

Sir Malcolm Hailey photograph album of Sarda Canal

Ms. Coll. 1146

Finding aid prepared by Clémence Scouten.

Last updated on January 08, 2016.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2015 November 12

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Moona Lal & Sons, Photographers.
Title	Sir Malcolm Hailey photograph album of Sarda Canal
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1146
Date	1928
Extent	08 linear feet (1 volume)
Language	English
Abstract	This album is a presentation photograph album given to Sir Malcolm Hailey, later 1st Baron Hailey, by Moona Lal and Sons, photographers. Hailey was governor of the Punjab from 1924 to 1928 and of the United Provinces from 1928 to 1930. The twenty-six photographs in the volume document the completion of the first stages of the works on the Sarda Canal, United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh).

Cite as:

Sir Malcolm Hailey photograph album of Sarda Canal, 1928, Ms Coll. 1146, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

This album is a presentation photograph album given to Sir Malcolm Hailey, later 1st Baron Hailey, by Moona Lal and Sons, photographers. Hailey was governor of the Punjab from 1924 to 1928 and of the United Provinces from 1928 to 1930.

The album commemorates the completion of the first stages of the works on the Sarda Canal, United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) which was formally opened on December 11, 1928, by Sir Malcolm Hailey, Governor of the United Provinces. The Sarda Canal system linked over 4,000 miles of canals and distributaries, commanding an area of over 7,000,000 acres, the largest capital works in the British Empire at that date. At the time, it was anticipated that the project would yield to the state a net annual return of 7% on an outlay of £7.5 million. The importance of this scheme is clearly set out by Philip Woodruff, who was an Assistant Magistrate in the U.P. at the time of the project.

"The canals in the North-West or United Provinces secured an area that had previously been uncertain, but men lived and ploughed there for thousands of years. In the Punjab, irrigation between the rivers meant that a desert suddenly blossomed, that where a few nomad tribes had grazed their goats and camels towns and villages sprang up and good wheat was grown... The water-level was eighty feet below the surface, so that irrigation from wells was out of the question, but for canal irrigation the country was ideal. There was a slight fall from North-East to South-West and between every pair of rivers ran a water-shed, invisible to the eye which dictated the alignment of the main canal. It is an idea to stir the dullest - a desert ready to be peopled, a Utopia waiting for its architect. And there is something staggering about its success." [Mason, page 112]

On the other hand, belief in the benefit of canals was not unanimous. "The Sarda Canal also epitomized the weakness of many of the projects [under British supervision]. As many landlords argued when the project was in the planning state in 1872, the Sarda Canal was not only unnecessary, but it would harm existing cultivation. They noted that there was no history of famine in in Awadh, that irrigation needs were met by the existing wells, and that it would lead to disease because of waterlogging. The landlords concluded by claiming that not only would the canal system add to their financial burden, but it would not make money. The government, as expected, ignored local knowledge. And yet, in the end, the landlords' predictions all came true." [Hill, page 131]

Works cited:

Hill, Christopher V., *South Asia: An Environmental History*. Santa Barbara, Calif. : ABC-CLIO, 2008.

Woodruff, Philip. *The men who ruled India, Volume 2: The guardians*. London : Cape, 1954.

Scope and Contents

This collection is composed of one album containing twenty-six original mounted photographs, twenty-one of them measuring 9" x 11;" five of them folding panoramas, approximately double-sized. A few of the images are slightly faded, but in general very good. The album itself is in the original full grey leather with the title of the album embedded in silver to the upper board, together with presentation plate and engraved silver corners, a little rubbed at the extremities, but with attractive engravings. None of the photographs are captioned.

The images record the Sarda Canal as the work was being completed. Most images feature the physical infrastructure of the canal and Indian workers, performing manual labor. Some images include train cars and boats which may have made the work somewhat less arduous. In many photographs, the engineering, the stonework and the piping is shown in detail. One image shows an Englishman (possibly Sir Malcolm Hailey) sitting with two English women and three Indian men.

Overall, the photographs show the enormous scale of the project in both geography and human resources.

Administrative Information

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Access Restrictions

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Custodial History note

Sold by Glenn Mitchell, 2002.

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Photograph albums
- Photographs

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Great Britain--Colonies--History--20th century

- India--History--British occupation, 1765-1947--Photographs
- Sarda Canal

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Hailey, William Malcolm Hailey, Baron, 1872-1969

SUBJECT(S)

- Canals--India--Uttar Pradesh
- Irrigation canals and flumes
- Water resources development--India--Uttar Pradesh

Collection Inventory

Photograph album of the Sarda Canal construction, 1928.