UNESCO's First Salvage Campaign – Nubian Monuments

The Aswan High Dam was constructed between 1960 and 1970. Its aim was to increase the amount of hydroelectric power, regulate the flooding of the Nile and increase agricultural production.

Who paid for the Aswan Dam? In December 1955, the U.S. and Britain pledged $56 million and $14 million, respectively, toward construction of the High Aswan Dam.

In respect to this, was the Aswan High Dam salvage project a success?

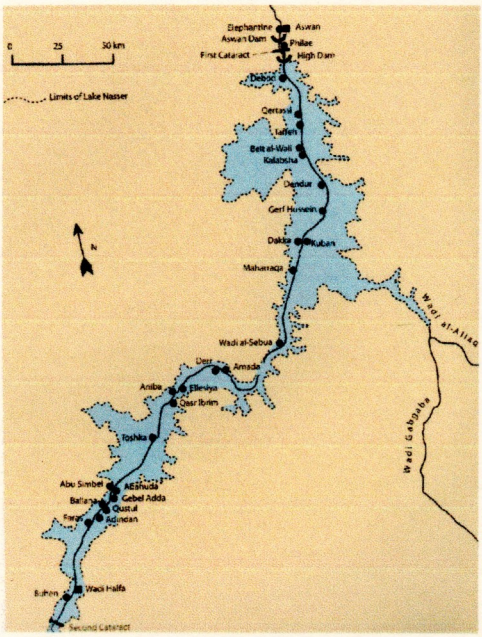
After 11 years of construction, the Aswan High Dam spanned across the Nile River in Egypt. Built by the Soviet Union, it was completed on July 21, 1970. The first Aswan Dam provided valuable irrigation during droughts but could not hold back the annual flood of the mighty Nile River.

How much electricity does the Aswan High Dam produce? The Aswan High Dam captures floodwater during rainy seasons and releases the water during times of drought. The dam also generates enormous amounts of electric power -- more than 10 billion kilowatt-hours every year. That's enough electricity to power one million color televisions for 20 years!

22 monuments and architectural complexes that were threatened by flooding from Lake Nasser, including the Abu Simbel temples, were preserved by moving them to what would be the shores of the lake under the UNESCO Nubia Campaign. Also moved were Philae, Kalabsha and Amada.

The Campaign officially began March 8th 1960, when UNESCO Director General Vittorino Veronese launched the appeal from Paris, construction of the dam began January 9th and already they were racing the rising waters. Veronese issued an international call for the participation of countries and organizations in the campaign. A committee was appointed under Sweden's Gustav VI with a 12 member subcommittee, 8 foreigners and 4 Egyptians, to support him.

UNESCO launched an international campaign to save monuments in Nubia from being flooded by the waters of Lake Nasser.



The philatelic campaign collected $65,690.64 through the sales of First Day Covers and other souvenirs. 50 nations issued stamps depicting the monuments to be saved. Though the amount was relatively small, it produced a significant promotion.

Stamps issued were semipostals, some were overprinted with the amount going toward the UNESCO project. Egypt instituted a "Tourist Tax", paying US$2.00 toward saving Abu Simbel. The tax amount has advanced over the years and is used for upkeep of Egypt's many ancient sites.

Most of the monuments were moved in a 5 year period, 1963-68, at a cost of about $36illion, 1/3rd was collected from the United States, 1/3rd was paid by Egypt and the balance was raised by UNESCO throughout the world.

<< Map from Temples & Tombs of Ancient Nubia by Torgny Save-Soderberg, who was active in the project.