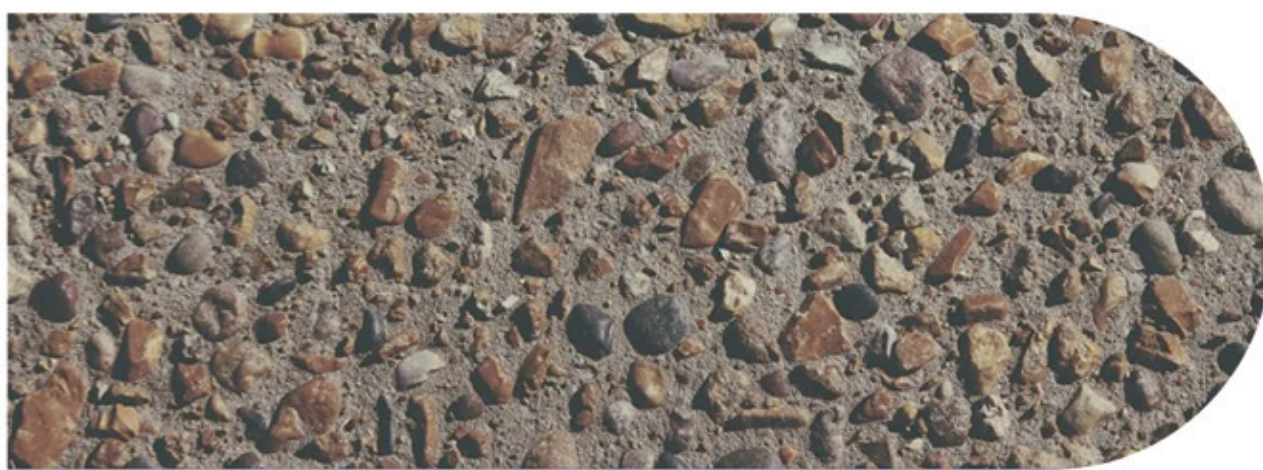




## American Tower Site #88793 & A Western Harvester Hill Broomfield, CO



exposed aggregate



I pulled off Highway 36 specifically to look at this cell phone tower atop a ridge in Broomfield. I mean, it's a great cell site—like an offshore oil rig bobbing up out of the shortgrass prairie as you drive east towards the Denver sprawl. Its gravel plot is fenced off for safety. Warnings include: *Do not stop in front of antennas.* *All personnel should have electromagnetic energy (EME) awareness training.* *Use personal RF monitors while working near antennas.* You'll boil your testes, toast your ankles (due to their small wet tissue cross-sectional area), and give yourself cataracts if you sit in front of the directional antennas too long, says the OSHA EME training guide I found online. "The body is most efficient at absorbing energy when *whole body resonance* occurs in the 40 to 80 MHz range." I feel none of this from behind the fence. Hard to tell if the aches in my feet and the pain in my stomach are things I brought here with me, or created in the presence of the tower. I find myself empathizing with 5G conspiracists.

Behind the fence, among the small buildings and metal scaffolding, sits a Kohler diesel generator, stationary, waiting. It's built and branded by the company known for toilets and bathtubs, which began producing diesel engines after acquiring the Italian company Lombardini in 2007. Looking for more information on why a toilet company makes diesel engines, I find that they no longer will. On November 6th, 2023, the Kohler Company announced they will outsource their energy division to Platinum Equity, which manages \$47 billion in assets. David Kohler calls this a "bold and strategic move for the future of our company." Mergers and acquisitions. Corporate carve-outs.

Everything here is a bit gritty. The air kicked up with the dust of the earthmoving machines over the crest, expanding the airport. The crest of a hill—a good spot for an airport. A good spot for a cell tower array. A good spot for prairie dogs. A good spot to stop and poke around. "I honestly don't give a crap," says the Ball Aerospace security guard. "I saw you looking at the tower. I saw you looking at me. As long as you don't take any pictures of the buildings or any of the cars in the parking lot, I honestly don't give a crap." The cell tower is located just off the Ball Aerospace & Technologies facility. Yes, the jar company. Well, actually, they sold the canning side of their business to Newell Brands to focus on spaceships, satellites, lasers, sensors, surveillance, and electronic warfare. Mergers and acquisitions. Corporate carve-outs. Their website indicates they make technologies that can "use the electromagnetic spectrum, or directed energy to control the spectrum, attack an enemy, or disrupt enemy assaults." It sounds like they found a way to weaponize the small wet tissue cross-sectional area of my ankles.

"I'm an artist" doesn't give me any additional leeway with the guard, but perhaps excuses my erratic movements around the space—to the RF towers, to the network of chirping prairie dogs in the vacant lot, sliding sideways down the road cut above Interlocken Loop (State Highway 128), squatting around the Western Harvester Ant hills.

Named for their diet of seeds gleaned from the surrounding areas, the ants create subterranean granaries, feeding their queen the seeds they can, and waiting patiently for the outer coverings of more stubborn seeds to split open during germination. These ants have a proclivity for collecting certain-sized granules to build their hills. It doesn't even have to be rock, it seems. A glass shard, a morsel of charcoal, or bits of cement, but predominantly quartz, polished pink stones, and the tiniest conglomerates are what I find.

In August of 1889, John Bell Hatcher, paleontologist and fossil hunter, known as the "king of collectors," was tasked with finding cretaceous-period mammal fossils in the Wyoming Badlands for researchers at Yale University. These micro-fossils: a bone chip, a tooth, a jawbone, indicate the earliest development of placental mammals and are fleetingly rare. And yet, they too are a desirable size and density for the most diligent collectors in the Western Plains—the ant. In a single day in Wyoming, Hatcher found 87 tiny fossils placed on an ant hill as he panned for them like gold. Through this technique, carried on today, the Western Harvesters have entered into an unwitting scientific collaboration to aggregate and organize fossils on their hills, only for them to be scooped up and placed in natural history collections.

At some point, the stones, glass shards, and mouse tooth fossils will weather too small for an ant's liking and, therefore, become unfindable to scientists. Perhaps they'll blow off this hilltop as dust, carried by the harsh winds that whip off the Rockies, finding a home nestled in the raw topsoil of a nearby development. I pull out my phone, take some photos, and send a text to my partner, telling her I'll be home soon. Another one to my uncle in East Denver declining his invitation for Thanksgiving, and last to my mother in Vermont checking if they too have had a killing frost. The security guard has relocated, and the Teslas, Broncos, and Range Rovers in the Ball Aerospace parking lot begin to file out onto Interlocken Loop, and so do I.

