

“Settle in the bare desert and cause it to bloom.”

by

MỹDung T Nguyễn

Bachelor of Design in Architecture

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Signature of Author: _____

Department of Architecture
January 18, 2018

Certified by: _____

Mark Jarzombek
Professor of the History and Theory of Architecture
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by: _____

Sheila Kennedy
Professor of Architecture
Chair of the Department Committee on Graduate Students

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ABSTRACT

This is an imaginary for the town of Allensworth, an unincorporated community of about 600 inhabitants in the Central Valley of California, located 50 miles from both the city of Visalia in the north and the city of Bakersfield in the south. Based on a series of historic oral and written interviews and through informal conversations with inhabitants, the narrative is told by multiple voices across time to recover the past, understand the present, and project to a future environment in which the township will continue to develop. Proposed within the shaping of this “future” environment is the Saltbush Collectives, a series of experimental hubs run by the community to promote the cultivation of the saltbush plant. Each center is composed of a crop field of saltbushes and a unique water tower dedicated to one of the various usages provided by the shrub: a test kitchen, a medicinal lab, a dye works, a sauna, and a seed bank.

The architecture defining the town’s imagined future is dominated by images of the agricultural icons in California since the late 19th century. In a slow transformation of the local landscape by the ongoing expansion of the saltbush shrub, large billboards of a cornstalk, an almond tree, stalks of wheat, an alfalfa plant, and an orange tree present monuments as questions of the relationships between human sociology, economy, and ecology. Visitors near and far travel to Allensworth to learn of the estranged saltbush and the community which supports it. There, they experience a landscape of symbolic contradictions that begs one to ask “why??” Yet, the extent to which the author will answer this question straightforwardly, dear reader, sums up as this: the Saltbush Collectives is a gathering.

Thesis Supervisor: Mark Jarzombek

Title: Professor of the History and Theory of Architecture

With thanks

to

Mark Jarzombek
for encouraging me to imagine beyond the “rational”.

Azra Aksamija
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for the many conversations. I was never alone with you as my unofficial thesis partner.

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To Valerie Gorospe , Caroline Farrell , Refugio Valencia , Kelsey L. Campbell , and Sherri White for allowing me to learn first-hand what it takes to empower unincorporated communities in the California Central Valley. And to Lupe Martinez in particular, who introduced me to the community of Allensworth.

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To Marichel Mejia, Nancy Oropeza, Eriberto Fernandez, Edgar Aguilascho, and Luz Pena for showing me what the realities behind the life of an immigrant farmworker in California.

Mẹ & Ba
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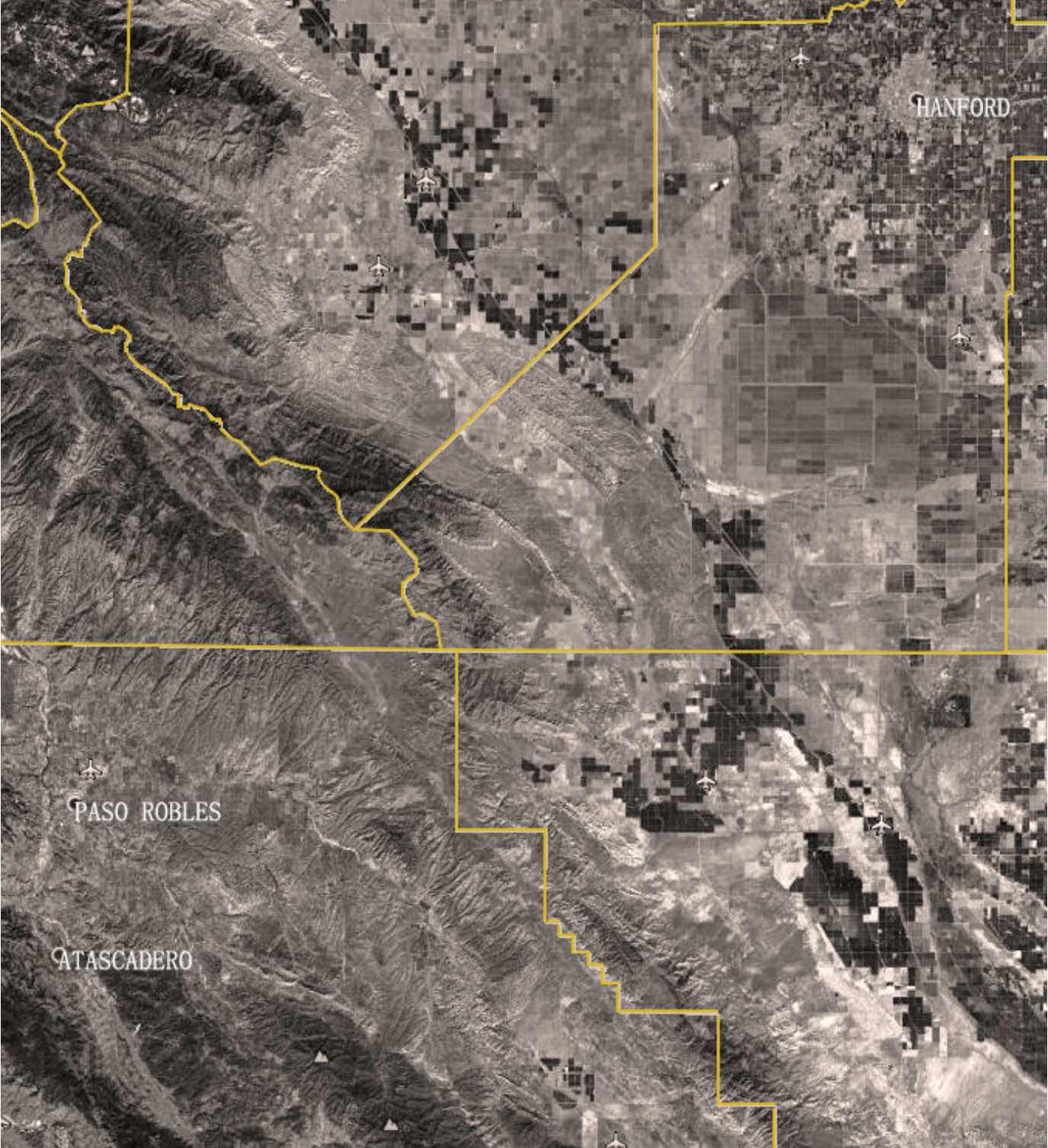
“It is hard for me describe Allensworth today, compared to my memories of the beautiful at-
tended gardens, the green fields, the green trees that grew along the ditch banks and in some

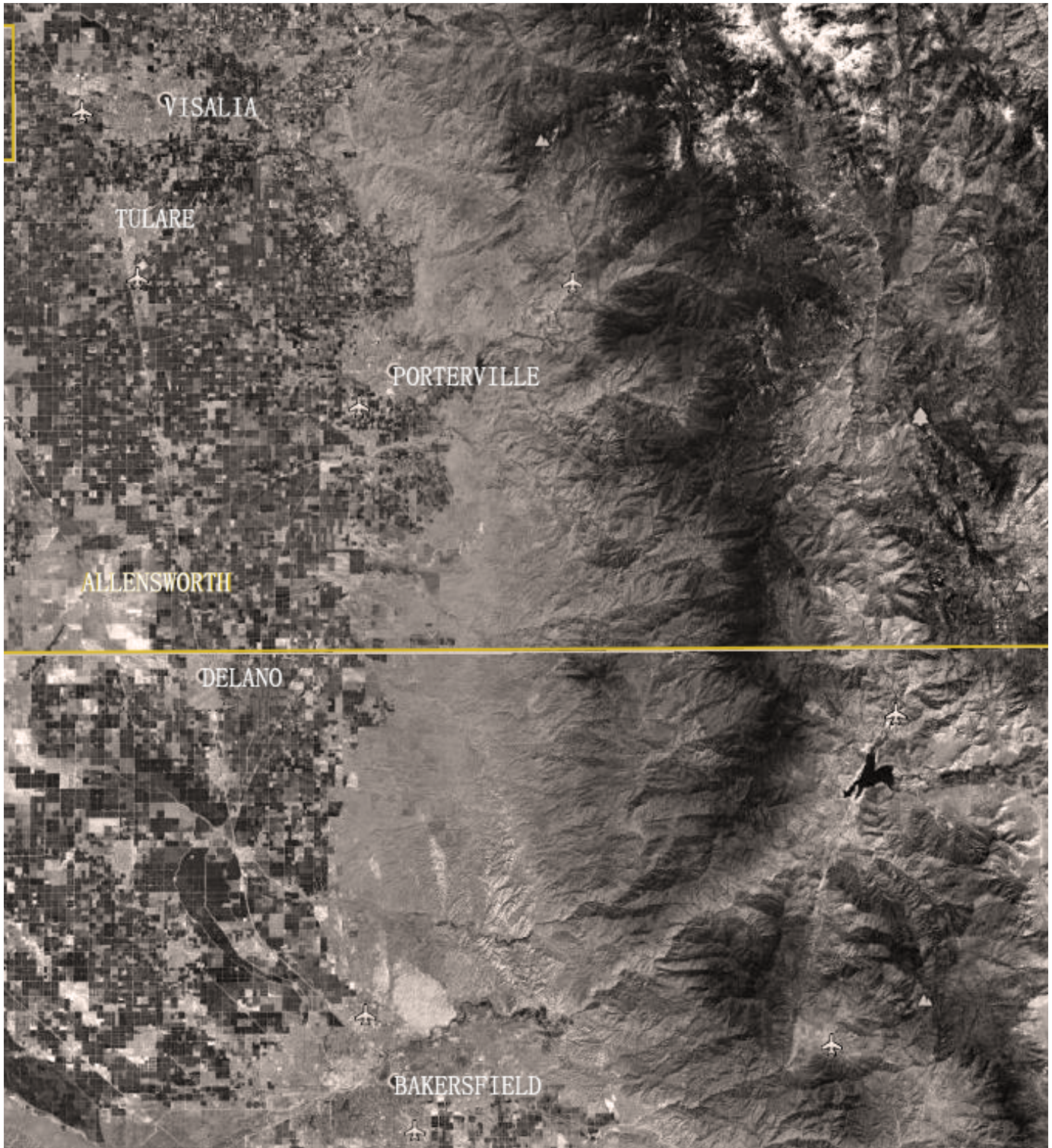


of the yards; the cheerful greetings of classmates; and the general feeling of pride I had in living in Allensworth so many years ago.” -Pauline Hall Patton ¹

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Allensworth is an unincorporated community of about 600 inhabitants in the Central Valley of California², located 50 miles from both the city of Visalia in the north and the city of Bakersfield in the south, in the county of Tulare. The township was founded in 1908 by Allen

• • •

They want to grow almonds here.



Across from Allensworth Community Services c. 2017.¹

Allensworth, William Payne, and three others, as the first planned all-African American town in California. Allensworth is best known for the Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, an ongoing restoration of the original town in its heyday between the 1910s-1920s.



The residual fruit in a field of pomegranates across the interstate c. 2017.²

• • •

And over there, that's where they wanted to make the dairies. Not more silage, no, that would require too much water for a crop that the county's got a million acres of already. No, they wanted to replace the water with milk. But milk rots and when it rots, it smells like hell. Do you understand what I'm saying? So we fought the dairies and now there are some pomegranates instead.

They don't seem to be doing so well though.... you know why? Two words:

“It’s been a struggle the whole time. They didn’t want to do this, originally. They just wanted to put a marker on the highway. Then they wanted to build two dairies right next to us. Then a chicken ranch, and something involving oil and manure, too. There’s been (arsenic) in



Left: Soil cracks in the fields of Allensworth c. 2017.³ | Right: A pomegranate cracks in a neighboring crop field c. 2017.⁴

• • •

Arsenic and alkali.

Did you ever wonder how they taste together? The sweet with the salty and a hint of metal; opposites don’t always neutralize each other though, you know. It’s the same with water: just because you have less of it doesn’t mean you have less poison. Sometimes, it’s the opposite.

the water. We've won every fight they've put in front of us." -George Finley. Prior to a 2007 settlement which prevented the opening of two large dairies across from the Allensworth State Park, proposals for nearby land included a turkey farm and an industrial food dump³.



Dirt mounds in the fields of Allensworth c. 2017.⁵

• • •

Well, it turns out that crops don't like poison very much either.

They wanted to bring dairies here and now we have these struggling pomegranates... next on the horizon are almonds... Flush this salty earth over with blue gold, trucks of foreign dirt, and the rocks will transform into Franklins before your eyes. It's business, sure--we need business, sure.

Today, the demographics for Allensworth has changed drastically from its founding. While 7% remains Black or African American , over 90% percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino⁴. The majority of those who live in the township are employed in the agricultural industry⁵, many

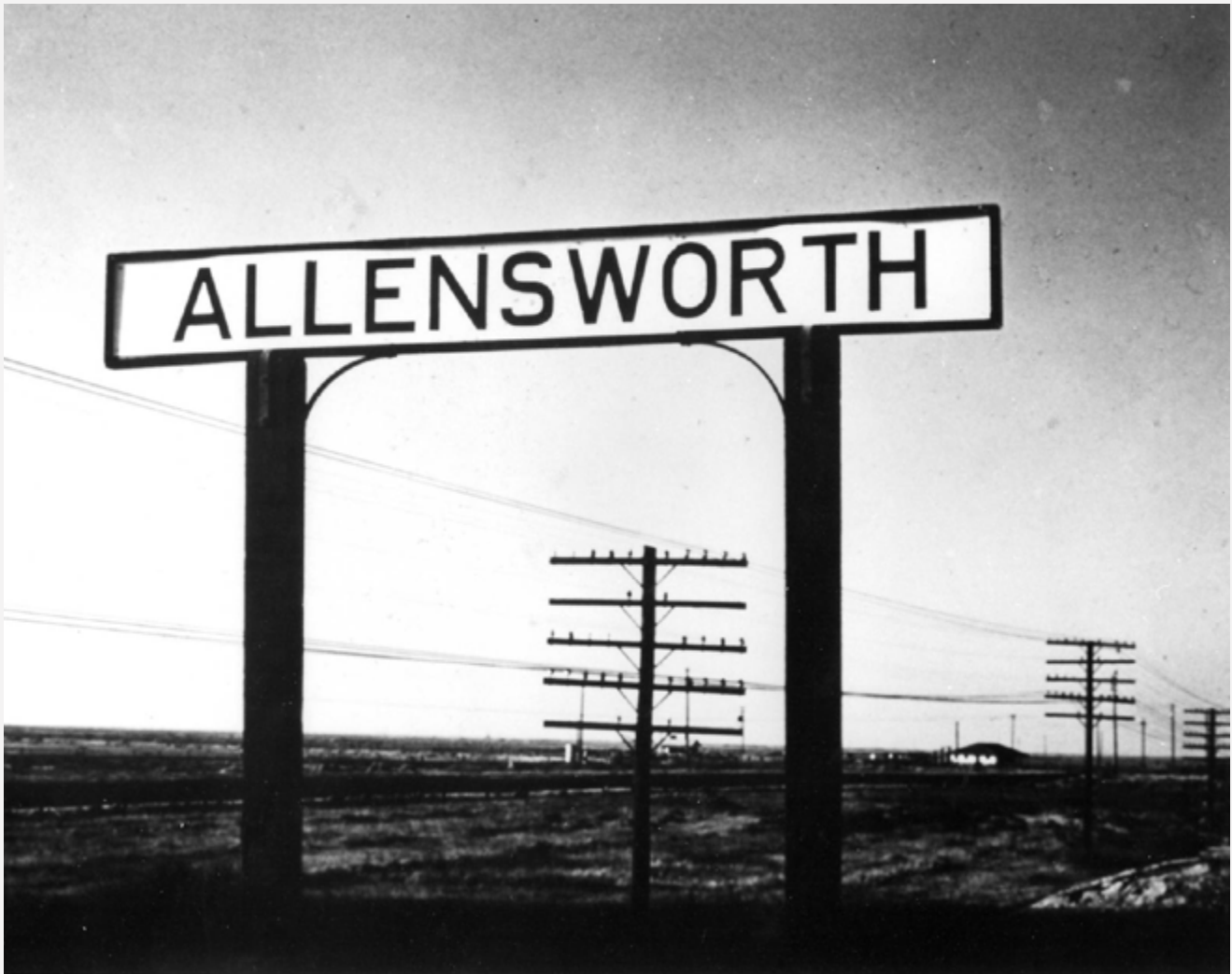


Homes in the Allensworth township, as seen from the road c. 2017.⁶

• • •

But they have already forgotten about us... All that we ever needed was water.

as farmworkers. Publicly, Allensworth has an elementary school, a community center, a cemetery, a community service district center, and an historic state park. Access to the township is primarily by State Highway 43 and (conditionally) by the San Joaquins Amtrak.



Allensworth entrance sign c. 1915.⁷

• • •

But this is not really about them or us. It is about a town called Allensworth and a dream the people had...have.

“The chief object of this community will be to aid in settling some of the vast problems now before the country... A large number of our fellow countrymen have been taught for generations that the Negro is incapable of the highest development of citizenship. This they believe and

ALLENSWORTH

“

Settle in the bare desert and cause it to bloom.

”

Colonel Allensworth⁶



will continue to think until we show them they are mistaken. If we expect to be given due credit for our efforts and achievements...people of our race must be in a community where the responsibilities of its municipal government are upon them and them alone.” -Allen Allensworth⁷

• • •

This town, from now until God knows when, is our piece of the world. You know what I mean by that? Outside of this horizon they may refuse to call it by the name we chose—(scoff) they will call us by names we never had a say in--but this is just the beginning of change and it will be done. You mark my words, it will be done.



Portrait of Colonel Allen Allensworth, at his retirement in 1906, the highest ranking African American officer in the US Army.⁸

“As a child, I did have the opportunity to visit. I had an auntie with a house right over the railroad track. It had a cool porch wrapped all the way around it. We’d spend a week there. Most of the greenery I saw as a child, it was right over there. When I was a kid, that was as



Gemelia Hall Herring and grandson Robert Triplett III in the family cotton field, Shafter, 1950s.⁹

• • •

Look around you... can you describe it by any word other than “paradise”? Green grass (and I mean, green), wildflowers all around, and three artesian wells. Walk down that street there and tell me that there ain’t no water springing up and I’d call you a liar. I dare ya!

far as you could go. The rest was marshland. Swampy. You had all kinds of birds you could see, exotic ones... My auntie, she used to describe Allensworth as paradise... That if you wanted to be as close to heaven as you can get, it'd be here at Allensworth." -So Leah Green⁸



Water flows from a new 1300-foot deep well in Allensworth. For sixty-six years the town's water has been arsenic-tainted. 1968. ¹⁰

• • •

You want to hear more about this little slice of heaven? Well, how about them fish in those streams? They be slipping by so fast, it's a wonder them kids ever catch them.

“I first went to Allensworth in 1923. I remember we had a picnic and went up to a park on the way to Visalia, California. This was a gathering of people all around the Valley; from all the little towns. My aunts would cook pies and cakes and fix dishes for three and four days before



Hackett sisters Sadie, Nora, Myrtle, and Josephine and two extended family members during the historic period of Allensworth.¹¹

• • •

They must've been lulled by our angels' voices, the jewels of this prairie.

this picnic. The men would go up a day ahead of time and dig a hole and barbecue two and three hogs and two and three beef in open-pit barbecues. They would feast and eat and drink for the weekend. They used to call it Juneteenth” -Percy Williams⁹



Archer family reunion, likely 1940s. ¹²

• • •

Or maybe they grew a taste for our sugar beets, juice as sweet as the heat of the sun itself. Grown right by all that grain and cattle, alfalfa and chickens, turkeys, Belgian hares---Belgian hares! No fish would bite a hare though, even a Belgian hare.

“One of the outstanding things I remember about Allensworth was the library. It was the best-equipped small library that I have ever seen, and I spent many happy hours in there, reading and taking books out. And all of us read a great deal... For some reason there were no illiterate



Mary Dickerson Memorial Library, 1918. ¹³

• • •

Maybe it's them summer night plays that tricked 'em into coming.

Or it could be the books. A thousand books....

children in that area. Everybody read and enjoyed reading and studying, and we all sang, and many of us played instruments...It was a unique town.” -Elizabeth Payne McGhee¹⁰



Tracks running past Allensworth, 1915.¹⁴

• • •

Or maybe, they're like us, folks who've tired of drowning in the ocean of this society, yet still thirsty for water. Here to prove that in this country we are home, for oh sweet home. Just like them.

“...In the 12 years considerable development has taken place. A number of small farms have been opened up and uniformly good crops have been produced, the soil being well adapted to the growing of grain, alfalfa, broomcorn, milo maize, and gyp corn and garden vegetables. Practi-



Allensworth Historic State Park, 2017. ¹⁵

• • •

Of course, it won't be easy... for decades.

cally the entire 750 acres are improved, and some of the residents have done remarkably well in dairying.” -From the Morning Republican, July 30, 1922 ¹¹

“

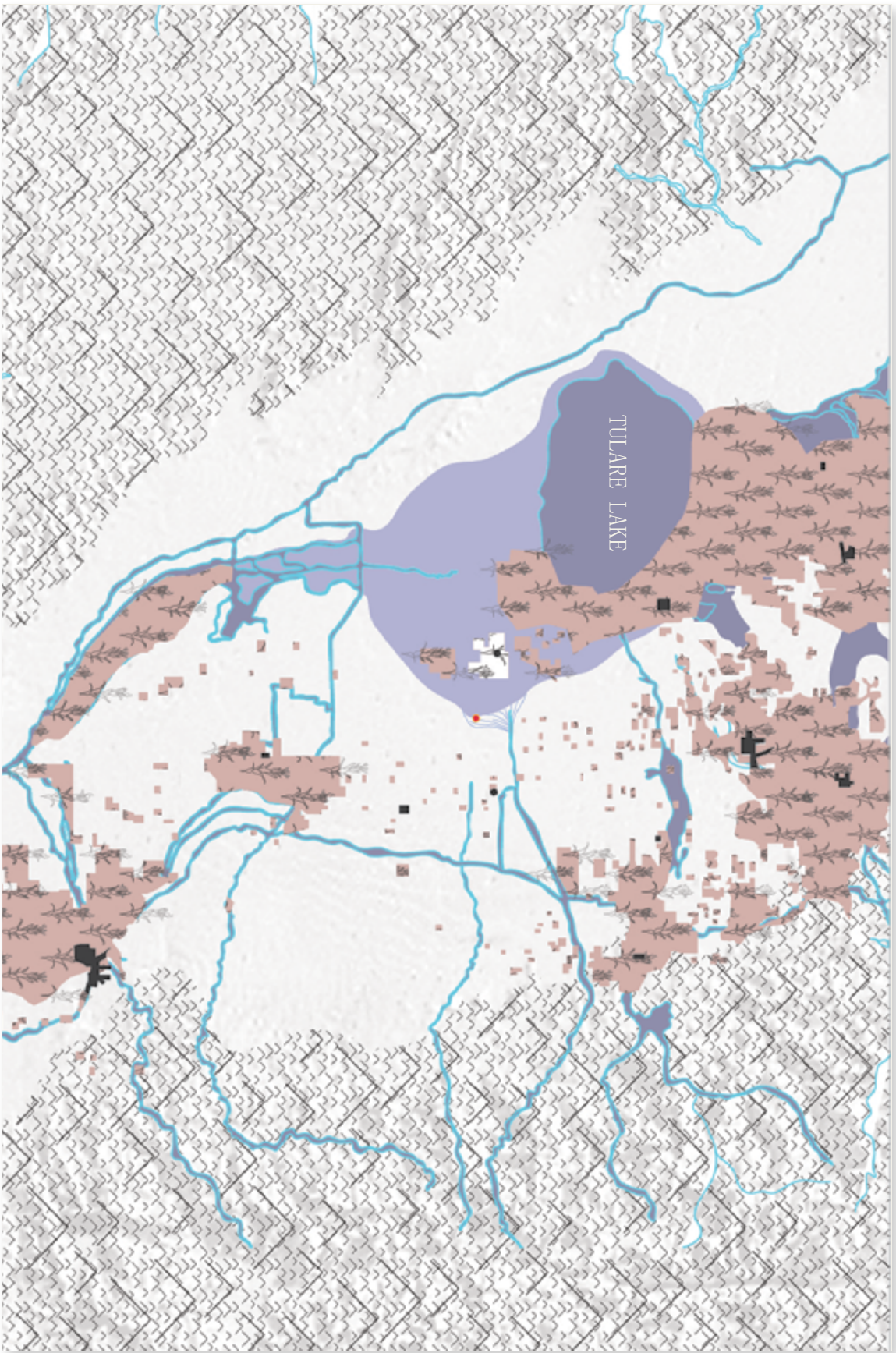
It's bone dry now. Bone dry.

”

ALLENSWORTH *So Leah Green¹²*

DELANO

BAKERSFIELD



1912

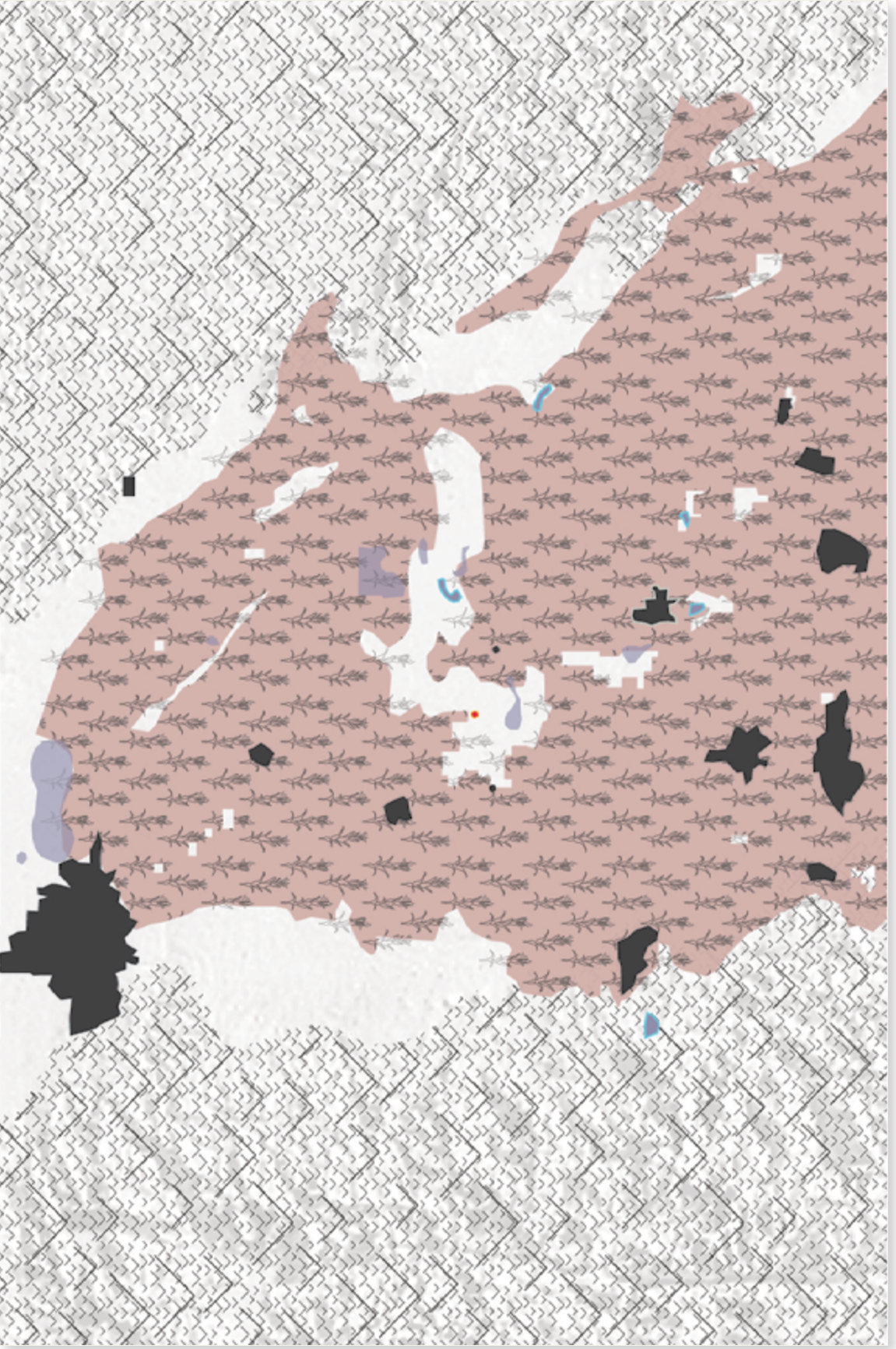
Map of the San Joaquin Valley, showing water bodies, wetlands, urban areas (dark gray), and irrigated lands. Allensworth is indicated as the red dot.

“Quite simply, the soil in this area is a highly saline soil with severe limitations for most crops. The clay loam layer that is found at 20 to 30 inches in the soil will hurt efforts to leach the salt out of the soil. The silt loam or very fine sandy loam soil surface is very subject to wind erosion, dust and compaction problems.”

– “Soils Report for Allensworth Historic Site” (USDA, undated)¹³



They left one desert for another, with a plan to turn the land into an oasis. They knew that the ground was drying up, so they wrote what seemed to be a guarantee for survival...



2017

Map of the San Joaquin Valley, showing water bodies, wetlands, urban areas (dark gray), and irrigated lands. Allensworth is indicated as the red dot.

“The 1920s were a time of lower than average rainfall throughout the Tulare Lake basin; diversion of creeks and rivers by big farmers continued. By the late 1920s, water was so scarce that the Tulare County Library cut off water at the Allensworth branch, in spite of resident protests.” -Letter from Abraham Stockett, dated October 22, 1927¹⁴

• • •

then they learned that, even after everything, the oasis was still located within the desert. The aquifer receded too fast; the agreement fell through; the soil cracked and blew away. And without treatment, history tastes nauseating, both too sweet and too salty:

In 2012, the state of California granted nearly \$420,000 to fund a feasibility study on the regional consolidation of the Allensworth and Alpaugh Community Services Districts with the Angiola Water District, which sells water for irrigation. This was in reaction to the high levels of arsenic found in the limited water supplies for both communities^{16,17}. Similar proposals for consolidation have been found to be effective for



Positioning between Allensworth, Alpaugh, and Angiola: consideration for a consolidation of water districts between the three

“One issue that was always guaranteed to produce a good fight was the question ‘Who will get the water first?’ Because Allensworth developed a water shortage, which persists to this day, the farmers had to take turns irrigating their fields one at a time... Once tempers flared so high that one farmer attacked his neighbor with a pitchfork, thinking the neighbor had robbed him of his turn at the water.” —Josephine Hackett¹⁵

33

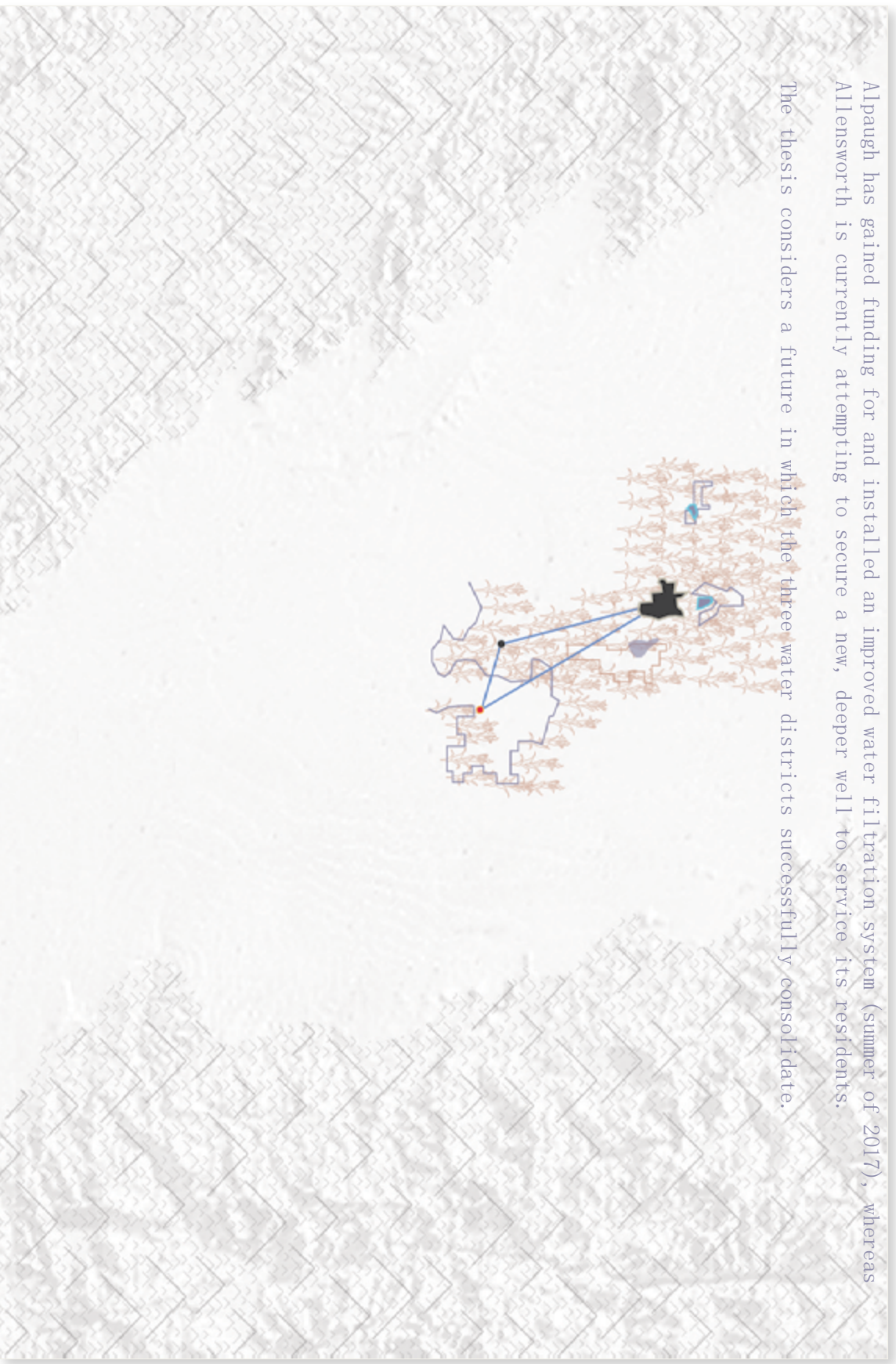


Alpaugh, a second town established under the same Pacific Farming Company received a better location, better land, more wells; and, while bottled water became a regularity for the people of Allensworth agriculture bloomed around beyond them, financed by blue gold sprung from an artificial mine made when the state structured the flow of water further in 1960.

Positioning between Allensworth, Alpaugh, and Angiola; consideration for a consolidation of water districts between the three

Alpaugh has gained funding for and installed an improved water filtration system (summer of 2017), whereas Allensworth is currently attempting to secure a new, deeper well to service its residents.

The thesis considers a future in which the three water districts successfully consolidate.



Positioning between Allensworth, Alpaugh, and Angiola; consideration for a consolidation of water districts between the three

providing unincorporated rural communities with the means and access to water meeting state standards¹⁸; communities are able to pool funding for administrative, installation, and maintenance costs for one, versus multiple, systems. The two-year effort ultimately failed as delays in negotiations resulted in the withdrawal of the Angiola Water District and a subsequent project dissolution. In the years following,



Positioning between Allensworth, Alpaugh, and Angiola: consideration for a consolidation of water districts between the three

“We never felt deprived. We didn’ t have plumbing facilities, we didn’ t have electricity, there were many things we didn’ t have, but we didn’ t have, we didn’ t feel the lack of them. We would go to Pasadena for the summer, and enjoy those things in the city, but when we got home

“

We build bridges that we will never use, plant trees that we will never see,
we do all these things for those who will come behind us.

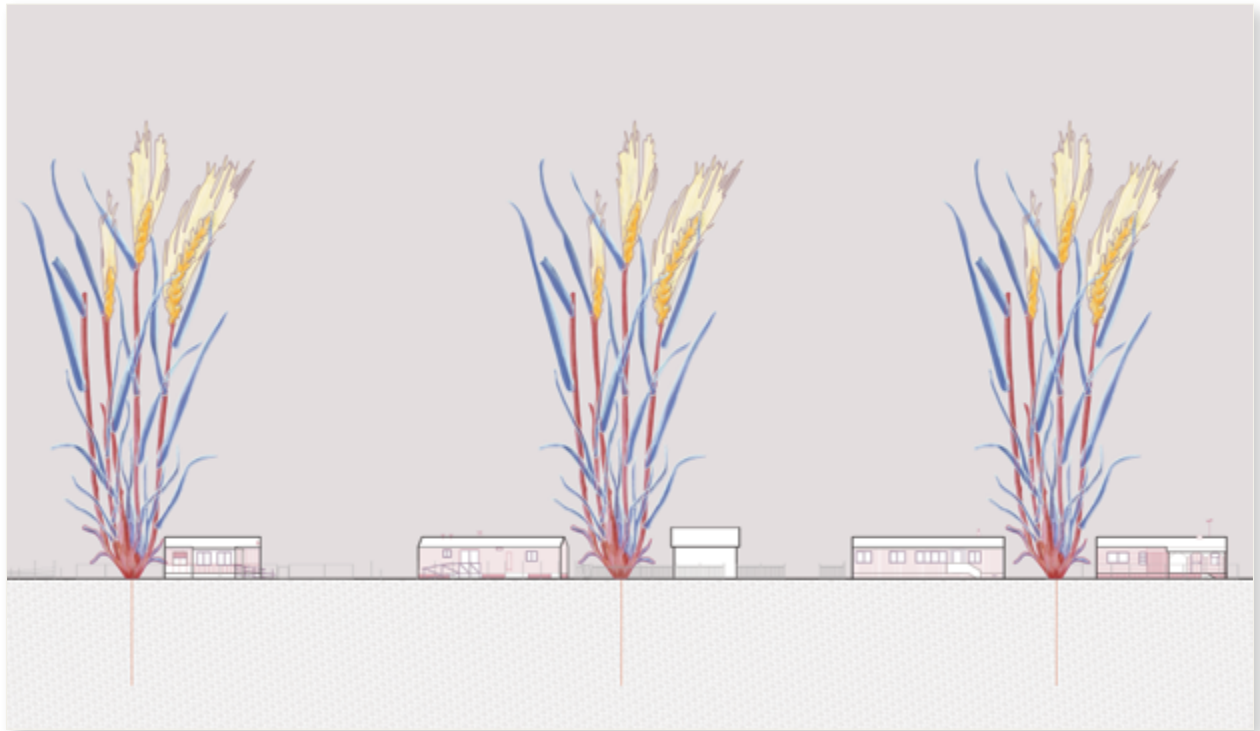
”

*William Payne*¹⁹

we were quite content, because there were always streams to explore, and the fish to catch, and we took lots of pictures. Women did needlework, lots of crocheting, carving, and so forth... Everybody was creative, because when you don't have it handed to you, you make your own.”
-Elizabeth Payne McGhee²⁰

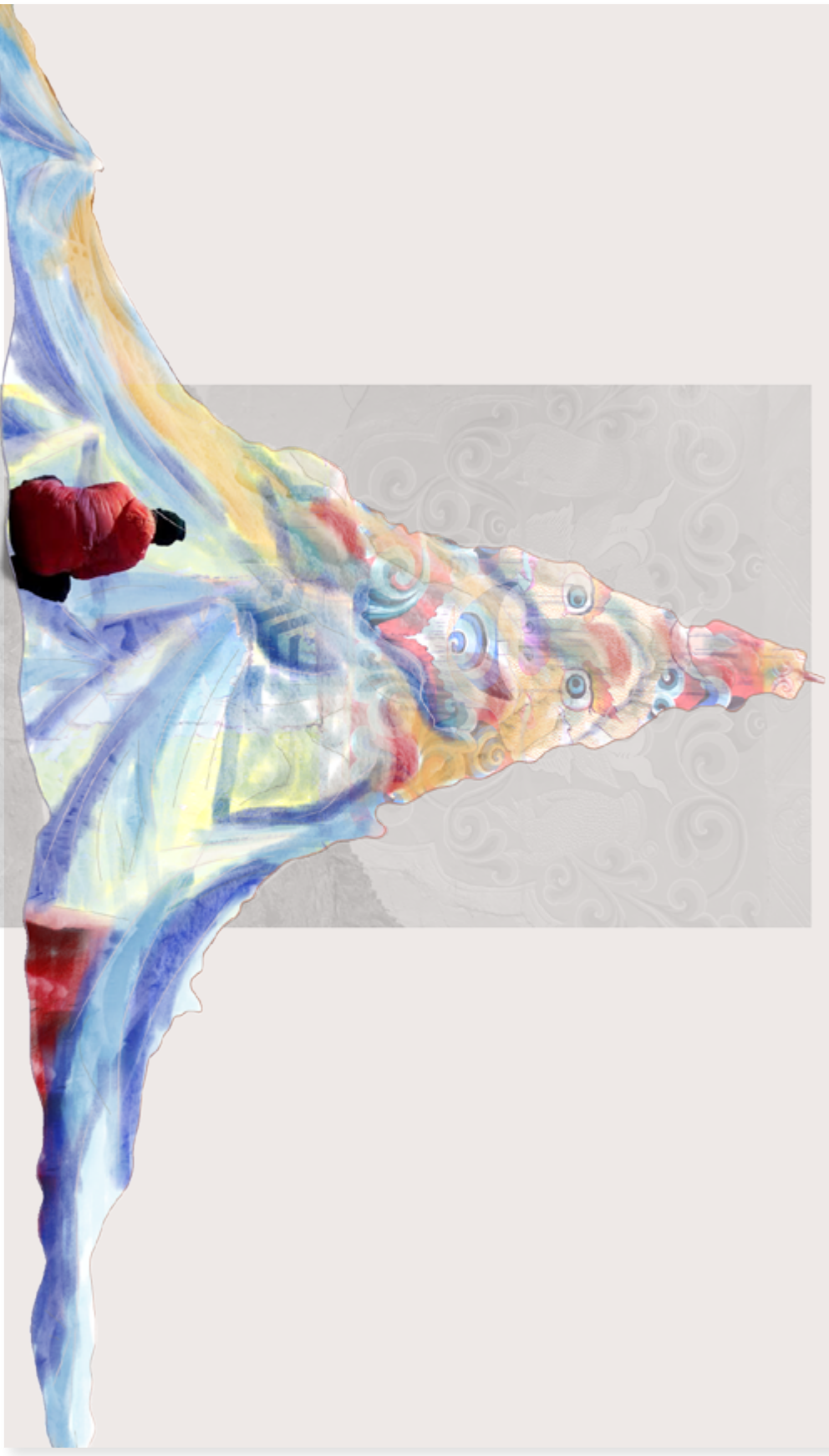
• • •

I never saw the wildflowers and they don't really come anymore, but I've been seeing their colors in my dreams, adorning the land in grains of red, yellow, and blue.



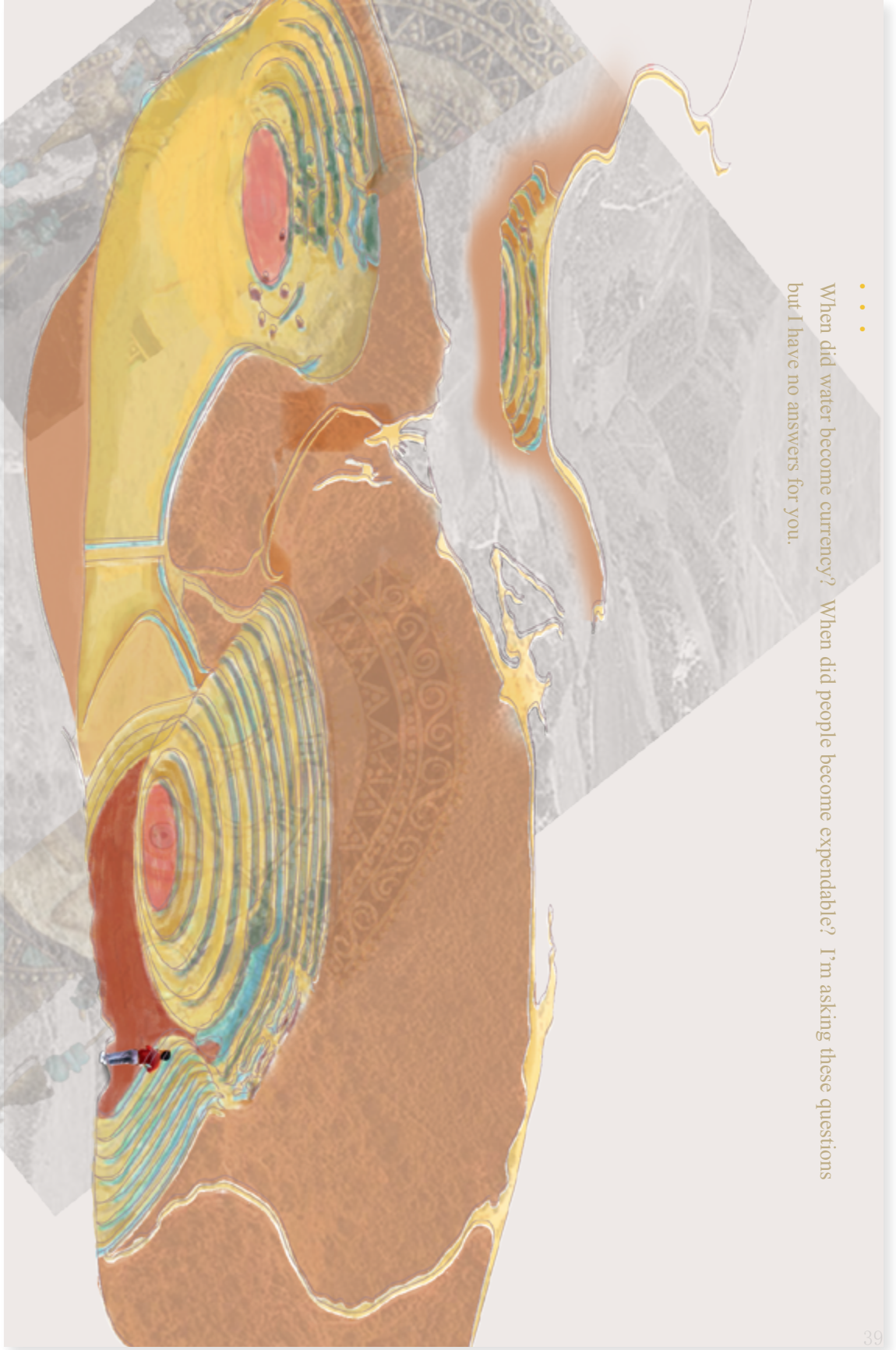
A blooming Allensworth.

• • •
All I can share are some of my imaginaries...I've been seeing wells in my dreams, wells without arsenic
or any other poison our filters can't pump out.



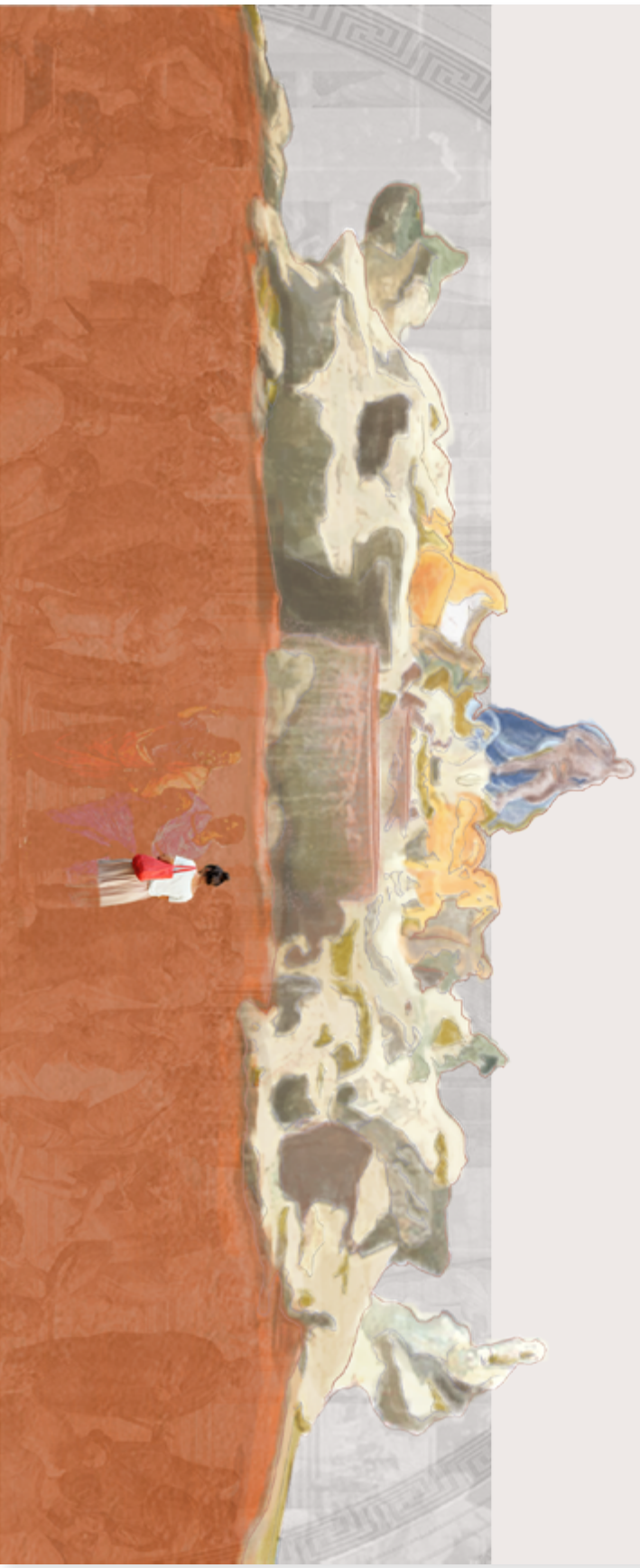
Ice Stupa of Phyang

• • •
When did water become currency? When did people become expendable? I'm asking these questions
but I have no answers for you.



Moray

• • •
prayers, vivid as the heat. The sacred that has become so profane in our own society, other embodiments
of cultural history.



Ice Stupa of Phyang

• • •
No, I tell you they're nothing like what you've ever seen: colored like the carnival, dressed in songs of



Ice Stupa of Phyang

I had no choice. I had to go along. Now I have a choice, and I'm here. Right here.”
-So Leah Green²¹



The township of Allensworth in the distance c.2017.¹⁶

• • •

So I'll tell you this: travel, go see more of the world, and then come back sometime (won't you?). Come back and tell me that this ain't one of the most beautiful places you ever saw, and I'd call you a liar.



Hindsman and Co General Store



Johnson's Bakery



Allensworth Elementary School



Mary Dickinson Memorial Library



First Baptist Church



Colonel and Mrs. Allensworth's House



Landing

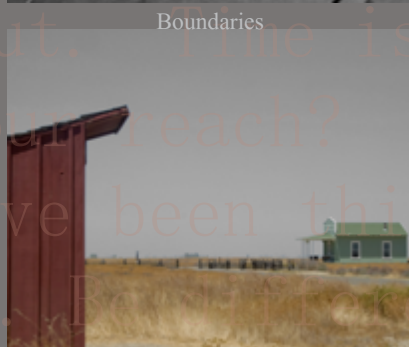


FUTURE

HISTORIC



Boundaries



thinking about time in a really weird
 yourself for anything novel, because what
 g- has been explained with more rigi
 1. This is me and these are we
 e that Einstein described that one time,
 become incidents on across the surface.
 nk of things with things with things
 the inside of a capsule. The alien is
 speaking, but you see the thing



Community Church



Community Center



Allensworth Home



Allensworth Elementary School



Allensworth Cemetery



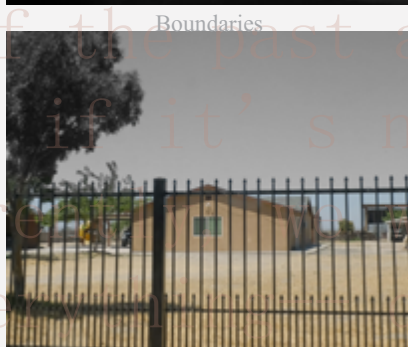
Community Service District Water Tank

CURRENT



FUTURE

ribing this spectrum of happenings and
 nd out to show you everything. Every-
 see and see and you can almost feel but
 out that you're not your own
 why do we speak of the past as though it
 er the future as if it's not here al-
 view time differently
 h other things are going



Boundaries

• • •

At first we joked about it: oh yeah, let's go out into the middle of nowhere to visit a giant corn stalk, some overgrown weeds, and two fruitless trees to eat some salty bread made from tumbleweed. *scoff* As if the heat wouldn't be enough to scare anyone away, you have to





• • •

learn to be tough.

Learn which battles are worth fighting, when to speak out and when to hold your tongue. You learn that normal is not you. Then that one part of you, the part that is

“different,”

becomes you. Your identity somehow becomes this one thing, this flattened image of a being defined by a larger entity. A façade, a front to the back. But you are not a billboard, waiting for them to fill your message with a chosen advertisement. The structure which holds you is heavy with histories and pregnant with the unknown future. You live with the realization that you were born into a mission which all of the denial cannot abort... When you try, they shun your decision as something inhumane, unnatural; they forget that there is nothing natural about the image in the first place, that it is an extension of their words.

So you have to

A billboard in Los Angeles c.2017

The fourwing saltbush (*atriplex canescens*) is a native shrub found in the southern Great Plains, Great Basin, and desert southwest of the United States. It is a hardy species which thrives in poor, salty soils with low water demands. It is characterized by the gray, scurfy branches and relatively large fruits which have four membranous wings²². A variety of usages

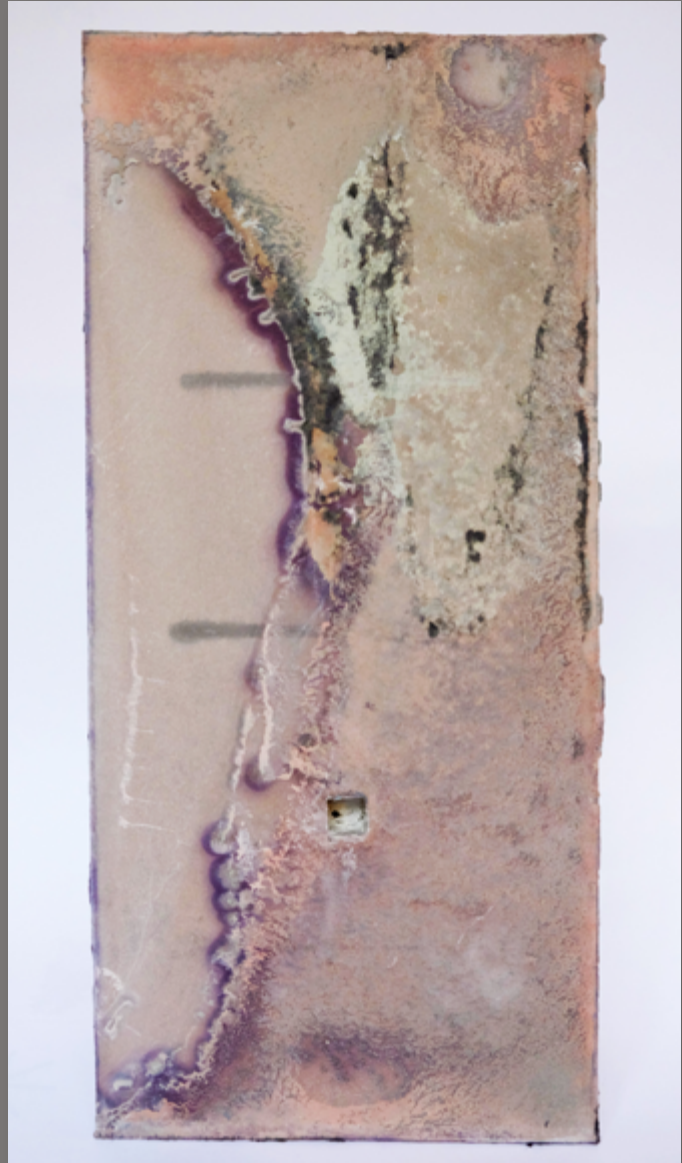


Fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) shrub from a field in Allensworth

• • •

work....there is no weekend; you go out there to harvest the flowers, dig up the roots, wash them, sift them, grind them into a paste, and then do whatever else is needed to make...a loaf of bread, a bar of soap, some sort of “natural” anti-itch ointment, and a jar of golden dye. Why would anyone do that? Just go to Walgreens or CVS. Why drive all the way out there to do that? Why did we

exist for the saltbush, including being eaten (raw or cooked), made into a salve for skin ailments, boiled with raw alum to produce yellow dyes, and browsing for livestock²³. Its extensive root system makes it excellent for erosion control and land reclamation, while its fire-retardant property enables use as barrier planting.



The tracing of water

• • •

do that?

You know, leave.

Sometimes you have to leave the place you grew up in order to find your home when you arrive again.

I've been thinking that, maybe, we're almost messed up way. Don't prepare you I'm about to say-said-thought-am saying in much more eloquent words, but oh well

I'm seeing that fabric in space, the one where the planets are resting about and That fabric is time, right? Ok, now this rainbow of muted lights playing across

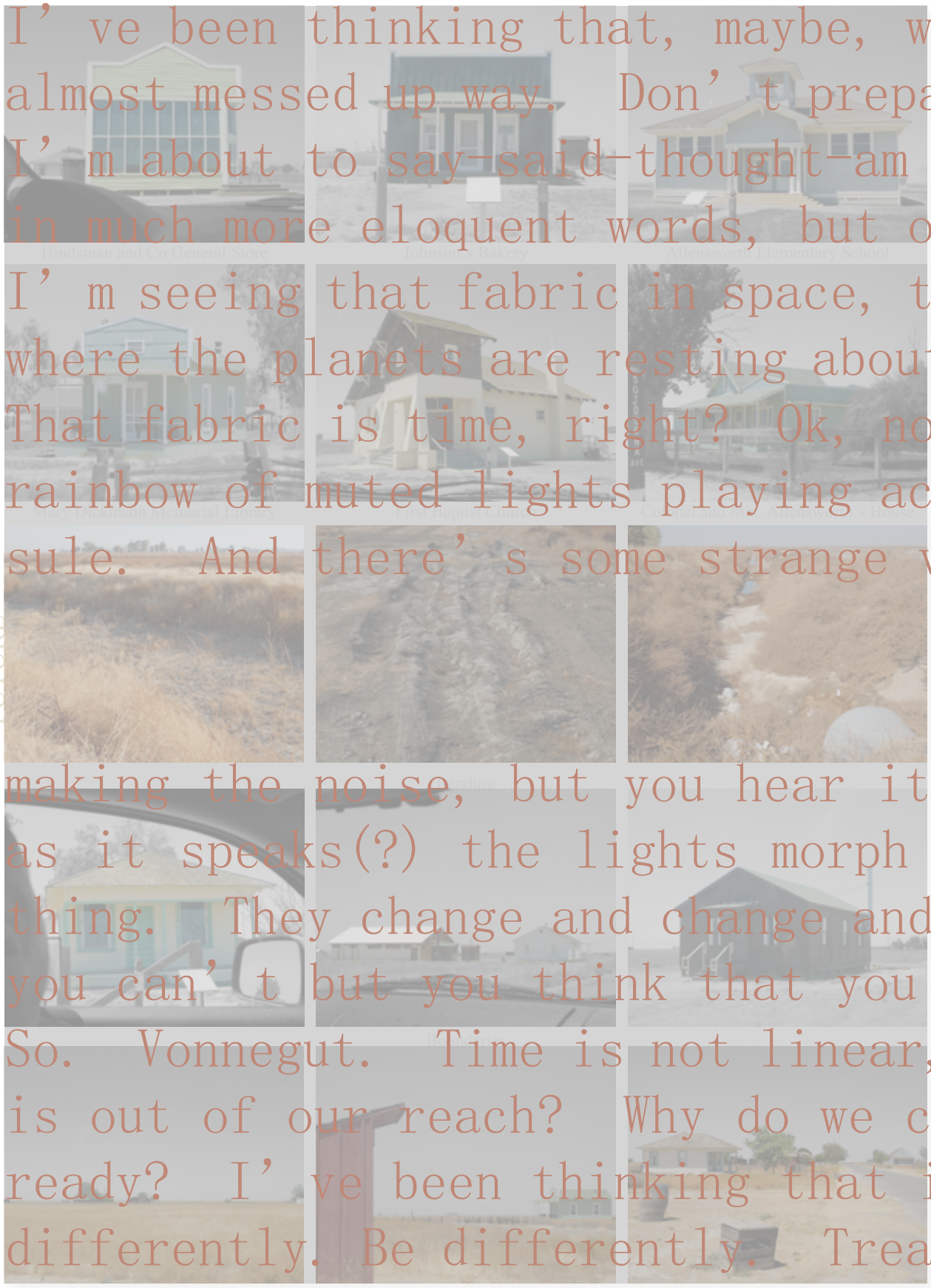
sule. And there's some strange voice

making the noise, but you hear it descending as it speaks(?) the lights morph in another thing. They change and change and you you can't but you think that you can be

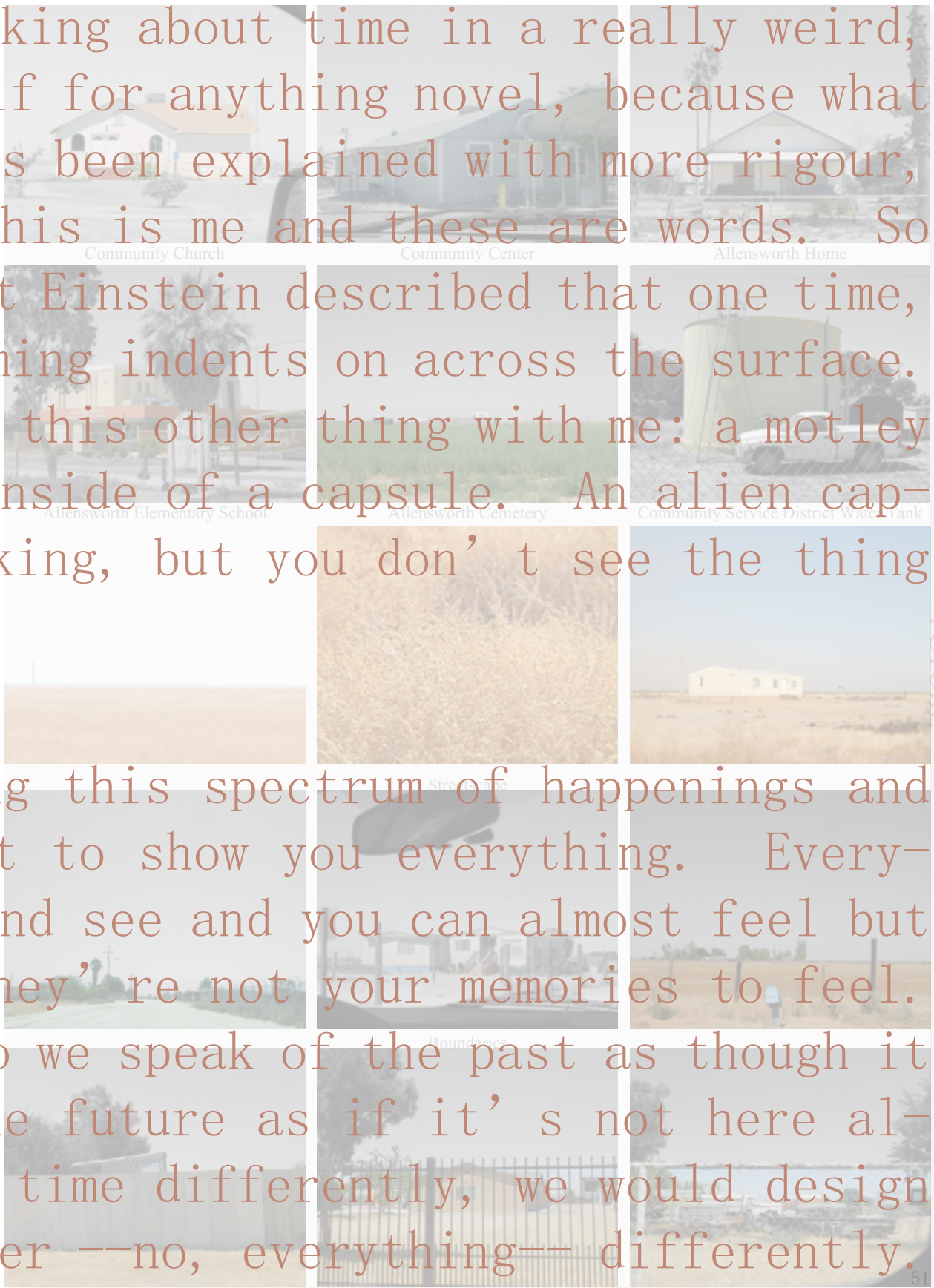
So. Vonnegut. Time is not linear, so what is out of our reach? Why do we consider ready? I've been thinking that if we differently. Be differently. Treat each

FUTURE

HISTORIC

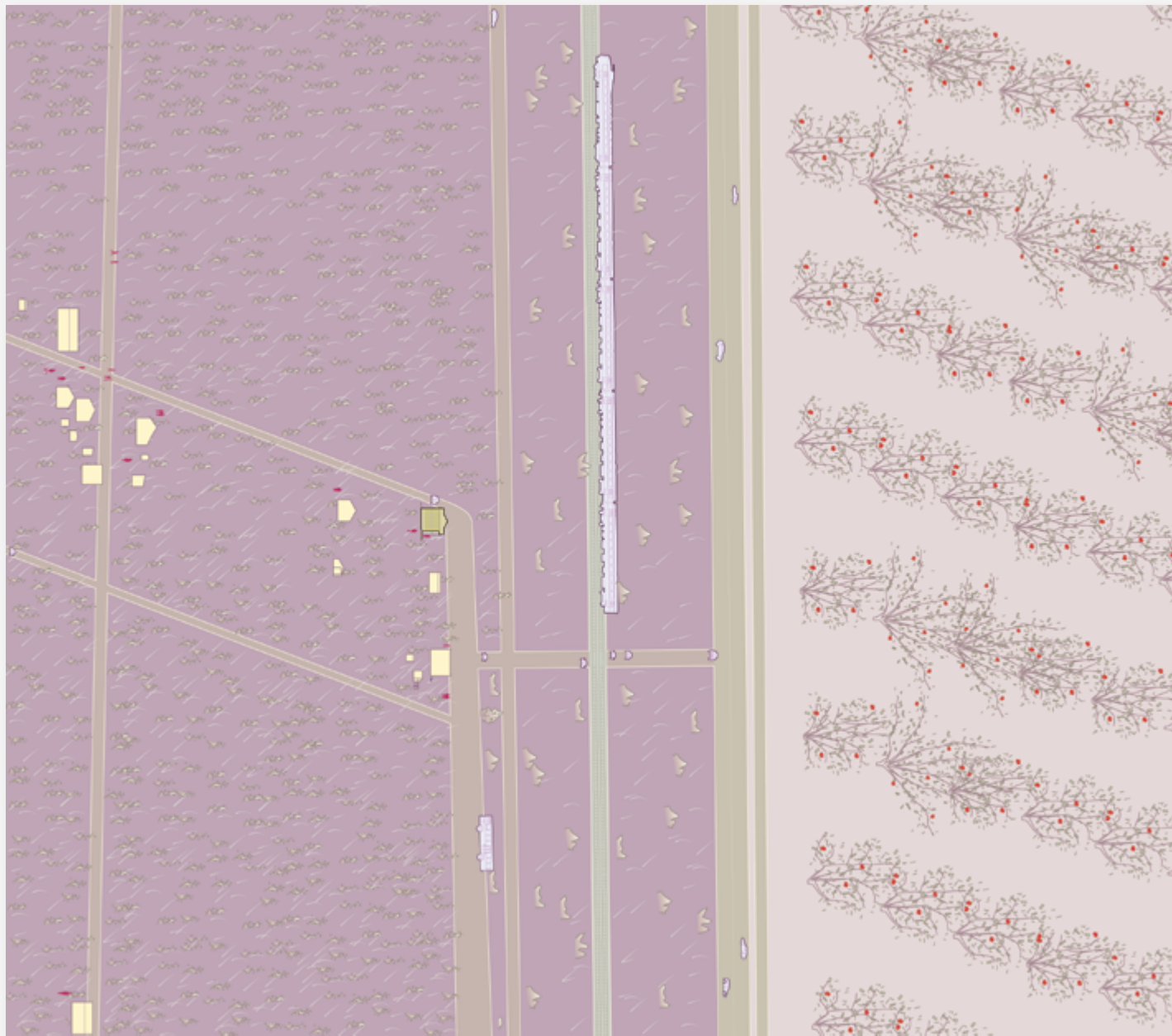


thinking about time in a really weird, yourself for anything novel, because what g- has been explained with more rigour, 1. This is me and these are words. So e that Einstein described that one time, becoming indents on across the surface. nk of this other thing with me: a motley the inside of a capsule. An alien cap- speaking, but you don't see the thing



ribing this spectrum of happenings and nd out to show you everything. Every- see and see and you can almost feel but out they're not your memories to feel. why do we speak of the past as though it er the future as if it's not here al- view time differently, we would design h other --no, everything-- differently.

“The station was, as in all small towns, a place of excitement, because that brought the outside world close to us, and one of my memories of that was during World War I, when Judge Overr—that was Oscar Overr, who was our town judge—was going off to war, and they had signs,



Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park

Amtrak Railway

State Highway 43



So we went there, the Saltbush Collectives, or “SB Collects” for short. It was mid-November and the fire season hadn’t begun yet, so the weather was perfect. Only the first two towers were up and pumping water then: the Salty Test Kitchen and the Salty Sauna, or “Wheaty Thins” and “Corn Flakes” as I like to call them. We booked a private room at a family’s home in town and just... did it.

they closed the school and everybody goes down to the station to see him off. I don't think he got very far. He must not have passed his physical, but he was our hero for that moment.”
-Elizabeth Payne McGhee²⁴

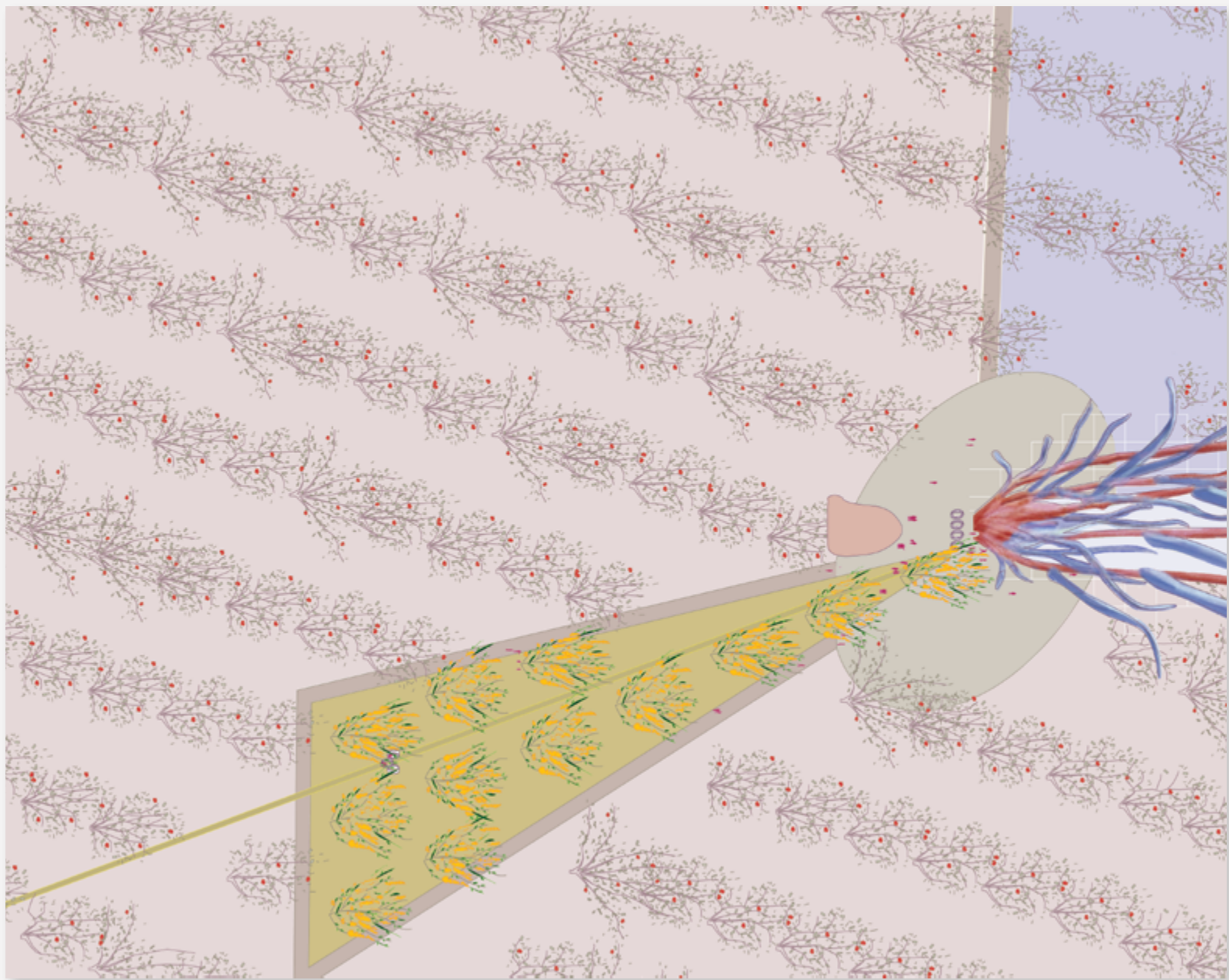


Pomegranate Fields

• • •

I can't tell you why; we're nowhere near the California Central Valley and we're definitely not the spontaneous type who would just pack their bags for a 14-hour drive to bake some scones and exfoliate ourselves with saltbush soap in-um- a couple of water towers. I guess, if I had to, I would call it... a "weekend getaway".

“I am trying to prove to the white man beyond a shadow of doubt that the Negro is capable of self-respect and self-control.” -William Wells²⁵



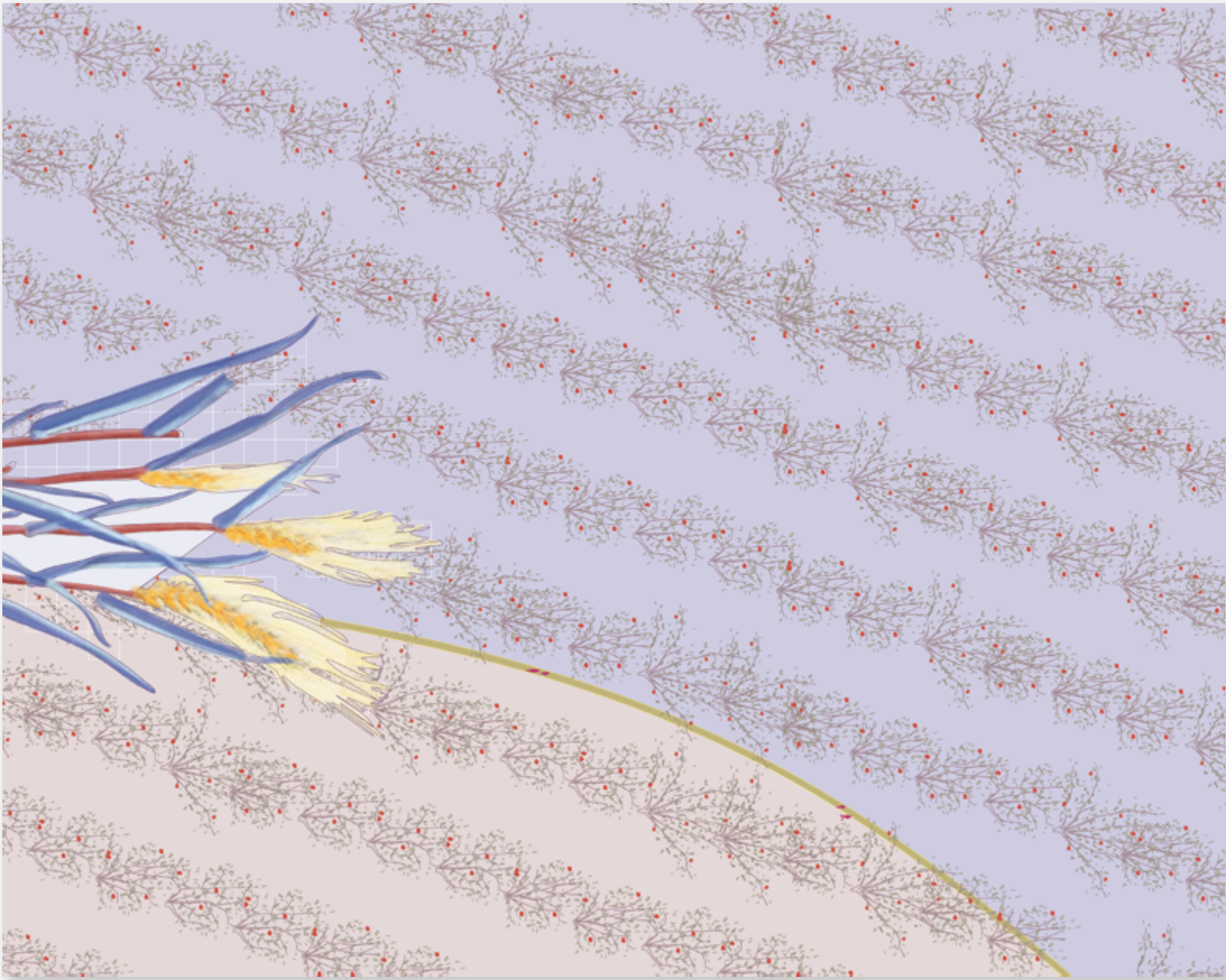
Pomegranate Fields

Saltbush Field

• • •

So we went and it was, it was, well...it was just like that. I remember standing at the steps of the Hindmans General Store in the state park and seeing the tower in the distance, piercing the flat horizon in all of its wheaty glory.

“Coming to an all-Black town where people had a chance to make it, the security of being around Black folks, stepping on some friendly turf...this was paradise to me.” —Ed Pope²⁶

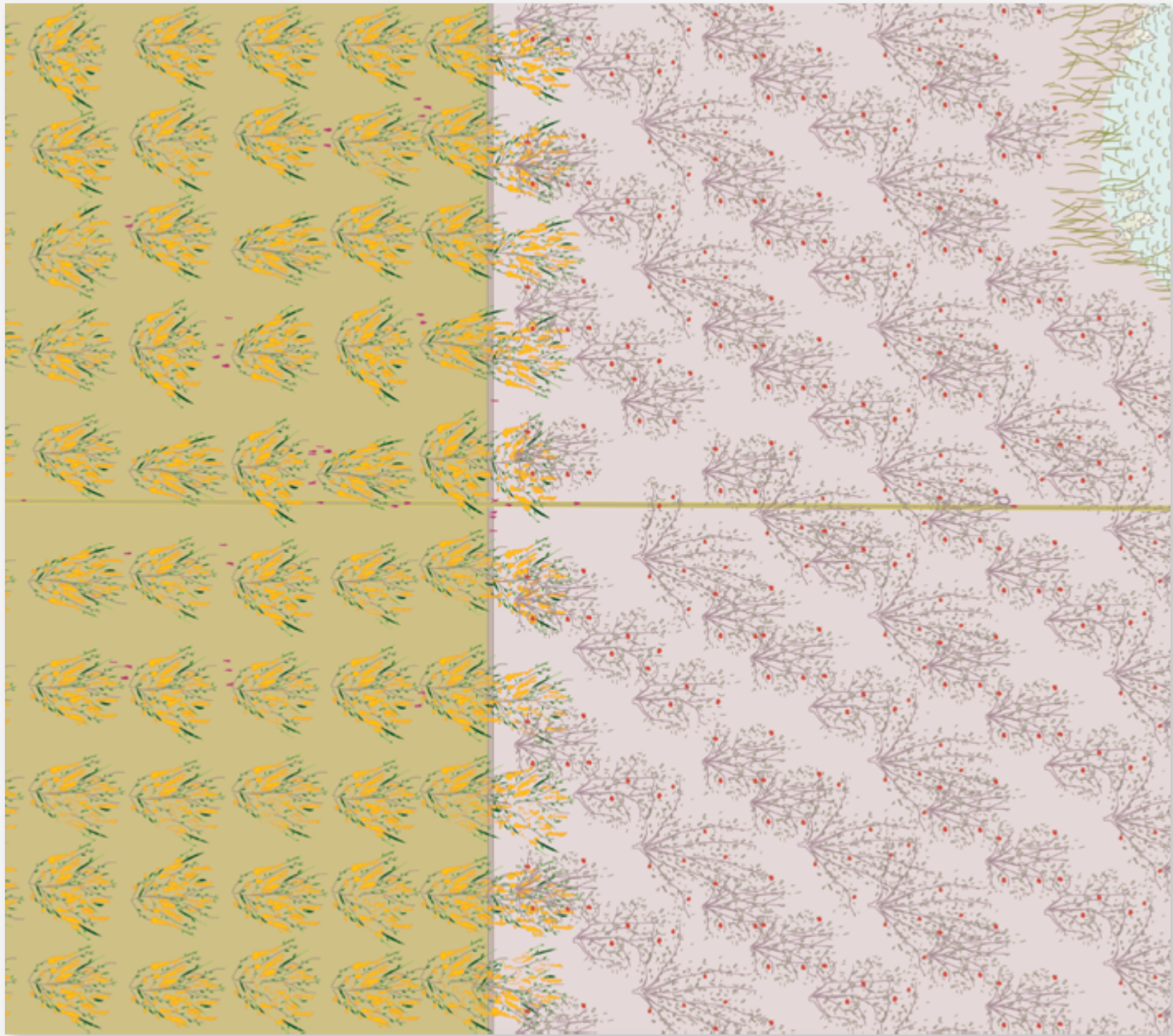


Salty Kitchen

• • •

At first it just looked a little funny standing like a giant next to the pomegranate trees. Then, I started imagining those rolling fields of golden wheat and something in my stomach turned...the pomegranates were dying.

“We had one picnic that extended over an entire summer. A developer from out of town leased Albert Dunlap’s acreage and sowed it to an assortment of melons. In the early stages of experimentation he had no need for the fruit itself; the seeds alone were important to him. He



Left: Soil cracks in the fields of Allensworth c. 2017 | Right: A pomegranate cracks in a neighboring crop field c. 2017

• • •

When we were walking back from the Salty Kitchen that first day, Sal was picking the flowers straight from the saltbushes in the crop field, snacking on them like granola. Bits fell and added to this yellow-shelled road that we were following to town. The path was a gradient of new and aged nut shells from orchards throughout the county.

told Mr. Dunlap to set up some barrels and invite the whole community to come to the field and eat their fill... No limitation was put on the number of melons we were allowed to cut, so long as the seeds were saved. We were quite prodigal, and very choosy.” -Josephine Hackett²⁷

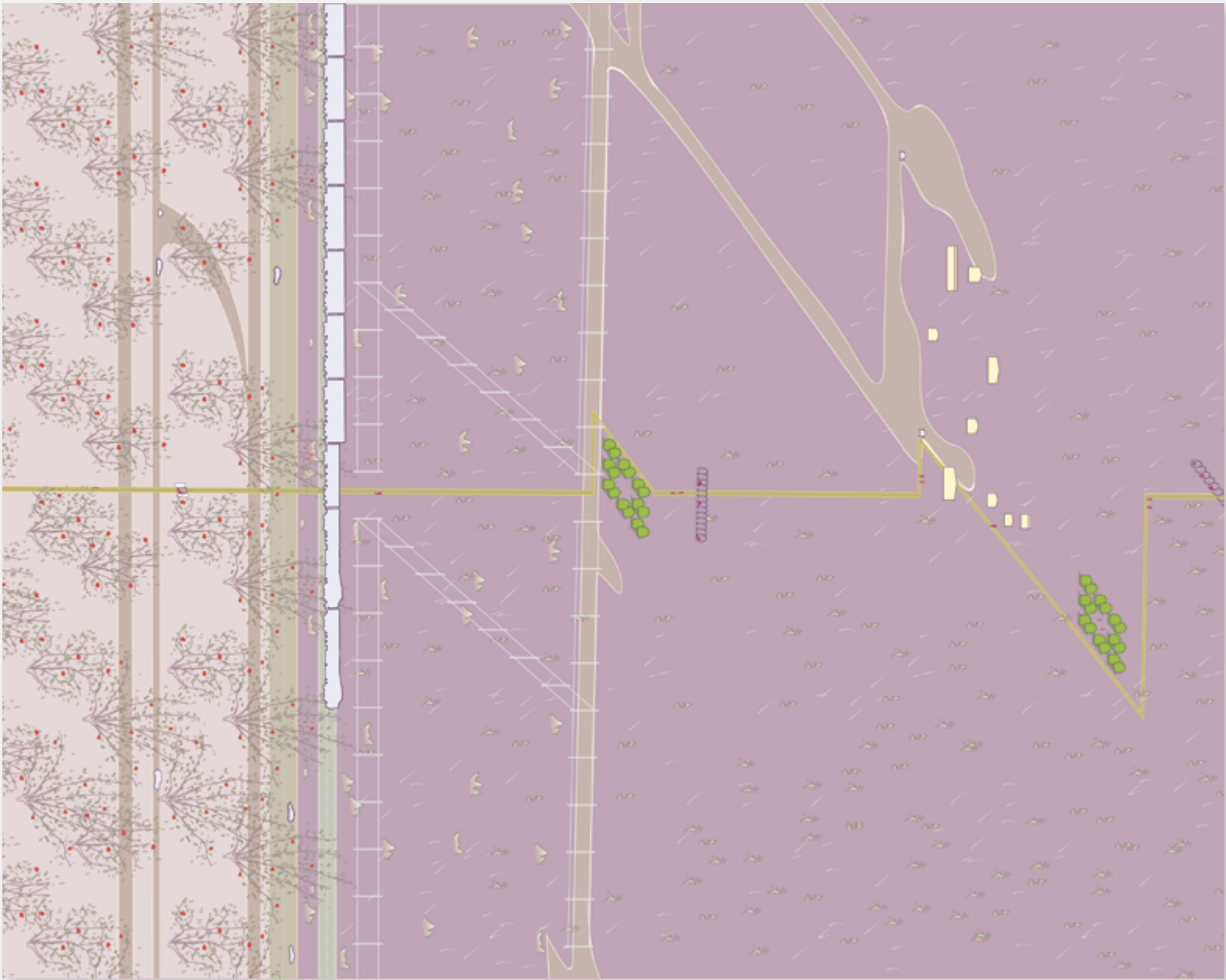


Dirt mounds in the fields of Allensworth c. 2017

• • •

It crunched beneath our feet for a stretch of time. Rows gave away to more rows, from salt-bushes to some haggard pomegranates, and then every quarter mile we came across these large, extruded outlines of wheat grains that we would sit in. Steps, stay, see, steps, stay, see...

“The milking industry was the only thing that was holding Allensworth, and the reason that happened was that we had a sort of communal grazing area... We’d go out and round them up and start them home, because that’s about all you had to do— ‘cause, you know, a milk cow will come in. And it was a wonderful thing to see the cows coming home in the evening to be milked.



Left: Soil cracks in the fields of Allensworth c. 2017 | Right: A pomegranate cracks in a neighboring crop field c. 2017

• • •

steps... the distant horizon outside of the fields...
until it opened up...

You' d get to a certain farm and the cattle, the cows for this farm would just automatically turn off. You didn' t have to do it; they knew where they were going; they knew their home was there.” -Henry Singleton²⁸



Dirt mounds in the fields of Allensworth c. 2017

• • •

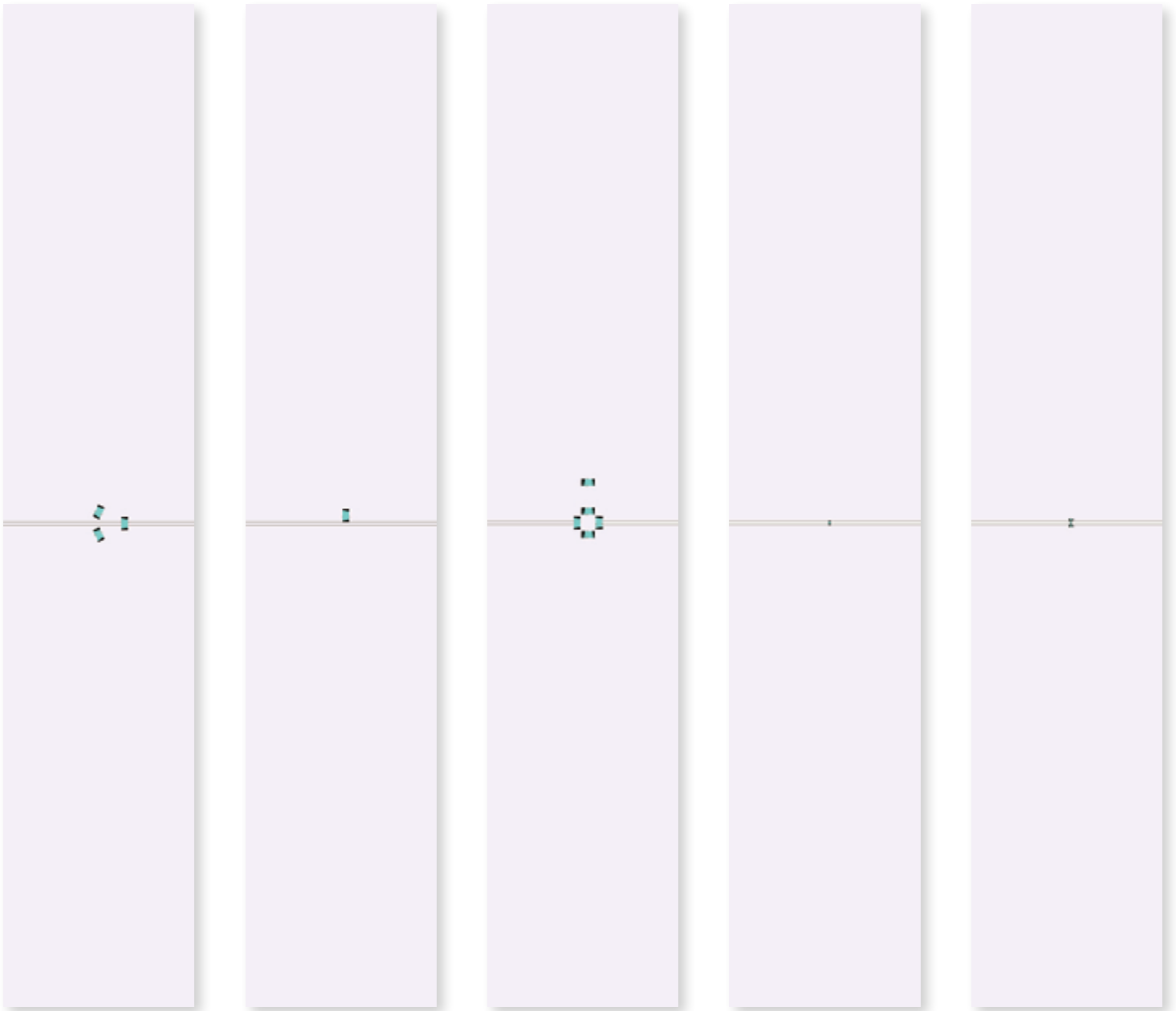
stay...

at the interstate and...

see...

the sky come down all around like a butter dish.

When one walks to the saltbush centers, one crosses a changing landscape marked with hollowed produce. Each product trails out from its representative tower facade: wheat grains from a stalk of wheat, oranges from an orange tree, seeds from an almond tree, sprouts from an alfalfa plant, and cow heads from a corn stalk. Marking every ¼ mile along the paths between the



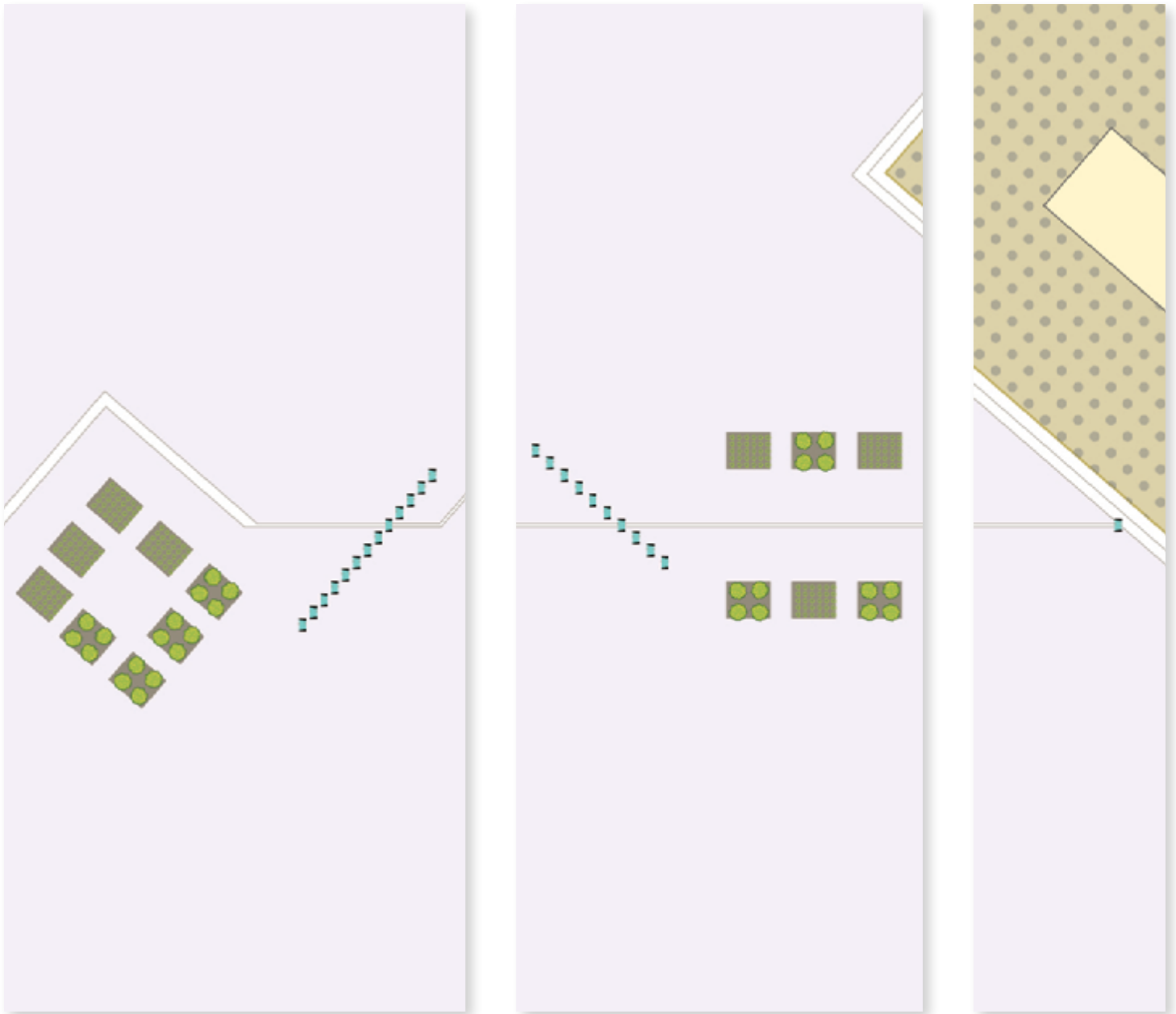
Left: Soil cracks in the fields of Allensworth c. 2017 | Right: A pomegranate cracks in a neighboring crop field c. 2017

• • •

Steps, stay, see, steps, stay, see... the path led us along a string of gardens between homes. Steps, stay, see, steps, stay, see, steps... pass the border,

a Wall

saltbush towers and centers of community in the township, these frames act doubly as seating and as curated viewing platforms. At times, they are clustered for group gatherings; at times, they are oriented for the faraway landscape. These are frames for the local region around Allensworth as it transforms over time, crop fields of saltbush expanding towards the township.



Dirt mounds in the fields of Allensworth c. 2017

• • •

made of young saltbushes surrounding the community center. In a few years, this will be a filled frame, the ground full of saltbushes the color of gold during mid-November...

we pass from the outside in.

The three current centers of community gathering in the township consist of the church, the elementary school, and the community services center.

Each tower establishes with 2-6 acres of saltbush fields to sustain its activities. As saltbush requires 4 years to establish itself, the fields would be sowed first, even before every tower has been constructed.



Lines Between Towers and Centers of Community in Allensworth



Initial Saltbush Crop Fields



As the crop fields continue to grow, saltbush is also planted in the property lines of the centers of community. The plants in these fields are grown to varying heights, in relation to the ground's height difference from the height of the previous Tulare Lake.

As saltbush overtakes the land throughout Allensworth, the plant slowly reclaims the land. While the Saltbush Collective progresses the usage of the plant and the economy around it, the landscape is prepared for potential future developments.



Crop Fields Expand Onto the Fallow Fields in the Township

Saltbush Frames Allensworth's Main Corridor



• • •

It's summertime and the fields are a wash of weathered leather...an almost perfect compliment to the sky. All framed by an orange and here we are within that frame, staring at the painting as it exists outside...something not quite Rothko and yet...

It's hot.

Heat radiates from the sky, blocks of colors which stretch horizontally unrestrained by the frame.

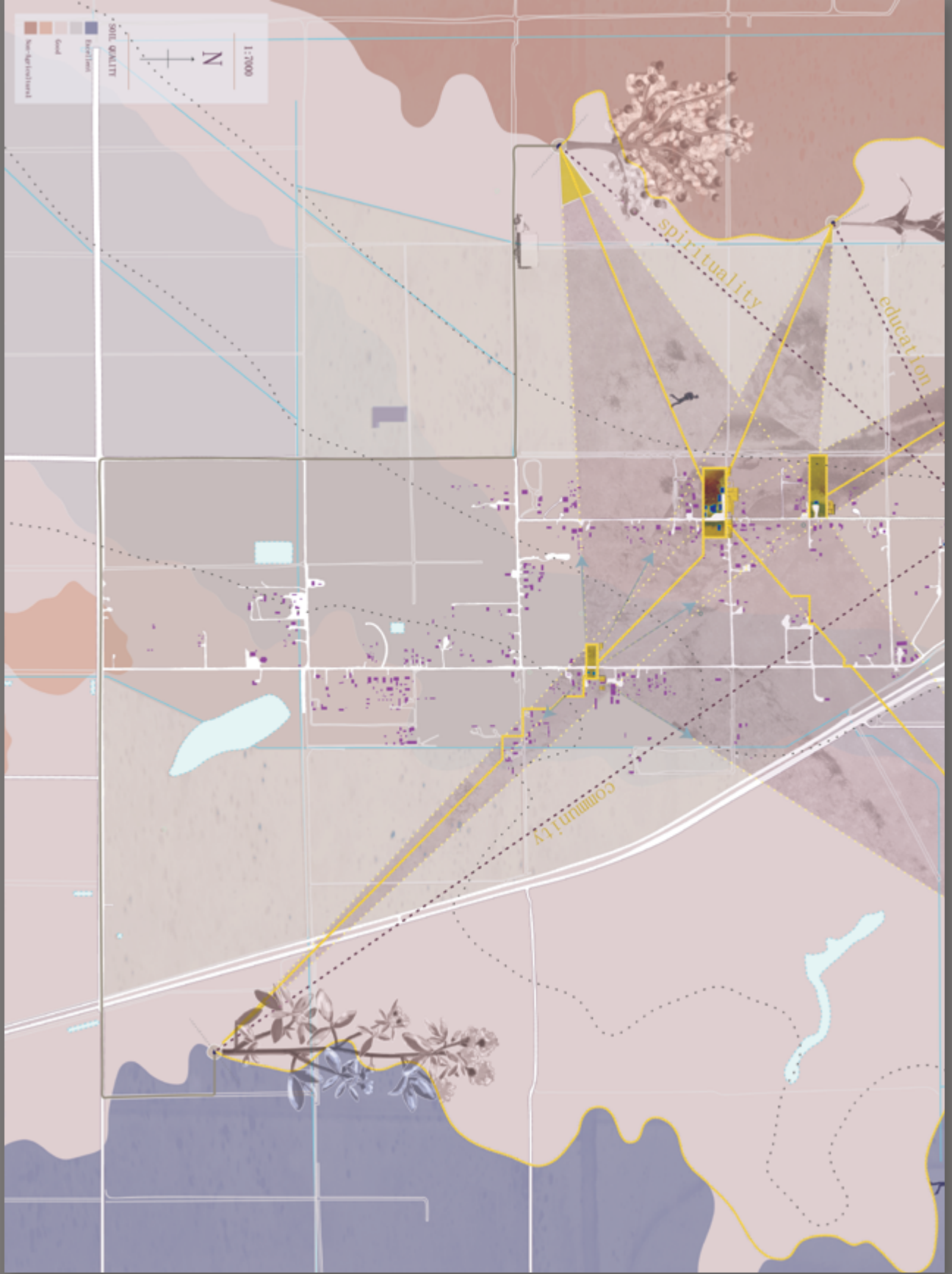




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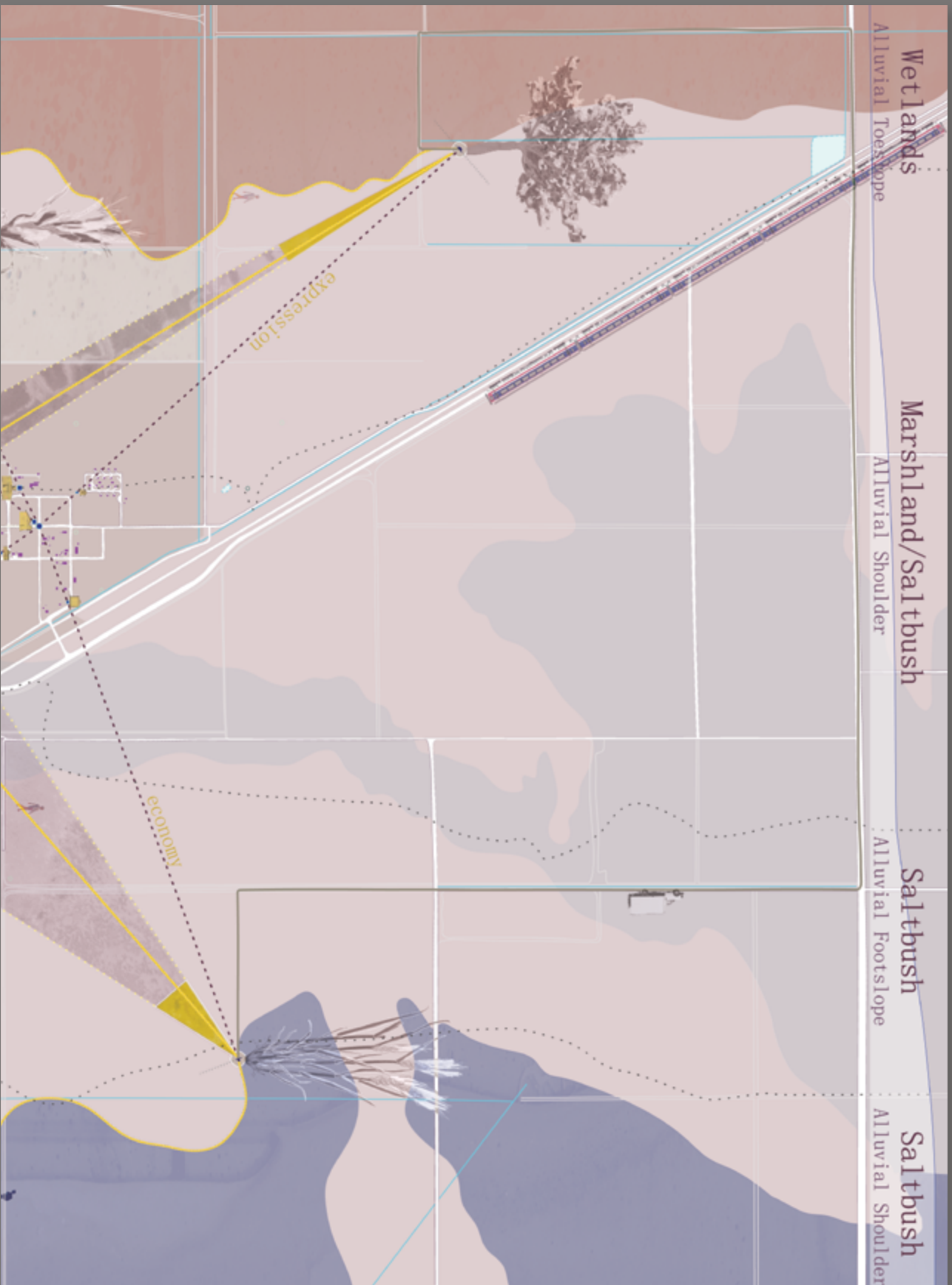
In all of this flatness, we move along invisible markers. The tower facades face the historic town; paths cut to various centers of community gathering in the township; the winding road in the back is a pilgrimage positioned between different soils. We see the flat; we see the hollowed; we see the landscape and town in changing views. The walk between them is a slow movement. Even if we wanted to hurry the air is too warm to sustain our strides, so we let the sky envelop us in a timeless place as we sit and watch the grass grow...imagining fields of gold , the perfect compliment to the sky.

CURRENT



FUTURE

HISTORIC



• • •

“The well was about a half-mile from our house, so we could each carry home a bucket of water each time we went there. It was considered a cardinal sin to go within shooting distance of the well without an empty vessel in hand. While the women went only when necessary, the children came to look on the well as a social center.” -Teresa Hackett²⁹





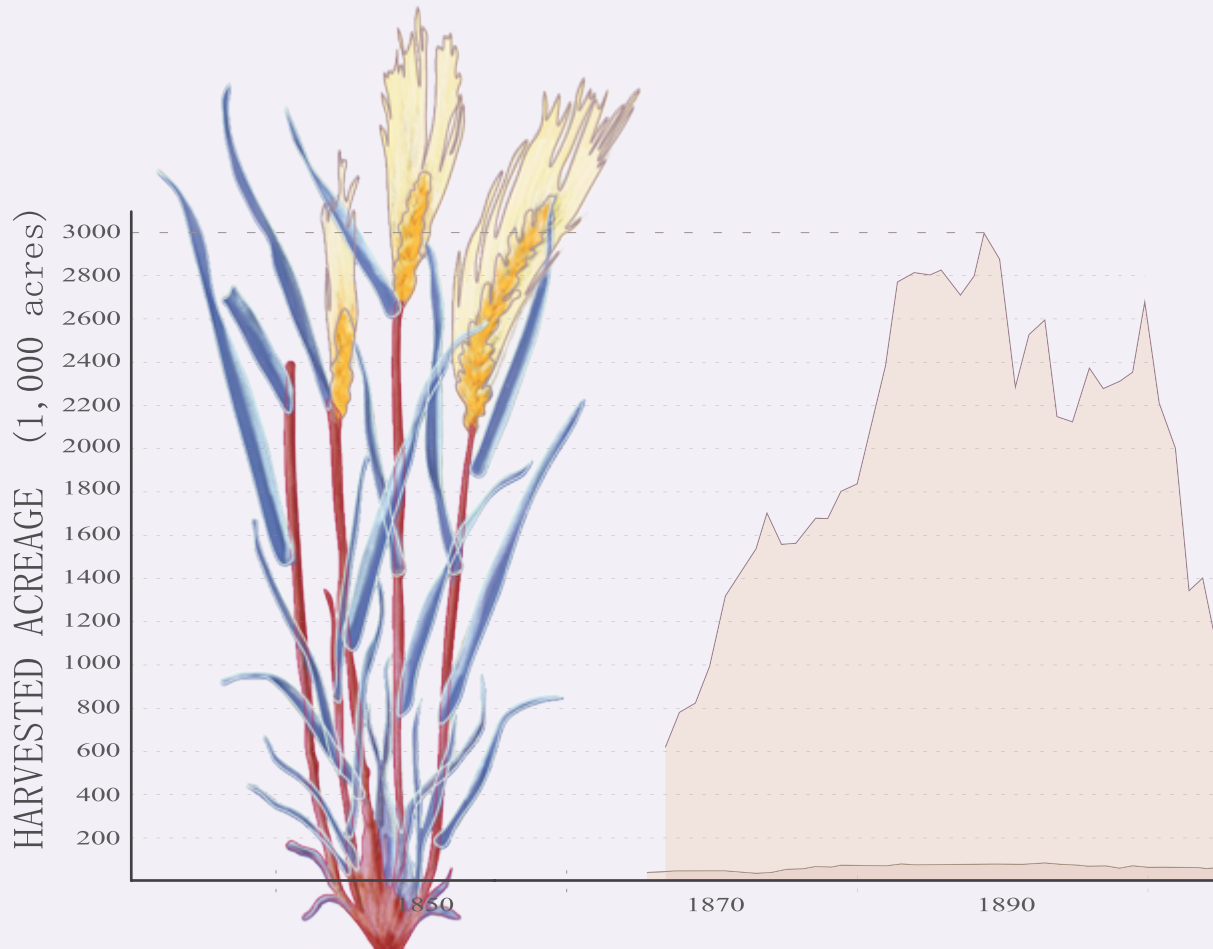
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I could imagine what it must have felt like, being there at that edge where water flowed freely from an artesian well...surrounded by birds and green wildflowers. This well was running dry, but the birds were still there and they flitted around dark calls of music. We couldn't see any water, but the grass was green at the center. For a place so bare, there was so much life...

For the past half hour we had been walking with only the sound of our voices and the crunching of pistachio shells underneath our feet for conversation. An occasional truck would drone by as it rolled down the interstate, but they didn't really count. Standing at the edge of this moment, I remembered the descriptions of Allensworth as people recalled in the documents and I realized that it wasn't just about the people. It was never about just one group, or race, or even species. Water attracts all forms of life and when they come together, they produce something new altogether.

New identities; new products; new environments.

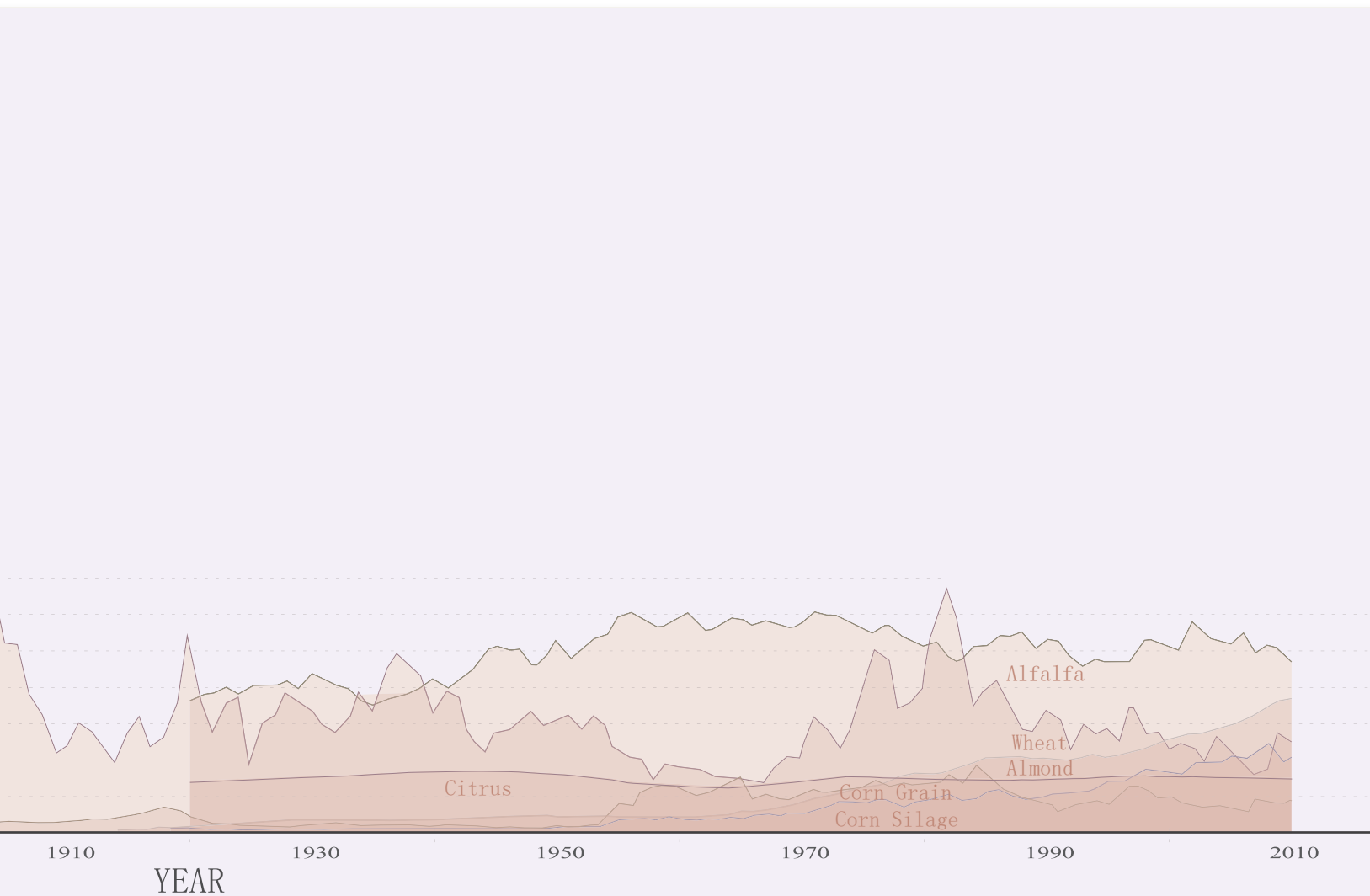
THE WHEAT STALK



“GOLDEN SUNLIGHT brought down to earth,
captured in KERNELS OF GOLD”

Wheat was brought into California from Mexico during the mission period and was grown at a relatively small scale until the second half of the century, when a rush of demand from the Gold Rush rose production greatly. By 1888, wheat was harvested on 3 million acres, producing more than 1 million tons annually³⁰. However, this boom diminished as quickly as it arose as the soils exhausted and farm prices lowered substantially, reflected in the reduction of production to less than half a million acres by 1906³¹. Although not as prominent as it once was, wheat remains a vital part of the industry. In 2010, grains required 260 billion gallons of water in California³².

HARVESTED ACREAGE FOR THE TOP 5 DEFINITIVE CROPS IN CALIFORNIA OVER TIME

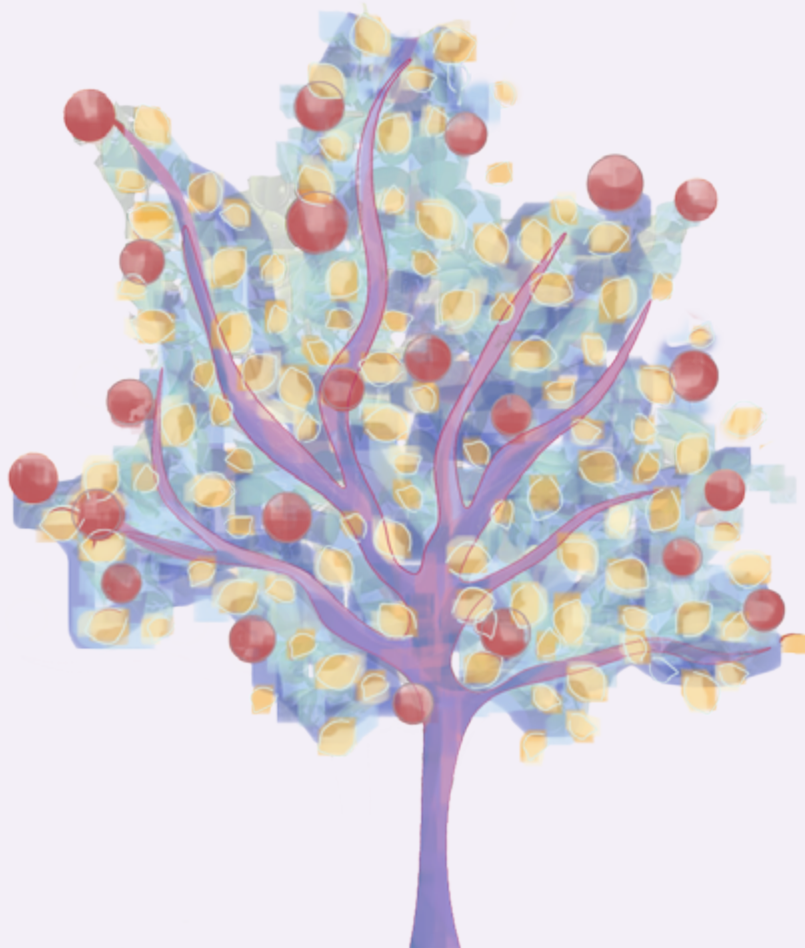


Comparisons

• • •

Following the Gold Rush, agriculture in California took root quickly as settlers identified the region as seemingly ideal for crops. Large-scale irrigation throughout the entire length and width of the Central Valley transformed the plains into an environment which now produces over a third of the nation's vegetables and two-thirds of the country's fruits and nuts³³. Reflecting the ongoing migration of goods in today's globalized world, the majority of the crops which are grown in the state are foreign imports. This is epitomized by the 5 prominent crops which identify various stages of transition in the state's agricultural landscape. These are as follows: wheat, oranges, alfalfa, almond, and corn.

THE ORANGE TREE

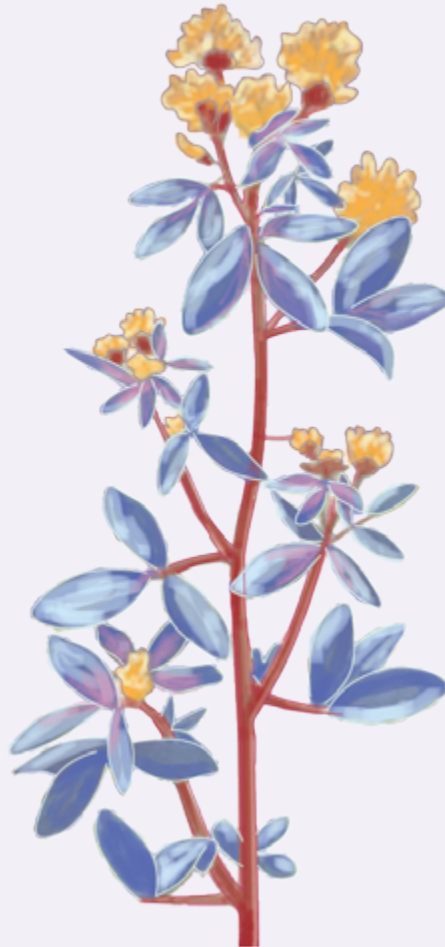


“huge GOLDEN GLOBES that outshined every other citrus table fruit around”

• • •

The orange was brought to California in the 18th century as a variety thought to have originated from Southeast China thousands of years earlier. Its growth propelled in the 1870s as the Gold Rush surged and with the introduction of the navel orange³⁴. Then on, increased irrigation, the completion of the transcontinental railroad, and effective branding established citrus as California’s second largest industry. Today, the citrus business is worth more than \$1 billion; Tulare County produces for about half of the state’s navel oranges and 42% of its Valencia oranges³⁵. In 2010, subtropical trees required 456 billion gallons of water in California³⁶.

THE ALFALFA PLANT



“HI FIBER GOLD”

• • •

Alfalfa is believed to have been brought to California from South America during 1847-1850, as the “Chilean clover”³⁷. The crop quickly took root in the state’s local economy, with hay production increasing from 2,000 tons in 1850 to 550,000 tons in 1870, due to the rise of the dairy industry around cities during the Gold Rush³⁸. While central to California’s agricultural history, alfalfa has been highly criticized for its extremely high water consumption and low cash value. In 2010, alfalfa growth in California required 1.7 trillion gallons of water³⁹ while its economic productivity equaled \$175 per acre-foot⁴⁰.

THE ALMOND TREE



“a modern-day GOLD RUSH”

• • •

Almond trees were first brought to California from Spain in the mid-1700's, but were not successfully propagated until the 1870s⁴¹ and it was around the turn of the 20th century when the crop established itself in the agricultural industry. With major increases in irrigated acreage and an expanded market for almond products, major areas of production have shifted to the San Joaquin Valley for its favorable climate and better soils. In 2010, almond and pistachio orchards required 1.2 trillion gallons of water⁴² and held an economic productivity of \$1,154 acre-foot⁴³. In 2016, almonds generated \$5.6 billion in revenue⁴⁴.

THE CORN STALK



“GOLDEN AND GREEN, the colors are seen,”

• • •

In early Spanish missions, corn established itself as the most important crop in California. This lasted until the second half of the 19th century, when it was displaced by small grains and other crops. Production for corn resurged after 1950, due favorable prices, development of hybrid species, and improvements in management and machinery⁴⁵. Field corn is grown for both grain and silage with an almost even split. The surge of silage in the 20th century is related to an expansion in the state’s dairy industry⁴⁶. In 2010, water usage for corn was 717 billion gallons⁴⁷ while the crop held an economic productivity of \$136 per acre-foot⁴⁸. In 2016, milk and cream generated \$6.07 billion in revenue⁴⁹.

EXTENDING THE IMAGE'S DEPTH

FLATTENED IMAGE



DOUBLED IMAGE
(with surprise filling!)



EXTRUDED IMAGE



FOLDED CORNER



ROTATED IMAGE



BACKED IMAGE



“Quit taking five dollar buggy rides on six dollars a week. Don’ t put a five dollar hat on a fifty cent head. Get a bank account. Get a home of your own. Get some property... Don’ t be satisfied with the shadows of civilization; get some substance for yourself!” -J. J. Neimore⁵⁰



Hindsman and Co. General Store in Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park c. 2017.¹⁹

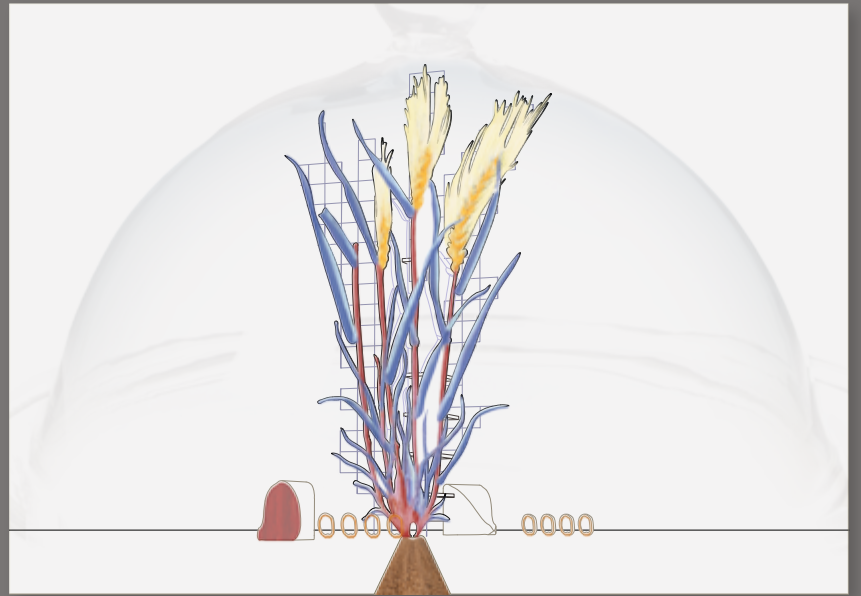
THE DEPTH OF A METAPHOR

• • •

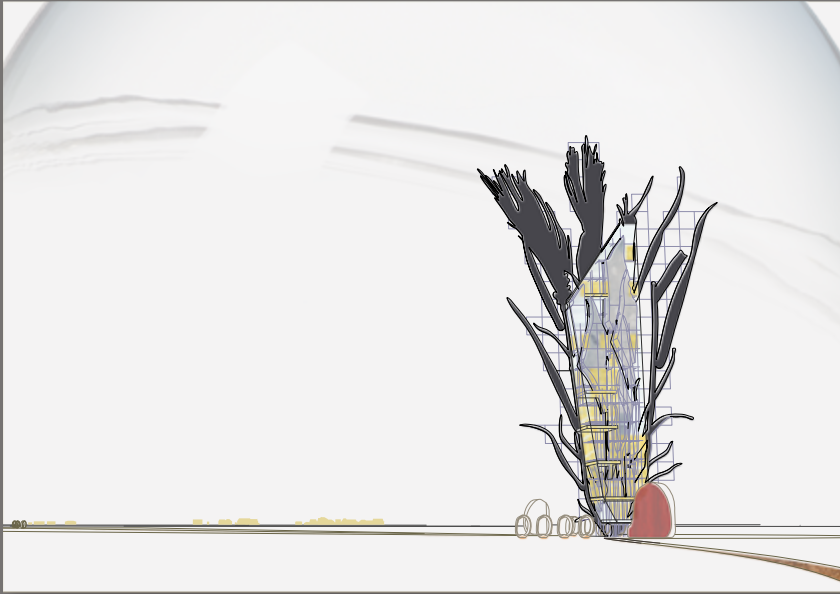
It is a front and a back,
a word and a definition,
a cutie on the desk and a grove on the other side of the country,
brought from another language before our nation
could even speak.

Didn't you know? It is an orange foreigner.
But its innards are salty.

“Inevitably, we began to develop an awareness of the flat landscape around us and to be a little uneasy about it. One starry night, Alice, Grace, and I were out in the yard when I suddenly felt unusually oppressed by the sense of confinement. I thought of the



Approaching the Salty Test Kitchen from the township.



Approaching the Salty Test Kitchen from the borderland.

butter dish sitting on our dining table, with its flat plate and dome-shaped cover. It seemed to me that the land around us was that plate, the sky coming down all around like a huge, transparent dome. I turned to the other girls and said, 'We're in a butter dish!' -Josephine Hackett⁵¹

• • •

(Speaking about the Allensworth school bell) “On one occasion the bell was rung out of sheer exuberance... the night the lights were turned on in the colony [about 1923].”
-Josephine Hackett⁵²

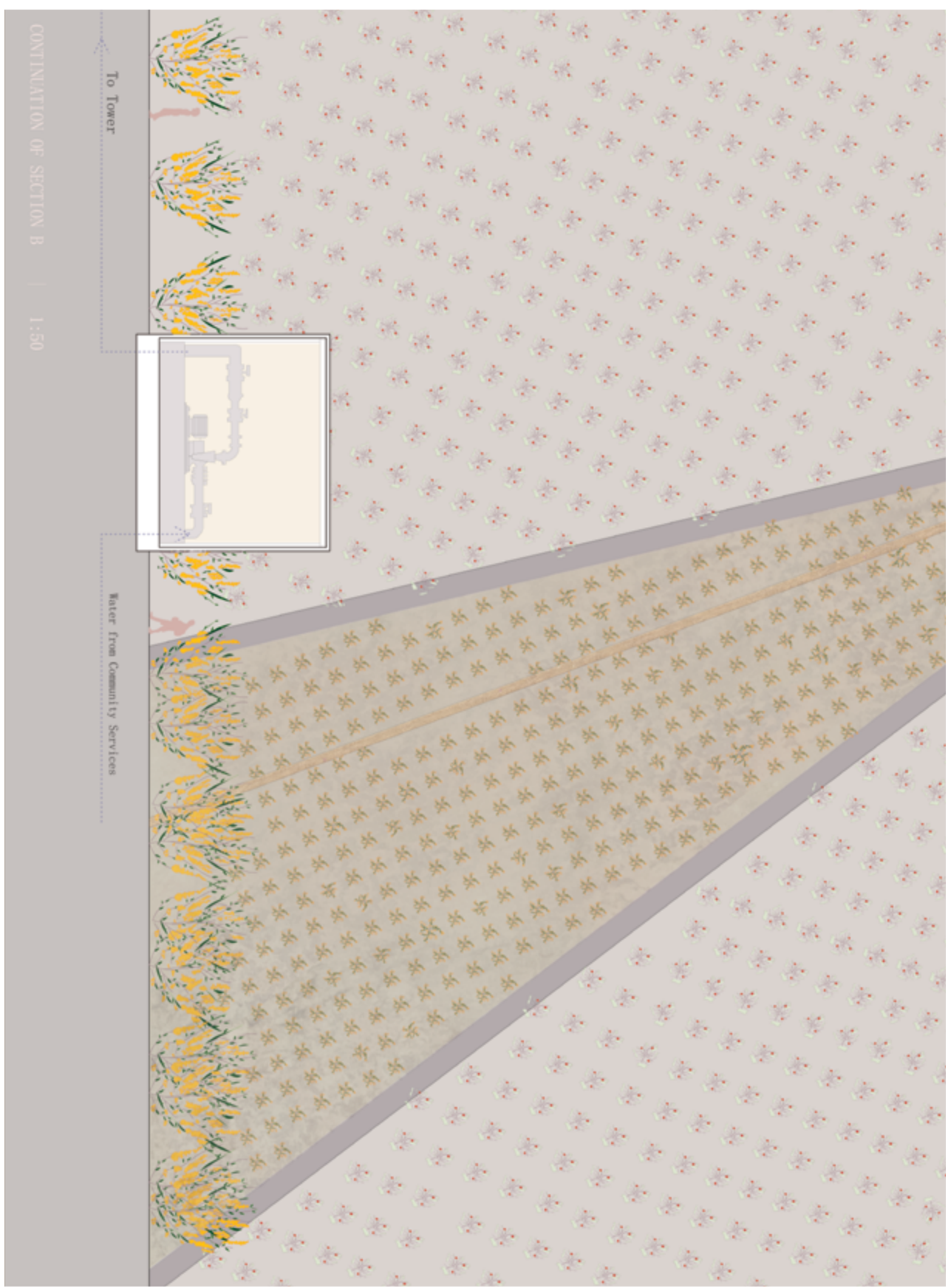




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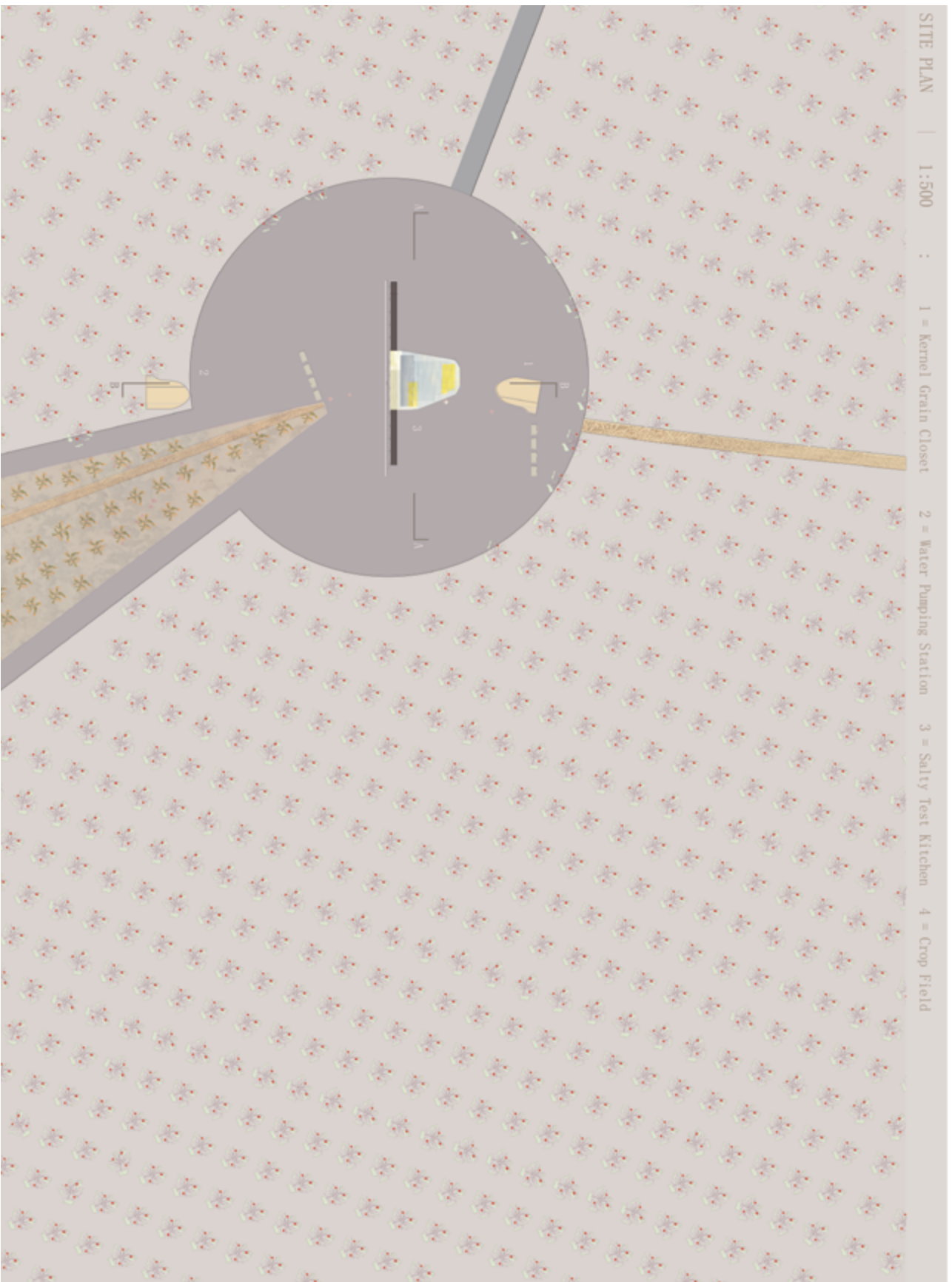
Paths. Weird paths. Long paths. Nutty paths.
Must have come from those orchards off the road.
They're bothersome.
They make my feet slide and every 5 minutes I have to stop
and take the shells out from my shoes.
Brown, light brown, lighter brown, gray
dirt
They keep piling up in my shoes.
No green gem to eat here
just dirt.

FUTURE



CURRENT

HISTORIC



FUTURE

• • •

“No one in Allensworth had to worry about locking their house. They didn’ t even have keys. There was no such thing as robbery. If you were leaving town, you just told your neighbor. You could go any time you wanted.” -Henry Singleton⁵³

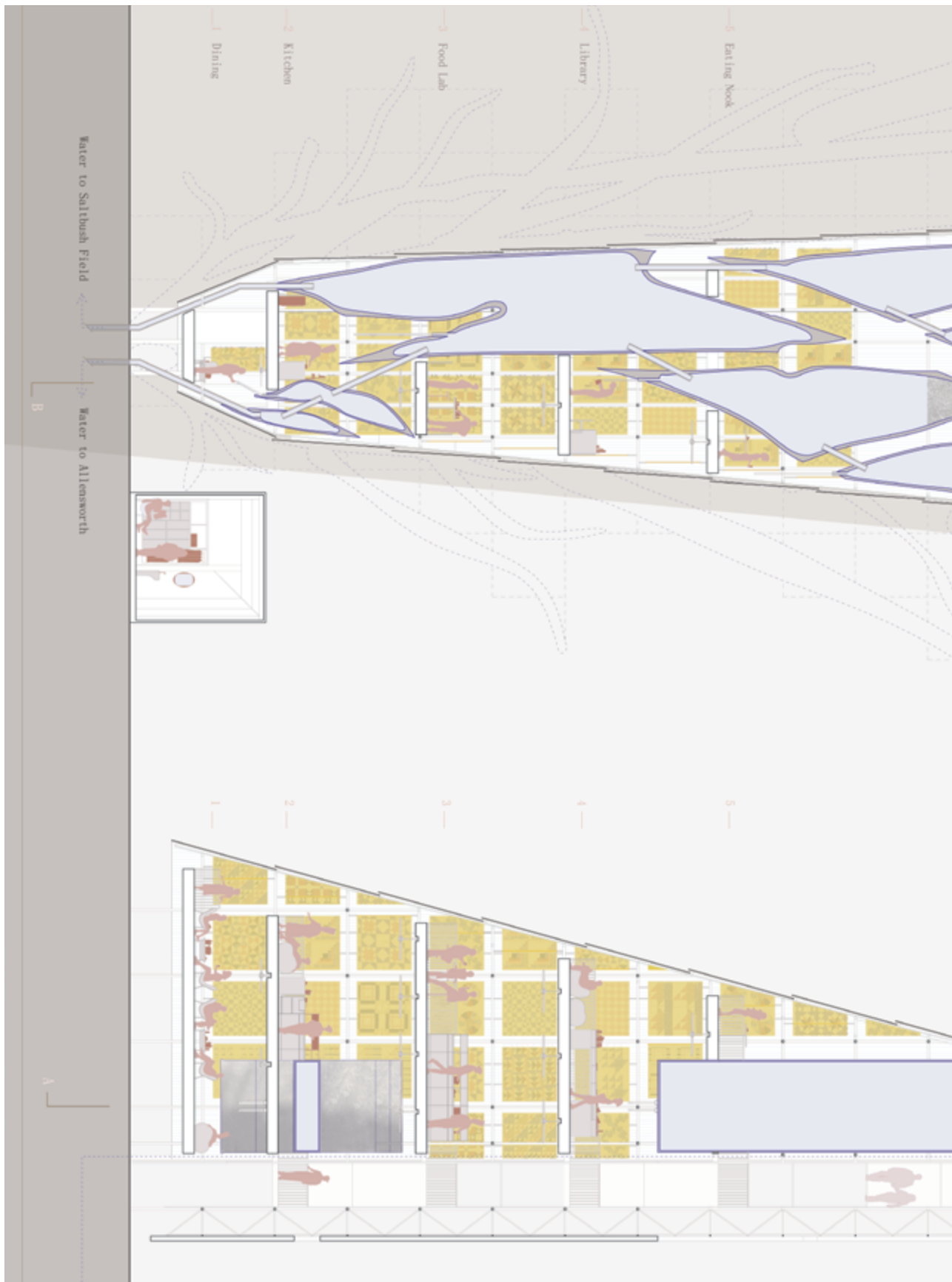




• • •

From one to the other
We dyed the fabric yellow and stitched the cloth with geometries
just familiar enough to look like these.
So when they dress the other
there is a glow of gold that looks
almost right there,
for tea time
scented with the color of salt-crusted breads
sitting within one arms length
of our yellow-shaded triangulations.

FUTURE

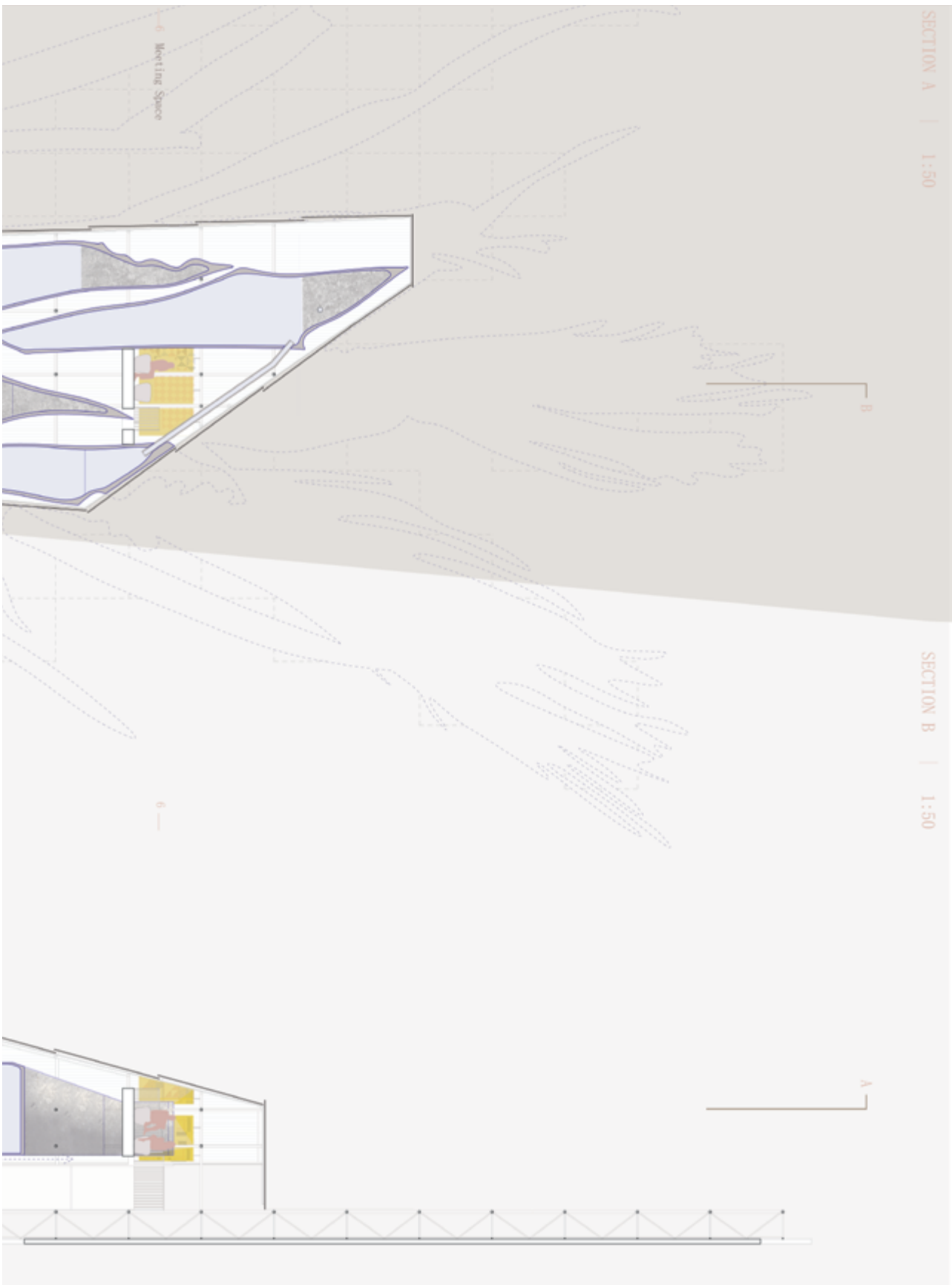


CURRENT

HISTORIC

SECTION A | 1:50

SECTION B | 1:50



FUTURE



Living c.2018.²²

• • •

Home, where there is snow falling like mad outside and the sun hardly has time to greet you before a cloud covers it. Home again, but it is different now.



room. c.2018.²³

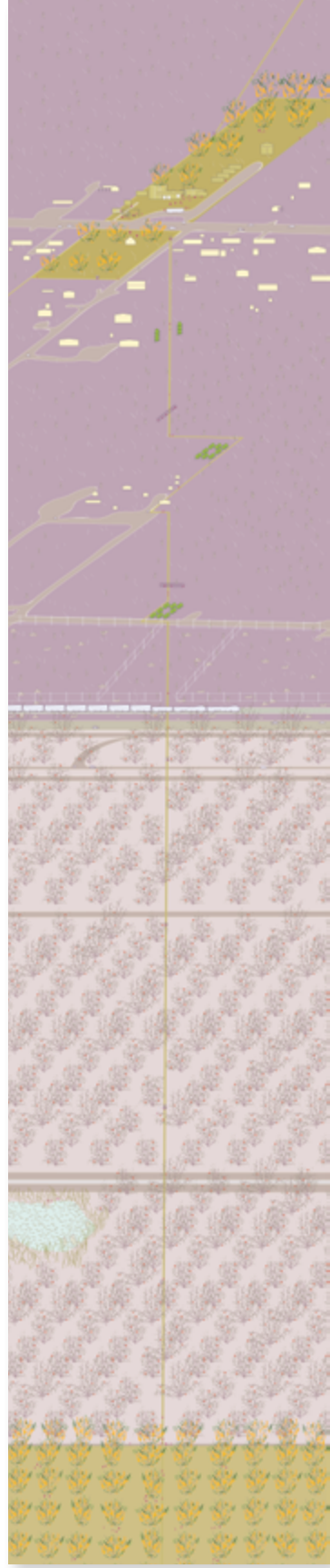
• • •

And the stories....well, this is the second to last sentence. So thend, at least for now anyways.

“It always seemed home to me... The grass was green, and wildflowers grew all over. I thought Allensworth was one of the most beautiful places I ever saw.”
-Gemelia Herring⁵⁴







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