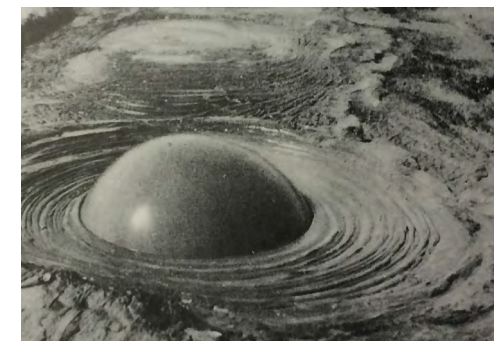


EARLY REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SALTON SINK: THE CONSTRUCTION OF SEA AND DESERT



The Salton Sink, once the delta of the Colorado River and located in the Imperial and Coachella valleys of Southern California, has a long, cyclical history of flood, evaporation, hyper-salinity, and eventually the reemergence of arid land. Created at the turn of the 20th century due to accident, imagination and a little bit of fraud, today the Salton Sea is known for its toxicity as well as its location on the Pacific flyway. Numerous proposals have been put forth to “save the Salton Sea.” Most choose sea and reduced salinity over hyper-salinity and desert. This thesis proposal asks how such preferences are embedded in much earlier ways of seeing, representing and responding to arid land: how surveyors, military expeditions, railroad companies and writers came to see this land in terms of *potentially wet* as opposed to *potentially dry*, and what such ways of seeing have missed.

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