

Historic Preservation through Powerful Interpretation

Creating Signage that Fosters
Community Stewardship



Utah State Historic
Preservation Office

Introductions



Emma Farley
SHPO Marketing and Design
Specialist



Marcos Van Dalen
SHPO History Researcher



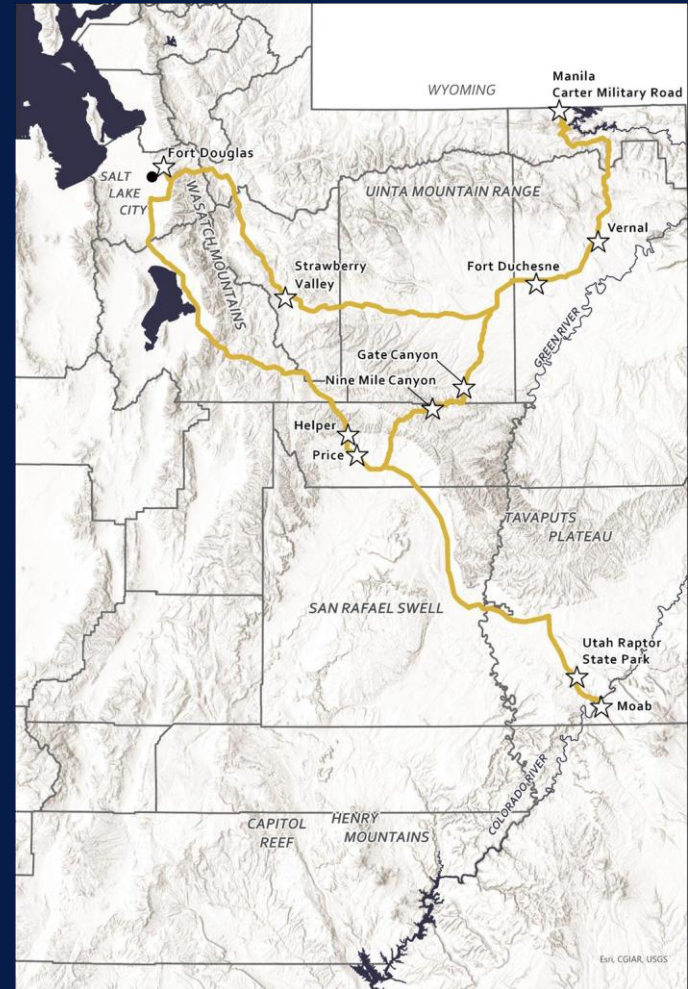
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Overview:

1. What is Interpretation
2. The Interpretive Signage Process
3. How to Research for Interpretative Signage.
4. Turning Research into Writing
5. How to Craft your Content
6. Production and Industry Standards



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What is Interpretation?

- 1. An analysis of the facts.
- 1. Revealing meaning rather than simply communicating factual information.
- 1. It helps people better understand history
- 1. Interpretation is not just information, it is engaging people



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The Buffalo Soldier Heritage Trail

- Before this project, Utah's Buffalo Soldier history was relatively unknown.
- Research, presentation, publications have all increased public awareness.
- Through these signs, we are putting this history out into the world
 - Thousands of people will experience and connect with these signs every single year. Strawberry Reservoir - 2 Million visitors a year.
- This is what interpretation is all about, turning forgotten history into a story that lives on



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Real World Process

1. Select project and identify sign locations.
1. Gather stakeholders
1. Confirm approvals and compliance
1. Plan entire project cost
1. Install and maintain

BSHT

PARTNER

- American West Center
- University of Utah History Department
- Bureau of Land Management, Price and Vernal Field Offices
- Fort Douglas Military Museum
- Utah National Guard
- Uintah and Ouray Agency Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest
- Ashley National Forest
- Price Prehistoric Museum
- Helper Historic Museum
- Uintah County Regional History Center
- Uintah County Heritage Museum
- Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation
- Utah Department of Cultural and Community Engagement



General Costs

- 1. Sign Base: ~\$600-700.
- 1. Sign Panel: ~\$100
- 1. Installation materials: \$200



How to Research for an Interpretive Sign.

Research at three levels: national, regional, and local to fully understand its history:

National:

- How does this story fit in the national context.
- Research national-level assets: National Archives, Library of Congress, NPS Theme studies, Smithsonians etc.

Regional:

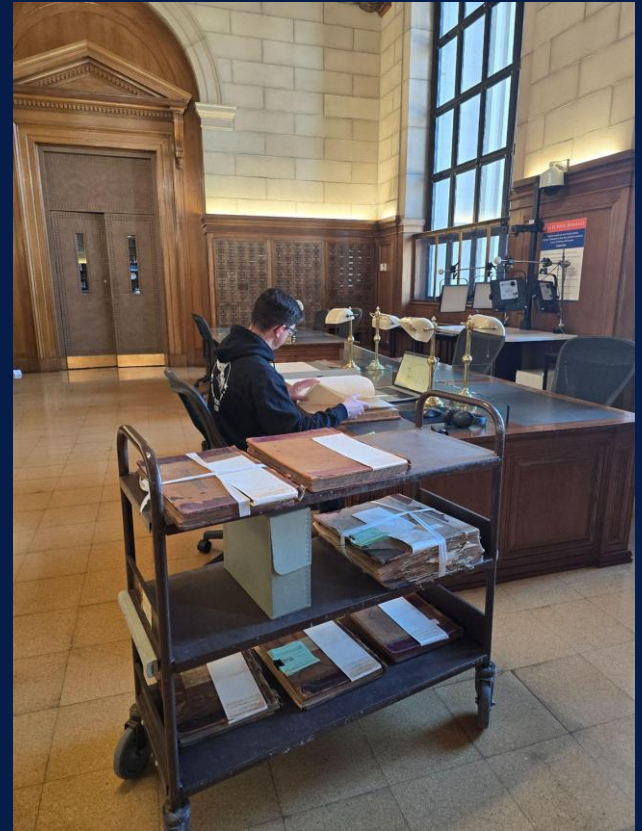
- How does this story fit in my region? The American West, South etc.
- Research region or topic specific sources: Mountain West Digital Library, Western Historical Quarterly, The American West Center.

Local:

- Connect this story with the physical location.
- The Marriot Library, local Historical Societies, Newspapers, and Oral Histories are effective tools to do so.

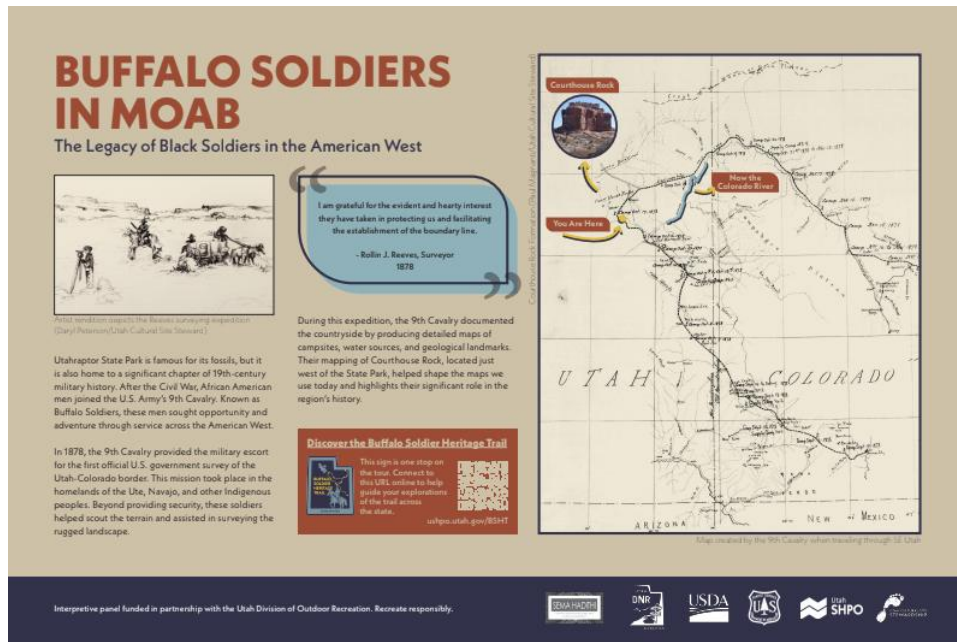


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Turning Research into Writing

1. **Understand the Audience**
 - General Public, not historians.
1. **Identify the Main Story**
 - What is missing, forgotten, or misunderstood?
1. **Use research as a support**
 - Don't force too much information, be selective.
1. **Draft, Consult, and Edit**
 - Involve stakeholders, balance priorities.
1. **Stay Focused.**
 - You cannot cover everything.



The Buffalo Soldiers in Moab

BUFFALO SOLDIERS IN MOAB

The Legacy of Black Soldiers in the American West



Members of the 9th U.S. Cavalry, unknown location, circa 1900

Not long after Colorado became a state, there was a need to survey its rugged border with the Utah Territory. For three months in the summer of 1878, the 9th Cavalry provided military escort for the surveyors. Their job was to protect them as they mapped an area only really known to the Ute, Navajo, and other tribes of the region.

Following the Civil War, African American men joined the U.S. Army and headed west, looking for adventure and opportunity. These men became known as "Buffalo Soldiers," a nickname believed to have been given to them by Native Americans who compared their bravery to the revered buffalo. The soldiers embraced the name.



Artist rendition depicts the Elk Mountain Mission (Daryl Peterson/Utah Cultural Site Steward)

The 9th Cavalry kept meticulous hand-drawn maps of their journey. One prominent landmark they documented was the "Old Mormon Fort" (Elk Mountain Mission). Established in 1855 by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this preceded modern Moab.

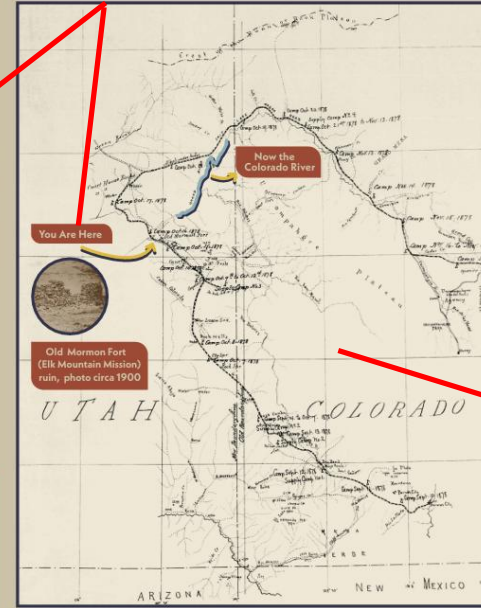
Discover the Buffalo Soldier Heritage Trail



This sign is one stop on the tour. Connect to this URL online to help guide your explorations of the trail across the state.

ushpo.utah.gov/BSHT

Local Connection



Regional Connection

Interpretive panel funded in partnership with the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation. Recreate responsibly.



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Good and Bad Examples

1. The deployment of Buffalo Soldiers, specifically elements of the 9th Cavalry Regiment, into the Utah Territory in 1878 was predicated on the Secretary of the Interior's mandate to establish the boundary with Colorado. This three-month engagement necessitated that the regiment provide sustained military escort for the surveying party and ensure the reliable maintenance of all critical logistical supply lines.
1. Soon after Colorado became a state, there was a need to survey its rugged border with the Utah Territory. For three months in the summer of 1878, the 9th Cavalry of Buffalo Soldiers provided military escort for the surveyors. Their job was to protect them as they mapped a region only really known to the Ute, Navajo, and other tribes of the region.

Crafting the Content

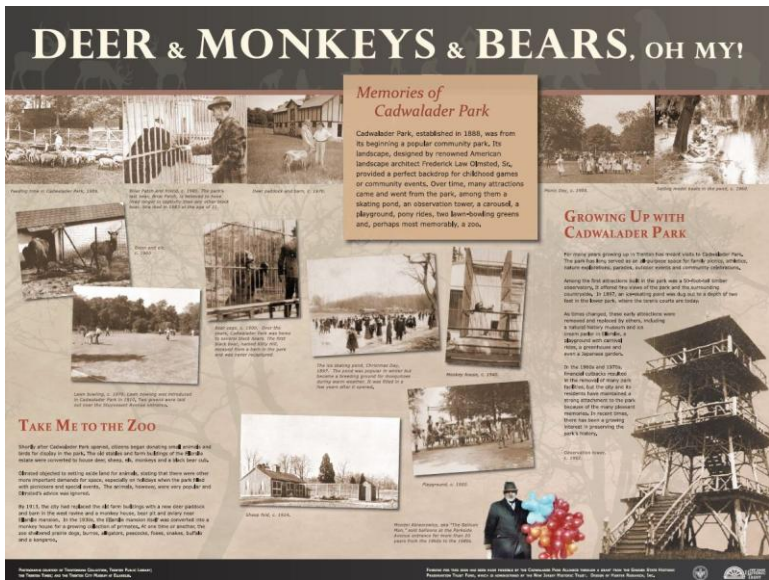


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Today, we will learn how to:

- Write a captivating title
- Draft compelling body copy
- Hook your reader with a powerful opening sentence
- Incorporate striking visual imagery
- Turn captions and labels into self-contained learning points
- Establish an intentional visual flow

Which title is more captivating?



“DEER & MONKEYS & BEARS, OH MY!”



“Waddell Buildings”

Let's write a captivating title

Ineffective

- The 1880 Railroad Route
- Native Plants of the Region
- Fire Station No. 7

Effective

- Stitching the Nation Together: How Steel Rails Reshaped This Valley
- A Hidden Pharmacy Underfoot
- Seconds Count: How Salt Lake City Firemen Conquered the Flames

The Salt Lake City Grid System



Why are these streets so wide?

Real world examples of captivating titles



Real world examples of captivating titles

Glacier National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

WITNESS THE CHANGE

Since the end of the Little Ice Age in the 1800s, the glaciers of Glacier National Park are melting at an accelerated rate due to a warming trend, partially as a result of human activity. Researchers monitor glaciers like Grinnell through repeat photography. The park uses this information to determine plausible and possible future scenarios, and to protect the park resources when the glaciers are gone.

Grinnell Glacier
Salamander Glacier

DOCUMENT THE CHANGE

Researchers and visitors have been documenting the Grinnell Glacier since the arrival of George Bird Grinnell in the late 1800s. The photo at left was taken in 2014. Take a photo from this common viewpoint and compare. What has changed?

Views of Grinnell Glacier from summit of Mt. Gould

1887
George Bird Grinnell's travel diary:
The glacier lies in a basin two miles wide by one and one-half deep and consists of two principal masses, one below, which covers far more ground than the one above, and another on a ledge above the first which is very thick and is constantly falling over onto the mass below.

1938
13 JULY 1938

1981
10 AUGUST 1981

1998
10 AUGUST 1998

2009
10 AUGUST 2009

2013
10 AUGUST 2013

Which sign can you commit to reading?

Life under a log

A rotting log provides damp, warm shelter for many tiny plants and animals. These small organisms play a critical role in the life cycle of all forest dwellers.

Just as you recycle your plastic or glass, nature has its own recycling system.

Decomposers

The forest clean-up crew feed on leaf litter, dead animals and faeces. So who are these tireless cleaners? The FBI – fungi, bacteria and invertebrates. Did you know these guys are sometimes used to clean up oil spills?

Recycling

Creatures like earthworms, insects, fungi and bacteria help put nutrients back into the soil for plants, mosses and lichen to use as they grow. This cycle is as old as life on earth.

Who dines here?

Echidnas are the oldest living mammal in the world. That long beak and sticky tongue are perfect for lapping ants, earthworms, termites and small insects.

Most bush cockroaches hide under bark, logs and stones. Some even burrow into a rotting log. They are good decomposers as they eat rotting leaves and wood and excrete fertiliser to be used by plants.



183 words

Bighorn Mountain Heritage of Plains Indian Tribes

Sacred Site

The Bighorn National Monument is a sacred site for the Bighorn Band of the Gros Ventre and Arapaho Tribes. It is located on the east side of the Bighorn Mountains in Montana. The monument is a large, open area with a large, circular, earthen structure in the center. This structure is a Sun Dance Circle, a sacred site for the Bighorn Band. The monument is a large, open area with a large, circular, earthen structure in the center. This structure is a Sun Dance Circle, a sacred site for the Bighorn Band.

Sacred Heritage

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The Legend of Big Metal

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Land Treaties

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785 words

Let's start with a first sentence

Ineffective opening sentence

Taxidea taxus, commonly known as the American badger, is a fossorial carnivore native to this specific geographic region.

Effective opening sentence

Look down at your feet. Just three feet beneath the dirt you're standing on, a badger might be sleeping right now.

A historic example...

Ineffective opening sentence

This military installation was constructed in 1872 for the purpose of housing the 9th Cavalry Regiment.

Effective opening sentence

Imagine standing guard right here at 2:00 AM in a blinding winter blizzard. This is the exact climate the Buffalo Soldiers of the 9th Cavalry endured while stationed in Utah.

Write your own opening sentence

Ineffective opening sentence

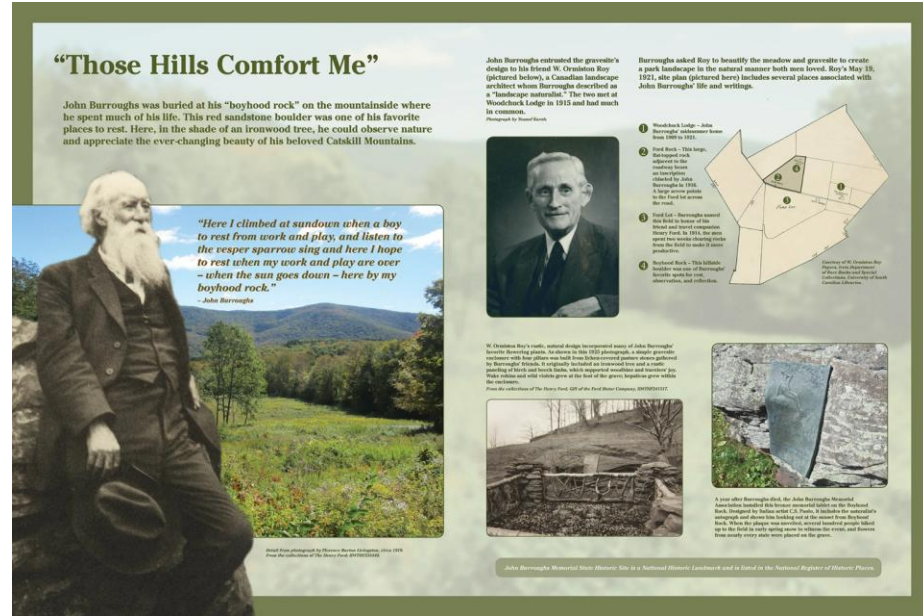
The Preservation Engaged Conference took place on June 12, 2026 at Ogden High School. Speakers from around Utah gathered to share information on historic preservation practices.

Effective opening sentence

What happens when history is forgotten? Look around you at these towering Art Deco walls. On June 12, 2026, this room buzzed with the voices of advocates who refused to find out.



Which sign invites you closer?



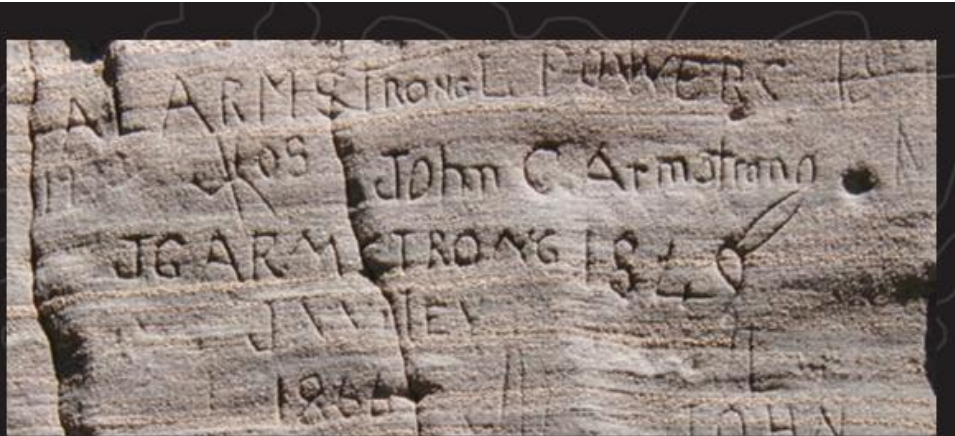
Examples of high reward to effort ratio graphics



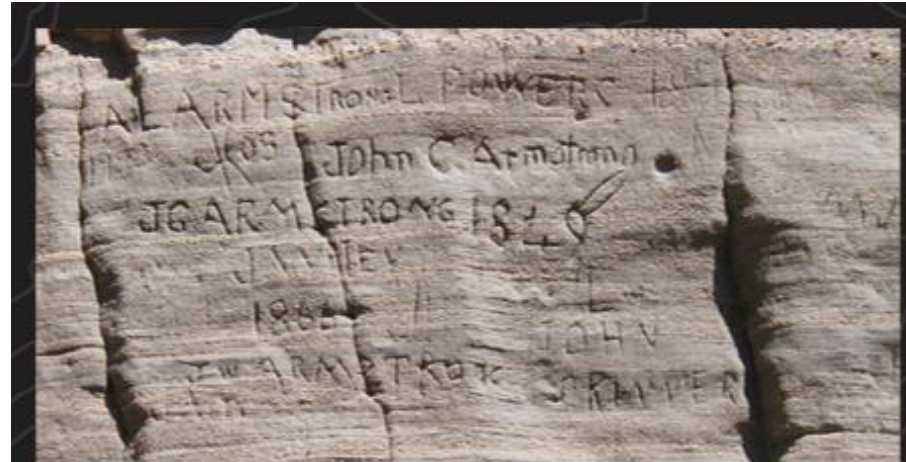
Examples of high reward to effort ratio graphics



Turn captions into self-contained learning points



John C. Armstrong's carving on this Fremont Wash cliff provides a window into his complex and hidden life.



John C. Armstrong Inscription

Grid System


**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**


**Utah State Historic
Preservation Office**

Migration, Identity, and Survival in the American West

The Pratt Southern Utah Expedition

In 1849, Parley P. Pratt led an expedition through southern Utah in order to identify a "Southern Route" which could support access between Salt Lake City and Latter Day Saints settlements in southern Utah. The party utilized portions of the Old Spanish Trail and other Indigenous networks to develop what became known as the Southern Route.

As the Pratt Party descended into the Fremont wash, members carved their names into the sandstone cliff in celebration of the final leg of their journey to Parowan. One of the most prominent carvings is that of John C. Armstrong, who participated in the fifth group of the expedition.



The Pratt Southern Utah Expedition Route



John C. Armstrong inscription

What's in a Name?

John Christopher Armstrong was born in 1813 in Carlisle, England and immigrated to the United States in 1847 with his first wife Mary, joining the Pratt expedition two years later. Following the expedition, Armstrong served as a missionary in England from 1852 until 1853, at which time he left the Church of Latter-Day Saints. Armstrong resided in St. Louis, Missouri with his second wife, Ursula, until her death in 1857.

In 1861 he moved to Ohio and enlisted in the Ohio Infantry during the American Civil War under the alias of Drew C. Iverson. After suffering injury during the Battle of McDowell in 1862, Armstrong began drawing military pension and in 1863 married his third wife Malissa. John C. Armstrong passed away in June of 1881 from consumption (Tuberculosis), after revealing his identity to his family.

NAME OF PERSON	CLASS	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	ISSUE DATE
<i>Drew Iverson</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>10440</i>	<i>10440</i>	<i>1863</i>
<i>John C. Armstrong</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>10440</i>	<i>10440</i>	<i>1863</i>

Drew Iverson (John C. Armstrong) Draft Card



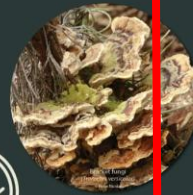
Life under a log

A rotting log provides damp, warm shelter for many tiny plants and animals. These small organisms play a critical role in the life cycle of all forest dwellers.

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Decomposers

The forest clean-up crew feed on leaf litter, dead animals and faeces. So who are these tireless cleaners? The FBI – fungi, bacteria and invertebrates. Did you know these guys are sometimes used to clean up oil spills?






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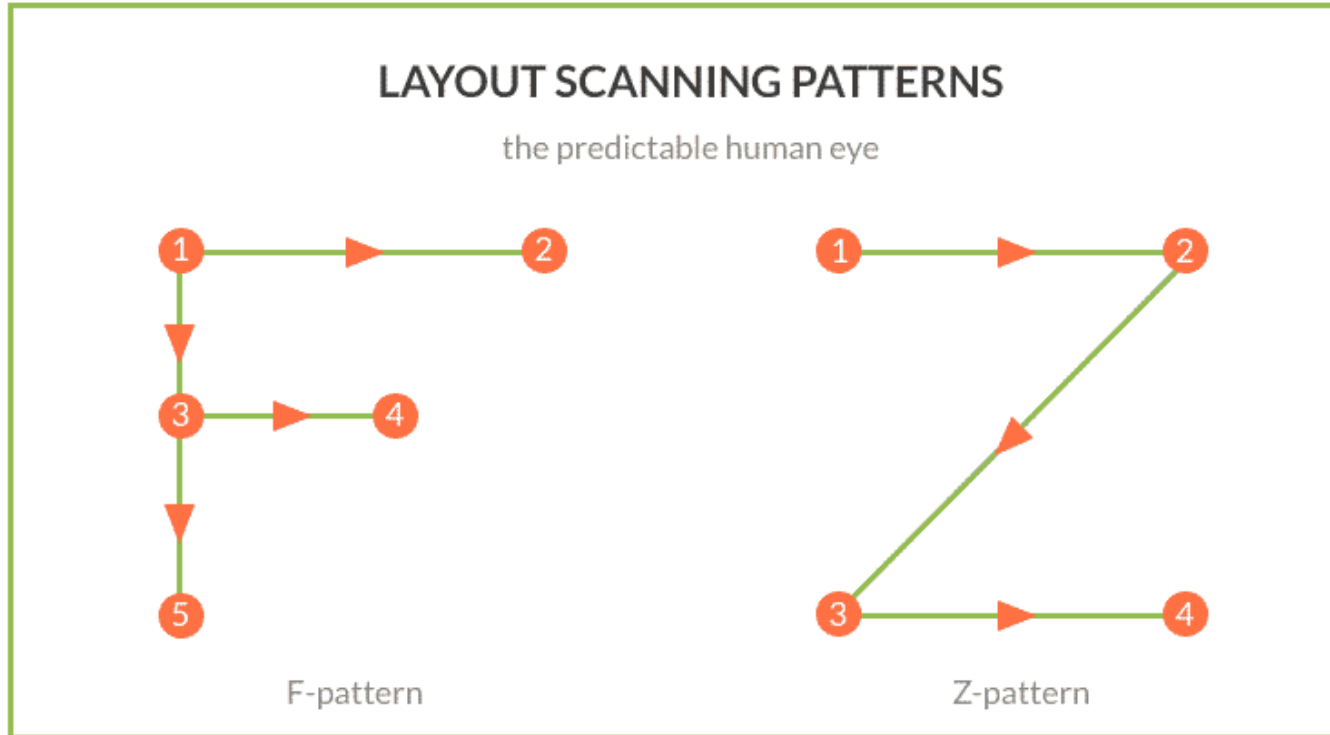




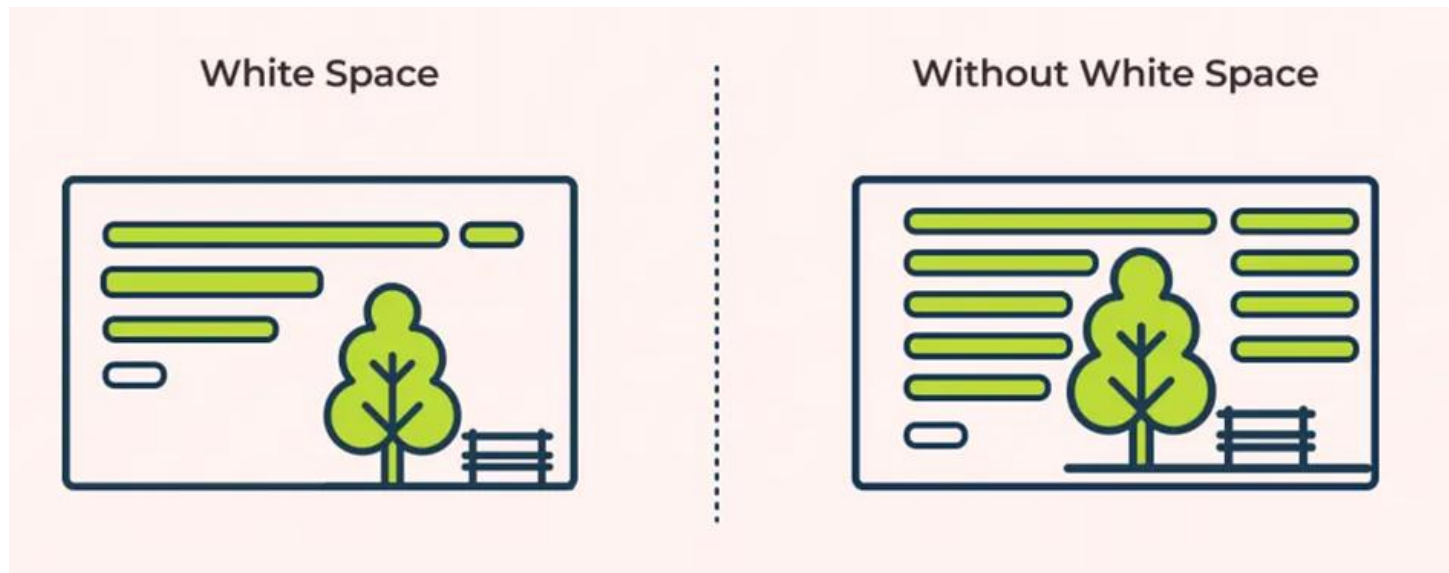
Grid System



Natural Eye Tracking Patterns



Don't be afraid of blank space



Apply the rule of thirds: $\frac{1}{3}$ graphics, $\frac{1}{3}$ text and $\frac{1}{3}$ blank “negative space”

Give your Message Room to Breathe



Give Your Message Room to Breathe



Production and Industry Standards



Utah State Historic
Preservation Office

Create a Style Guide

DRAFT STYLE GUIDE

FOR UCSS' BUFFALO SOLDIER BOOKLET

COLOR IDENTITY



Logo Blue: #32324a Logo Light Blue: #76979f Logo Yellow: #f1bd41 Sepia Grey: #cdc1a8 Red Ochre: #9c45c5

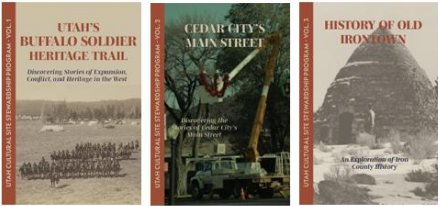
The leftmost three colors are the colors of the Buffalo Soldier Heritage Trail logo, used in the booklet to keep unity between the projects.

The sepia grey and red ochre on the right are selected to match the cover photo chosen for the booklet, and will be used as the series colors for any future project books UCSS chooses to create. These project books are planned to release annually starting this year (2025), and will each utilize the same typography and size guidelines, but may vary page layouts according to what each project needs. Each book will be 6.5x9.5 in., perfect bound, with a minimum of 60 pages.

Since the series may include entries with different interior designs or color schemes established for their projects (like the Buffalo Soldier Heritage Trail having its own established palette), our plan is to unify the look of the series primarily through the covers; font choice and size; and reusing the red ochre and sepia grey colors.

SERIES DESIGN

COVER DESIGN
AND TYPOGRAPHY



TITLE: Mencken Std Head ExtraBold - 46 pt
46 pt Leading, Tracking -30, All Caps

Subtitle: Mencken Std Head Bold Italic - 22 pt
24 pt Leading, Tracking 10

SIDEBAR: Neue Kabel Bold - 22 pt
24 pt Leading, Tracking 10, All Caps

These books will use established CCE fonts. Above are a few drafts of potential covers using these colors and fonts. The Buffalo Soldier book uses the logo's dark blue for its subtitle, while future designs would use black instead if needed but otherwise preserve the red and sepia grey. The text on the

sidebar is identical to the interior subheadings style. These covers and all of their text are all concepts/drafts, and the Buffalo Soldier cover needs to be finalized and cleaned up. It should appear similar to what's shown here.

PAGE CONCEPTS

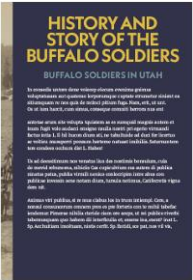
These page concepts are drafts based off of what the UCSS team has discussed, and are not set-in-stone parent pages. Hopefully, these show a decent range of ideas and clarify the look we're hoping to create with this project. The primary focus will be images and

graphics - we're expecting to fit 100-200 words on a page, which is less than these pages show. The extra text throughout is for illustration.

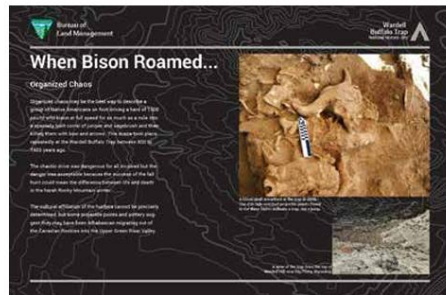
All images, text, and graphics are placeholders.



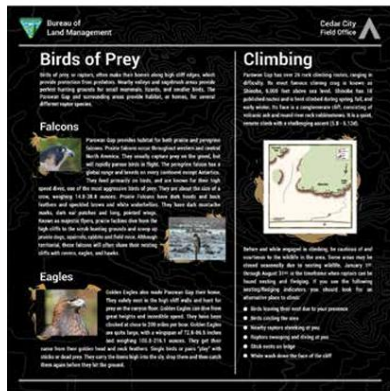
Section breaker pages like these will include a full-page photo and a page of text introducing the next major subject.



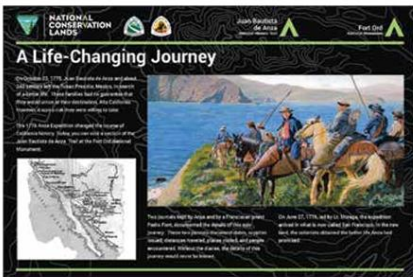
Bureau of Land Management's Style Guide



Regular BLM panels with silver accent color.



National Conservation Lands panel with green accent color.



National Conservation Lands panel with green accent color and trail symbols.

A. SIGN STANDARDS

The following specifications apply to all custom signage unless otherwise stipulated, or unless the signage is subject to MUTCD standards.

1. Emblem

a. Regular BLM: BLM rounded triangle.

b. National Conservation Lands: wordmark, incorporating the unit's chosen accent color.

2. Colors

a. Background: Black.
cmyk
60/40/100



b. Text: White.
cmyk
0/0/0



c. Regular BLM Accent: Silver. This color will be used on accent bars and other sign elements as aesthetics dictate.
cmyk
15/10/10/30



d. National Conservation Lands Accent: green, orange, brown, or blue. The unit-selected color will be used throughout unit signage on all design elements, such as the wordmark AV, accent bars, tent arrows, and selected lines and other accents, as well as on related communication strategy materials.



Pantone
cmyk
RGB
HEX
367C
41/0/75/0
164/214/94
#A4D65E



Pantone
cmyk
RGB
HEX
7578C
0/70/100/0
220/91/17
#DC5B11



Pantone
cmyk
RGB
HEX
7504C
30/42/60/20
148/106/70
#946A46



Pantone
cmyk
RGB
HEX
306C
79/0/0/0
0/191/240
#00BFF0

Determine Your Panel Proportion



Low-Profile Wayside
(Small)



Low-Profile Wayside
(Standard)



Upright Orientation Wayside

Use An Industry Standard Design Tool

- Adobe InDesign and Illustrator
 - layouts/grids
- Photoshop
 - Historical imagery, upscaling
- arcGIS
 - Clear, accurate and professional maps

Make sure your content is accessible

To ensure your signage is fully legible and ADA-accessible, follow these strict minimum font size guidelines based on standard outdoor viewing distances:

- Titles: 60 to 72 pt.
- Subtitles: 40 to 48 pt.
- Body Text: No smaller than 36 pt.
- Captions: No smaller than 24 pt.

Be creative

Think outside the box



Tactile model, Timpanogos Cave NM



Tactile model, WWII Valor in the Pacific NM



Advertise your work



Workshop: How should we improve this sign?

Bullion Beck Mine

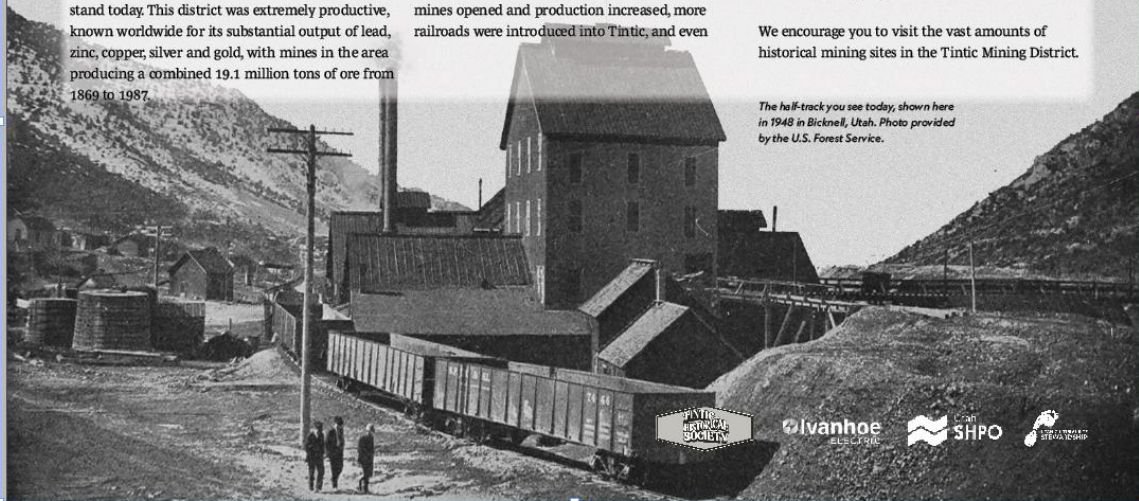
You are standing in front of the Bullion Beck Mine in the Tintic Mining District, one of the four most prominent mines in the valley, known as the "Big Four", which along with the Bullion Beck included the Gemini, Eureka Hill, and Centennial Eureka (also called the Blue Rock). Many of the original structures are still intact and visible from where you stand today. This district was extremely productive, known worldwide for its substantial output of lead, zinc, copper, silver and gold, with mines in the area producing a combined 19.1 million tons of ore from 1869 to 1987.

After the discovery of a rich outcropping of ore in 1859 at the Sunbeam mine, towns began to spring up in the 1870s, the first of which being Diamond and Silver City, and later larger towns including Eureka and Mammoth. A catalyzing factor in the increased development of the district was the introduction of a railroad in the 1880s, as more mines opened and production increased, more railroads were introduced into Tintic, and even

directly to individual mines. Mining would slow down significantly after World War with minor operations continuing even through to today. The Tintic Mining District is home to around 800 people, with the area experiencing a new boom as it is becoming increasingly popular for outdoor recreation, camping, off-roading and more.

We encourage you to visit the vast amounts of historical mining sites in the Tintic Mining District.

The half-track you see today, shown here in 1948 in Bicknell, Utah. Photo provided by the U.S. Forest Service.



Thanks!



**Utah State Historic
Preservation Office**