

## ***The Santa Clara Bench Canal***

*The published history of Ivins references this canal.*

[Ivins](#) was born out of the fulfilled dream of several men to bring water to the Santa Clara bench. This was not easy to accomplish. **An eight-mile canal had to be built from the Santa Clara creek near the Shem smelter to the bench.** This was not an easy undertaking, the route took them over steep mountain sides and deep ravines that needed to be syphoned or plumed. Work began in 1911 and the canal was completed in 1914. **Ivins Reservoir was built to store the water in 1918.**



Civil Engineers, Leo A. Snow and Clarence S. Jarvis, were the men who first conceived this idea in 1909. St. George Stake President Edward H. Snow, Santa Clara Bishop Edward R. Frei, Sr., Thomas P. Cottam, George F. Whitehead, James Andrus, James McArthur, Isaac C. Macfarlane, Leo A. snow, John S. Stucki, and many other workers from both Santa Clara and St. George.

The first couple to move onto the project site were Mr. and Mrs. Alden Gray. They moved there 15 January 1922. Mr. and Mrs. Edward Tobler came a week later. Mr and Mrs. Samuel Gubler came in the spring, then Mr. and Mrs. Clement Gubler, Mr. and Mrs. Edward R. Frei,

Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Leo F. Reber, and Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Ence. In 1924 Mr. and Mrs. Milo Ence, Mr. and Mrs. Rulon Stucki, Mr. and Mrs. Martin J. Gubler, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Reber, and Mr. and Mrs. Loren Stucki joined the group. The irrigation company offered a lot to the first ten families to move to the new town, but since two came on the same day they gave eleven lots instead. These families were all young and willing to live in humble circumstances and work hard to make this new town a reality. Their children had to ride a horse to Santa Clara to school each day.

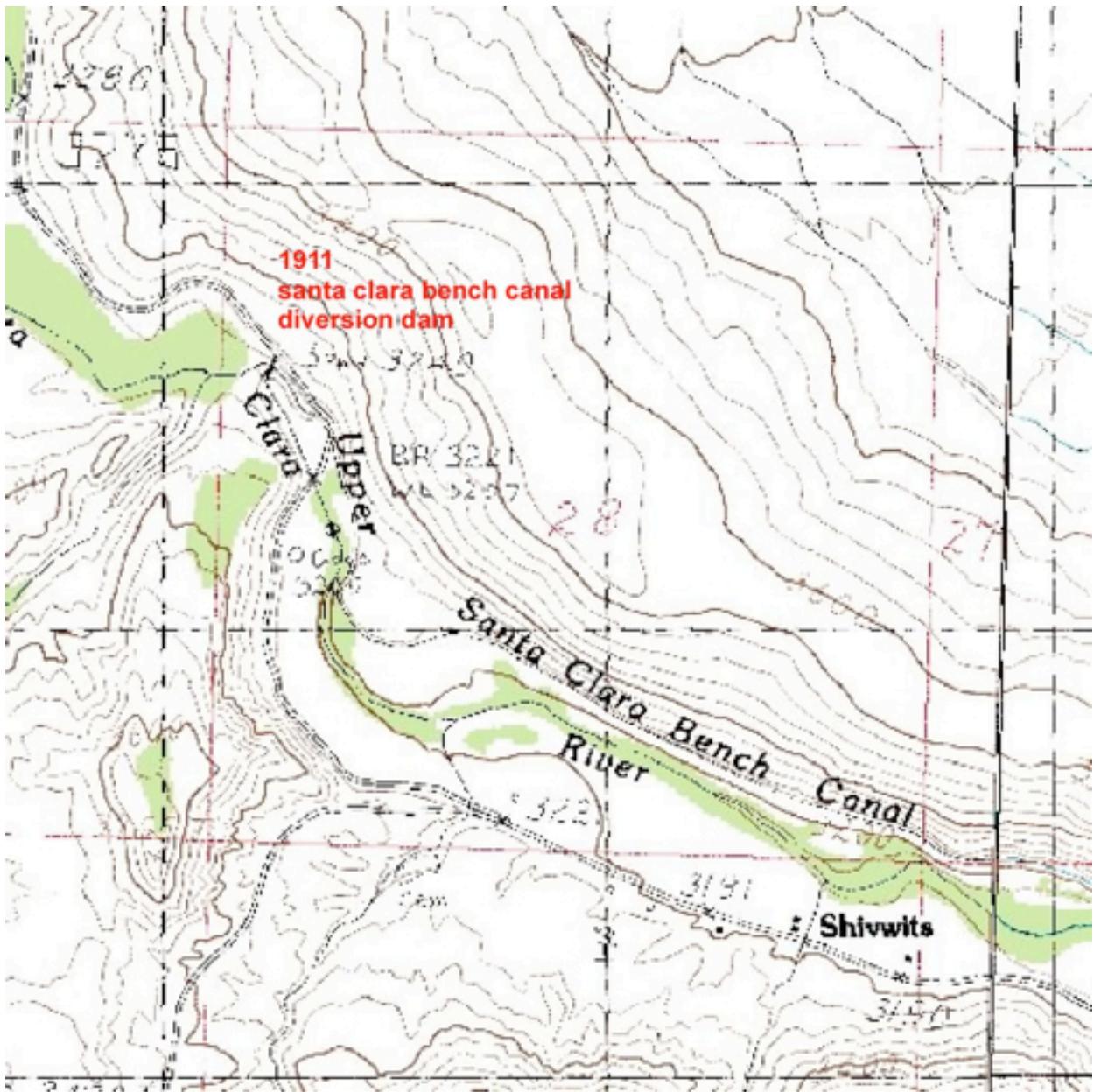
They decided they wanted a different name for their town than "Santa Clara Bench," the name that was finally chosen was "Ivins" after the Mormon Apostle

[Anthony W. Ivins.](#)

He was asked and didn't object as long as they spelled it right. He then donated \$100 toward a chapel and later sent a bell for it.



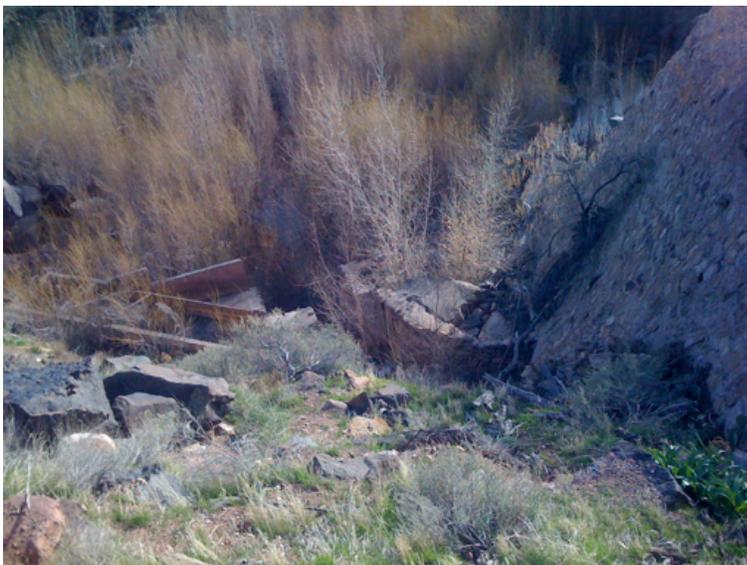
*2010 photo of the edge of Ivins City showing pressure irrigated fields.*



Current USGS maps show the location of the Santa Clara Bench Canal and contain a symbol indicating the location of the dam where diversion occurred.



*This photo shows the existing dam where the diversion of water to the Santa Clara Bench Canal occurred.*

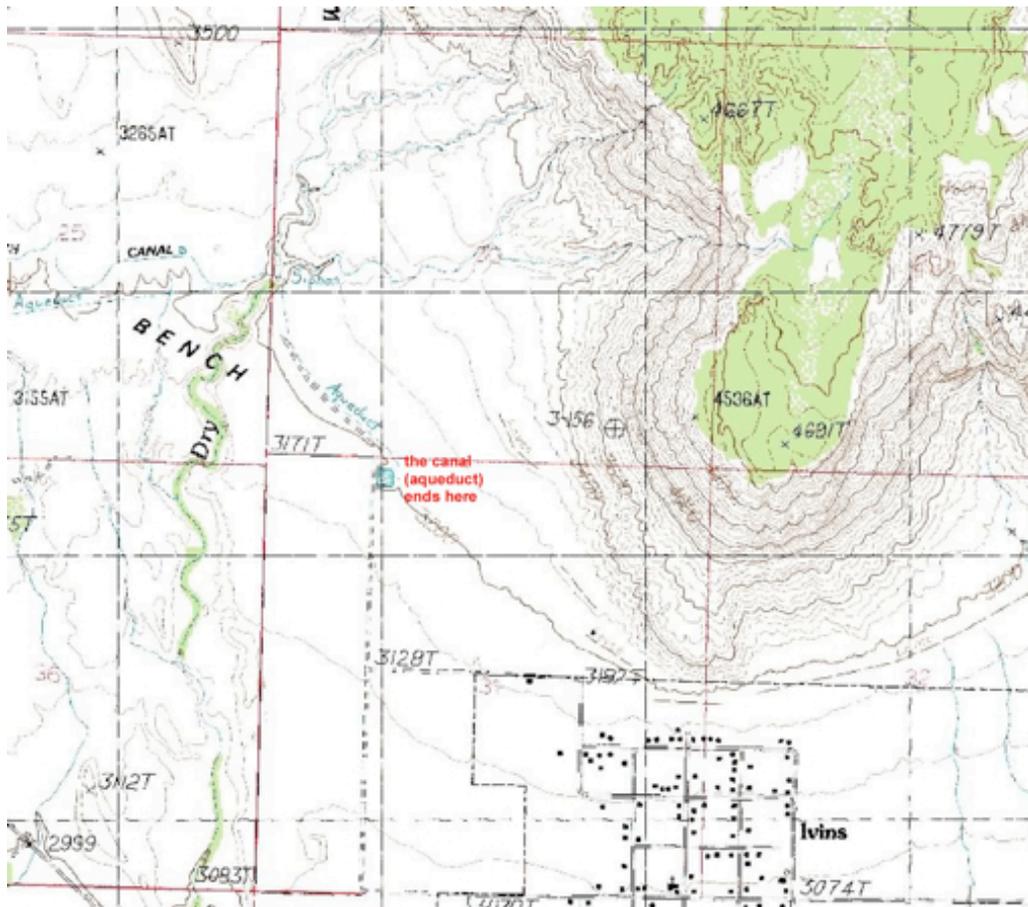


*Photos 2010*





*The location of the Santa Clara Bench Canal is revealed by the visible cut slopes above the Santa Clara River bottoms beyond the ruins of Shem City (now Shivwits).*



*This USGS map shows the Santa Clara Bench Canal (or Aqueduct) ending at a pond northwest of Ivins.*



*Washington County GIS photos show the pond where the USGS maps indicate the canal ends along with visual evidence of the canals continuation to the southeast. Older USGS maps indicate the existence of an Upper Santa Clara Bench Canal and a Lower Santa Clara Bench Canal which diverge at this point. Physical remnants of the existence of these canals have largely been obliterated by recent suburban growth.*

*There are records dating the founding of Shem City to approximately 1902*



SHEM, UTAH, 1902. Shem was a smelter where they smelted ore into bullion. The Blocks (bullion) were hauled to Modena and shipped away for further refinement. The Apex Mine was perhaps 10 miles from the smelter, Shem. Freighting outfits such as the Wm. Edward Bunker outfit here hauled ore from the Apex Mine (which was to the southwest, or west of Shem). Shem hummed with activity for about 10 years. The old mine is still the scene of limited and sporadic operations. Gift of LaVell & Oz Johnson. Original photo belongs to William Lang Bunker of Delta, Utah. **Shem is in Millard County.** Shem and the Apex Mine are in Washington County, Utah. Modena is in Iron County.

Mar 25, 1903 - Deseret News

Conditions at "Shem City"

The new store of James Andrus and Sons at "Shem City" is completed. Shem is the name of the new mining camp 15 miles north of this city and situated on the Santa Clara stream. This town is named after an Indian chief who resided in that locality. It has a postoffice and the new smelter just being completed there will reduce the ore from the Dixie mine which is located eight miles southwest, where some 50 miners are employed and it is the most prosperous camp in southern **Utah**. There is one drawback, however to this mine, it is situated on top of a mountain, where there is no water, and that necessary fluid has to be hauled from the city of **Shem**. For this reason the smelter had to be built so far from the mine. A good road has been constructed between these two places at the expense of the company and a telegraph line is now being erected for its use.

*Road improvements between Shem and Saint George were made after 1908. Probably along the present alignment of Highway 91.*

Nov 17, 1908 - Deseret News

#### A Move for New Highway

The Washington County Commercial Club is now working on the problem of securing better communication with the business world. The Utah and Eastern Copper company some years ago constructed a road from its smelter at Shem to the railroad at Acoma, on which it was expected to run a steam wagon. The smelter is not now running, but the road is intact; as Shem is only 14 miles from St. George, it is possible to have automobile connection with the railroad by continuing the road from Shem to St. George. Assurances have been given by Mr. H. H. Clark to the effect that an automobile will be put on the road as soon as it can be completed. A committee from the club is now working in the attempt to raise subscriptions enough to construct the proposed road to Shem. Speed the good work which shall make the climate of Dixie available to those who desire to escape the rigors of the northern winter.

Smelter at Shem, Utah, c. 1909



The dam where the Santa Clara Bench Canal starts has been attributed to be Civilian Conservation Corps work completed after 1934. *But it must have already existed at that time in some fashion.* It is more likely that the CCC work was repair and/or improvement to the existing dam.



Ashley A. Workman served in the CCC for seven years, 1934-41, in ten different camps. This undated, unsited photo from his collection of "some type of CCC bridge construction project." What else could a minimalistic geometric structure, stripped of time, place, context, and utility be but a sculpture? [[here's another view of it.](#)]

We know where [Lamar Peterson took this photo](#), "'Dam on Santa Clara River, Shivcoit Indian Reservation," [actually, I believe that should be Shivwits, a band of the Paiute tribe] but it still looks like it could be part of Michael Heizer's City.

I have no idea what Heizer, Robert Smithson, Walter deMaria, or any other earthworks artists thought or said about projects like the CCC's. Maybe nothing at all, ever. We see these historical works from the other end of the temporal telescope now, but did they look different to people encountering them for the first time in the 1960's and 70's?

When these artists began conceiving massive sculptural interventions in the remotest desert landscapes they could find, the country was only a generation removed from the Depression. I expect there was a much greater general cultural awareness of the CCC and its built legacy. And then there's the post-war construction and baby boom that saw American families taking cross-country roadtrips to national parks via new interstate highways.

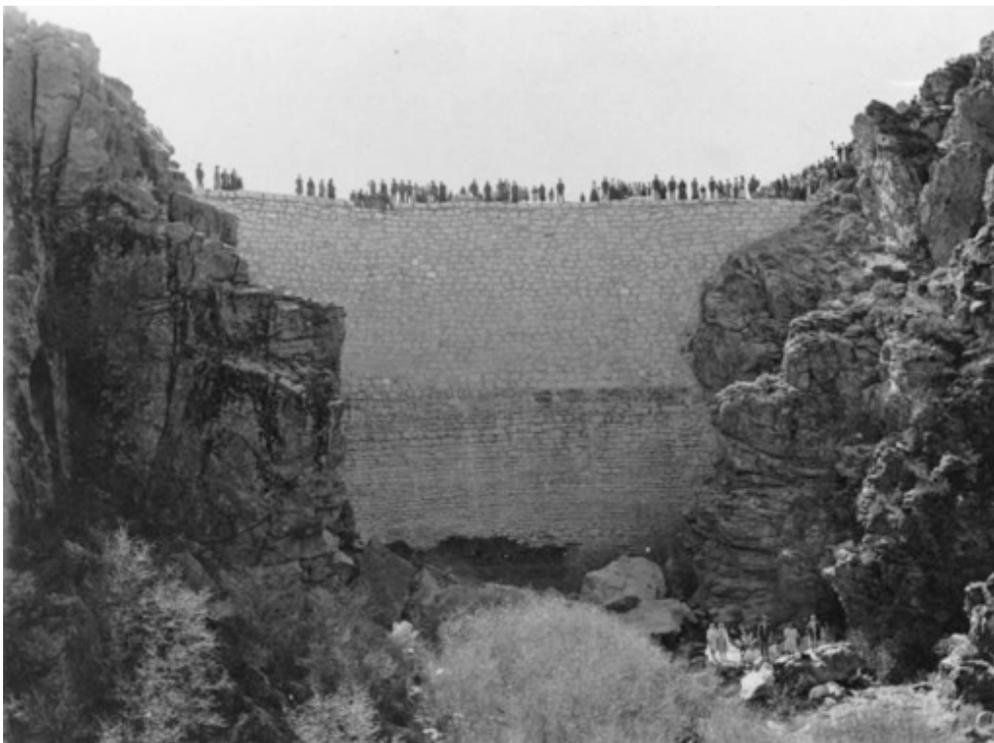
If anyone's seen Earthworks discussed well from this historical and aesthetic context, I'd love to know about it. And if anyone's then looked even further back, with contemporized eyes, to explore the production of pre-minimalist and pre-Earthwork objects, I'd definitely love to know about it, too.

[Images 2 of 1455 CCC photos in the Utah State Historical Society Collection](#) [lib.utah.edu]

CCC Slide Show Dam on Santa Clara River, Shivcoit Indian Reservation, 1934



*The type of stonework on this dam is closer to the stonework on the Enterprise Dam than to CCC work done on dams.*



Enterprise Dam (1910?) in Washington County. Gift of Florence Ivins Hyde.

Ivins City was settled from 1922 to 1926 by settlers descended from Swiss immigrants.

The early settlers were sent to the “Santa Clara Bench”, as the town was then called, to farm using water brought **via a canal from the Santa Clara River**. Culinary water was obtained from a **spring known as the Snow Canyon Springs**, located in Snow Canyon State Park and **now known as Johnson Arch Spring**. Families supported themselves through the raising of agricultural crops and some grazed cattle on the Pine Valley Mountain and Pinto areas.

The first survey of the original town site completed in the 1920’s was called the Santa Clara Bench Survey. The town was named after Anthony Ivins.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints subscribed for a considerable amount of land and water stock, when the project of building a canal on the Santa Clara bench was started. The Church paid in cash, which was so very important in purchasing the **needed materials such as cement, flume materials**, and other expenses.

*There is a 1995 document indicating application by the Town of Ivins and the Santa Clara Irrigation Company for a historic funding grant for repair of a “metal plume at the base of the dam”. (See Document Part C below)*

Apostle Anthony W. Ivins was the investigating authority sent down from Salt Lake City by the General Authorities, and his report was very favorable to the Church Officials.



After the town was settled and the Chapel built, it was dedicated in November 1926 by President Anthony W. Ivins. At that time he was second counselor to President Heber J. Grant. A meeting was held with President Ivins being the principle speaker. Leo Reber wrote, "I see him now, forty years later, as he spoke to us and related how he had come down to Santa Clara with his father [in 1861], when [nine] years of age, bringing the original Swiss Company that President Brigham Young had called to come to Dixie... He said he remembered...after everything had been unloaded, and his father was turning the wagons around to leave, he said to his Father, "Father, how are those people going to live?" His Father answered him thus, "I don't know my son, but the Lord will provide for them." (Life History of Leo Frei Reber, 1966, page 21, 26-27).

It was decided that this town should have a name other than Santa Clara Bench. Several names were submitted by the new settlers, however, the name chosen was sent in by Edward H. Snow, President of the St. George Stake. He suggested the new settlement be named after President Anthony W. Ivins, who had endeared himself to the people in this part of the country through his missionary work with the Indians. A short time after this, President Ivins met with the people and when they asked him if he objected to the town being named Ivins, he said, "No, as long as they spell it Ivins, instead of Ivens." At that time he contributed one hundred dollars in cash toward a new chapel and promised to send them a bell. This he did, and the bell still hangs in the belfry of the old church.(History of the Town of Ivins, by Myrtle L. Gubler, 1914-1966, page 3-4).

If you like Native American petroglyphs, on the south edge of town lies one of the most dense collections in the country.

Ivins has the land and is making plans to build an interpretative Indian museum that hopefully will be associated with the desert tortoise habitat their plan is for a center to explain the need for protection and about the tortoise itself. In close

association they hope to construct a raptor center for the rehabilitation from injury and subsequent release.

## Part C - Historic Sites

Site No.(s) 42WS4753

SG-1

**Describe:** Metal flume anchored by concrete structure is present at the base of the dam. Concrete vault with steel top is present on top of the dam.

**16. Comments/Continuations - Please make note of any Historic Record searched performed (County Records, General Land Office, Historic Society, Land Management Agency Records, Oral Histories/Interviews)**

"The Santa Clara Irrigation Company and the town of Ivins joined together to gain a twenty-year interest-free loan from the Utah Water Resources Board. Once the [Baker Dam Reservoir] project was approved by the state board, some people of Ivins and Santa Clara and St. George had second thoughts. They were concerned that the dam would endanger the proposed Dixie Project. Leaders from Central (Grant Keyes), Veyo (Jimmie Bunker), and Gunlock (Lee Leavitt) felt that the Dixie Project was a long time away from completion. They decided to go ahead with the Baker Dam. George Moses-Patrick Dougal became the contractor. The new company was led by Lee Leavitt, president; Max Cannon, first vice-president; Melbourne Cottam, second vice-president; with Lewis Bowler, Ether Leavitt, and M. Truman Bowler as directors. Truman Bowler was secretary-treasurer and remained a major leader in water development in the county. The dam was dedicated 9 June 1954. Twenty years later, in 1975, it was paid for through water-user fees and has been a boon to farmers throughout the area." Alder and Brooks (1996:206)

Washington County Centennial History by Alder and Brooks:1996



*Above the highway the remains of old cottonwood trees are visible along the alignment of the Santa Clara Bench Canal.*

*Richard Kohler, 2010*