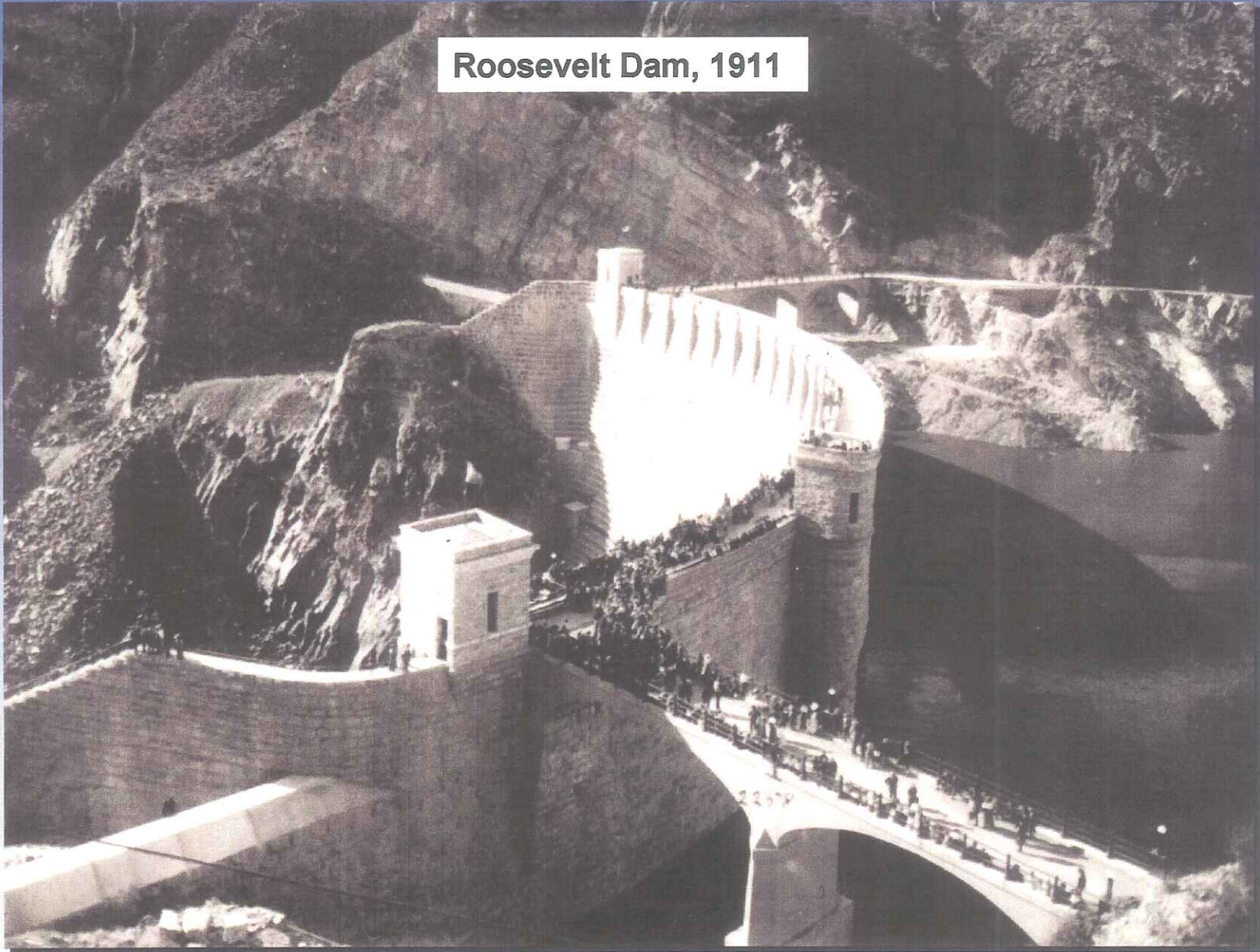
April 7, 2003



North



Roosevelt Dam, 1911





# Use of Salt River Water

## Kent Decree

- ◆ In settling the water disputes a lawsuit was initiated among Valley landowners in 1905
- ◆ In 1910 Judge Edward Kent issued an opinion:
  - ✓ the Salt River is a non-navigable stream
  - ✓ the doctrines of prior appropriation, beneficial use and appurtenancy govern the use of water from the Salt River
  - ✓ the doctrine of relation applies in establishing the priority for using water
  - ✓ Class A, B and C lands; normal flow, flood, surplus, and stored water



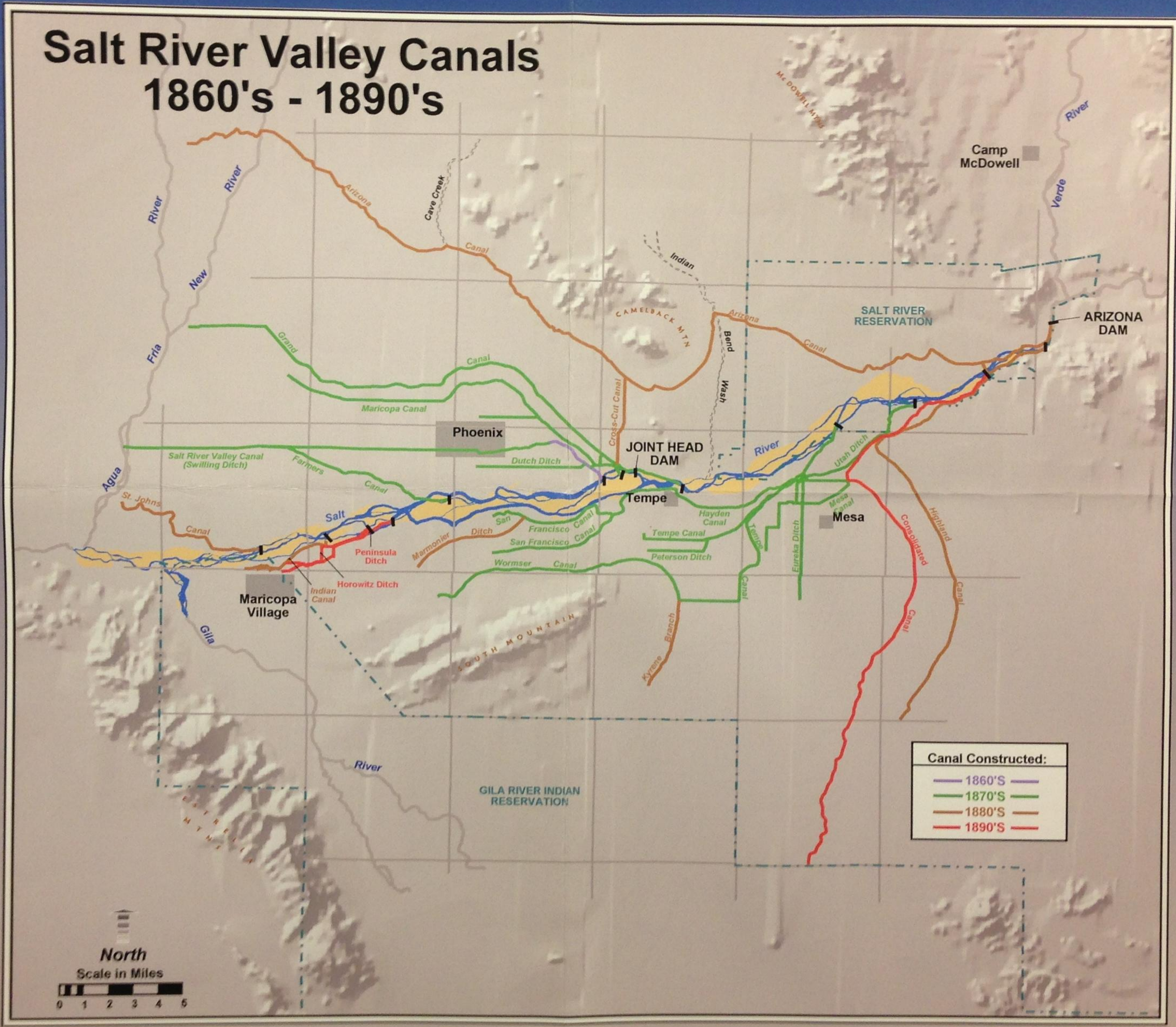
# Use of Salt River Water

## Summary

- ◆ The creation of the Salt River Federal Reclamation Project tamed the highly variable, often unpredictable Salt River bringing certainty to the Valley's water supply to support its continued growth and economic development
- ◆ By statehood, except on rare occasions when runoff from the Salt River watershed exceeded the capacity of SRP's water storage and diversion facilities, water users in the Valley appropriated all of the water in the Salt River for diversion and use on Valley lands



# Salt River Valley Canals 1860's - 1890's



Canal Constructed:	
<span style="color: purple;">—</span>	1860'S
<span style="color: green;">—</span>	1870'S
<span style="color: orange;">—</span>	1880'S
<span style="color: red;">—</span>	1890'S

