

ALLENSWORTH

100 YEARS OF THE CALIFORNIA DREAM

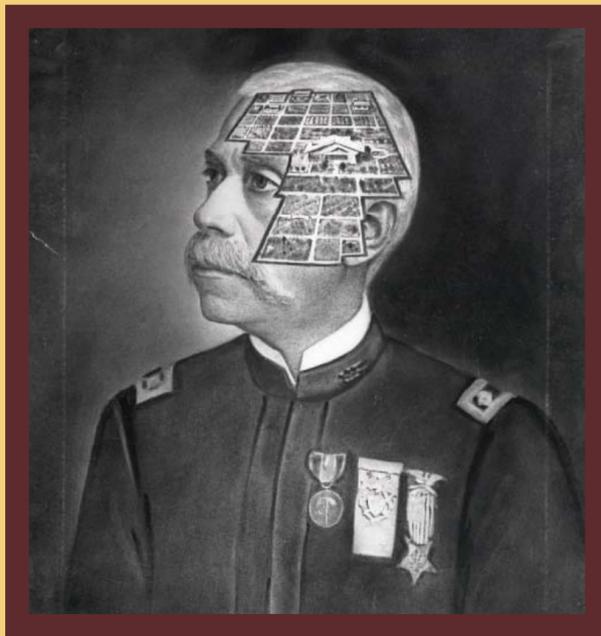


Celebrating the Centennial of the Historic Town of Allensworth and Its Impact on California

A collaboration of the California Department of Parks and Recreation,
the California African American Museum and the California Community Empowerment Foundation

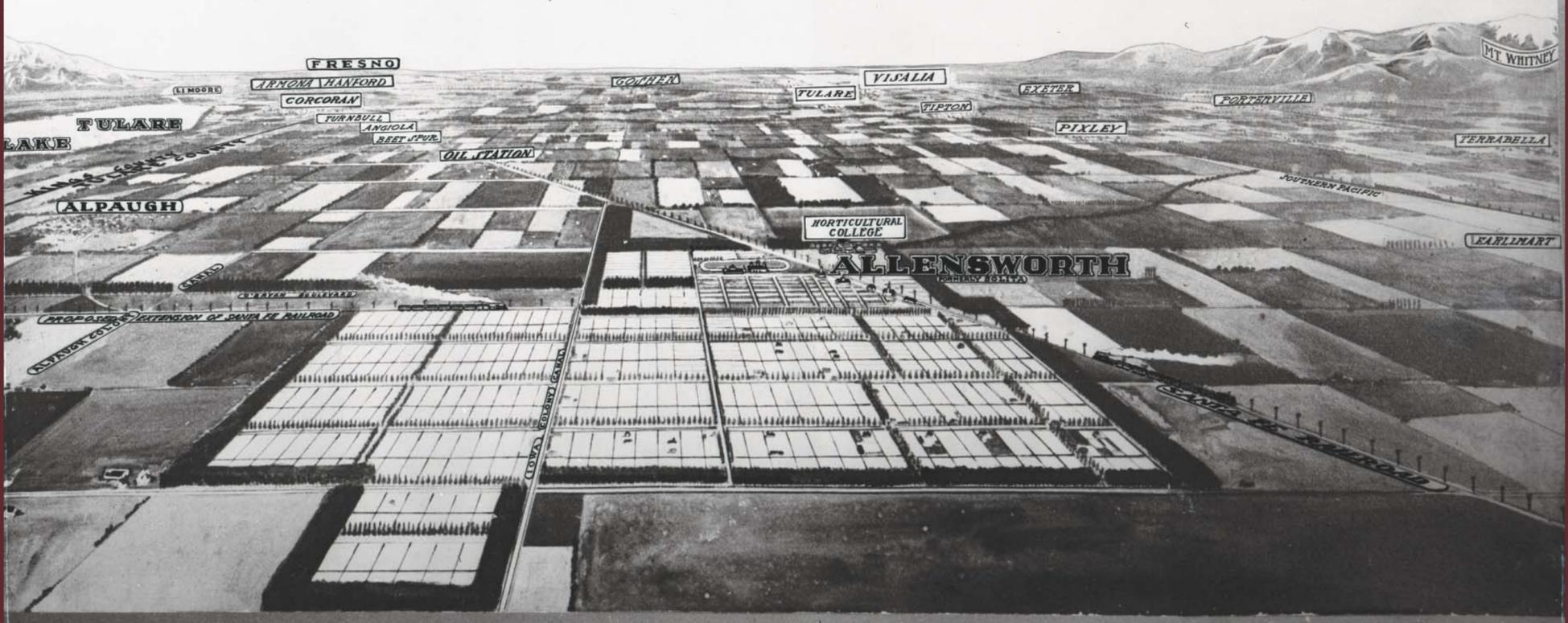
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With Allensworth in Mind:
Portrait of Colonel Allensworth,
circa 1915

Map of Allensworth — California Colony and Home Promoting Association



Map Showing the Pacific Farming Co.'s Subdivision for the
California Colony and Home Promoting Association
Office Address 906 Security Bldg., Los Angeles, Cal. Location of Tract, Allensworth, Tulare County, Cal.



CURATOR'S STATEMENT

ONE HUNDRED YEARS after the founding of Allensworth, this exhibit challenges the interpretation that the settlement was simply a black farming community that flourished, then declined, in an isolated rural area of California.

Instead, the images and words displayed here uncover the evidence that Allensworth was a planned experiment in civic power that had significant impact around the state and meaning for all.

Beyond the chronology of the town, this exhibit travels across the spatial map of California, demonstrating how influential were the intentions of the founders and citizens of Allensworth.

From Sacramento to the San Francisco Bay Area, from Tulare County, Yosemite National Park and the Los Angeles area, to El Centro in Imperial County, the community empowerment represented by the institutions, individuals and ideals emanating from Allensworth still resonates today.

Just as the town touched diverse peoples and places around California, today Col. Allensworth State Historic Park attracts a wide array of visitors of all ethnic groups — drawn to this symbol of the universal dream of freedom.

Susan Anderson

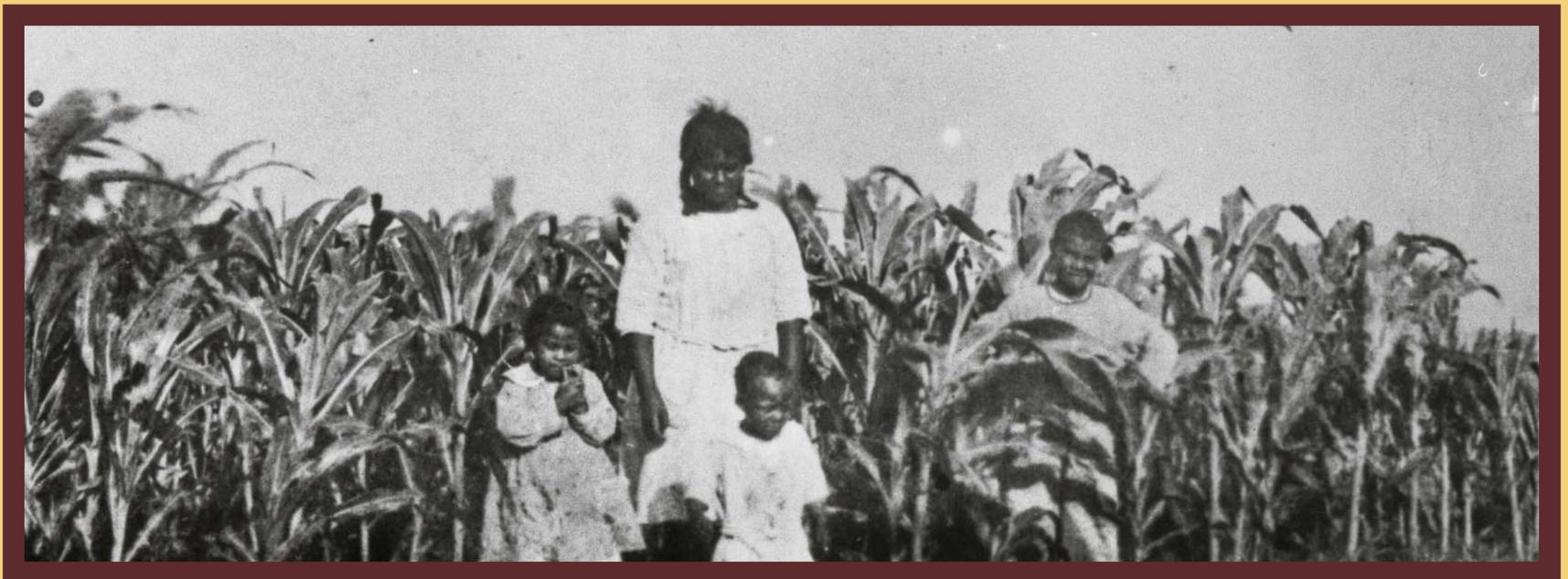
IN THE BEGINNING



The people at Allensworth belong to an aspiring, self-respecting, self-supporting middle class...they are all farmers, dairymen and traders... The Negroes of this town are hard workers. They are prosperous, happy and contented.

Charles Alexander, *The Battles and Victories of Col. Allen Allensworth*, 1914

THE SETTLEMENT of Allensworth was established in 1908 in Tulare County, 40 miles north of Bakersfield, by the Black-owned California Colony and Home Promoting Association. Allensworth represented the dream of its namesake, Col. Allen Allensworth when he dedicated the town as a place where African Americans would “settle upon the bare desert and cause it to blossom as a rose.”



Woman, children in a field of corn, *circa 1915*

THE BLACK TOWN MOVEMENT



They are a number of industrious, enterprising Negroes, who wish to develop their individuality to its highest efficiency, who are contending for industrial and intellectual liberty, not for themselves alone, but for all members of the Race, wherever they may be.

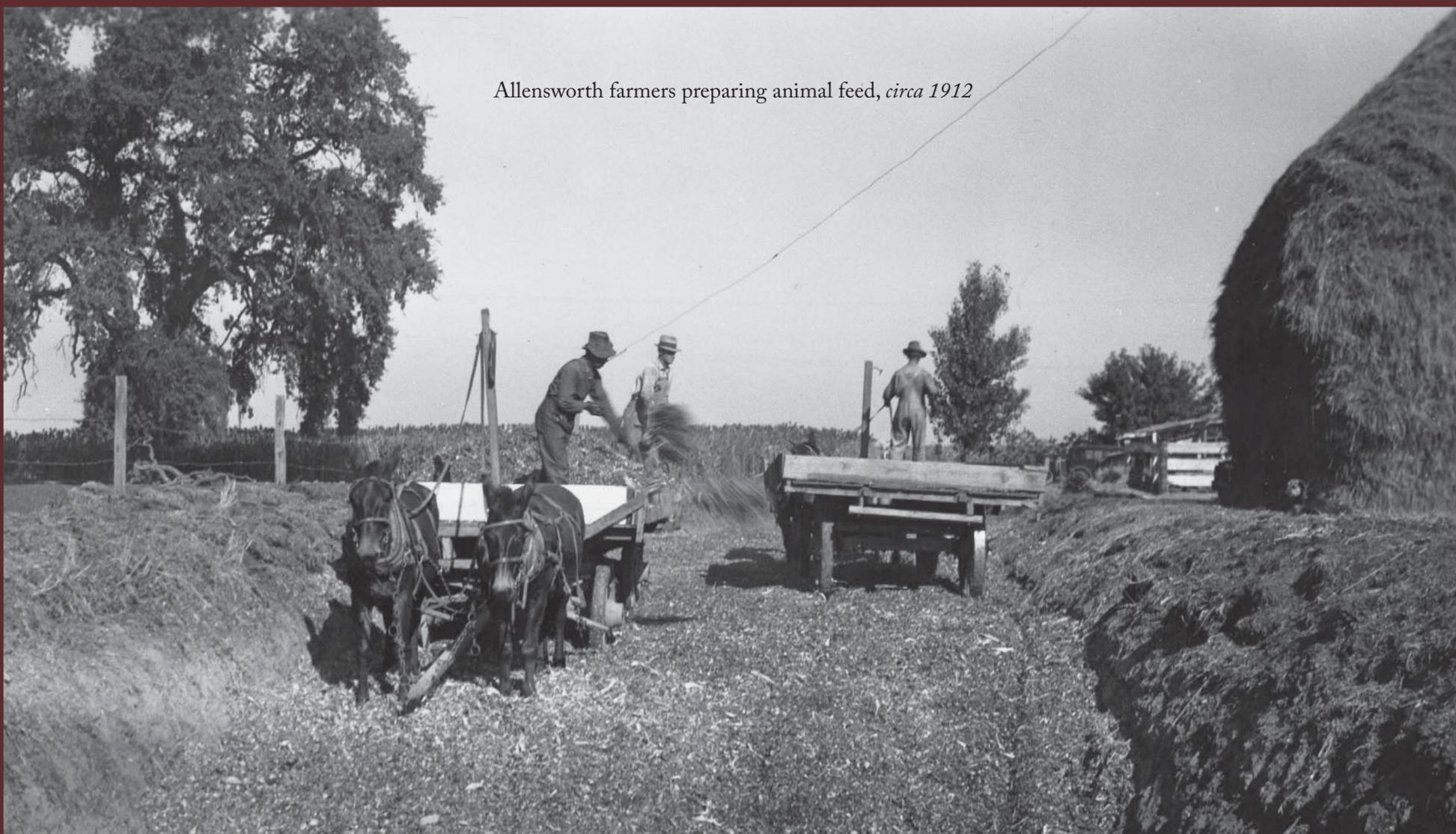
Col. Allen Allensworth, *The Sentiment Maker*, May 15th, 1912

ALLENSWORTH was one of many independent towns founded by African Americans, especially following the defeat of Reconstruction in 1877. Some of the best known of these towns are Boley, Oklahoma, Mound Bayou, Mississippi, and Nicodemus, Kansas. During a time of lynchings, race repression and the rise of Jim Crow, these towns were an expression of black striving for freedom and civic empowerment.

There were several black towns initiated in the Western U.S. and California during the late 19th century and early 20th century, but Allensworth was the most sophisticated and enduring. As an example of the pride in their heritage, planners of the town named its streets after well known personages in African American culture.

Today, visitors to Col. Allensworth State Historic Park can walk down roads honoring abolitionist Sojourner Truth, abolitionist and statesman Frederick Douglass, conservationist and military pioneer Col. Charles Young, poet and novelist Paul Laurence Dunbar and abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Allensworth farmers preparing animal feed, circa 1912



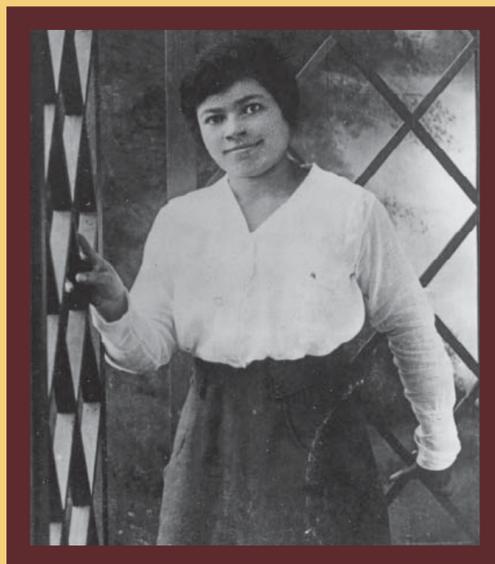
TULARE COUNTY



**The Colony is growing and prospering.
It is to be the pride of the West.**

Col. Allen Allensworth, *The Sentiment Maker*, May 15th, 1912

FOR DECADES, Allensworth thrived. Its more than 200 citizens built homes, worked farms, raised livestock, operated dairies and ran businesses, including Mary Bickers' Store, the Z. Hindsman and Company General Store, Mary Gross' Drug Store, the Singleton Store and Post Office, The Allensworth Hotel, bakery, restaurant, livery, blacksmith shop, and Frank Milner's barbershop. They built churches, educated their children at Allensworth Elementary School in their independent school district, attended their own theater, built the Mary Dickinson Memorial Library, a branch of the Tulare County Public Library, and elected Oscar Overr the first black Justice of the Peace and William H. Dotson the first black Constable in California. Allensworth residents participated in a Debating Society, symphony orchestra, Girls Glee Club and Women's Improvement League.



Ethel Hall, Allensworth's first Librarian, 1916

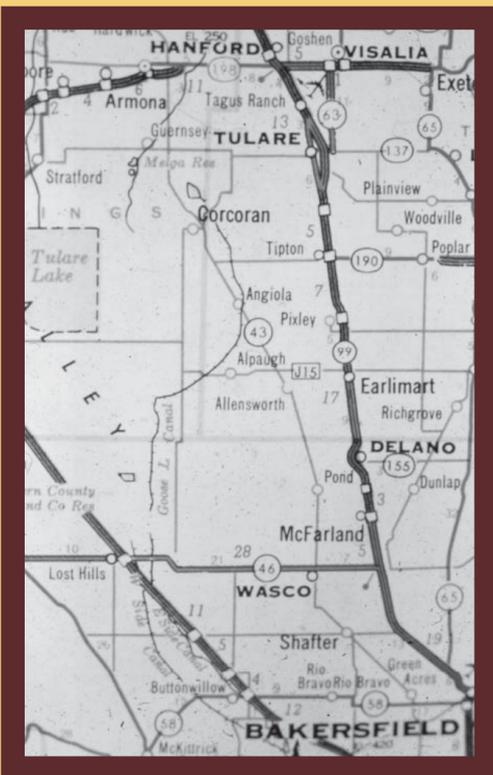
Mary Dickinson Memorial Library, circa 1918



TULARE COUNTY



TULARE COUNTY is located in the San Joaquin Valley, the part of California known for its agricultural bounty. While Allensworth leaders created a model society, the agricultural labor system surrounded it. Nearby is Delano, commemorated for the 1965 strike, when Filipino members of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee walked off the table grape fields to protest low wages and poor working conditions. They were joined by the National Farm Workers Association, led by a young, César Chavez. The two organizations became the United Farm Workers Union (UFW). The UFW was influenced and encouraged by the development of the African American-led modern civil rights movement.



Tulare County/Delano map



William Towne in his Allensworth grain field

LOS ANGELES



**Never abandon the high ground of right
for the low lands and swamps of expedience.
No man was ever lost in a straight road.**

Col. Allensworth, *The Five Manly Virtues*

The Los Angeles area gave birth to the plans for Allensworth.

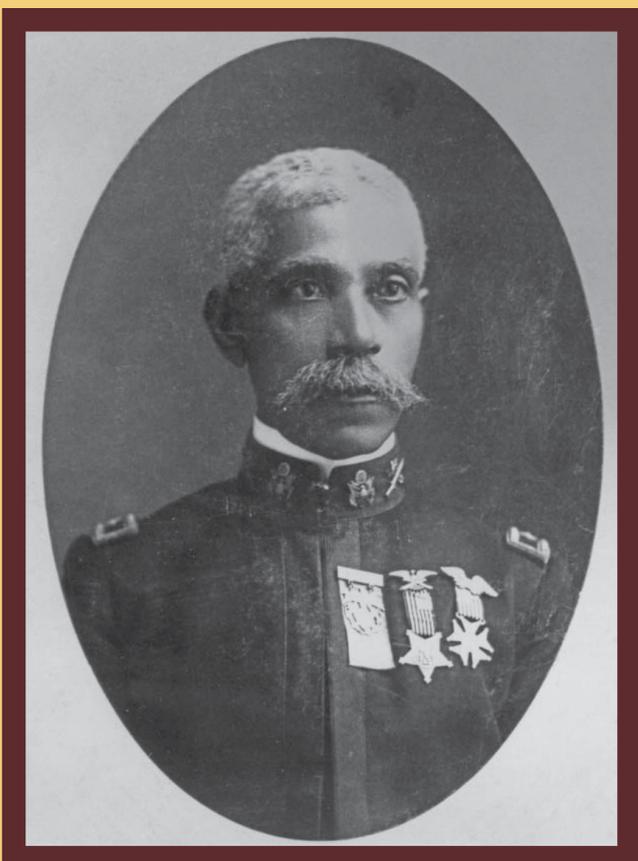
UPON RETIREMENT as Chaplain of the 24th Infantry (Buffalo Soldiers) in 1906, Col. Allensworth moved his family to Los Angeles, to a home on E. 30th Street. He and his wife, Josephine Leavell Allensworth, were integral members and leaders of black Los Angeles. His prominence was great enough to merit an article in the Los Angeles Times upon his arrival, which heralded the move “by one of the most distinguished colored

men of this country, and the senior chaplain of the U.S. Army.” In Los Angeles, Col. Allensworth and his family were active in Second Baptist Church; he was a speaker at the national Republican Convention; He was a prominent civic leader, involved in 1907 in the committee that helped pass the Owens River water bond, which led to the construction of the aqueduct, bringing water to Los Angeles. Allensworth descendants live in Los Angeles and other locations.



The Allensworth Los Angeles Home

Col. Allen Allensworth, *circa 1904 – 1906*



Josephine Leavell Allensworth, *circa 1875*



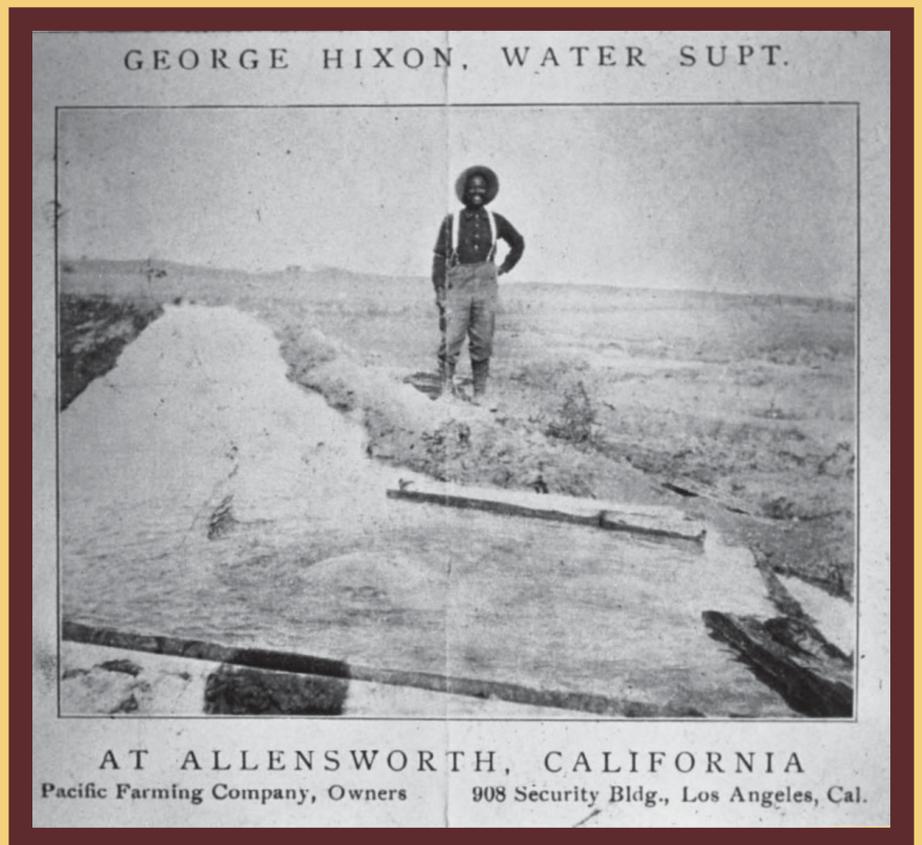
LOS ANGELES



WITH LOS ANGELES RESIDENTS, Rev. W.H. Peck, Minister of the AME church at Eighth and Towne, miner J.W. Palmer, real estate agent Harry Mitchel, and Pasadena resident and educator William Payne, Col. Allensworth incorporated the California Colony and Home Promoting Association.

The company's offices were in downtown Los Angeles. A contract was executed with The Pacific Farming Company as land broker. Officers of the California Colony and Home Promoting Association also sold shares in a municipal water company to secure adequate supplies for farming and sewage.

The establishment of the settlement fulfilled Col. Allensworth's dream of a community that would "aid in settling some of the vast problems now before the country" and give African Americans a reason, "*to sing, in spirit and in truth, My Country, 'Tis of Thee.*"



George Hixon: Water Supe, Pacific Farming Co. Advertisement, circa 1908

PASADENA



Oscar Overr and horse in Allensworth, *undated*

TOWN PIONEER, Oscar Overr, was a resident of Pasadena when he was approached by the Allensworth founders to scout land for the settlement. Overr's wife, Olivia, served as a trustee of the Allensworth School Board; her husband had donated the lumber for the school house. Overr was among the largest landowners in Allensworth. In 1914, Overr was elected the first African American Justice of the Peace in the State of California, serving for two terms until 1922. Overr also established an experimental garden in Allensworth, where crops could be tested and displayed.

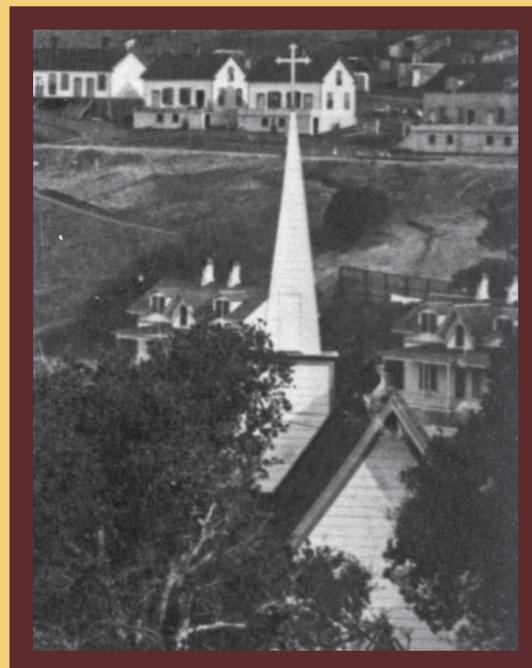
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA



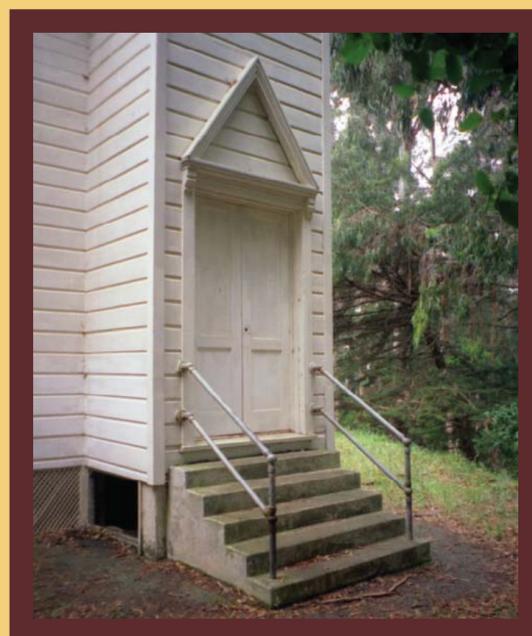
ON DECEMBER 9, 1900 then-Major Allen Allensworth was assigned Chaplain to Fort McDowell — originally called Camp Reynolds — on Angel Island, off the coast of San Francisco.

The chapel seated 100 people for Allensworth’s “lively and well attended chapel gatherings,” as well as a one-room school which seated 24 students. When he first arrived, Chaplain Allensworth was recovering from an injury suffered in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. His wife, Josephine Leavell Allensworth and daughters, Nella and Eva, “ably carried on services.” In addition to Sunday services, the Chaplain organized weekly debates among enlisted men.

By August 4, 1902, Allensworth, his family and the 24th Infantry were assigned to Forts in Montana. It is possible that memories of his stay at Fort McDowell, “this beautiful garrison which looks out through the Golden Gate,” influenced Allensworth’s decision to retire to California in 1906.



South elevation of the chapel, *date unknown*

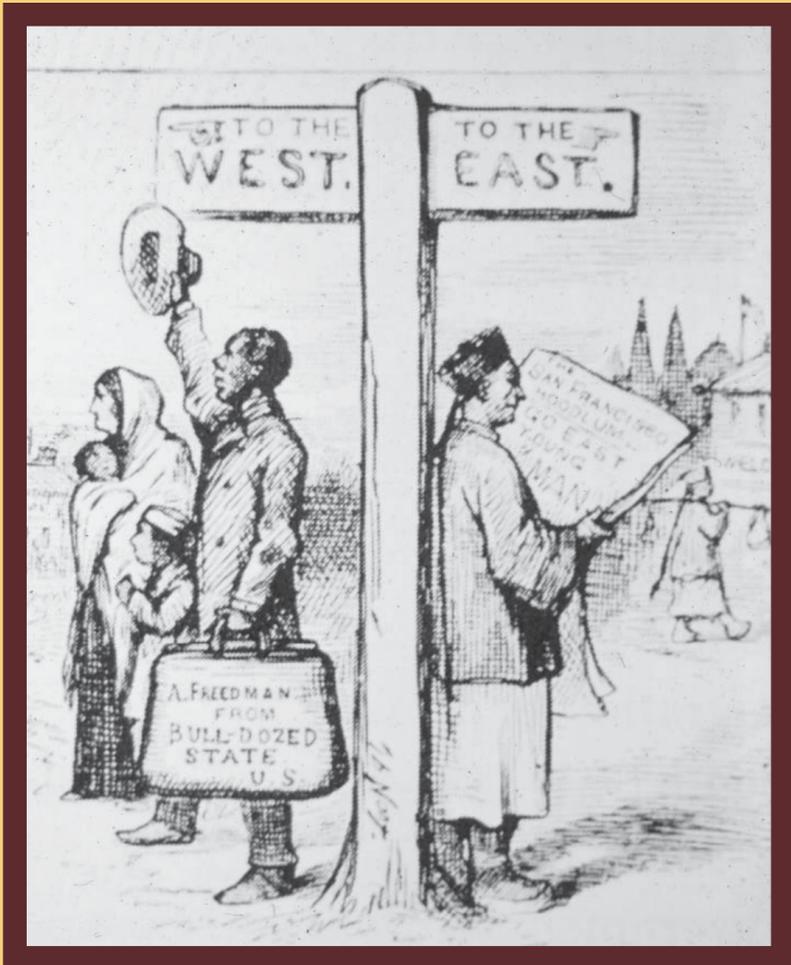


West Garrison Chapel, front entry doorway,
1997 image

ANGEL ISLAND



ANGEL ISLAND, the location of the former Fort McDowell, off the coast of San Francisco, is often considered “the Ellis Island of the West,” the primary entry point for Asians to the United States, during the early 20th century. However, in 1910, eight years after Col. Allensworth’s departure, an immigration station was established at Angel Island, not to encourage newcomers from Asia, but to control the flow of Chinese immigrants to America.



For a time, after Reconstruction and before WWI, African Americans and Chinese Americans endured large-scale repression. Southern states practiced Jim Crow, a system of laws restricting black rights, and lynchings were epidemic. On the West coast, Chinese immigrants faced legal barriers and were the targets of violence during a time when the large numbers of Asian immigrants were referred to as “the Yellow Peril.”

*'Difficult Problems Solving Themselves,'
Thomas Nast cartoon, Harper's Weekly, 1870s*

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

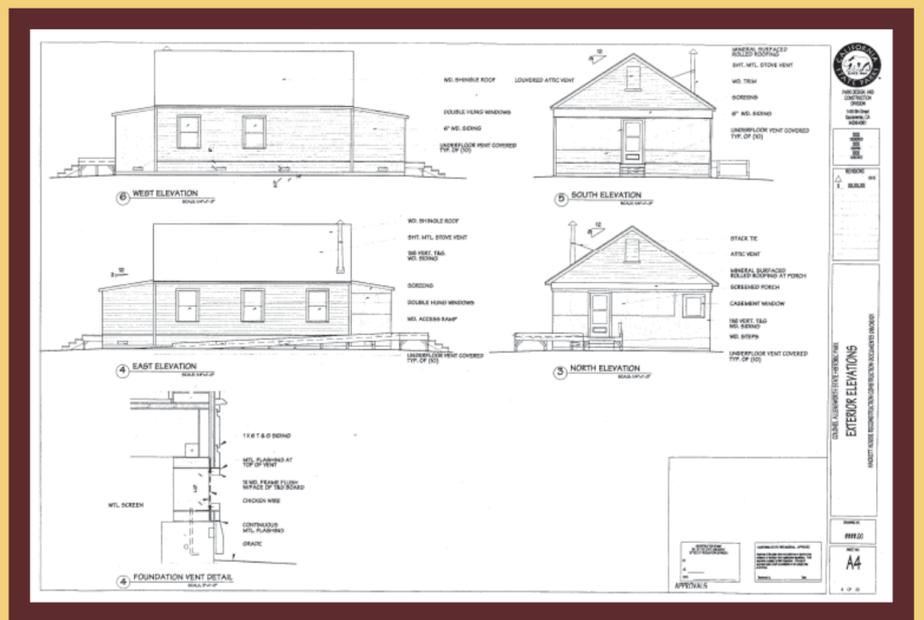


My father was very race conscious,
and that was why, after all his long residence in Alameda,
he decided he wanted to go and be a part of it
(Allensworth).

Sadie Hackett Calbert, *Oral history*

Successful businessman and civic leader, known as “one of Alameda County’s most esteemed citizens,” James Hackett became an Allensworth pioneer at age 60, after building for his wife and children the first home in Alameda for an African American family in 1890. He operated the Hackett Rubber Goods Company on California Street in San Francisco, and opened in 1907 a prosperous East Bay business, Hackett Drayage. He helped to found Cooper A.M.E. Zion church in Oakland, the Oakland chapter of the Afro American Council and the Northern California branch of the NAACP.

The Hackett home in Allensworth was the first location for the town elementary school. Descendants of James and his wife, Alice Hackett, Live in Visalia, California and elsewhere.



Hackett House architectural drawings for restoration

SACRAMENTO

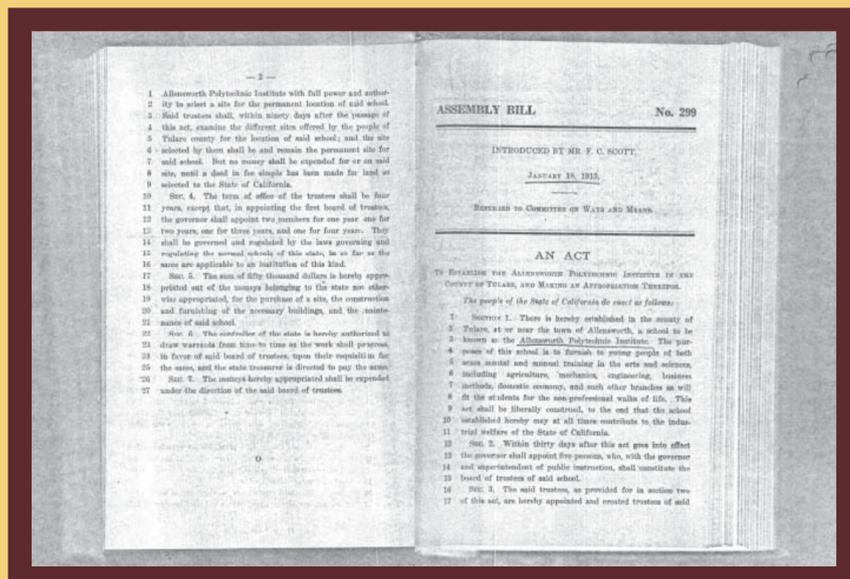


THE HISTORIC State Capitol building, in use since 1874, was the stage for the state-wide drama that erupted over a bill introduced by Visalia Assemblyman Fred Scott to build a vocational school at Allensworth.

Education was a priority at Allensworth. The school was the first community building in the settlement, built in 1910. It was the dream of Col. Allensworth and William Payne, principal of the Allensworth school, to develop a vocational school, called by its supporters, “the Tuskegee Institute of the West.”

In a letter in support of the plan, Tulare County librarian, Bessie Herman Twaddle, wrote, *The colored people in the colony at Allensworth...feel that their young people ought to have vocational training rather than classical education...They hope to have a school...so that the colored young people of the west will not need to go back east to Hampton and Tuskegee (sic) for their practical education...Some of the members of the State Board of Education feel quite confident that we shall be successful...*

Assembly Bill No. 299 Introduced by Assemblyman F.C. Scott, January 18, 1915, Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, An Act to Establish the Allensworth Polytechnic Institute and an Appropriation Therefor...



(below) Allensworth School Children



SACRAMENTO



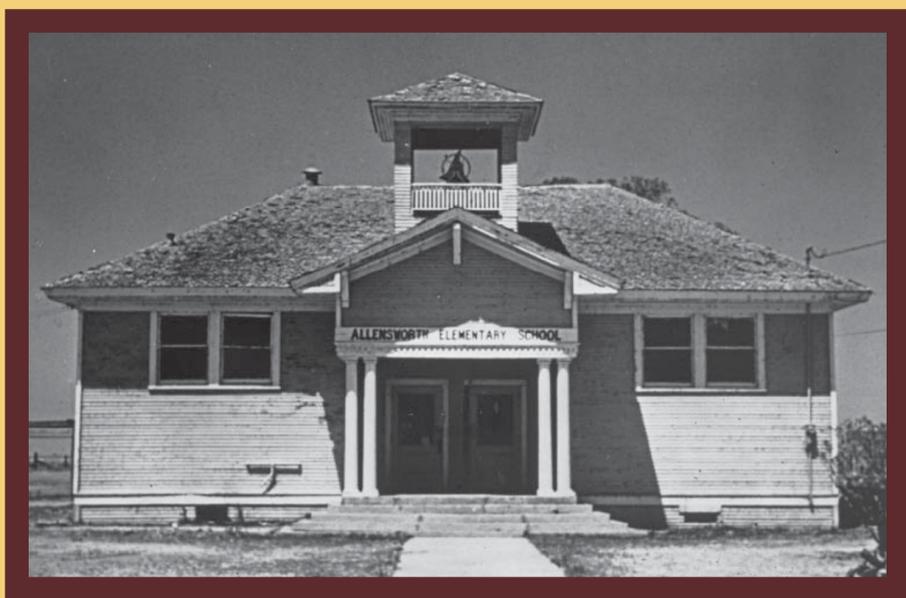
**In view of our peculiar situation here (in California)
we must oppose all forms of separation.**

Editorial, *Oakland Sunshine*, African American-owned newspaper, March 20, 1915

EDUCATOR WILLIAM PAYNE, and town leader, Oscar Overr, traveled the state to build support for the Allensworth vocational school proposal.

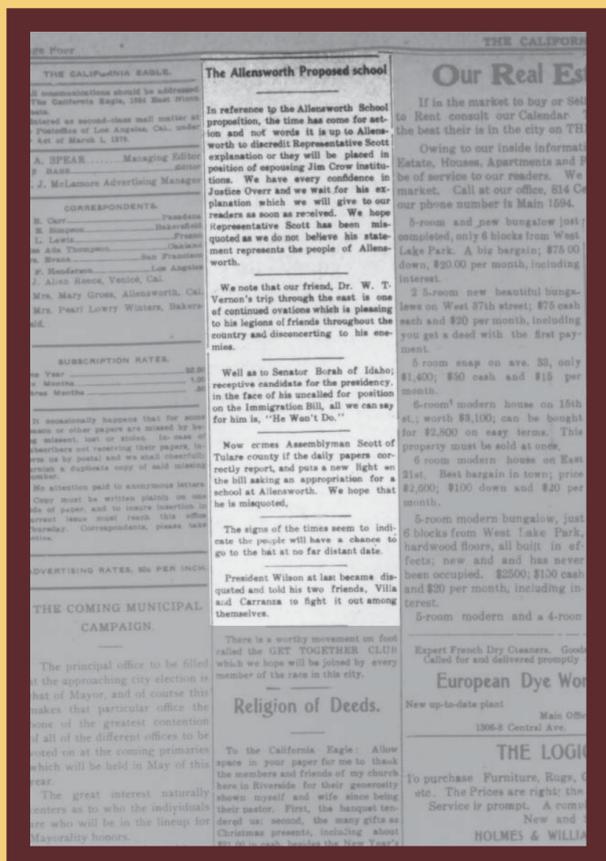
In a seeming paradox, black leaders successfully lobbied against the legislation. Its author, Assemblyman Scott of Visalia, was an avowed segregationist, and California's black leaders had fresh memories of the decades-long struggle for equal education in California. In 1852, the Legislature passed a law excluding black children from public schools. Black parents established private schools to instruct their children, while fighting to open the public schools. A lawsuit brought by the parents of Mary Ward led to the State Supreme

Court allowing separate black schools in 1872, predating the U.S. Supreme Court's Plessy v. Ferguson ruling of 1896. Visalia, in Tulare County, did not integrate its schools until a court order of 1890. "Efforts to re-establish a segregated public school system persisted, with such bills introduced in the State Legislature in 1913, 1914, and 1915."



Allensworth Elementary School, circa 1918

'The Allensworth Proposed School,'
The California Eagle, January 16, 1915, page four



'Allensworth Responds to Race Criticism,'
The California Eagle, January 23, 1915, front page



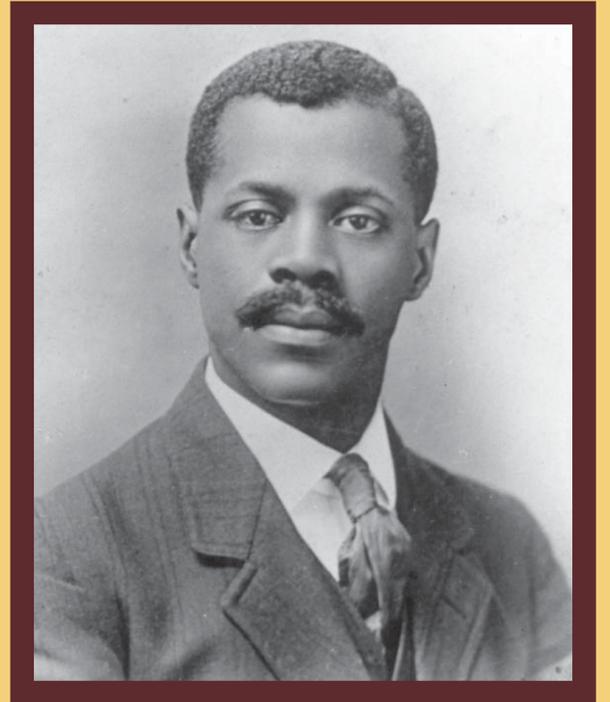
EL CENTRO, IMPERIAL COUNTY



PROF. WILLIAM PAYNE, Col. Allensworth's closest associate, remained as one of the settlement's leaders until 1921, when he and his family left for the Imperial County town of El Centro. There he became principal of the all-black Dunbar Elementary School — named after famed poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar — in the segregated district. Payne also became the principal at the new Eastside High school for African American students. Residents convinced the Board of Trustees to change the name to honor abolitionist and statesman, Frederick Douglass, and the school became Douglass High School.

Payne was an educational innovator; he extended educational opportunities through the first high school available to African Americans in El Centro. He offered junior college courses to the students at Douglass.

Payne's schools also became a center for training African American teachers. Many districts in California required Black teachers to have a year of experience, while denying Black teachers jobs in the classroom. At Dunbar Elementary and Douglass High School in El Centro, African American teachers received the training and experience that allowed them to obtain work as educators and break the color barrier in districts around the state.



Early photograph of Professor Payne, *undated*



Douglass High School preserved as a Masonic Lodge, *circa 1950s*

COL. ALLEN ALLENSWORTH



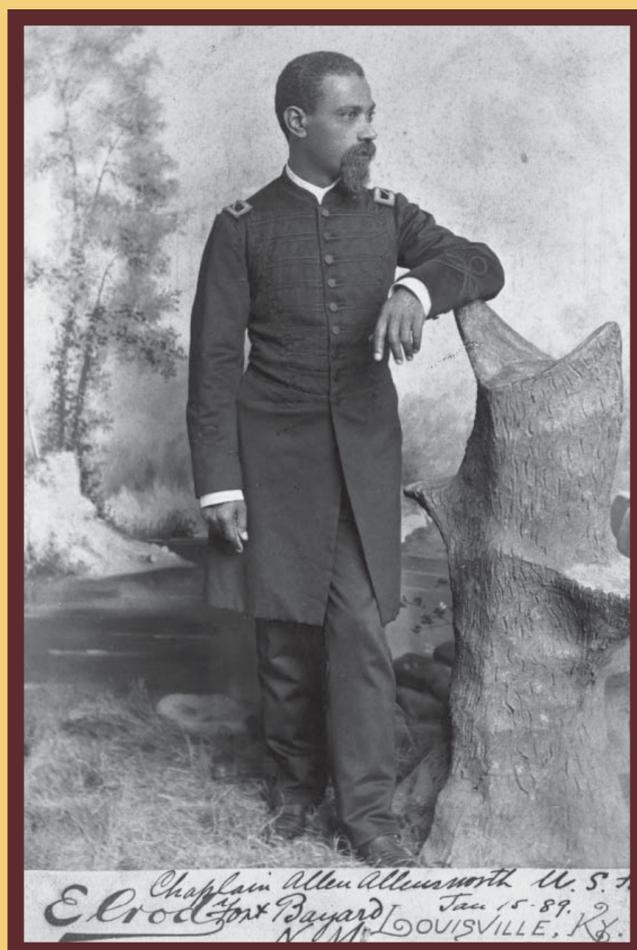
In considering the characters that have made history it is interesting to note that a large percent of them were cradled in obscurity, and attained a noble place on the world's roll of honor only by refusing to acknowledge environment as master of their destiny...

Col. Allensworth, *The Battle of Life and How to Fight It*

ALLEN ALLENSWORTH was born a slave in Louisville, Kentucky, April 7, 1842. When, at age 12, he was sold as punishment for learning to read, his mother gave him money to buy a book and a comb, to “*put knowledge from the book into your head, and comb everything else out.*” He tried to escape slavery twice. In 1862, he successfully became attached as a nurse to Union Army troops during the Civil War. In 1863, he signed up as a First Class Seaman in the Navy and was discharged as a First Class Petty officer at the end of the war.

As a civilian, Allensworth worked for the Navy, opened two restaurants in St. Louis, Missouri, with his brother, William, was a janitor and student at the normal school in Louisville, became a teacher at the nearby Freedman's Bureau school, graduated from the Baptist-affiliated Roger Williams University in Nashville, married Josephine Leavell in 1877, and as Rev. Allensworth, led Baptist churches in Kentucky and Ohio, before being appointed Chaplain of the 24th Infantry in 1886 by President Grover Cleveland.

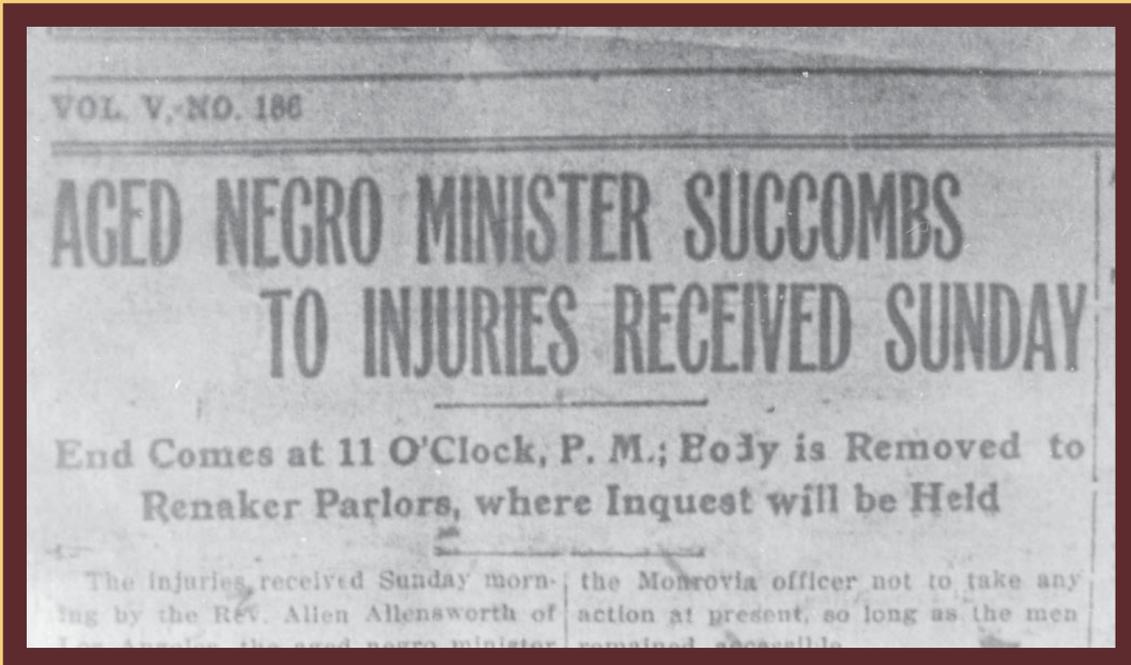
Allensworth, one of the first and highest ranking African American Army Chaplains, distinguished himself as a successful educator and exemplary leader and was rewarded with the rank of Lt. Col. on his 1906 retirement.



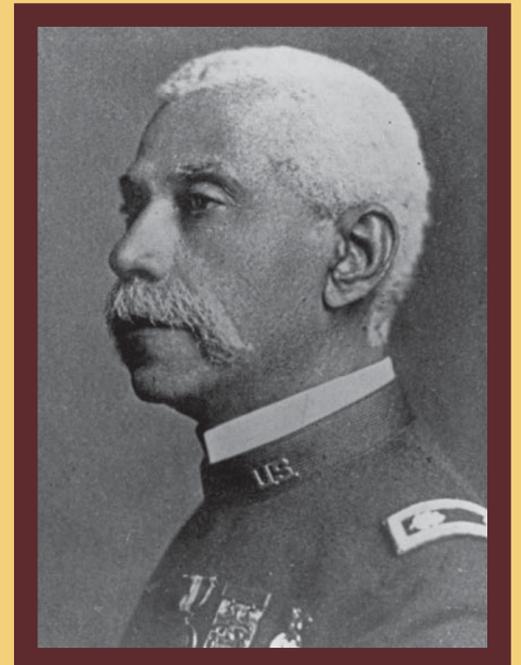
Studio portrait of Col. Allensworth, January 15, 1889, three years after receiving his commission

Chaplain Allen Allensworth U. S. A.
E. Crockett Bayard Jan 15 89
N. M. LOUISVILLE, Ky.

COL. ALLEN ALLENSWORTH



Aged Negro Minister Succumbs (sic) to Injuries Received Sunday —
Monrovia Daily News, 1914



Col. Allen Allensworth —
retired, circa 1906

COL. ALLENSWORTH was killed by reckless motorcyclists on his way to preach at Second Baptist Church in Monrovia in September 1914. For a time, his widow, Josephine, continued her leadership role in Allensworth, but moved back to Los Angeles in the 1920s to live with her daughter, Nella, who was married to successful businessman and contractor, Louis Blodgett. Josephine died in 1932. The Col. and his family are buried in Los Angeles.

BUFFALO SOLDIERS



I do sincerely hope that every soldier will buy and settle in the colony where such a fine opportunity awaits them...

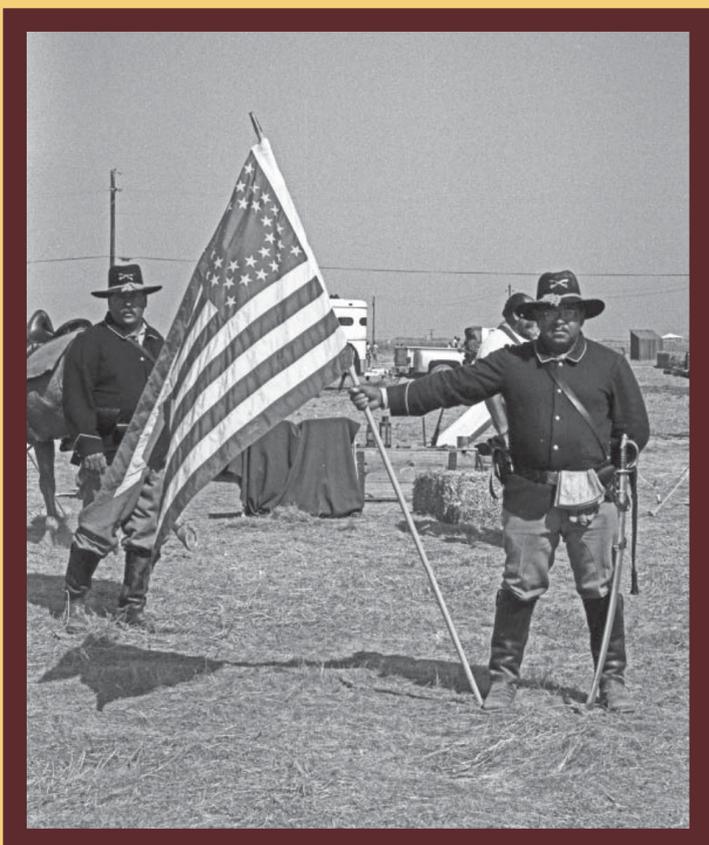
You can not save your money better than to buy property at Allensworth. It will give you an anchor and a home to go to when you leave the Army.

Sergeant John W. Holt, U.S. Army, Retired, 937 E. 32nd St., Los Angeles, *The Sentiment Maker*, May 15th, 1912

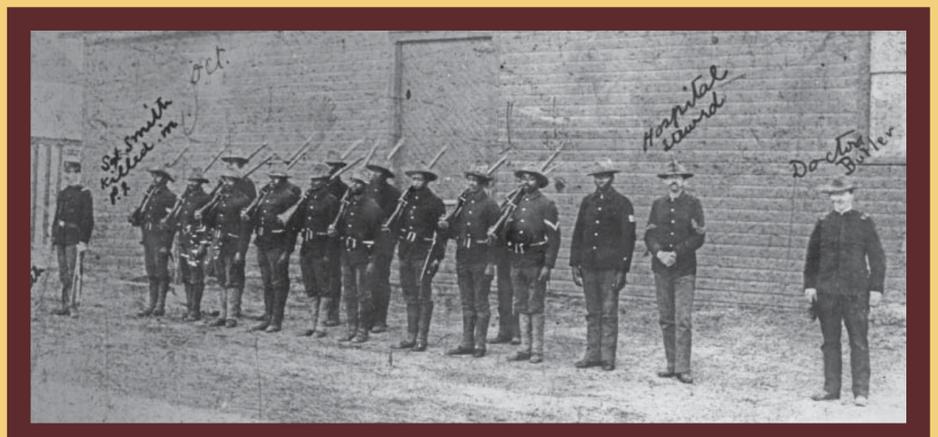
THE 24TH INFANTRY, for which Col. Allensworth was Chaplain, was one of the four all-black, segregated Army units that existed until Pres. Eisenhower integrated the U.S. military during the 1950s Korean War. The nickname "Buffalo Soldiers" was originally given to the 10th Cavalry by Cheyenne warriors out of respect for their fierce fighting in 1867. Despite second-class treatment, Buffalo soldiers were regiments of the highest caliber and had the lowest desertion and alcoholism rates in the Army. Troops of the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry lived and were stationed in California through WWII.

In 1899, Col. Allensworth's 24th Infantry patrolled Yosemite Park. Four years later, Troops K and L of the 9th cavalry, under the command of Col. Charles Young, patrolled and secured Yosemite National Park. In 1903, Troops I and M rode sixteen rough days from the Presidio in San Francisco to Sequoia National Park, where they secured the area, and built and repaired roads. During this time, Col. Young was Acting Superintendent of Sequoia Park and Kings Canyon and an advocate for their preservation. The trails his troops constructed are still in use.

Contemporary 'Buffalo Soldiers' at Col. Allensworth State Historic Park, *October 1995*



Members and others attached to the 24th Infantry, *October 1899, probably the Philippines*



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH



The Baptist Church in California contributed to Allensworth's development.

COL. ALLENSWORTH was a Baptist minister. When he retired to Los Angeles in 1906, he was a prominent member of Second Baptist Church.

The Allensworth settlement was home to three congregations, African Methodist Episcopal, Seventh Day Adventist, and Baptist. All used The First Baptist Church building which served as a house of worship, a meeting place for the entire community, and a memorial to the faith of Col. Allensworth.

The Col. took the lead in obtaining a building for the Baptist congregation at Allensworth. In 1914, as the land exchange was arranged for the ownership of the site by the Baptist Church, the Col. was tragically killed. Citizens of Allensworth vowed to continue in their leader's name, *"We pledge to live up to the idea's that were Col. Allensworth's. We re-affirm our faith in the community he founded..."*

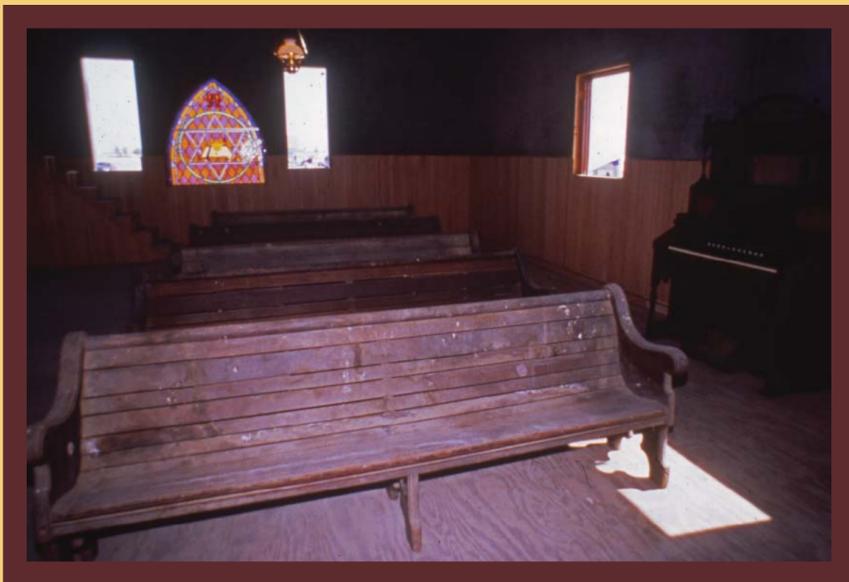


First Baptist Church *photo taken 1966*

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH



IN LATE 1914, the legendary pastor, Rev. J.L. Allen, after whom the Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland is named, was enlisted to construct the church building. The First Baptist Church was dedicated in “impressive ceremonies” including Baptist dignitaries from around California in 1916. From 1916 to 1967, the church had a small, dedicated congregation and was shepherded by missionary pastors. Important community events, such as Allensworth School commencement ceremonies, were held at the church. By 1967, with the decline of the town’s population, the building was abandoned, and eventually torn down. Building materials, including original church pews, were salvaged. In 2000, the building, restored by the California Parks and Recreation Department, was commemorated in ceremonies at Col. Allensworth State Historic Park that attracted 6,000 participants.



First Baptist Church interior — under restoration, 2000



First Baptist Church exterior — Dedication, *October 2000*

DECLINE AND RESURRECTION

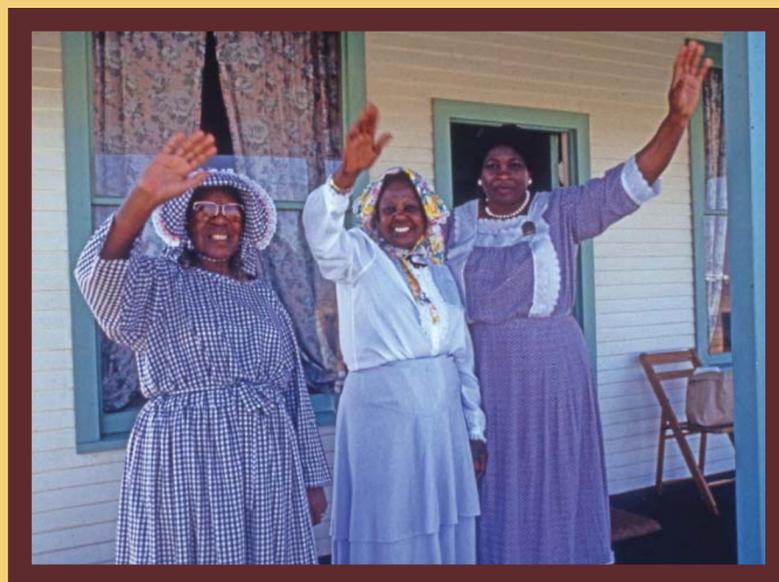


AFTER COL. ALLENSWORTH'S death, and the failure of the vocation school proposal, battles over water rights and water table levels destroyed the once-thriving agricultural base. The owners of the Santa Fe railroad diverted the spur away from Allensworth to neighboring, all-white Alpaugh. The loss of the railway depot hurt the town's economy. Later, suspicions regarding water contamination plagued the town.

Despite its slow deterioration over the 20th century, Allensworth became "the town that refused to die." By 1976, the efforts of concerned citizens resulted in legislation signed into law by Gov. Ronald Reagan, establishing Col. Allensworth State Historic Park. The park now preserves and interprets the influential history of the Allensworth and its residents — *"pioneers in spirit and deed,"* an inspiration to all Californians.



Crowds at Col. Allensworth State Historic Park, Oct. 2000



Docents in period dress, Col. Allensworth State Historic Park, 1999

Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Sign





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