Selecting Strong Imagery for Interpretive Stories

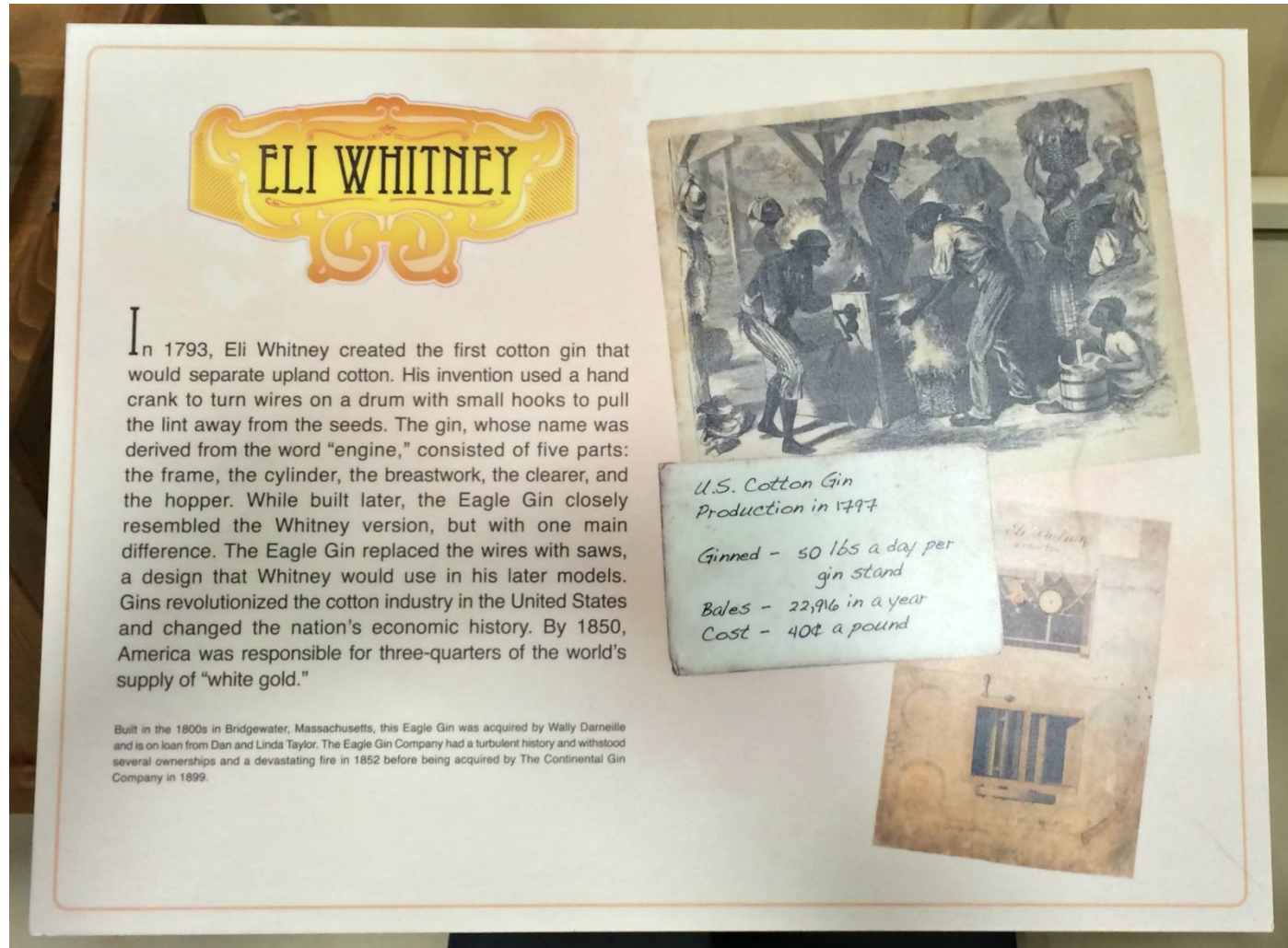# Exhibitions are a Visual Medium

Settlement to City Museum, Grapevine, TX

Exhibits of All Kinds are Visual Media

Texas State Cemetery, Austin, TX

Exhibits of All Kinds are Visual Media

Bayer Museum of Agriculture, Lubbock, TX

Audience Expectations

Visual Variety

Donald Schoolhouse Museum, Grapevine, TX

Visual Variety

Outdoor interpretive sign, Garner State Park, Concan, TX

Choosing the Right Type of Visual

Step 1: Figure out what it is you're trying to communicate.

Step 2: Figure out which type of visual will best communicate that.

Step 3: Assess the quality of your options.

Step 4: Choose your visual.

Maps

The Basics

- Need to be reproduced at a scale large enough that people can see what it is you're interpreting.

- If necessary, it's okay to reproduce just a segment of a map.

Maps

Historical maps are good for giving people a snapshot of what a particular place looked like at a given time.

"Bird's Eye View of the City of Austin," by Augustus Koch, 1873, from Texas Bird's-Eye Views, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, TX

Maps

When historical maps are used together, they can also be used to show growth and change over time.

"Bird's Eye View of the City of Austin," by Augustus Koch, 1887, from Texas Bird's-Eye Views, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, TX

Charts, Graphs and Tables

Battleship TEXAS State Historic Site, La Porte, TX
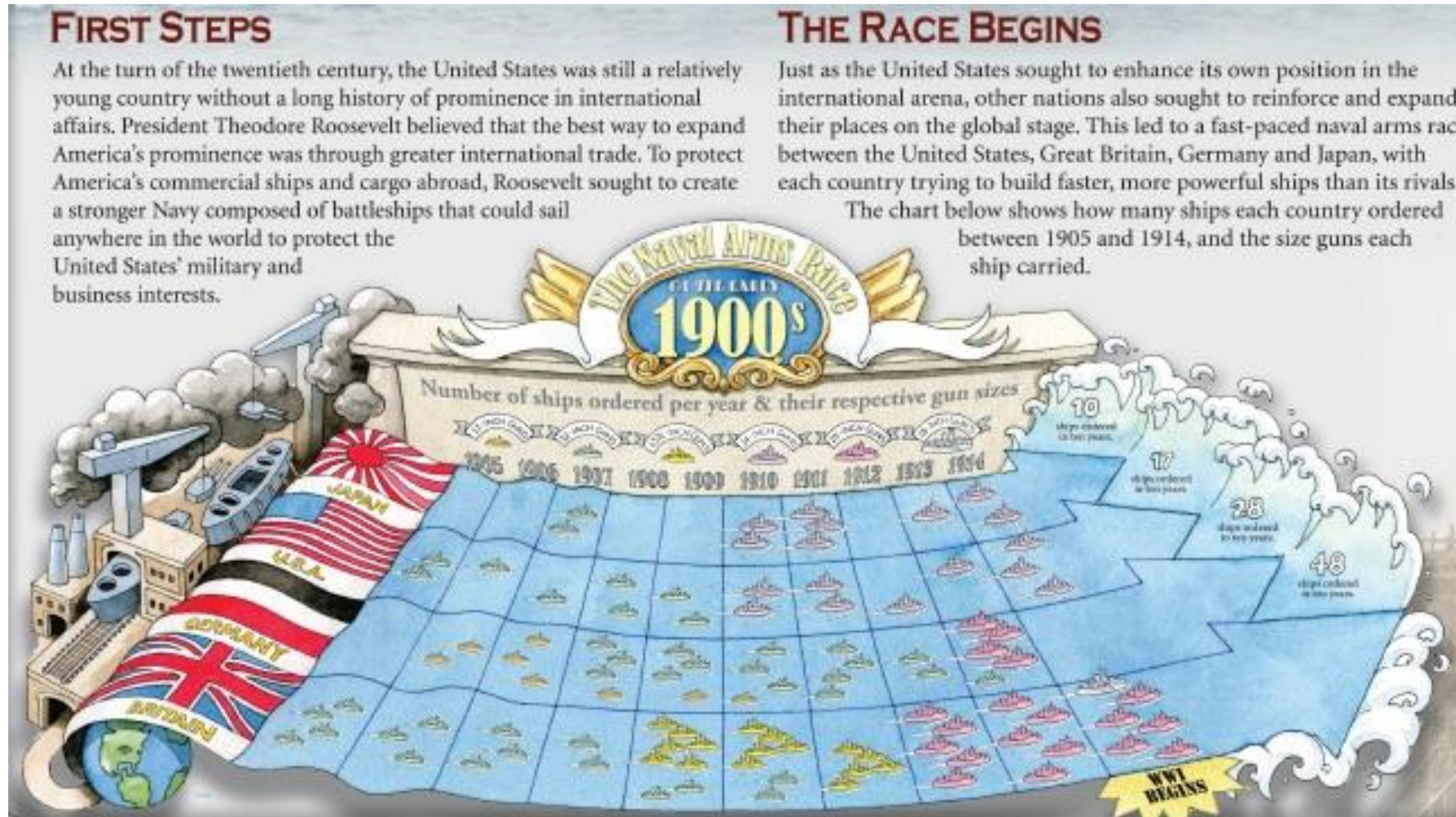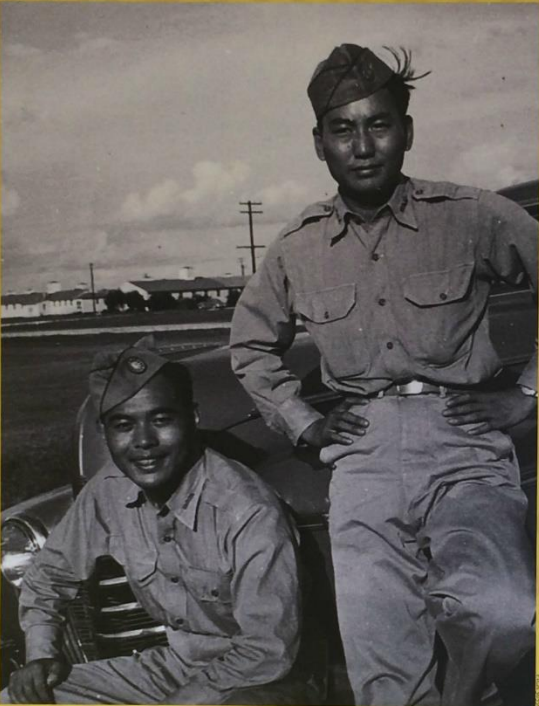
Images of Documents
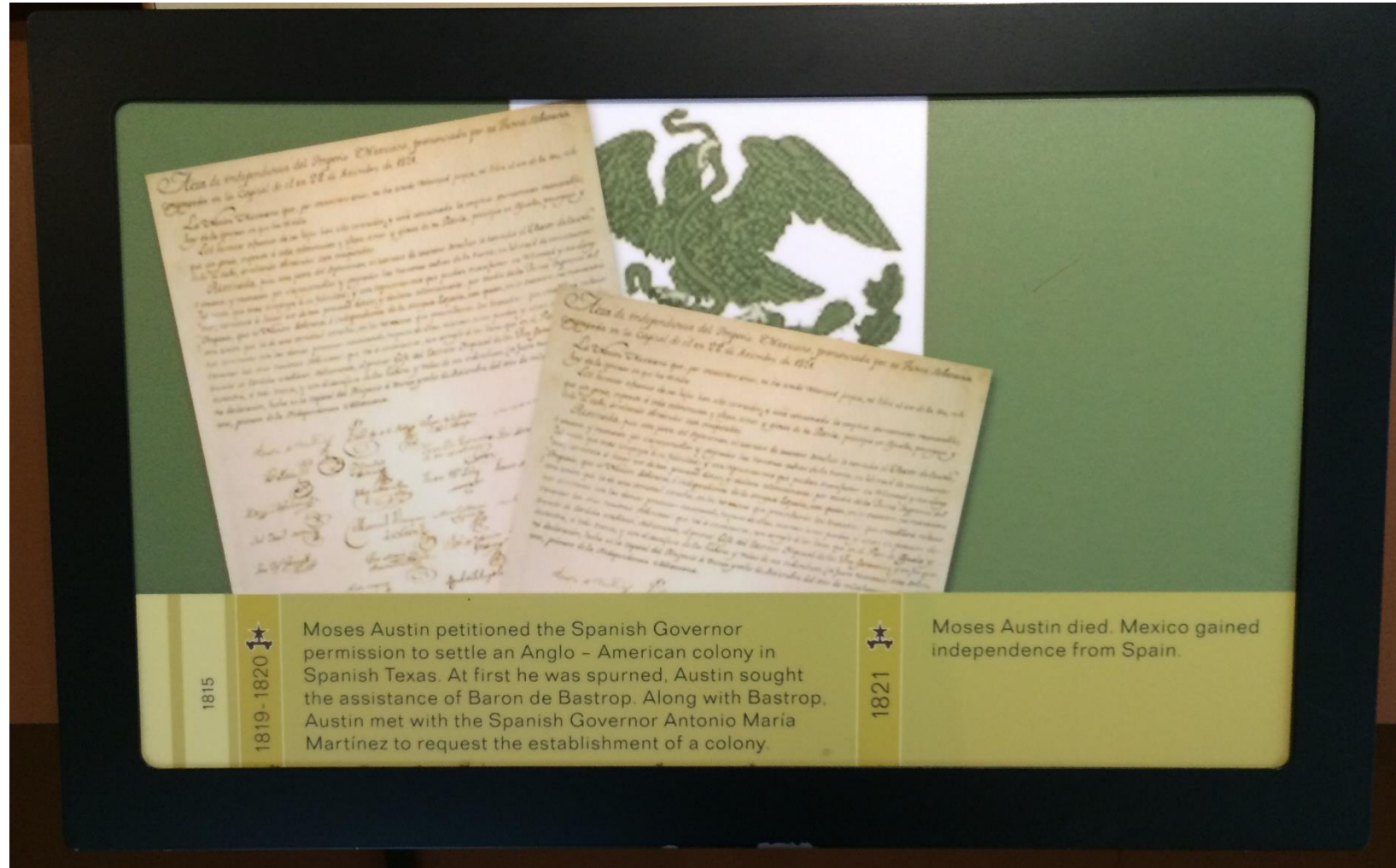
Texas State Cemetery, Austin, TX

Images of Documents

1940s-50s
MILITARY SERVICE

During World War II, 100 Chinese military officers, fluent in English, came to America to serve as interpreters for Chinese pilots training for a top-secret mission. The FAB (Foreign Affairs Bureau)-100 were sent to military bases across America, and Kwei "Duke" Tu (on the right) was one of the officers sent to Bergstrom Army Air Field in Austin.

Austin's First Chinese Draftee To Leave Today

Justice of Peace Also Included In Induction Group

Austin's first Chinese registrant will leave with 35 other selectees of Travis county Friday at 2:30 p. m. for the induction center at Fort Sam Houston to begin one year of military training under the nation's selective service law.

He is Chew Ah Leung, 33-year-old cook at Sam Wah cafe, 223 Congress avenue, who holds order No. 183. Chew was born in Canton, China, in 1907, but he has been in the United States since 1924 and has filed declaration of intention to become a citizen.

Another registrant leaving for the induction center Friday is Mace Baxter Thurman, Jr., justice of the peace, Travis county, for Precinct 3, Place 2. Thurman announced that he will wait until his acceptance is announced before making any statement relative to his civil office here.

This article announces the first Chinese man to enter military service from Austin, Chew Ah Leung, a cook at Sam Wah Café. Mr. Leung was trained at Fort Sam Houston and served during World War II.

Waves of Hope: Asian American History in Austin, Asian American Resource Center, Austin, TX

Images of Documents
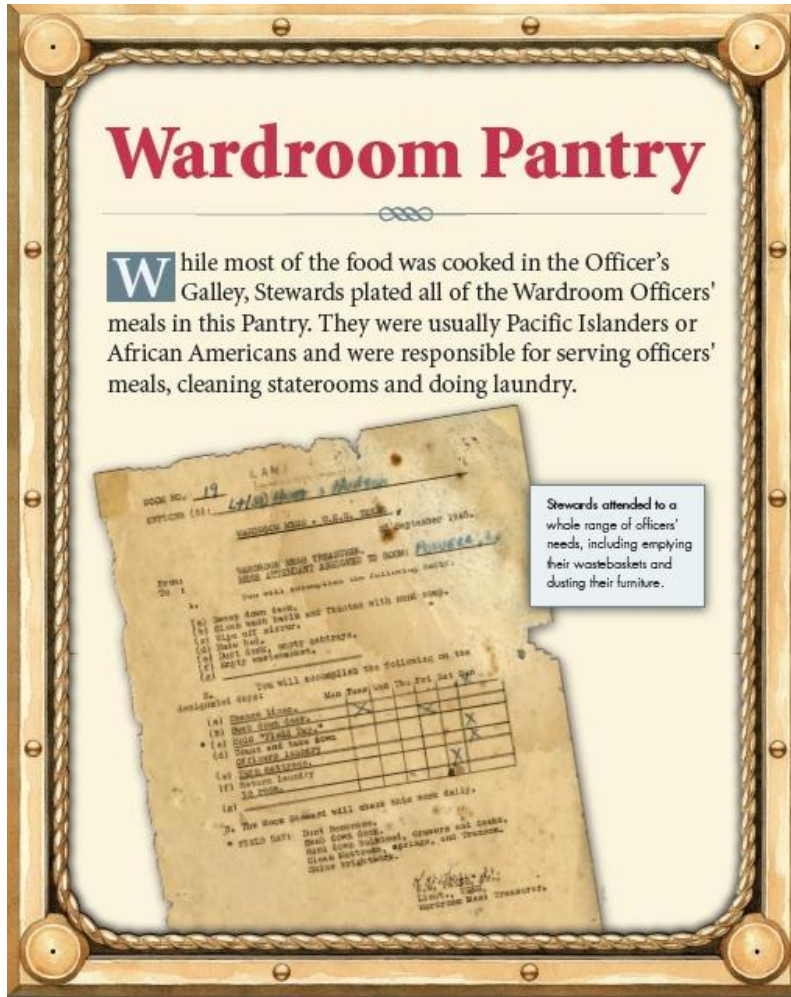
Battleship TEXAS State Historic Site, La Porte, TX

Photographs: The Basics

Donald Schoolhouse Museum, Grapevine, TX

Photographs: The Basics

Photographs: The Basics

Time Exposures: Picturing Isleta Pueblo in the 19th Century, Museum of Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX

Photographs: Simple is Strong
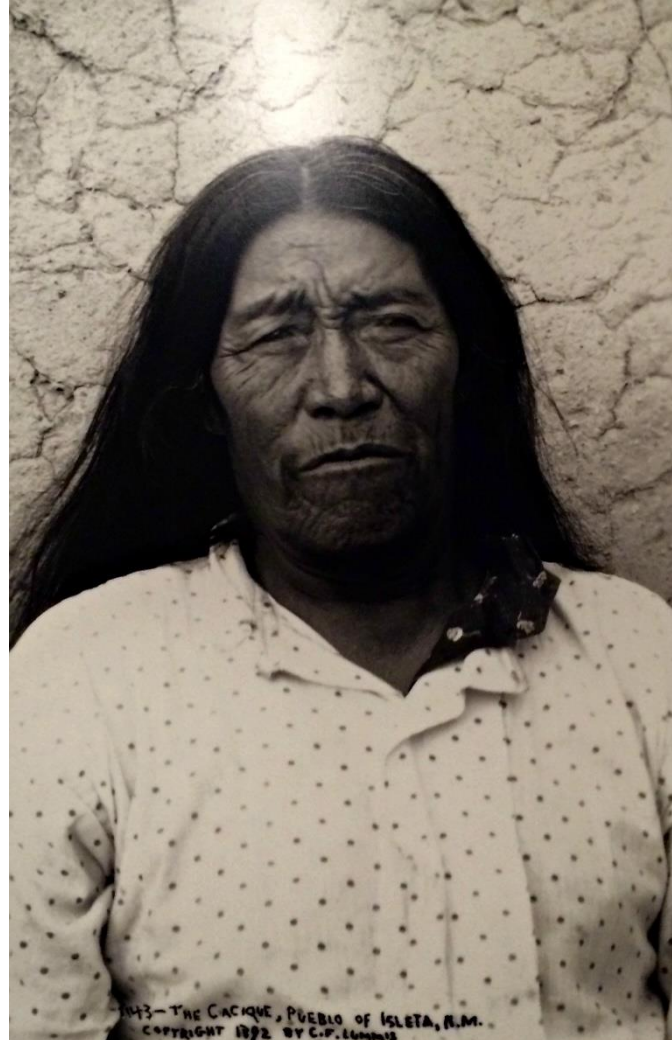
Time Exposures: Picturing Isleta Pueblo in the 19th Century, Museum of Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX

Photographs: The "Rule" of Thirds
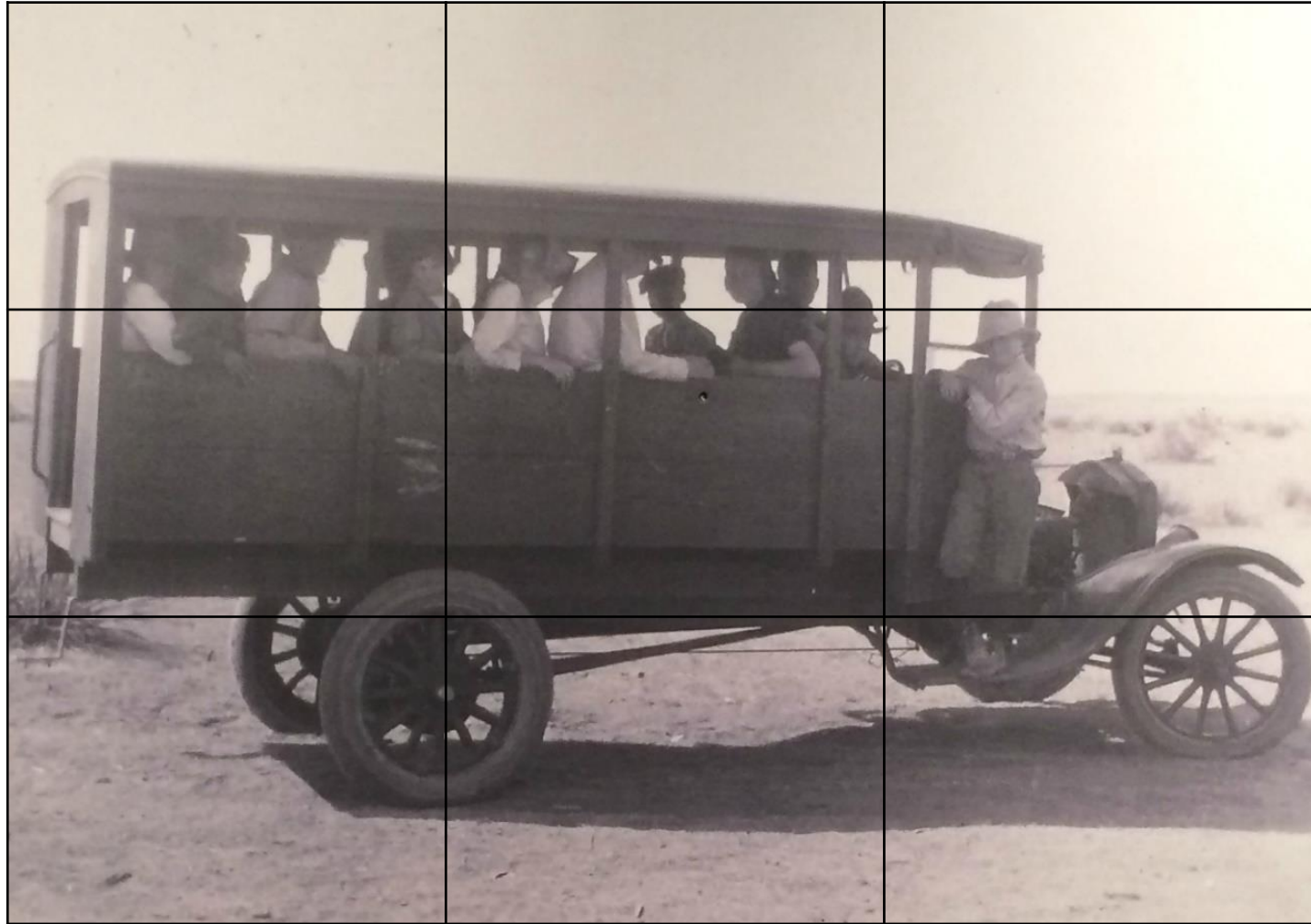
From Horse-Drawn to Horsepower, National Ranching Heritage Center, Lubbock, TX

Photographs: The "Rule" of Thirds
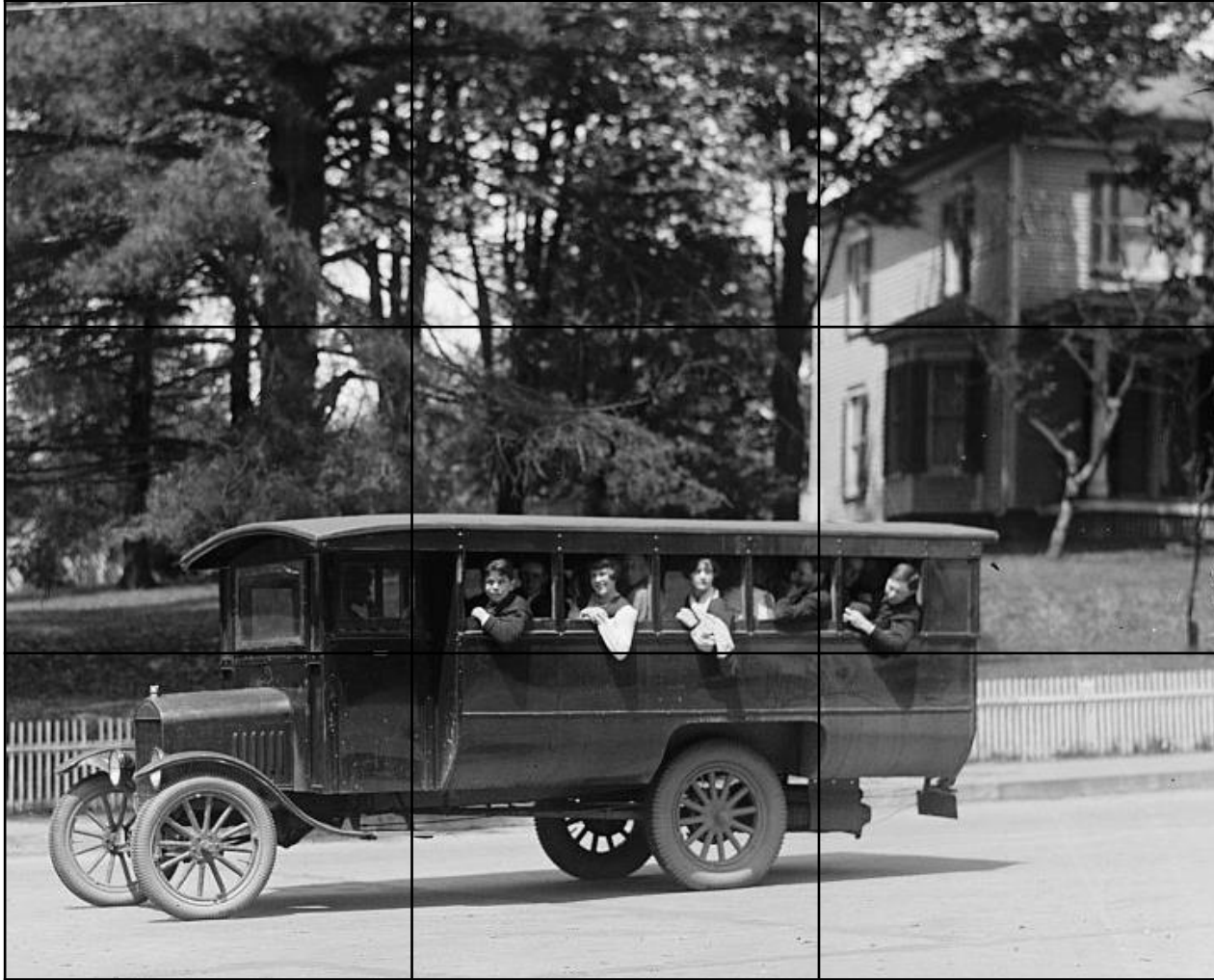
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

Photographs: The "Rule" of Thirds

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

Photographs: Lines and Movement

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

Photographs: Lines and Movement

From Horse-Drawn to Horsepower, National Ranching Heritage Center, Lubbock, TX

Photographs: Lines and Movement

Photographs: Action Images

Outdoor interpretive sign, Garner State Park, Concan, TX

Photographs: Action Images

Outdoor interpretive sign, Garner State Park, Concan, TX

Photographs: Static Images
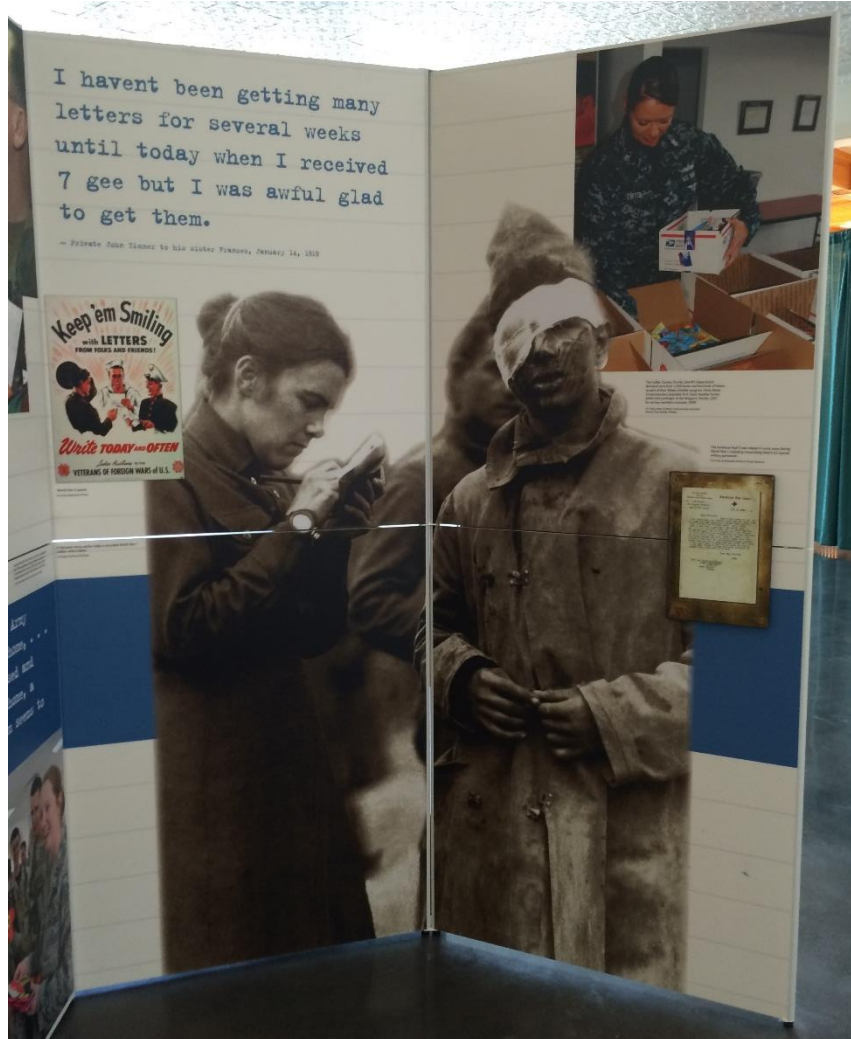
Mail Call, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, at Grapevine CVB, Grapevine, TX

Fonts: Serif vs. Sans Serif

Serif

- Serifs have "feet" or "tails" on the letters.
- Examples:
  - Garamond
  - Times New Roman
  - Bookman Old Style

Sans Serif

- Sans serif fonts lack the "feet" or "tails" on the letters.
- Examples:
  - **Franklin Gothic**
  - Tahoma
  - Arial

Fonts: Print vs. Web

Print

- Serif fonts are considered more legible in print.
- In general, use serif fonts for body copy and larger.
- Exception: serif fonts are harder to read at small size. Use sans serif fonts for smaller print (e.g., captions).

Web

- Sans serif fonts are considered more legible on screen.
- Use sans serif fonts at any size.

Fonts: Sizes

- Captions: 20 to 24-point type
- Body copy and Titles: 28 to 42-point type, depending on:
  - color of type
  - spacing between letters (kerning) and between lines (leading)
  - type of font (regular, bold, italic)

Note: the actual print size of a 20-point font will vary depending on the font. For example:

- Garamond at 20 point
- DilleniaUPC at 20 point

When using a font that runs on the smaller side, make sure you compensate for this by using it at a larger size.

Fonts: More Readable

- In general: regular typefaces (not **BOLD** or *italic*)

- Don't set text in ALL CAPS

- Serif fonts:
  - Times New Roman
  - New Century Schoolbook

- Sans serif fonts:
 - Helvetica
  - Univers 55
  - Futura

Source: Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Design

Fonts: Less Readable

▶ *Script*   Because all the letters connect and contain flourishes, script fonts make it harder for the eye to distinguish one letter from the next. This makes these fonts harder to read overall.

▶ Eroded   Eroded fonts don't have smooth edges, which makes it difficult for

the eye to recognize the letter forms. Use them sparingly in both print and web applications.

These fonts all evoke a particular feeling or mood. There are some cases where they might be your best option. If you choose to use these types of fonts, use them sparingly and at a very large size, and recognize that you are sacrificing readability for some viewers.

Fonts: Less Readable
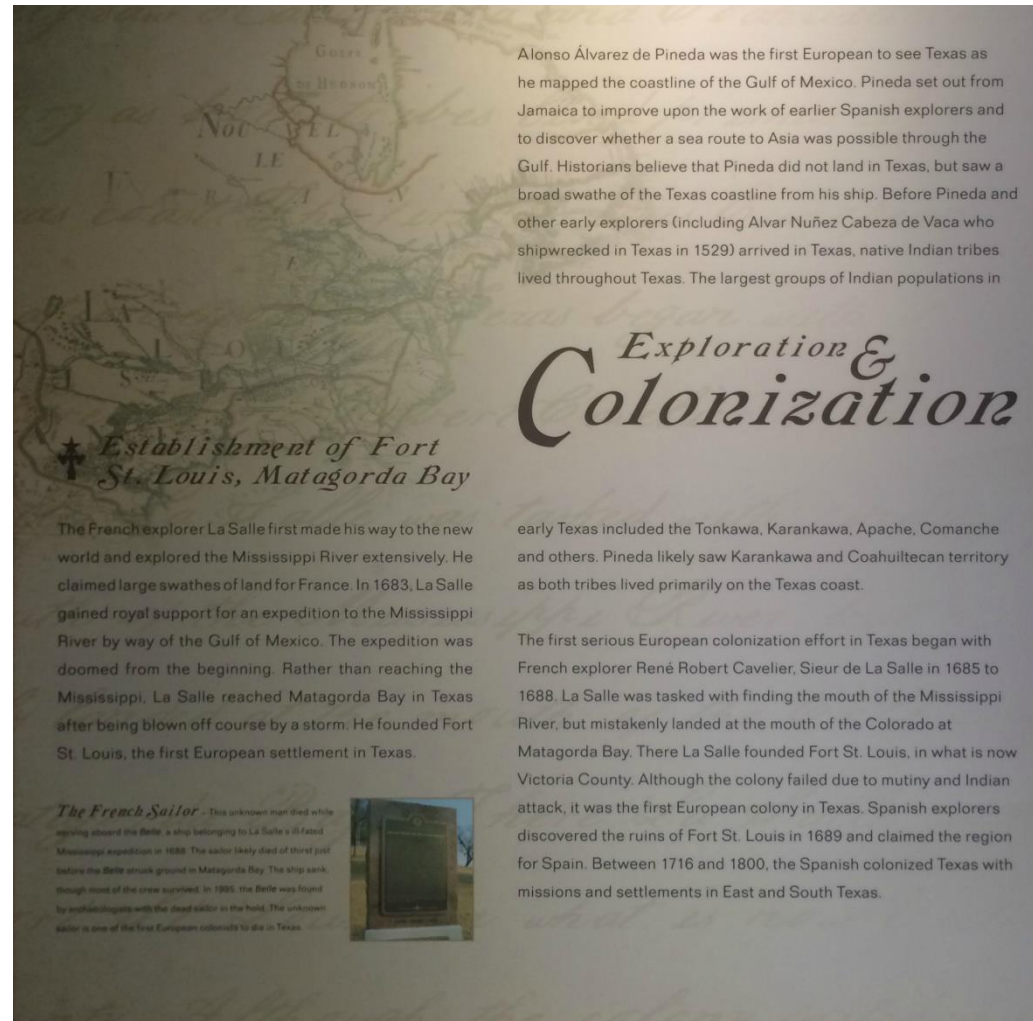
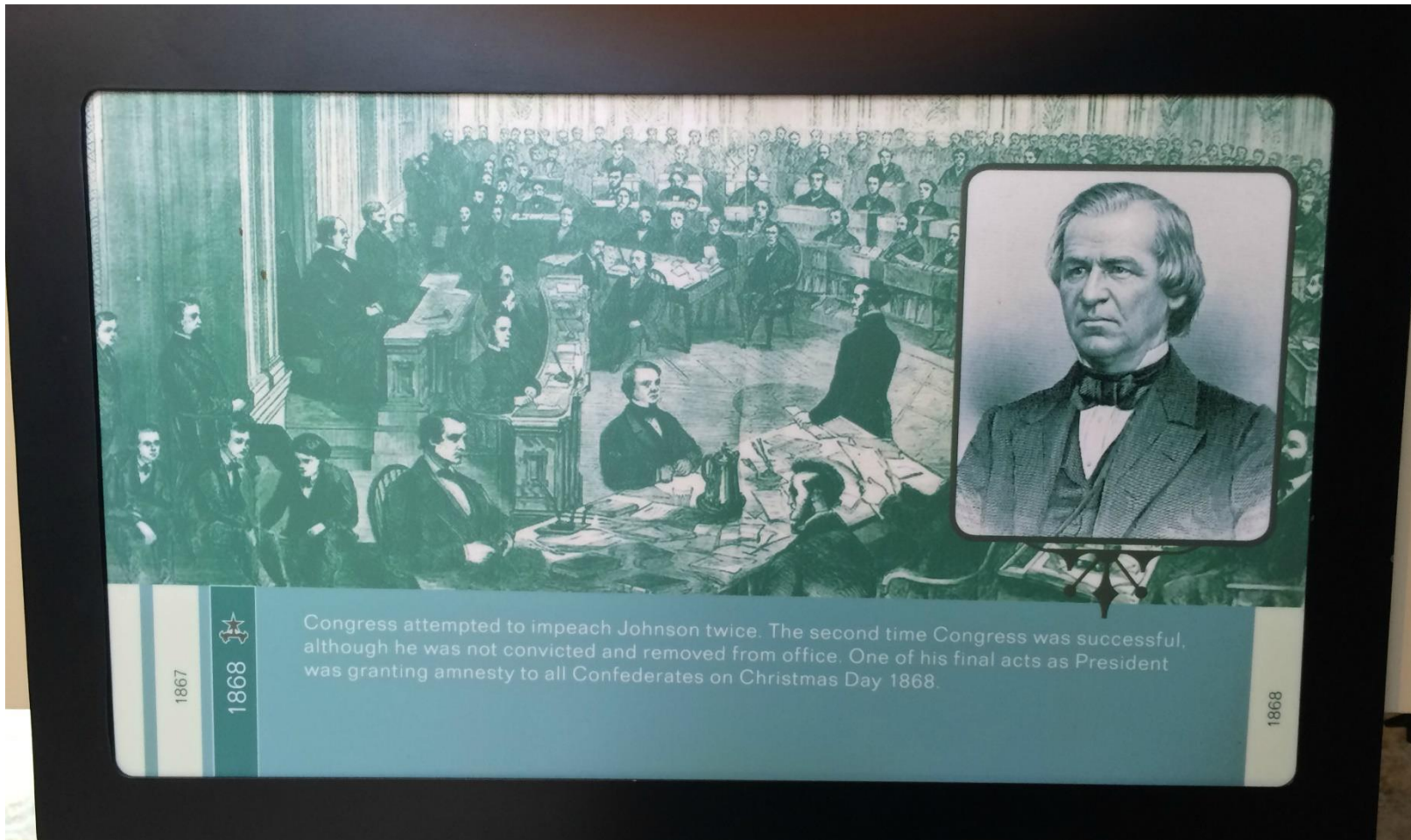*Texas State Cemetery, Austin, TX*
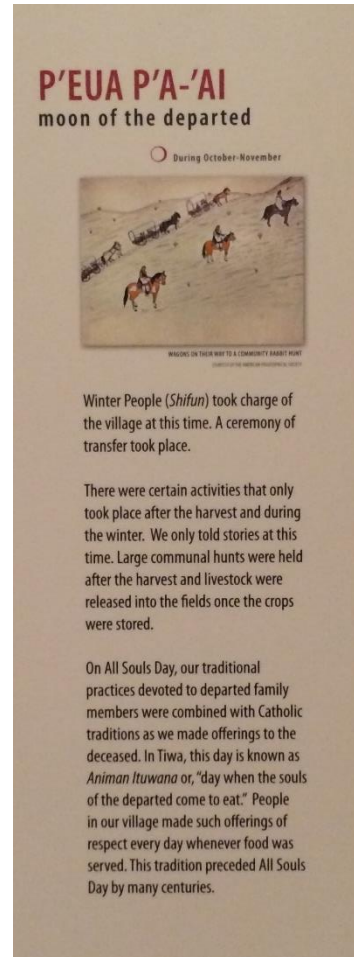
Fonts: Overused Fonts

Comic Sans

Papyrus

Looking for an alternative font? I often use www.dafont.com for free, downloadable fonts that are fully licensed for non-commercial use.

Composition: Balance

Texas State Cemetery, Austin, TX

Composition: Colors and Contrast

Time Exposures: Picturing Isleta Pueblo in the 19th Century, Museum of Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX

Composition: Image Orientation
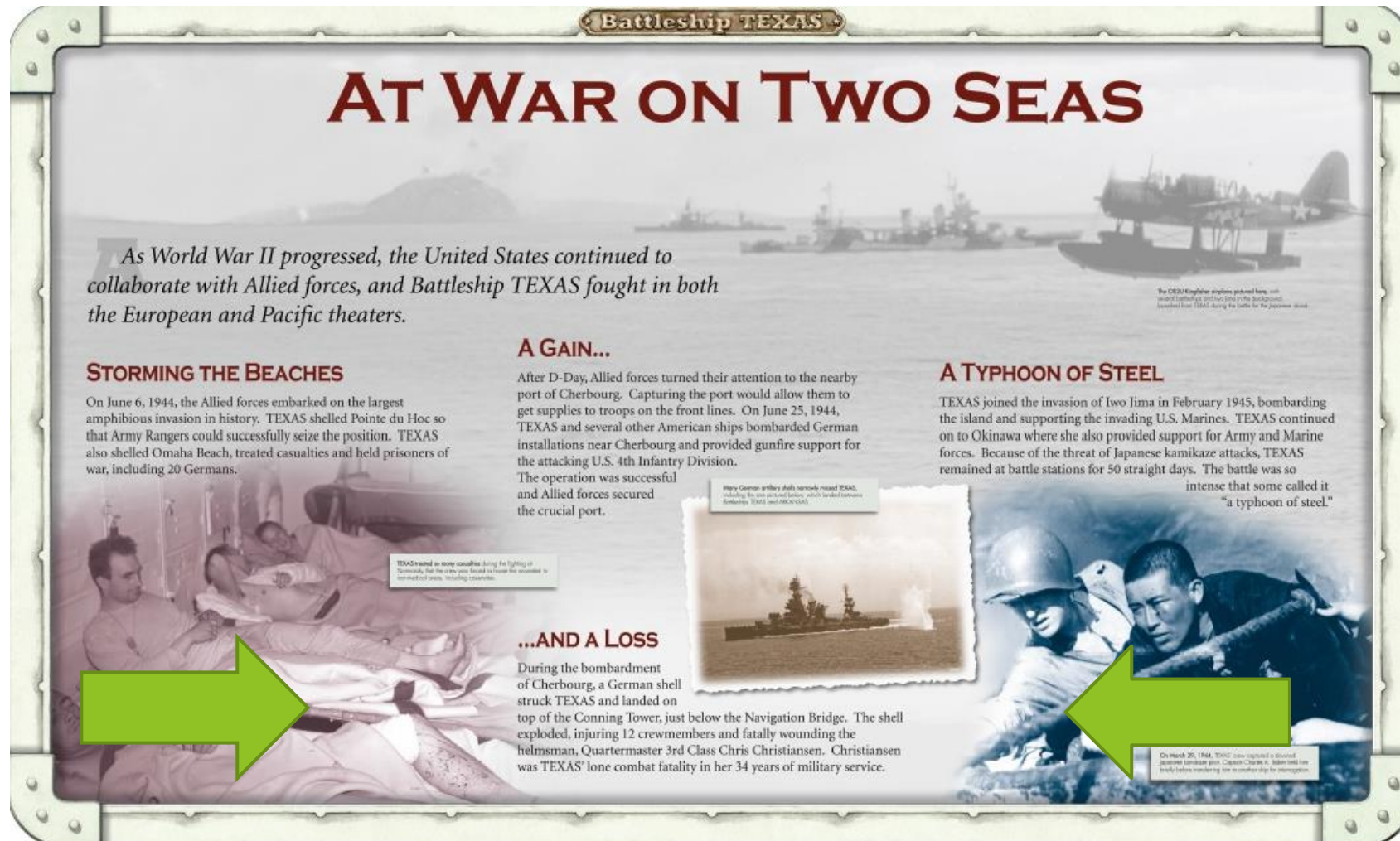
Battleship TEXAS State Historic Site, La Porte, TX

Composition: Capacity

Tall Tales of the Wild West, National Ranching Heritage Center, Lubbock, TX

Composition: Capacity

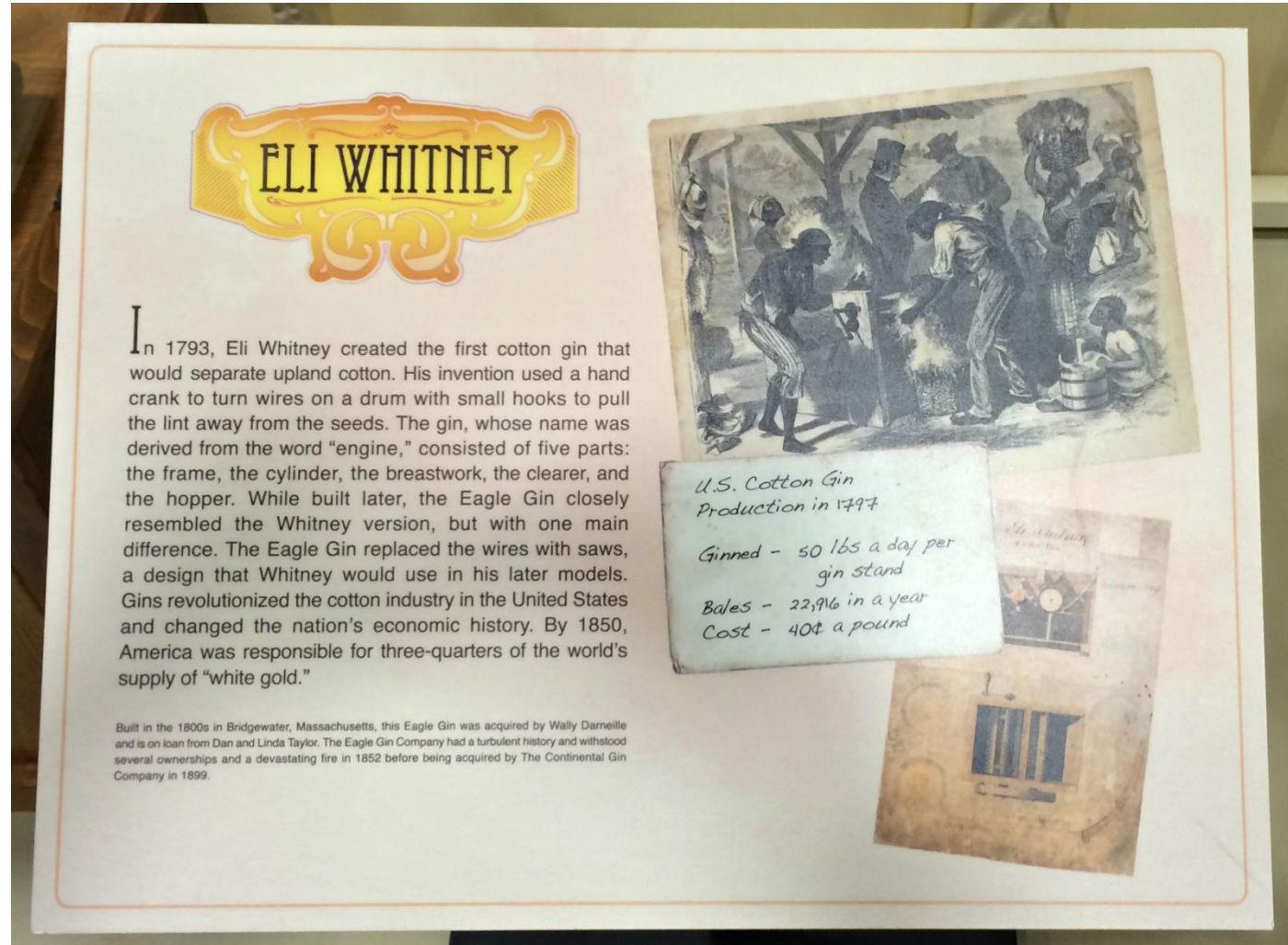*Bayer Museum of Agriculture, Lubbock, TX*

Composition: Capacity

Asian American Resource Center, Austin, TX
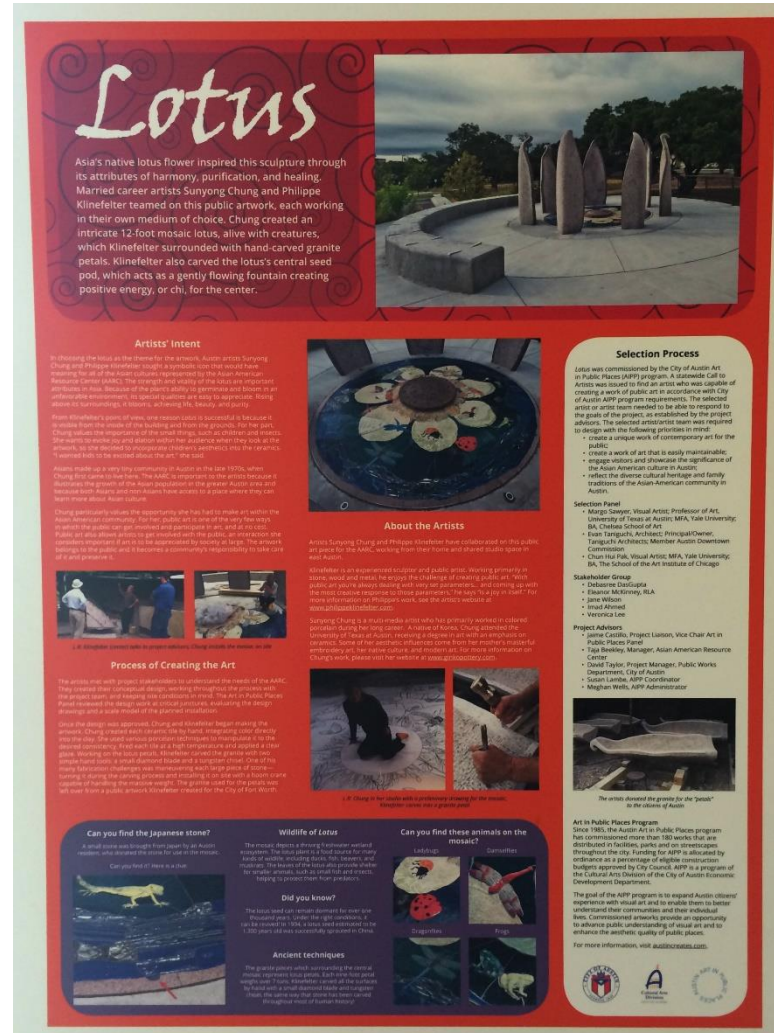
Take-Aways

▶ Choose the right type of visual for your message.

▶ Look for simple, well-composed, and dynamic images.

▶ Rely on fonts that are highly readable (and limit use of those that are not).

▶ Think about balance, contrast, image orientation, and capacity when putting it all together.

Resources

Useful (free!) resources:

- PicMonkey (http://www.picmonkey.com): free web-based photo editing, good for touching up modern images.

- http://www.dafonts.com: downloads of all types of fonts, free licenses for non-commercial uses

- Colour Contrast Check (http://www.snook.ca/technical/colour_contrast/colour.html): check the contrast between your text (foreground) color and background color by inputting color values or using a slider to select your color. Sidebar tells you whether your contrast is at least 7:1.

- Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design (http://accessible.si.edu/pdf/Smithsonian%20Guidelines%20for%20accessible%20design.pdf)

- Library of Congress (http://www.loc.gov/pictures/): free image downloads, usually free of copyright issues)