

# South Phoenix and the Geography of Exclusion

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**Abstract:**

This poster presents the historical geographical construction of a contaminated community in the heart of one of the largest and fastest growing Sunbelt cities in the US. In 'minority' districts of South Phoenix, Arizona, land uses were authorized that were not permitted in white Phoenix, as race and place were discursively and materially woven together. Early conditions in South Phoenix included a railroad and associated warehousing and industries, stockyards, open sewage, dilapidated housing and disease. This area was a stigmatized and underdeveloped zone of racial exclusion and economic marginality in the central city. The core of this exclusionary geography was in place by 1920, increasingly policed and controlled by white Phoenix, producing a geography of 'white privilege.' This Sunbelt apartheid was subsequently built into zoning, planning, and investment decisions that continue to shape the human ecology of Phoenix today.

THE FLOOD

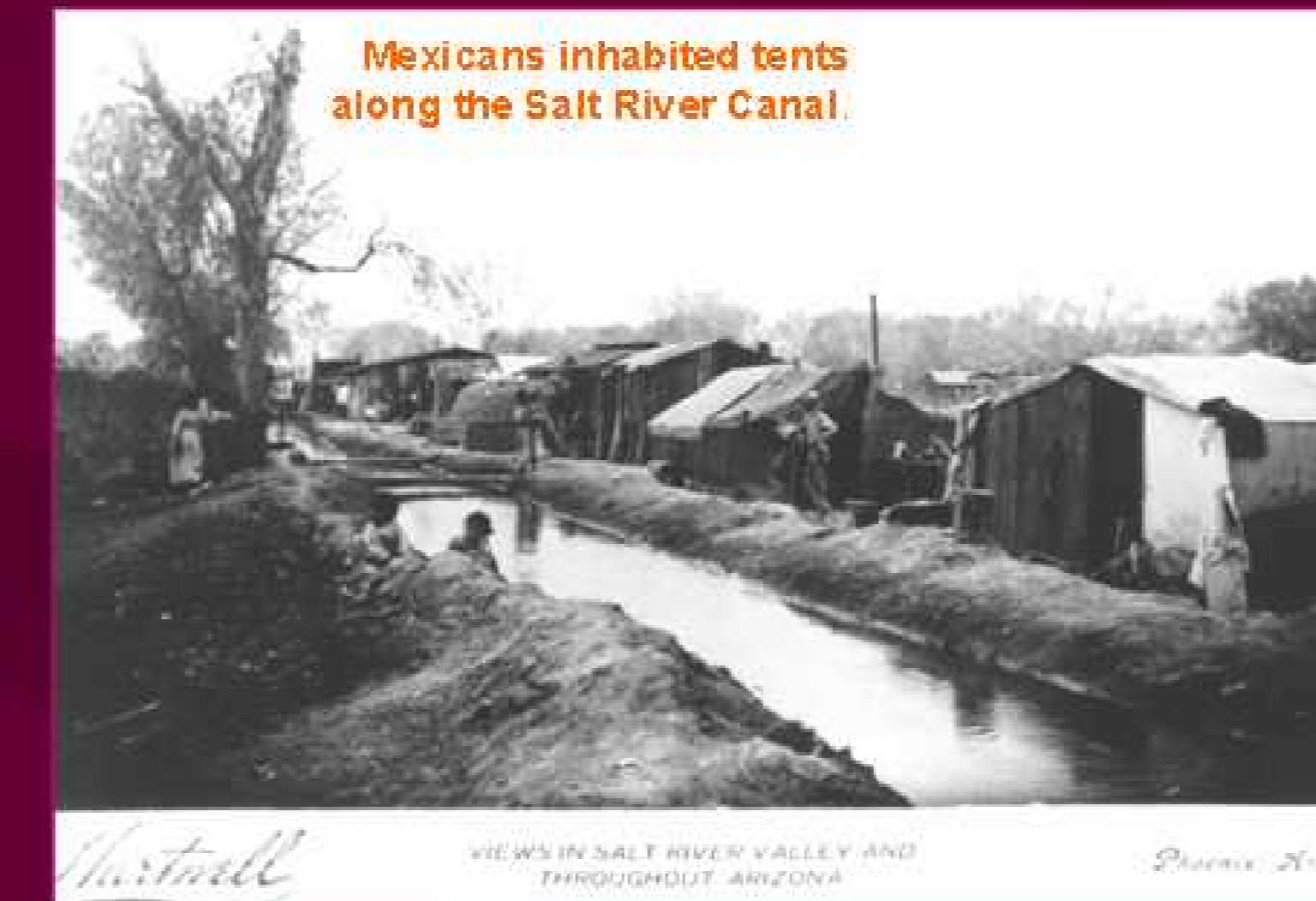


**Salt River Flood of 1891**  
A hazard event, the great flood of 1891, began the *geography of exclusion* of minority persons from white Phoenix from the earliest days. The flood created a less desirable zone which became the defacto residential area for blacks and Latinos.

The flood instituted a trajectory of increased exclusion and the denial of economic participation for minority persons in Phoenix.

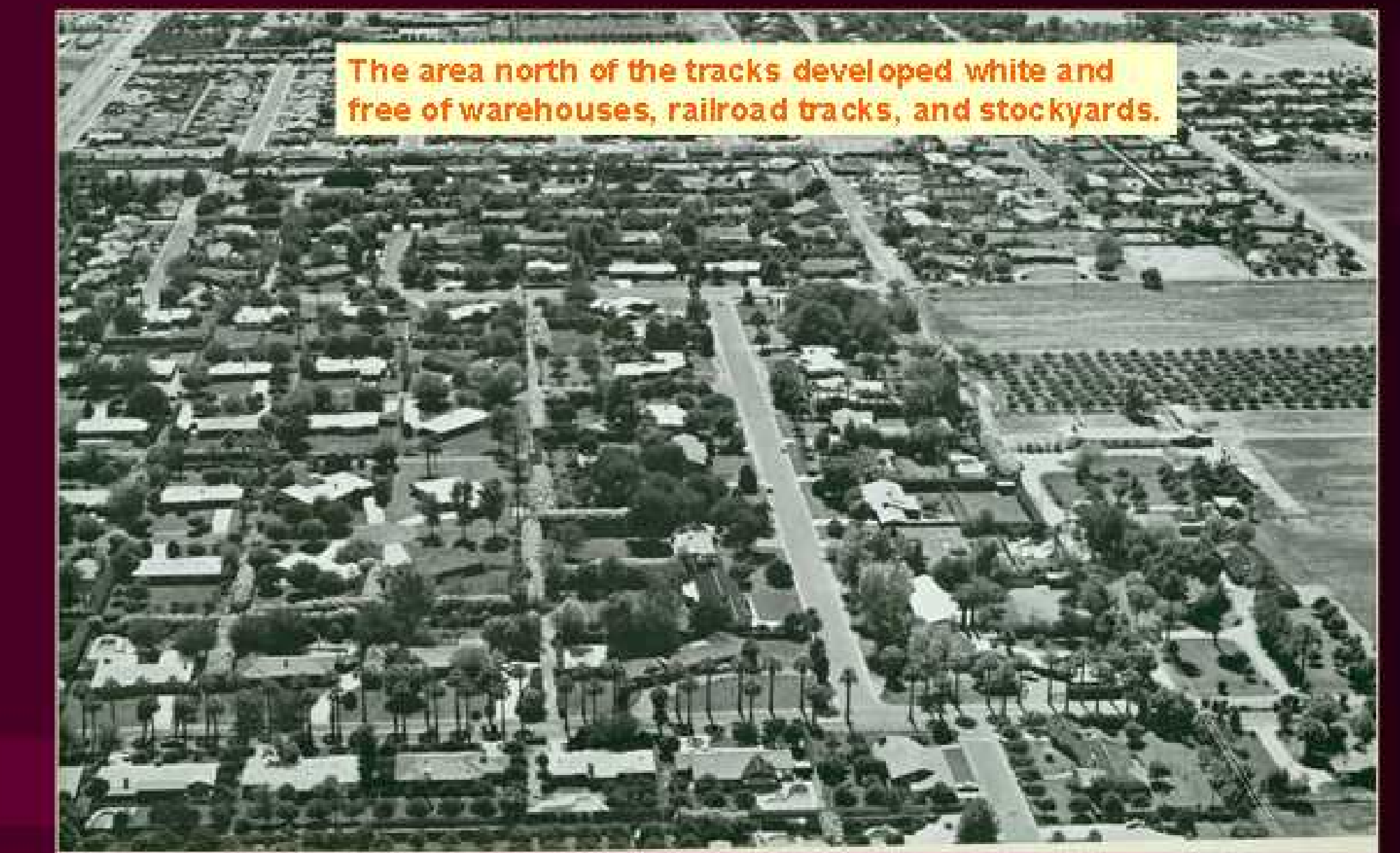


**Mexican Barrio in South Phoenix, 1896**



**Mexicans inhabited tents along the Salt River Canal.**

Meanwhile...



The area north of the tracks developed white and free of warehouses, railroad tracks, and stockyards.



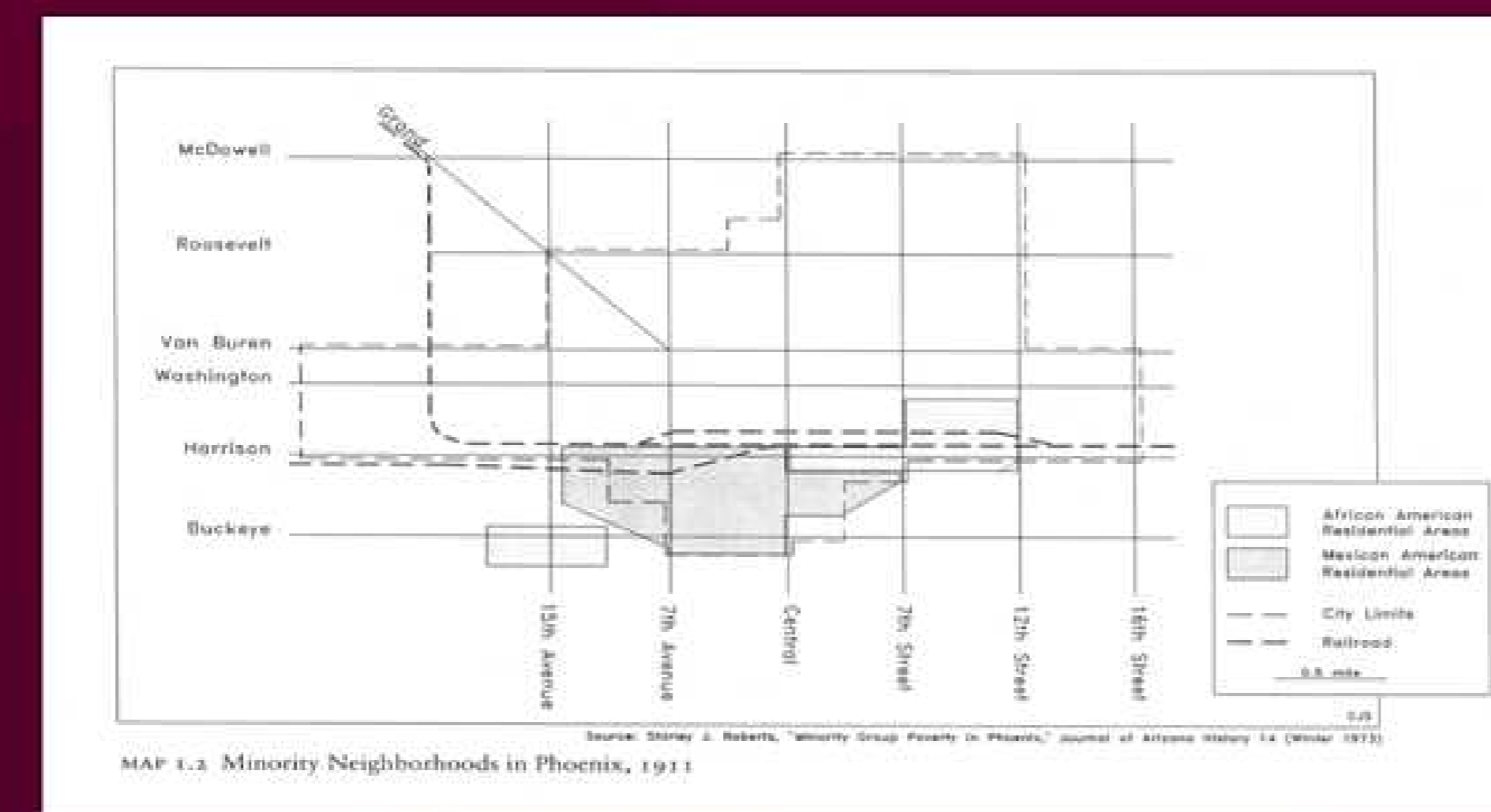
The railroad went through South Phoenix near the Salt River and anchored a zone of industrial development and locally unwanted land uses beginning in when the first train arrived in 1887 (Myrick 1980). In 1926, the Southern Pacific Main Line came to town and industrial development skyrocketed.

THE RAILROAD

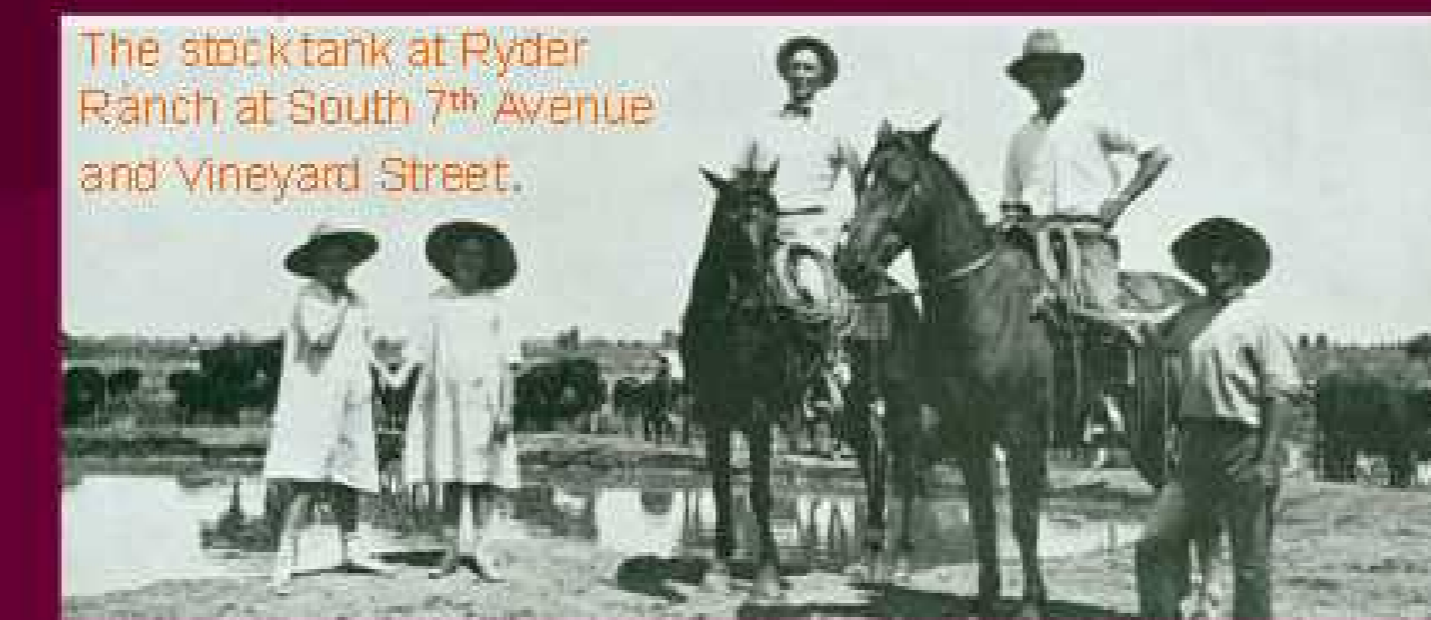


For white Phoenix, the RR marked increased recreational and business opportunities. For South Phoenix, it represented another environmental burden.

Minority Neighborhoods in Phoenix, 1911



LOCALLY UNWANTED LAND USES: THE CATTLE INDUSTRY

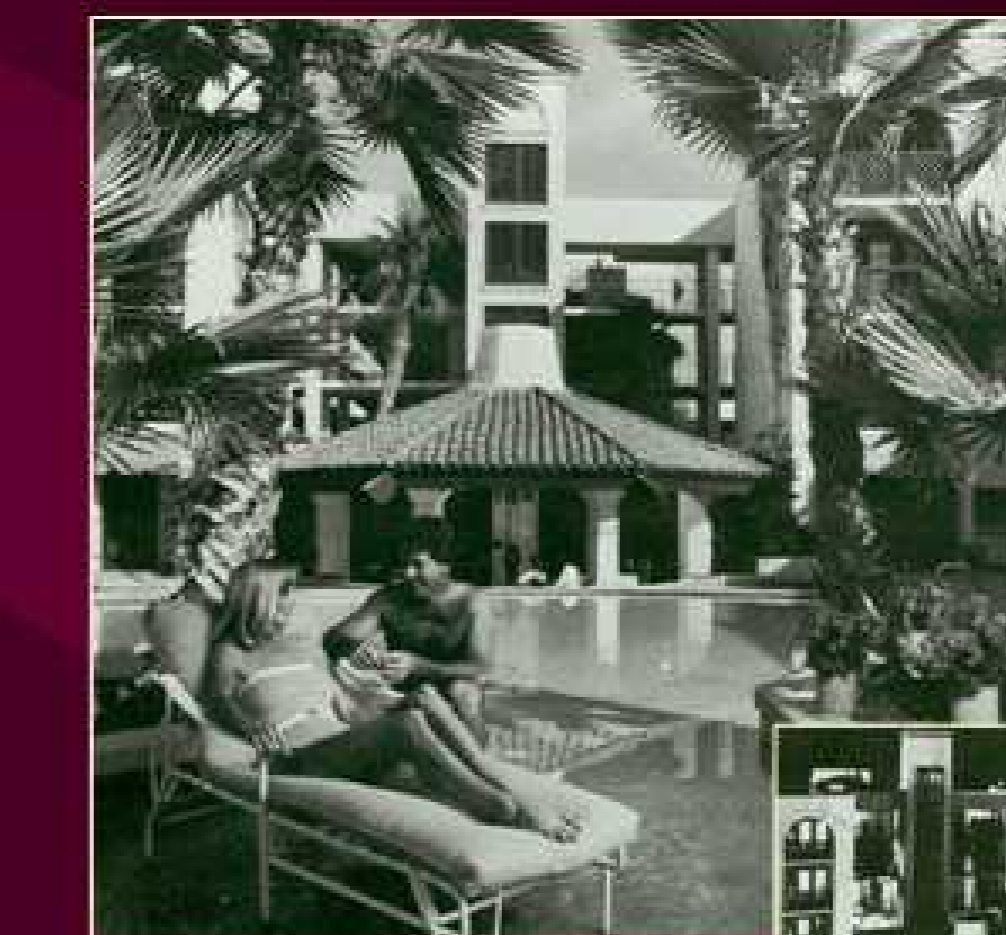


The stocktank at Ryder Ranch at South 7th Avenue and Vineyard Street.

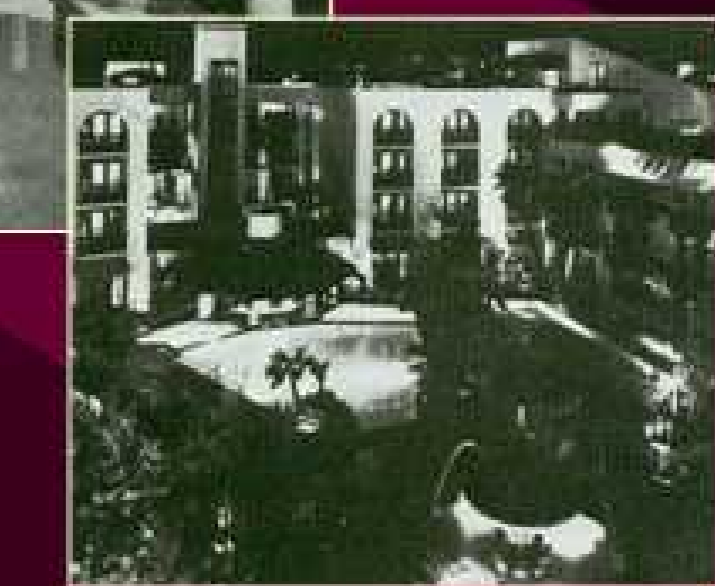
Railroads and warehouses attracted stockyards and cattle ranches to South Phoenix that persisted through the 1960s adding to the miasmic conditions of the area.



Mexican Cowboys



Environmental amenities were the focus of white Phoenix development.



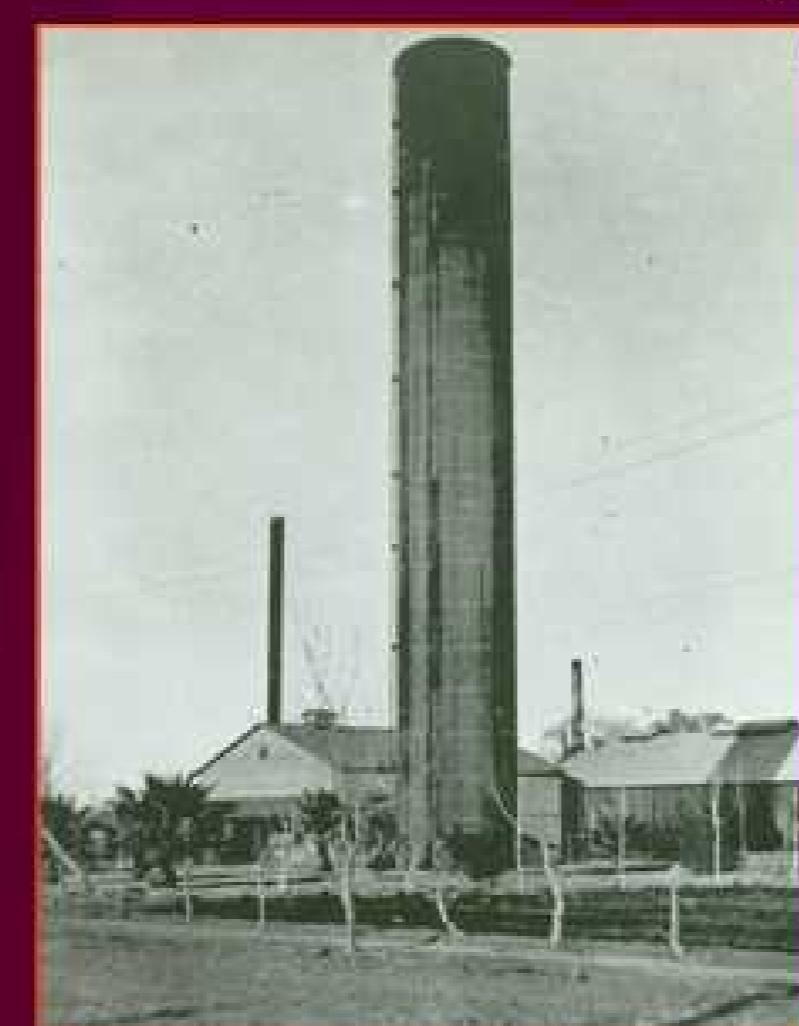
Transportation Corridors

When Sky Harbor Airport came to South Phoenix in the 1930s, they received few benefits from the addition of this facility to their community. It became the second transportation node burdening residents.

INDUSTRIAL LAND USES



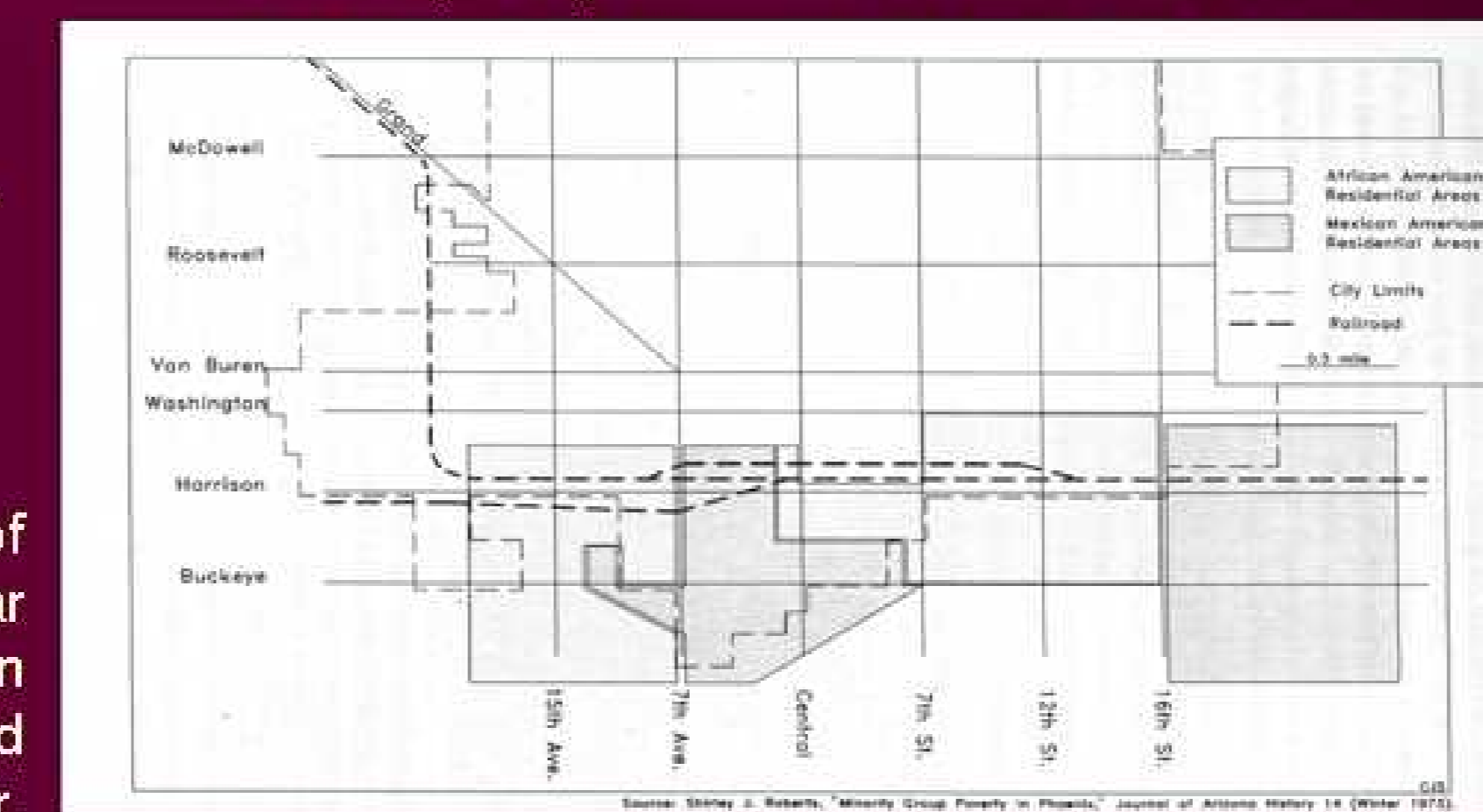
The steam electric plant was located near 2nd Avenue and Buchanan appeared in 1909.



The City Waterworks at the northeast corner of 9th Street & Van Buren was constructed in 1896.

South Phoenix hosted infrastructure for white Phoenix, such as the water works and electric plants. However, South Phoenix was not plumbed or wired for electricity and therefore received nothing from these environmental burdens. Into the 1950s, a majority of South Phoenix residents were agricultural workers, who were bussed to fields outside of town; they were not employed in South Phoenix.

Minority Neighborhoods in Phoenix, 1940



Patterns of pre-war segregation persisted post-war.



Air Research's ammonia plant at 5th Street & Broadway, 1933

Patterns of industrial development accelerated post-war.



Arizona Public Service steam plant at 9th & Van Buren, 1947

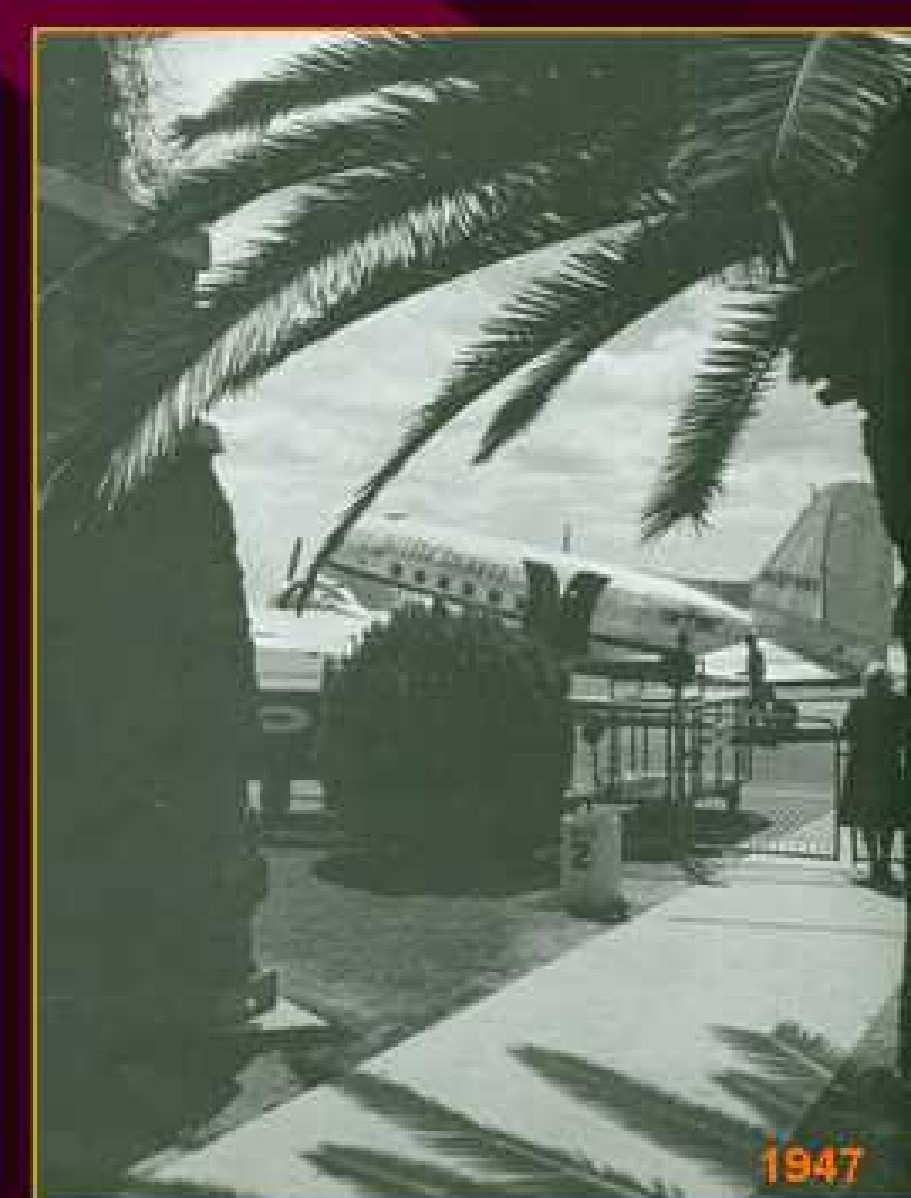
CONCLUSIONS

Early segregation coupled with a white power structure have assured that a system of white privilege remains. Persisting early political and urban ecologies of Phoenix, in terms of spatial, social, political and cultural exclusion, are maintained in Phoenix.

South Phoenix Today



THE AIRPORT



1947