

Prairie Switch

Gabrielle Gonzales

Wood, Prismacolor pencil, metal, cotton, acrylic paint

The Prairie Switch, currently known as El Campo, is located in the coastal plains of Texas. The Prairie Switch was a railroad camp that served as a switching point on the Houston-Victoria Railroad and a shipping point on the New York, Texas, and Mexican Railroad. Ranching and Railroads were the primary industry during the 1880s; the small camp annually shipped an abundance of cattle and crops such as cotton, hay, and corn.

My ancestors migrated to the Prairie Switch from Mexico, seeking a better life and opportunities for work. After settlement, ranching, railroads, and church was what daily life consisted of as my family quickly grew to occupy the town. I relive my grandma’s past as she describes her endeavors growing up in the Prairie Switch; her fond memories of picking cotton with her siblings and cousins, and Sunday rituals of god, family, and potlucks. As time continued, my family changed and evolved just as the town did. A greater distance has been created between generations, one that I now experience. I have no ties to the migration of countries or the great Vaqueros of Texas. I live in liminality, unattached and unknowing to my past, but perhaps liminality is my history.

